

GOD AND THE WORLD IN SAINT IRENAEUS : THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

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This thesis has been composed by
myself, and is my own work.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.H.	Adversus Haereses
B.J.R.L.	Bulletin of the John Ryland's Library
C.D.	Church Dogmatics
C.U.P.	Cambridge University Press
Dem.	Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching
D.L.T.	Darton, Longman and Todd
H.T.R.	Harvard Theological Review
J.E.H.	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
J.T.S.	Journal of Theological Studies
M.M.S.	Marshall, Morgan and Scott
N.T.S.	New Testament Studies
O.U.P.	Oxford University Press
R.K.P.	Routledge and Kegan Paul
R.S.R.	Recherches de Science Religieuse
S.J.T.	Scottish Journal of Theology
S.P.	Studia Patristica
V.C.	Vigiliae Christianae
Z.N.W.	Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS (Regulation 7.9)

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Chapter One considers the shape of Irenaeus' doctrine of the one God, paying particular attention to the various attributes which are ascribed to Him : power, goodness, richness, patience, mercy, justice, holiness, wisdom, omniscience, omnipresence, incomprehensibility. It is concluded that Irenaeus had a fuller doctrine of God than has often been appreciated, but that he departs somewhat from the New Testament in not fully integrating the mercy and justice of God, and in reflecting, to a limited degree, Middle Platonic teaching upon His essential incomprehensibility.

Chapter Two treats aspects of Irenaeus' doctrine of the Trinity, notably the relation between the Father and Word/Son, and the pre-existence of Jesus Christ. It is argued that Irenaeus severely modifies the 'Logos model' of Justin and other Apologists, and, consequently, that he moves towards a reconceptualisation of time around the incarnation, rather than seeing a disincarnate Logos pre-existing in time.

Chapter Three examines certain fundamental features of Irenaeus' doctrine of creation : the purpose of God in creating, the question of creation out of nothing, and the balance between freedom and necessity in God. It is argued that the particular emphasis given to the will of God compromises the created and independent rationality of creation.

Chapter Four focuses upon the Irenaeian account of providence and created freedom. An element of rationalism is demonstrated in the former, and tensions which were later to erupt in the Pelagian controversy are identified in the latter area.

Chapter Five explores Irenaeus' treatment of the place of man in creation, and the fundamental nature of man as body, soul and Spirit (or spirit). It is argued that the relation between God and creation, and especially between God and man, is drawn too tightly, and the chapter illustrates and further explicates this underlying feature of Irenaeus' doctrines of God and creation, by examining his approaches to theodicy.

Throughout the thesis the theology of St. Irenaeus is discussed in relation to the context of Gnostic and Apologetic theology against which he wrote, the New Testament and, on occasions, modern theology, particularly as exemplified by Karl Barth. The greatness of St. Irenaeus is not diminished, but the tensions and problems, incipient and more obvious, in his theology of creation, are emphasised rather more than has been customary in previous studies.

INTRODUCTION

R.D. Williams has justly claimed that, in many areas of theology, Irenaeus 'lays a tantalizing trail of allusions and undeveloped resonances to await more systematic exploration'.¹ But to what extent should such subsequent exploration be read back into Irenaeus himself? It can hardly be doubted that, on many occasions, later systems of thought have been too readily imposed upon him. This is the case whether it has been Nicene orthodoxy or modalist heresy which has been the subject of attribution. Where Nicene orthodoxy is concerned, we need not doubt that Irenaeus would have stood with Athanasius against the Arians, if we still maintain that different aspects of Irenaeus' theology are both superior and inferior to that exhibited in Athanasius. Whereas Athanasius affirms the identity of essence of Father and Son more plainly than some Irenaeian statements would permit, Irenaeus has a much clearer vision of the importance of the historical reality of Jesus Christ than does Athanasius. If truth is indeed the daughter of time, the line of descent is less than straight. The question of how a historian should do justice to the past is a major issue of modern thought which is taken up in this thesis, although generally in relation to the concrete subject under discussion rather than to the underlying philosophy of historiography.

If the content of Irenaeus' theology has been subjected to anachronistic systematisation, the same could be said of its form. While some scholars, chiefly from the older continental school (for example, A. Harnack² and F. Loofs³), engaged in a detailed analysis and dissection of Adversus Haereses into its component theologies and their 'sources', other scholars (for example, G. Wingren⁴ and L. Thornton⁵) have, perhaps partly in reaction to the speculative theses published abroad,

tended to over-emphasise the unity of both form and content of Adversus Haereses.

It used to be believed that all evolutionary change in the natural world was adaptive, but we now know that, although a clear line of evolutionary ascent is discernible, there have been many blind alleys which have ended with extinction. In the same way, it is possible to identify in Irenaeus both an underlying systematic coherence and many tensions or problematic features. As the enormously useful modern discussion and development of the concept of 'models' has shown, all theologians are obliged to use a variety of models, metaphors, analogies or frameworks in the attempt to point through language and symbol to the reality of God. Because we can no longer conceive of a univocal relation between language or theory and reality, we are aware that all theological systems will exhibit limitations and hence (at least) incipient error. With Irenaeus, we are dealing with a writer from a relatively early stage in the formative period of Christian thought, and inevitably we observe him struggling adequately to articulate and formulate the experience which was at the centre of the life of the Church : the lex orandi was, as always, prior to the lex credendi.

How, then should we approach the study of the theology of St. Irenaeus? The present thesis maintains that the possible choice between a theological and a historical approach is false, and that an attempt should be made to engage both aspects together. The enormous attention devoted over the past century to scriptural hermeneutics would seem to be producing at least a limited consensus that theology and history cannot be held in separate areas of study.⁶ These conclusions require extension into other branches of theology, not least patristics.

E.F.Osborn . has given recent attention to the question of the methodology of patristic study, and, following J. Passmore, he favours the method of 'problematic elucidation'.⁷ While not wishing to dispute the importance of paying careful attention to the particular problems with which a given writer in a given context was concerned, the method adopted by Osborn, if unchecked, leads to an underestimation of the personal character of much patristic writing, and the participation of an author in an on-going tradition. Philosophical and theological problems can only be elucidated in dialogue with the personal position from which they are perceived. Osborn's methodology does not give this sufficient recognition, and hence his own (to a significant degree, platonic) presuppositions are assumed, rather than recognised and defended.

In a sense, Osborn's work displays the 'two horizons' approach to hermeneutics, with discussions of past and present instances of given 'problems' being juxtaposed in successive sections of a chapter. Notwithstanding the usefulness of the 'two horizons' framework⁸ for the examination of hermeneutical issues, we would wish to insist that something akin to 'three horizons' should be recognised, as has long been indicated (albeit imperfectly!), in relation to the interpretation of Scripture, by the Anglican conception of Scripture, reason, and tradition. For tradition, we are thinking especially of the historical development of theology, which should be allowed to interact with both the thought-world of a patristic writer, and that of a contemporary scholar. To put this slightly differently, the assessment made of the relation between a given author and his or her environment, and other authors and their environments, past, present or future - that is, an historical assessment - contains an irreducibly

personal, responsible dimension supplied by the historian concerned. The three 'horizons' are related, ultimately, by their inter-locking relation to the transcendent realm of truth, the service of which is the only valid motive of human endeavour, historiographic or otherwise.

The present thesis is offered against the background of these methodological considerations, but its basic subject matter is not methodology. There is a considerable danger in modern theology, with its great interest in questions of methodology, of an abstract, and thus intrinsically lifeless, discussion of theological issues. Is there such a thing as a method of theological enquiry, other than the unending attempt to allow the subject matter Himself to speak to us through the study of the substance of theology? It has been one of the great services rendered to theology by Karl Barth that he has consistently placed this critical question before us. My exploration of the shape of Irenaeus' theology therefore examines the important loci of his theology, the doctrines of God and creation. With but limited exceptions, these aspects of his theology have received surprisingly little detailed attention, for the focus has been much more upon those doctrines, such as of the Trinity and Christology, which dominated later patristic debates. As we shall see in relation to his doctrine of the Trinity, the retroaction of later questions upon Irenaeus has often distorted the actual emphases which are to be found in this area of his theology.

The subjects of the doctrines of God and creation, together with their inter-relation, are central to Irenaeus' theology. We shall first tackle aspects of his doctrine of God, because it is fundamental to Irenaeus that God is not to be understood ex factis, sed ea quae

facta sunt ex Deo (II.25.1). We shall cover a good deal of ground, and from the doctrines of God and creation only some aspects can be selected for consideration. Although there are dangers in researching across such a wide field, it is arguably the case that there is a certain danger in theological research of excessive, and therefore potentially myopic, specialisation. Specialised, narrow studies are undoubtedly important, but heavy concentration upon such studies in the overall allocation of research in a given subject can only be justified if there is wide agreement concerning the fundamental assumptions which guide the selection of the narrower subjects of study. This condition is satisfied across large areas of natural science, but the same cannot be said of theology, or, indeed, of many other subjects in the arts and humanities. The use of aerial photography to identify the macroscopic features of archaeological sites, prior to their microscopic examination, has helped to revitalise archaeology. In an analogous way, it is a concern of the present writer that the sights of theological gunners need careful alignment before their analytical salvos will truly engage their target. This investigation is an exercise in the identification of, and reflection upon, the vital concerns of Irenaeus, in the area of his doctrines of God and creation.

1. Eucharistic Sacrifice - The Roots of a Metaphor, (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1982), p.11.
2. History of Dogma, Vol. II, (E.T., London: Williams and Norgate, 1896)
3. Theophilus von Antiochien adv. Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenäus, Texte und Untersuchungen, 46 (Leipzig: 1930)
4. Man and the Incarnation, (E.T., Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959)
5. Revelation in the Modern World, (London: A. & C. Black, 1950)
6. Three examples of such a conclusion reached by prominent contemporary scholars may be cited: P. Stuhlmacher, Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture, (E.T., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); C.M. Wood, The Formation of Christian Understanding, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981); and, in an important essay, N. Lash, 'What Might Martyrdom Mean?', in Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament, ed. W. Horbury and B. McNeil, (C.U.P.: 1981), pp. 183-198.
7. The Beginning of Christian Philosophy, (C.U.P., 1981), pp.10ff.
8. As (almost) definitively expounded by A.C. Thiselton, The Two Horizons, (Exeter : Paternoster, 1980)

Introduction

A perpetual problem of Christian theology is to reconcile the transcendence and goodness of an omnipotent God with both the dependence of creation on Him and the sheer existence of evil. How far Irenaeus was aware of the group of related problems which we encounter here, and how successfully he solved or accommodated them, will be the recurrent theme of the present thesis.

One could explore Irenaeus' doctrines concerning these matters by starting at any one of several points, but it is reasonable, and indeed it is in accord with Irenaeus' own starting point as revealed in the early books of his major extant work, to begin with his doctrine of God. The chapter that follows is not, however, intended as a comprehensive treatise upon Irenaeus' doctrine of God. Space does not permit attention to be given to the full range of expressions, involving many different combinations of words and phrases, which Irenaeus employs.¹ I shall confine myself very largely to those aspects of Irenaeus' doctrine which are most relevant to his doctrine of creation, taking this latter expression in its broadest sense, while at the same time attempting to give an interpretation of Irenaeus' doctrine of God which is faithful to the overall shape of his theology. Inevitably, this was coloured by his opposition to Gnosticism, and we shall therefore take an initial, albeit brief, look at some relevant points in its account of the nature of God.

It might be argued that the various schools of Gnosticism described by

Irenaeus did not really have a doctrine of God at all. They certainly had theories concerning the Godhead, or Pleroma, but little is actually said concerning the character of the various Aeons,² except that the original Aeon (and to some extent all the Aeons) was unknowable and quite opposed to material creation. It is almost as if the Christian doctrine of God were not to go beyond a rather academic account of the doctrine of the Trinity to the traditional 'attributes', or 'perfections' of God. Irenaeus realised this weakness of the Gnostic systems and hence directs his initial argument against the account of the Gnostic Pleroma. In particular he is concerned to expose the consequences of their doctrine of the Supreme Aeon, usually known as Bythus (also as Propater, Proarche, Arrhetus). He states his intention in the middle of the description in Book One of the various Gnostic systems:

Since, therefore, it is a complex and multiform task to detect and convict all the heretics, and since our design is to reply to them all according to their special characteristics, we have judged necessary, first of all, to give an account of their source and root, in order that, by getting a knowledge of their most exalted Bythus, you may understand the nature of the tree which has produced such fruits. (I.22.2)³

Which features of the Gnostic doctrine did Irenaeus concentrate upon?

In the first place we may take the Gnostic attempt to place the origin of evil, and hence a radical dualism, within the Godhead itself.⁴ In consequence the necessity and nature of redemption is presented as wholly a series of events within the life and being of God.

There was dispute among the Valentinian Gnostics as to whether Abyss was originally alone or was matched from the outset with Silence (also called Grace and Thought).⁵ Either way, 'eternal and unbegotten, he remained throughout innumerable cycles of ages in profound serenity

and quiescence.⁶ For reasons not specified, and again according to different versions a different pattern, Abyss and Silence produced two Aeons, Mind and Truth.⁷ From these latter two were projected a further four Aeons, Word and Life, Man and Church. These Aeons wished to glorify Mind (also called Father) and projected in two groups a further eleven pairs, making a Pleroma of 30 Aeons, in 15 male/female syzygies. The last female Aeon in the chain of emanations is Wisdom (Sophia).

The Pleroma has a hierarchical structure, and Mind alone can know the Abyss, having emanated directly from him. The lower Aeons longed to know whence they came, and the unrest caused by ignorance was too much for the lowest and latest Aeon, Sophia, who fell into^a/frenzy of presumption. In attempting the impossible she faced the risk of dissolution into the unknowable depths of Bythus. Sophia was saved by a power called Limit (Horos), but in the process her passion or frenzy was detached as a formless entity outside the Pleroma. Hence the pessimistic Gnostic account of creation begins, to which I shall in due course return. This description of a hierarchical and unhappy Pleroma raised a basic issue for Irenaeus.⁸

He opposed the notion that evil could originate from within the Godhead. The idea that an Aeon could fall into sin was bad enough, but Irenaeus saw that such a suggestion would recoil on the first male Aeon issued, called Mind or Father, and ultimately on Bythus himself.

What sort of a being must that Bythus be, who allows a stain to have place in His own bosom, and permits another one to create or produce within His territory, contrary to His own will? (II.4.2)

Irenaeus is not unwilling to answer for the Gnostics: their God either contains 'defect and error' (II.4.3) or 'will be found to be the slave

of necessity and fate' (II.5.4). What else, Irenaeus sarcastically enquires, is implied in the Gnostic teaching that the created world came into existence apart from the desire of the supreme God? Was he callously indifferent to the outcome of the extraordinary events outside the Pleroma? Or was he simply powerless to stop, or at least control and direct towards a good end, these unfortunate events? Either way, he could not be the omnipotent and loving God portrayed in the Scriptures.

Goodness

Against the first horn of the dilemma⁹ he has exposed, the idea that God could either contain or be the author of evil, Irenaeus insists upon the absolute goodness of God:

For with the name of God the following words will harmonize: intelligence, word, life, incorruption, truth, wisdom, goodness, and such like. (II.13.9)

God also is truly perfect in all things, Himself equal and similar to Himself, as He is all light, and all mind, and all substance, and the fount of all good. (IV.11.2)

Such assertions may seem to evade rather than to solve the problem, for to assume that the supreme power in or over the world is good is hardly to prove the point. Who is to say that God is good? Such a claim certainly needs careful justification, for it is not enough simply to maintain that the fact that God is good is a valid philosophical proposition. There is of course more basis to Irenaeus' claim that God is good than this, but often he can appear to think that it is obvious that God is good, when in fact it is not so obvious to unprejudiced reason. How deeply was Irenaeus aware that the Christian belief in the goodness of creation, upon which the corresponding confession of the goodness of the Creator depends, was an article of faith? Are his attempts to prove the reasonableness of this faith a little overdone?

We shall consider this question as we examine the two main types of argument he uses to demonstrate the absolute goodness of God.

The most prominent line of argument - indeed, it can be said to dominate both Irenaeus' extant works - is exegetical. Irenaeus sets out to be thoroughly biblical in his arguments, more so than any other known writer of the first two centuries of our era. It is not, however, an abstract goodness that Irenaeus sets out to demonstrate, for that God is good is rather to be seen from the goodness of all He has made and done. Perhaps the key conception he has of God's good work is its coherence. He takes great pains to prove from Scripture the coherent unity of God, Christ, salvation history, creation in its diversity, man in his organic complexity, the witness of Scripture (in spite of problem texts), and the Church. We shall return to consider the success of Irenaeus' exegesis at various of these points in this and succeeding chapters. Because the goodness of God is demonstrated only in His actual work of creation and incarnation we shall not pursue the matter here but return at the appropriate times to the issue of God's goodness.¹⁰

In addition to his extended exegetical demonstration of the essential and complete goodness of God, Irenaeus is prepared to appeal directly to the harmony and beauty of creation as evidence of God's providential goodness.¹¹ That such natural theology is subordinate to the claims of revelation as attested in Scripture is shown by the following passage:

For if the manifestation of God which is made by means of creation, affords life to all living in the earth, much more does that revelation of the Father which comes through the Word, give life to those who seek God. (IV.20.7)

However, such limited use of the demonstration of God's goodness from the observed goodness of creation raised the thorny challenge of the

reality and perversity of evil. How well Irenaeus' theology copes here will again be the subject of a later chapter. This area of Irenaeus' thought is crucial to its overall integrity. Reflection upon the course taken by eighteenth-century optimism should indicate that it is not enough to try to persuade oneself that the goodness of God, and hence the goodness of creation, is basically no more than the most valid and hopeful philosophical presupposition available.

Omnipotence

Against the other horn of the dilemma he has exposed, the idea that God was not omnipotent, Irenaeus insists on the absolute power of God. Yet it is instructive to note that he does not insist on such power as simply a necessary property of the Supreme Being,¹² but rather he refers to God's sovereign power as it is exhibited in his mighty deeds of creation and redemption:

They do not believe that God, being powerful and rich in all resources, created matter itself, inasmuch as they do not know how much a spiritual and divine essence can accomplish. (II.10.3)

And then the doctrine concerning the resurrection of bodies will emerge true and certain.....For God is superior to nature, and has in Himself the will (to raise the dead), because He is good; and the ability to do so, because He is mighty; and the faculty of fully carrying out His purpose, because He is rich and perfect. (II.29.2) 13

Had Irenaeus wished to stress God's free and sovereign power he had useful Scriptural material available. He must have been aware of the old credal passages in the Old Testament which extol Yahweh's power over Israel's enemies, as found in Exodus 15 and Judges 5. He was certainly aware of Paul's use in Romans 9:20-23 of the Old Testament theme of the potter's supreme power over his clay. However, it is interesting to note that there are no references to these passages in Irenaeus' extant works. He makes no reference at all to the Book of Job. Because of the concrete nature of his conception of divine omnipotence, we will not pursue the

theme any further at present, because it will surface at various points in our discussion of the doctrine of creation.¹⁴

Richness

Just what Irenaeus meant by the attribution of power to God can be further illustrated by his frequent mention of the richness of God. This was evidently one of his favourite terms for describing God. At first sight the Gnostic Pleroma of 30 (or more) Aeons might seem to deserve this adjective more than Irenaeus' ruling conception of the unity of the Godhead. Such an apparently plausible suggestion to some extent underlies the popular appeal of Gnosticism.¹⁵ It is in response to such a challenge that Irenaeus develops his concept of God's richness. As with God's power, he does not refer to an abstract richness, but a richness which is illustrated by, although not confined to,¹⁶ His dealings with creation:

- (i) His power in creation (II.10.3 and II.29.2 - as quoted above)¹⁷
- (ii) His foreknowledge of all things:
.....all things which had been foreknown of the Father, our Lord did accomplish in their order, season, and hour, foreknown and fitting, being indeed one and the same, but rich and great. (III.16.7)¹⁸
- (iii) His ceaseless care for man:
For neither does God at any time cease to confer benefits upon or to enrich man; nor does man ever cease from receiving the benefits, and being enriched by God. (IV.11.2)
- (iv) The diversity and unity of the covenants:
Thus, in a variety of ways, He adjusted the human race to an agreement with salvation. On this account does John declare in the Apocalypse, 'And His voice as the sound of many waters' (Rev. 1:15). For the Spirit is truly many waters, since the Father is both rich and great. (IV.14.2)¹⁹
- (v) His ability and desire to recreate this world in the millennium:
'Wolves and lambs shall then browse together and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the serpent earth as if it were bread' (Is.40:6 etc.) for God is rich in all things. (V.33.4)²⁰

In different but related ways all five of these extracts associate the richness of God with His power over, and involvement in, the created universe and the salvation history which, for the sake of creation, occurs within it.

This richness of God's operation can be illustrated by a brief reference to Irenaeus' doctrine of salvation. If we put to Irenaeus' extant writings the question of the Reformation as to whether God or man is the subject of salvation, we find a complicated picture. On the one side are various statements which seem to affirm the freedom of man as the key determinant, and hence Irenaeus has often been charged with foreshadowing Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism. This side of his teaching we cannot consider at this point. On the other side, however, are more numerous statements putting the divine initiative at the centre of the picture. Within this latter class of statements we find that Irenaeus makes considerable use of what might be called divine instrumentality. By this is meant that salvation is mediated by various attributes or properties or extensions of God in Christ in His saving activity. We may mention Irenaeus' use of the following: virgin (IV.33.4); law (V.21.2); name (V.11.1); flesh and blood of Christ (V.14.3); eucharist (IV.18.5). Most important, however, is Irenaeus' development of the doctrine of the Trinity, where he describes the activity of God and His two Hands as a complex process with different aspects. This diversity of expression directs us to the richness of God as described by Irenaeus.²¹

The next chapter will return to consider Irenaeus' doctrine of the Trinity, and thus the relation between these various approaches to describing the action of God in the world. The present chapter attempts to exhibit the richness of God more directly from His unity, by considering

Irenaeus' comparatively neglected teaching on the diversity of the attributes of the God revealed to Israel and the Church:

For the prophets did not announce one and another God, but one and the same: under various aspects, however, and many titles. For varied and rich in attribute is the Father....(III.10.6)

Long-suffering and Patience

At this point, in order that we can better understand what for Irenaeus the goodness, power and richness of God involve, it is appropriate to refer to another significant property of God which he recognised. For Irenaeus God is long-suffering or patient (μακροθυμος, ἀνοχῆ; magnanimus, patientia, longanimitas).²²

Sometimes Irenaeus refers this long-suffering directly to the life and especially to the death of Jesus Christ:

And from this fact, that He exclaimed upon the cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, (Luke 23:34) the long-suffering, patience, compassion, and goodness of Christ are exhibited, since He both suffered, and.... (loved) the human race to such a degree, that He even prayed for those putting Him to death. (III.18.5)²³

On other occasions Irenaeus is more concerned to emphasise that in His patience God gives space and time for man to grow in stature as he learns the responsible use of freedom. Here he is anxious to stress that God in His love does not consume His handiwork, even though it is in great need of salvation from its present state:

And in man, as well as in angels, He has placed the power of choice (for angels are rational beings), so that those who had yielded obedience might justly possess what is good, given indeed by God, but preserved by themselves. On the other hand, they who have not obeyed shall....deservedly merit the just judgment of God, which also the Apostle Paul testifies in his Epistle to the Romans, where he says, 'But do you despise the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering, being ignorant that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?' (Rom.2:14) (IV.37.1)²⁴

This side of Irenaeus' teaching concerning the patience of God is closely associated with his well-known belief that man needs to 'learn by experience', Adam and Eve having been created in a child-like and gullible state. The first part of this approach, that man needs to learn by experience, had featured strongly in the Church's response to the presence of evil in the world; in a later chapter we shall look carefully at Irenaeus' use of such apology, and compare it with the similar but perhaps not identical thought of a modern author, J. Hick, who has claimed to base his theodicy on 'the Irenaean approach'.

These two sides to Irenaeus' conception of God's long-suffering are to some extent brought together when he speaks of the foresight of God in planning and patiently executing the successive stages in salvation-history, culminating in the incarnation and atonement:

Long-suffering therefore was God, when man became a defaulter, as foreseeing that victory which should be granted to him through the Word....For as He patiently suffered Jonah to be swallowed by the whale....so also, from the beginning, did God patiently allow man to be swallowed by the great whale, who was the author of transgression, not that he should perish altogether when so engulfed; but He arranged and prepared the plan of salvation, which was accomplished by the Word. (III.20.1) 25

We shall return to some of the issues raised here when we consider how Irenaeus sees God's interaction with His creation through the various stages of the history of creation and salvation. At this point, however, we should emphasise that it would be a mistake to interpret God's long-suffering as a sign of His weakness or impotence. While not making the decision of God to save man an automatic or necessary process, Irenaeus never suggests that there was ever any possibility that man would not be saved by God's patient but powerful

decree. Arguably, we should go further and speak of God's suffering, and even 'defencelessness' as the form which His power takes,²⁶ thus modifying Irenaeus' account. But theologians are treading on thin ice with such suggestions, even if it be agreed that Irenaeus does not give adequate attention to the implications of the crucifixion. We shall return to the issues here at other junctures, and particularly in the discussion of providence. In the meantime, in order to gain a better understanding of the place of the concept of God's patience in Irenaeus' theology it is helpful to look at the context in which he brings this property of God to the forefront. Examination of his writings shows that in addition to the usual background of the anti-Gnostic polemic, there is also his specific opposition to Tatian.²⁷

The Gnostic system of fall, creation and redemption is built around the passion of the last (and therefore outermost) of the Aeons, Sophia. Sophia is portrayed as moved by various emotions: grief, fear, bewilderment, shock, repentance.²⁸ The important point for the present context is that the passions of Sophia, hypostatized in 'Achamoth', are responsible for the nature and existence of material and psychic reality. Psychic or animal existence is derived from Achamoth's repentance and prayer, while material existence is derived from her passions of sorrow, terror, joy, laughter, anger and bewilderment.²⁹

Irenaeus strongly opposes any admission of these passionate events within the Godhead:³⁰

If they had known the Scriptures, and been taught the truth, they would have known, beyond doubt, that God is not as men are; and that His thoughts are not like the thoughts of men. for the Father of all is at a vast distance from those affections and passions which operate among men. (II.13.2)

The reference here to the 'vast distance' between God and the passions of men is significant. For Irenaeus, to be subject to passion implies limitation due to subjection to an external constraint.

The key issue here for Irenaeus is that for God to be God He must be free and independent of all necessity:

It is not seemly, however, to say of Him who is God over all, since He is free and independent, that He was a slave to necessity....For it would have been much better, more consistent, and more God-like, to cut off at the beginning the principle of this kind of necessity, than afterwards, as if moved by repentance.....(II.5.4)

Such teaching upon the sovereign transcendence of God was held in one or another form by many theologians and philosophers in the second century, particularly those influenced by Middle Platonism.³¹

However, such emphasis is not without well recognised difficulties.

These centre around the adoption of too strong a distinction between the realms of Being and becoming, God and creation. Irenaeus was more aware of these difficulties than most of his predecessors and immediate successors.³² His teaching upon the long-suffering of God illustrates the theological development which is taking place in his thought as he encounters the problem of relating uncreated to created existence. There is a constancy of purpose but not thereby a remoteness in God's dealings with the creation He loves and cherishes. This is not to be denied, and is fundamentally biblical.³³ However, it can be asked whether Irenaeus did not remove God a little too far from the realm of human passions. On at least twenty-three³⁴ occasions the Gospels refer to Jesus as praying to His Father. Irenaeus makes no positive reference to any of these verses, partly because the Gnostics did do so.³⁵ For the Gnostics, as we have seen, psychic creation originated from the prayer and repentance of Achamoth. Similarly it may well be partly because of the ontological place of the tears of Achamoth in the Gnostic system that Irenaeus makes no positive

reference to the Gospel accounts of Jesus' tears.³⁶ In the Old Testament the faithful patience of God is exhibited in the use of the term hesed, which is probably best translated 'covenant love'. This concept is of major importance in the Old Testament. However, on several dozen occasions the Old Testament makes direct reference to God repenting. Abraham intercedes for Sodom and Gomorrah, and God repents.³⁷ Moses successfully asks God to repent of His anger against Israel.³⁸ Are we to believe that Abraham and Moses really influenced God? In some sense, even if not in the crude sense, this must be true, if we are to stand with Irenaeus under and not over Scripture. In the story of the potter and his clay in Jeremiah 18, Jeremiah does not ask God to repent, but this merely serves to emphasise the message of the parable that God may well repent of the judgement or good he intends against a particular nation. Irenaeus makes no reference to these examples of divine repentance.³⁹ His only reference to God repenting occurs in the story of Jonah and the Ninevites, and he makes no comment upon the implications of divine repentance.⁴⁰

The teaching that God is impassible (ἀπαθής) is common in post-canonical writings, orthodox and heterodox. Ignatius uses it to speak of the divine nature of Christ (Eph. 7.2; Polyc. 3,2), though in both cases Ignatius also speaks of the passion and suffering of Christ. Ignatius believes that a similar combination of passion and impassible serenity should characterise the martyrdom he expected. Justin also refers both to the impassibility of God (1 Apol. 25.2), and to the impassibility of faithful Christians (2 Apol. 1.2). Irenaeus is instructed by this now traditional teaching, and is further led by the Gnostic account of passion in the Godhead to acknowledge that God and His Logos must be impassible:

It necessarily follows, therefore, both that he who springs from Him as Logos, or rather that Nous himself, since he is Logos, must be perfect and impassible. (II.17.7)

In all this Irenaeus does less than justice to the biblical notion of the living God. The impassible is not as such divine. God is impassible in His constant and purposeful life as the Creator and Redeemer: it is not a question of immobility or abstract unity and simplicity. It is in His rich and sovereign life that God is impassible, that is, unable to be that which He does not eternally will.⁴¹ The New Testament itself does not use the word ἀπαθής.

However, just as with Ignatius there are two aspects to God, the impassible and the passible, so it is with Irenaeus. Although the Gnostics allowed that Aeons were potentially passible, such passion was not to be welcomed or accepted. The aim of their mythology is to demonstrate the removal of passion from the Godhead. This is achieved by the secret gnosis, and hence the crucifixion could not involve the Godhead. Their Christology thus becomes docetic, and against this docetism Irenaeus firmly maintains that Christ truly suffered.⁴² We cannot discuss his doctrine of atonement here, but we can see that Irenaeus' conception of the long-suffering or patience of God is shaped by the Gnostic combination of rejection and crude acceptance of passion in God:

But as our Lord is alone truly Master, so the Son of God is truly good and patient, the Word of God the Father having been made the Son of Man. For He fought and conquered; for He was man contending for the fathers, and through obedience doing away with disobedience completely: for He bound the strong man, and set free the weak, and endowed His own handiwork with salvation, by destroying sin. For He is a most gracious and merciful Lord, and loves the human race. (III.18.6)

The Gnostic, or at least the Valentinian, approach to redemption was to

reverse the journey of the fall, which was due to ignorance, by the impartation of gnosis. The fragments of divine Spirit sojourn in the world awaiting illumination through the gnosis. The spiritual elite among mankind being sufficiently prepared, the gnosis itself is finally brought down by Christ, descending upon Jesus at his baptism and departing from him before his passion, so that death was deceived, the suffering of Jesus being seen as no more than a trick. The real passion concerned Sophia before the world was conceived, and made salvation necessary, rather than bringing it.⁴³ With a certain degree of exaggeration, Irenaeus sternly characterises this teaching:

(This) doctrine is homicidal, conjuring up, as it does, a number of gods, and simulating many Fathers, but lowering and dividing the Son of God in many ways. (III.16.8)

Although he dismisses the Gnostic doctrine in this fashion, as is usually the case, it acts as a stimulus to the development of various aspects of his theology. In IV.17, in response to the question of what did happen at Jesus' baptism if the Gnostic account is false, Irenaeus begins to develop his doctrine of the Spirit. Thus far in A.H. it has hardly surfaced at all. In stressing the oneness of the Jesus Christ who was born of the Virgin Mary, baptised in the Jordan, and crucified on Golgotha, Irenaeus opens up space for his doctrine of the Spirit.⁴⁴ He introduces ideas he will develop at greater length later in the treatise: the Spirit unifies the Church, joins believers to God, bestows incorruption on body and soul,⁴⁵ is poured out on all the earth, and conveys the image of God.⁴⁶ The Gnostics, by contrast:

....set the Spirit aside altogether; they understand that Christ was one and Jesus another: and they teach that there was not one Christ, but many. (III.17.4)

By developing his doctrine of the Spirit Irenaeus will be able to

nurture the doctrine of progressive salvation which is found in the latter half of A.H., and which dominates the Demonstration. The Gnostic dualism separated the Creator God of Moses and the prophets from the Father of Christ, and in this way it destroyed the integrity of the theology of history, which, Irenaeus saw, lay at the nerve-centre of the Christian Gospel. This development is allied to Irenaeus' teaching on the pre-existence of Christ, 'who was always present with mankind',⁴⁷ and on the foreknowledge and plan of the omniscient Father.⁴⁸ We shall see how these ideas cohere when we consider his doctrine of the Trinity. For the present purpose we can now see why Irenaeus opened Chapter 20 of Book Three, 'Long-Suffering, therefore, was God....' In order to emphasise that Irenaeus does not take the patience of God as in any way a sign of weakness, we should note that, immediately after his lengthy defence, against his Gnostic opponents, of the unity of Jesus Christ as God and man, Irenaeus also marks his position off from that of Tatian. The immediate question at issue is the salvation of Adam, which, Irenaeus claims, Tatian denied.⁴⁹

Irenaeus' immediate objection to such teaching is that it confuses the devil with Adam, whom he sees as God's 'own handiwork' (III.23.1). The contrast yet connexion between Christ and Adam, taken from St. Paul, has been shown to be fundamental to Irenaeus' theology, and especially to his opposition to Gnosticism.⁵⁰ Tatian's apparent disparagement of Adam is, however, immediately seen to raise questions concerning the nature and character of the Creator Himself, for, in Irenaeus' thought, Adam is both distinguished from the rest of mankind, and identified with them.⁵¹ Irenaeus is thus drawn to defend the constancy of God's purpose in creation and redemption. In doing so he again introduces the attribute 'long-suffering', and, lest such a property might be seen

to imply any weakness or impotence in God, he qualifies it with the attribute 'invincible':

For if man, who had been created by God that he might live, after losing life, through being injured by the serpent that had corrupted him, should not any more return to life, but should be utterly abandoned to death, God would have been conquered, and the wickedness of the serpent would have prevailed over the will of God. But in as much as God is invincible and long-suffering, He did indeed show Himself to be long-suffering in the matter of the correction of man... (III.23.1)

Mercy and Justice

It is not surprising to find that the God who is good, omnipotent, rich and long-suffering, is also merciful.⁵² Before presenting Irenaeus' teaching here, however, it is necessary to digress briefly concerning his relation to Marcionism. Throughout A.H. and the Demonstration there is a generally quiet but occasionally bellicose debate with Marcion and his followers. In the long run it was Marcion, rather than Valentinus, who posed the greater threat to emerging orthodoxy. The Gnostics were undoubtedly popular for a while, but their system was too esoteric to strike deep roots. To the second-century world their fatalistic outlook could have only a passing appeal. The general air of religious scepticism which beset the Roman Empire in the second century was not to be dispelled by Gnostic fatalism, even if it did seem to offer its adherents a somewhat spectacular exit from the surrounding evil world. The case with Marcion is certainly different, although the precise relationship between Marcion and Gnosticism has been the subject of vigorous debate in the present century. The discussion was stimulated by Harnack's justly famous monograph,⁵³ with its contention that Marcion was no Gnostic at all, but the first Christian reformer and the restorer of Paulinism. The main truth in Harnack's opinion is that Marcion neither attempted to imitate the Gnostic attempts to span the gulf

between the infinite and finite by a mythological series of emanations, nor sought within the life of the Pleroma the reason for the disorder in the visible world. Nevertheless, Irenaeus saw clearly that the excision by Marcion of the Gnostic myth of the fall of Sophia, allied to his retention of a strict division between the just Creator God of the Jews and the merciful Redeemer God of Pauline Christianity, merely caused the implicit Gnostic attribution of evil to the Creator to become more pronounced:

And, indeed, the followers of Marcion do directly blaspheme the Creator, alleging him to be the creator of evils, (but) holding a more tolerable theory as to his origin, maintaining that there are two beings, Gods by nature, differing from each other, the one being good, but the other evil. (III.12.12)

While Irenaeus recognised at least some of the differences between Marcion and the Gnostics, he at the same time acknowledged their common characteristics. In A.H. he links Marcion with Cerinthus, and especially Cerdo. It was from Cerdo, according to Irenaeus, who is our only authority, that Marcion while in Rome first learnt the rudiments of his own system:

(Cerdo) taught that the God proclaimed by the Law and the prophets was not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the former was known but the latter unknown; while the one was also righteous, but the other benevolent. Marcion of Pontus succeeded him, and developed his doctrine. In so doing, he 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 evils, to take delight in war, to be infirm of purpose, and even to be contrary to Himself. (I.27.1)

Irenaeus promised a special refutation of Marcion, but it does not survive and may never have been written. Fortunately, we have Tertullian's substantial Adversus Marcionem to supply information on the beliefs and practices of the Marcionite sect. A certain consistency can be seen: Marcion's Christology shows a definite but controlled Gnostic tendency.

Thus Christ was not the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, and he was not born of the Virgin Mary: he simply appeared unannounced and unexpected. But he did not evade the cross, as the Gnostics had taught. Rather the cross represents the unsolicited grace of the good God in redeeming all souls (not, of course, the bodies in which they are trapped) from the power of the Demiurge. There is no real concept of atonement, because there is no past relationship to heal. The whole theory rests upon 'an irreducible mystery of the divine goodness as such.'⁵⁴ The basic appeal in Marcion's theology derives from the answer it supplies to the problem of evil, the blame being laid on the intractability of matter and the incompetence of the Creator.⁵⁵

Marcion would seem to have something in common with Tatian, at least in general outlook.⁵⁶ Both were ascetic, and if Tatian does not explicitly regard the Creator as the author of evil, he does blame the freedom given to His creation.⁵⁷ The difference is not as significant as at first sight it may seem. Irenaeus certainly attacks a similar aspect of the teaching of Marcion and Tatian. Whereas Tatian's attempt to exclude Adam from salvation is opposed, it is Marcion's effort to exclude Abraham and his race from salvation which becomes the focus of attention in IV.8. Throughout Book Four of Adversus Haereses Irenaeus is concerned to insist that there is one author and one end to both covenants. The particular arguments of the Marcionites, that the God of the Old Testament was the author of evil and sin, are present throughout and are directly refuted in Chapters 29 and 30. Such arguments issued a much more serious challenge to the emerging orthodoxy than the flights of Gnostic mythology could ever have done, and the theology Irenaeus develops in reply has provoked the greatest debate among his critics. We shall give some assessment of this controversy when we come

to consider Irenaeus' understanding of evil.

It is against this background that Irenaeus speaks of God as merciful. Naturally he associates God's mercy with His disposition to save mankind, but it is clear that such a disposition flows from the very nature of God:

It is indeed proper to God, and befitting His character, to show mercy and pity, and to bring salvation to His creatures even though they be brought under danger of destruction. 'For with Him', says Scripture, 'is propitiation' (Ps.130:7). Fragment 10, preserved in John of Damascus, and probably from Irenaeus' De Resurrectione.

Irenaeus clearly wishes to avoid both an unbalanced stress on God's mercy (as exemplified by Marcion) and an equally unbalanced stress on God's righteousness (as exemplified by Tatian), and hence he tries to hold together in a complex, organic unity the mercy and righteousness, or the love and wrath of God:

Marcion, therefore, himself, by dividing God into two, maintaining one to be good and the other judicial, does in fact, on both sides, put an end to deity. For he that is the judicial one, if he be not good, is not God, because he from whom goodness is absent is no God at all; and again, he who is good, if he has no judicial power, suffers the same (loss) as the former, by being deprived of his character of deity. (III.25.3)

Does this mean that for Irenaeus God's justice and mercy co-exist in a dialectical tension? That would certainly not solve, but, concentrated now in one divine principle, might even increase, the disjunction between God's mercy and His justice. Hence he is immediately drawn to assert:

For He is good, and merciful, and patient, and saves whom He ought: nor does goodness desert Him in the exercise of justice, nor is His wisdom lessened; for He saves those whom He should save, and judges those worthy of judgement. Neither does He show Himself unmercifully just; for His goodness, no doubt, goes on before, and takes precedence. (III.25.3)

However edifying this may at first seem, it is also inadequate, for what concept of judgement is implied by Irenaeus? Who are those who are 'worthy of judgement' - besides, of course, the Gnostics and Marcionites? What is meant by praeunte scilicet et praecedente bonitate? Book Three is now drawing to a close and Irenaeus does not elaborate. To the present writer the basic problem seems to be that it is still assumed by Irenaeus - in common with his opponents - that the exercise of judgement and salvation are in essence mutually exclusive possibilities. For Irenaeus, Jesus Christ 'shall come in glory, Saviour of those who are saved, and the Judge of those who are judged' (III.4.2).⁵⁸ The problems with such a separation between the judgement and mercy of God, as Irenaeus, when opposing Gnostics and Marcionites, knows very well, is that it implies a corresponding division in the being of God. To attempt to overcome this merely by asserting the precedence of God's goodness (or love, mercy etc.) places a question over the integrity and reality of God's judgement and righteousness. As a theologian Irenaeus clearly wants to hold together the mercy and justice of God, and also recognises that his opponents do not. Quite out of character he now brings Plato to his defence:

Plato is proved to be more religious than these men, for he allowed that the same God was both just and good, having power over all things, and Himself executing judgement, expressing himself thus, 'And God.....does everything rightlyretributive justice always follows against those who depart from the divine law'. (III.25.5)

Throughout the following two books of A.H. and the later Demonstration⁵⁹ a similar attitude to the relation of the mercy of God to His justice can be found. This emerges in a striking fashion at the end of A.H. in connection with the inauguration of Christ's millennial rule. The judgement of God upon those who are damned follows the resurrection of the righteous (Irenaeus relies upon Revelation 20 here). Those who are

damned 'according to their own choice.....being in fact destitute of all good, do experience every kind of punishment'.⁶⁰ Is God then the author of punishment and hence of evil? The Marcionite question presses upon Irenaeus, and he immediately continues:

God, however, does not punish them immediately of Himself, but that punishment falls upon them because they are destitute of all that is good.

Should we not reverse our earlier question and ask what kind of understanding of the mercy and grace of God such a conception of judgement implies? Has Irenaeus, in attempting to avoid the pitfalls in which the Gnostics and Marcionites were trapped, stumbled into the type of error he had detected and opposed in Tatian? The query can be put simply: why, on this view, should Adam be saved? What, indeed, has become of the pre-eminent goodness of God?

The relation between the mercy and righteousness of God is a basic and pervasive theme throughout the Bible, from the expulsion of Adam from Paradise, through the treatment Israel receives at the hands of God, to the eschatological teaching of the New Testament. Central to the New Testament is St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which attempts to understand the constancy of God throughout His historical dealings with the descendants of Adam in general and of Israel in particular. The climax of the Epistle might justly be claimed to be reached at the well-known end of Chapter 11:

For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways! (Romans 11:32-33)

Irenaeus' extant writings contain two references to these verses, among numerous references to other parts of the Epistle. The first

(1.10.3) refers to the general inscrutability of God's ways, which put special demands upon those who would understand the less obvious aspects of Christian belief as presented in Holy Scripture.⁶¹ The second reference is more promising in that it prompts Irenaeus to introduce the person and work of the Saviour to explain the implications of Romans 11:32:

(The believer).....looks forward to the time when he shall become like Him who died for him, for He, too, 'was made in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Romans 8:3), to condemn sin, and to cast it, as now a condemned thing, away beyond the flesh.....(Christ being) the Word of God who dwelt in man, and became the Son of man, that He might accustom man to receive God, and God to dwell in man, according to the good pleasure of the Father. (III.20.2)

The reference here to the incarnation and atonement allows Irenaeus to accord to the judgement and righteousness of God a more consistent place in his dealings with man and creation. Rather than falling primarily upon Gnostics and others, the judgement of God is presented, true to St. Paul, as falling upon sin in the person of Jesus 'who was made in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Romans 8:3). Just how faithfully and comprehensively Irenaeus develops St. Paul's teaching upon the relation of God's mercy to His righteousness has been a subject of considerable debate. Harnack's comment stands for many others: 'It is the thoughts of Paul to which Irenaeus tried to accommodate himself without having the same feeling about the flesh and sin as this Apostle' (Hist.Dog. II, p.274, n.3).

While it would be difficult to maintain that Irenaeus fully appreciated Paul's teaching on sin and redemption, more can be said than Harnack would allow. Harnack shows little appreciation of the similar theological intention of both Paul and Irenaeus to show how the same God exhibits both mercy and justice, with His mercy taking a certain precedence.⁶²

He passes briefly and almost impatiently over Irenaeus' doctrine of God (Hist.Dog. II, pp.253-256), concluding his remarks with the following sentence, which contains his only mention of Irenaeus' treatment of God's attributes of mercy and justice: 'The early Catholic doctrine of God shows an advance beyond that of the Apologists, in so far as God's attributes of goodness and righteousness are expressly discussed, and it is proved in opposition to Marcion that they are not mutually exclusive, but necessarily involve each other.' (Hist.Dog. II, p.255f).

As the present chapter attempts to show, there is more to Irenaeus' doctrine of God, and his understanding of Paul, than Harnack admits. The Pauline thrust of Irenaeus' thought here can be seen from his use of Paul to counter the Gnostic belief that only an earthly Jesus suffered on the cross, the Aeon Christ having previously left Him. In III.16.18 Irenaeus assembles a variety of texts from Paul, together with some from the Gospels, to prove that the one Jesus Christ, the Son of God became Son of Man, suffered on our behalf and died for our sins. However, Irenaeus' Christological teaching here is not properly integrated into his subsequent understanding of man's free responsibility in the face of the future judgement. This problem will occupy us again in a later context, but we will examine it further at this point, because our discussion will introduce from a useful perspective the question of Irenaeus' dependence upon, and possible plagiarisation of, those traditions to which he was immediately heir.

In his attempt to show that the God declared by Jesus is a God of love and mercy, and not a God of vengeance and righteousness, Marcion removed from the emerging collection of New Testament writings those parts he felt had been added by Jewish interpreters of the original message of

Jesus. He believed that Christ called the Apostle Paul to restore this original message, and so made certain of Paul's letters, together with parts of the Gospel of Luke, his guiding canon. Even in the letters of Paul which he retained he omitted some passages. The Gnostics, rather than objecting to established Apostolic writings, had tended to compose their own gospels and holy writings. In response to both Gnostics and Marcionites the Church proceeded to establish the orthodox canon as we know it. The relevant point in the present context, however, is that Marcion's position could only be sustained by rejecting a good part of the emerging New Testament along with the whole of the Old Testament. In response, Irenaeus pointed out that the judgement and vengeance of God are declared more forcefully in the New Testament than in the Old Testament:

Inasmuch, then as in both Testaments there is the same righteousness of God (displayed) when God takes vengeance, in the one case indeed typically, temporarily, and more moderately ; but in the other, really, enduringly, and more rigidly: for the fire is eternal and the wrath of God which shall be revealed from heaven.....entails a heavier punishment on those who incur it. (IV.28.1)⁶³

Throughout the New Testament it is emphasised that it is precisely in the righteous judgement of God that the depth of His mercy and love are revealed. If this is a particular theme of Paul in Romans, it can hardly be said to be absent elsewhere in the New Testament. This applies to the Gospels with their remarkable emphasis on the passion story, as much as to the Epistles with their frequent references to the cross or blood or sacrifice of Christ, and Revelation is dominated by the central figure of the Lamb that was slain. Only if we are able to see the love and mercy of God as including rather than excluding his righteous judgement will we at bottom feel secure in the knowledge of this divine love towards us. This problem troubled Luther, his solution coming in the

soteriological teaching of the Epistle to the Romans. It also troubled Anselm, whose desire to think together God's mercy and justice led to the following puzzling conclusion to a discussion covering three chapters of the Proslogion:⁶⁴

So, then, Your mercy is begotten from Your justice because it is just for You to be good to such an extent that You are good even in sparing. And perhaps this is why the one who is supremely just can will good things for the wicked. But if we can somehow grasp why You can will to save the wicked, surely we cannot at all understand why from among those who are equally wicked You save some and not others because of Your supreme goodness, and condemn some and not others because of Your supreme justice.' (Prosl. 11)

This passage in Anselm raises - though it does not explore in any depth - the persistent question of universalism. There is evidently a tension in Pauline theology at this point, with the implications of Romans 11:32, 2 Corinthians 5:14,19, Colossians 1:20 being balanced by the other side of Paul's teaching. Irenaeus was not unaware of this tension, but neither does he show a deep appreciation of it.

Here, as elsewhere, Irenaeus receives from the tradition teaching he does not integrate into his overall theology as neatly as we today would wish. F. Loofs, in a substantial but posthumous work,⁶⁵ claimed that Irenaeus took over a great deal from lost works chiefly originating from Asia Minor, especially Theophilus' Adversus Marcionem. Loofs concludes that as a theologian Irenaeus is 'viel kleiner gewesen, als man bisher annahm'.⁶⁶ The details of Loofs' theory, and especially the extent to which he claimed Irenaeus was a mere plagiarist, have been vigorously and successfully contested.⁶⁷ The fact that Loofs' theory is almost certainly far-fetched should not eliminate the need for awareness of Irenaeus' borrowing from previous authors and, indeed, from oral sources. The same should also be said of other writers before

and after Irenaeus, some of whom may not have been as willing to acknowledge their debt to their sources!

Justin is probably a case in point, for it has been demonstrated that there are considerable inconsistencies in his eschatology.⁶⁸ This can be taken to indicate that he drew from several sources. In Justin's case, unlike that of Irenaeus, there are significant philosophical as well as theological antecedents to consider and this may help to explain why the obvious inconsistencies are greater in Justin than in Irenaeus. This is also true of the doctrine of God in Justin, where philosophical and biblical conceptions lie uneasily juxtaposed.⁶⁹ Justin's view of the work of Christ exhibits a similar uneasy diversity. A powerful side to his thought emphasises that Christ saves us as our teacher and example.⁷⁰ Yet he also states repeatedly⁷¹ that we are saved by the cross, resurrection, blood and sufferings of Christ. Barnard's comment is apt: 'Justin accepted this faith (in an objective theory of atonement) as fundamental, although it did not easily fit into the philosophy which he had imbibed.'⁷² Irenaeus largely lacks Justin's dependence upon Middle Platonism, but like Justin he does take over certain traditional beliefs concerning the work of Christ which were not properly integrated into the structures of theology until a later date.⁷³ Book Five of A.H., where Irenaeus sets out to 'subjoin to this composition.....also the doctrine of Paul',⁷⁴ is largely taken up with refuting the heretical denial that material creation in general, and flesh and blood in particular, had been, and would be, saved by Christ. Certain statements of Paul had evidently been misappropriated by the Gnostics as well as the Marcionites.⁷⁵ While Book Five contains much that is of great theological interest, especially as regards Irenaeus' views of the nature of man and eschatology, it does not penetrate very deeply into

the New Testament's teaching on the death of Christ as the operation of God's righteousness and mercy. This leaves the way open to his confident but unsatisfactory emphasis on the millennial judgement facing those men who are not to be saved, towards which the whole of Book Five is oriented.

It might be argued, with some justification, that much of this unevenness in A.H. is caused by Irenaeus changing his emphasis when he tackles different problems posed by his opponents. If this is the case, one possible test of the overall coherence of Irenaeus' doctrine is to look at the less polemical and later Demonstration. This is indeed found to be much more consistently Christocentric than can be claimed for A.H., although the multitude of Old Testament texts surrounded by only brief explanation can obscure the details of Irenaeus' arguments. It is this greater Christocentricity which perhaps causes the millenarian teaching of A.H. to play a comparatively minor role, if indeed it is present at all. In Dem.61 there is a belief that at the coming of Christ there will be peace and tranquillity in nature, but this is not expressed in millennial terms. Indeed on one important point Irenaeus has apparently changed his mind completely from A.H.. There⁷⁶ he had rejected the view that prophecies of a new Jerusalem, or of a new heaven and earth, were to be understood in anything but a future sense. This future sense was naturally stressed in opposition to Gnostic application of such prophecies to past or present events in the Pleroma. When writing the Demonstration, however, with Gnosticism further into the background, he applies the eschatological prophecies directly to the present life of the Church as well as to the future kingdom to be disclosed at the coming of Christ:

And this has already come to pass, for those who were before most perverse, to the extent of omitting no work of ungodliness,

coming to know Christ, and believing Him, no sooner believed that they were changed to the extent of omitting no superabundance, even, of justice; so great is the change wrought by faith in Christ, the Son of God, in those who believe in Him. (Dem.61)⁷⁷

Just how far Irenaeus has changed his doctrine rather than just his emphasis is not easy to determine, though change there undoubtedly is. While this modification is to be welcomed, the danger is that it could lead Irenaeus to draw too great a separation between God's dealings with the Church and his dealings with the rest of mankind. This would have serious implications for his doctrine of creation. There is some evidence that he does not avoid the danger. This can be demonstrated with regard to his attitude towards Israel and the Jews. In the Demonstration he contends at some length⁷⁸ that the Gentiles have replaced Israel. In this section there is no evidence that Irenaeus had given much thought to Paul's very different attitude as disclosed in Romans 9-11.⁷⁹ The fact that the argument in the Demonstration is drawn almost entirely from the Old Testament, and the repeated insistence on the abolition of the old Law in favour of the new law of Christ has led to the plausible suggestion that the work is based on a lost collection of 'Testimonies against the Jews', that is to say, of Old Testament texts intended to convince the Jews out of their own holy writings that the abolition of Law had been prophesied.⁸⁰ Even if this dependence be admitted we need not doubt that Irenaeus' attitude to the Jews was that indicated in the Demonstration. The practical and theoretical relationship of the Church to a Judaism which was a live force in the Empire was the occasion of considerable debate in the ancient Church, as it is today.⁸¹

The Jews themselves certainly opposed the emerging Christian Church,

and the breach became substantial before 100 A.D. by the official exclusion of Christians from the synagogues.⁸² Jews cursed Christians daily in their synagogues.⁸³ Irenaeus is much less anti-Jewish than the authors of the Epistle of Barnabas, the Epistle to Diognetus, and the Apology of Aristides.⁸⁴ This is partly because the Gnostics and Marcionites were so anti-Jewish, and partly due to his own theological perception of the strong relationship between the two covenants.

We are now in a better position to understand the problems we encountered with Irenaeus' account of the relationship between the mercy and justice of God. Is it not the case that the Jewish appreciation of the universal extent of sin, and the corresponding need for sacrifice and expiation needs to be recognised before we can understand the true depth of New Testament and especially Pauline theology? It is not surprising that the generations of Church leaders who succeeded the Apostles, who seem in the main to have been converted Gentiles,⁸⁵ including Irenaeus, fell short of the Apostolic community in their perception of the essential and continuing Jewishness⁸⁶ of Christianity. It is highly suggestive that there is no direct reference or allusion to John 4:22, 'Salvation is from the Jews', in the Apostolic Fathers, the Apologists, Justin, Irenaeus, or Clement of Alexandria.⁸⁷

I have suggested that the post-Apostolic church of the early centuries did not appreciate in sufficient depth the 'Jewishness' of Jesus Christ and the Church, and this was surely a factor leading to Irenaeus not having 'the same feeling about the flesh and sin' as Paul. This conclusion arises from consideration of Irenaeus' treatment of the mercy and righteousness of God. Irenaeus is a more biblical theologian than many of his contemporaries, but he too lacks the required Jewish depth in his

theology.⁸⁹ This can be further illustrated by the lack of attention he gives to the holiness of God.

Holiness

In the Old Testament it is repeatedly stated that God and all his actions and institutions are holy. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is called the Holy One of God (Mk.1:24; Acts 3:14), and the sanctified community is gathered and upheld by the Holy Spirit. In what does the biblical concept or concepts of holiness consist? In the first place it cannot be denied that there is the aspect of that which is mysterious and awe-inspiring, the mysterium tremendum of R. Otto.⁹⁰

This side of the biblical teaching upon the holiness of God is to some extent taken up in the common second-century emphasis upon the transcendence of God. In the second place, however, it must not be overlooked that the holy God of the Bible is the holy God of Israel, who not only stands over Israel as Lord and Judge but will also act to redeem His people. The holiness of God now emphasises the fact that the will of God shall prevail over all resistance, and characterises the nature of divine power. Supreme power would break through all resistance, but only a holy power would do so in triumph and grace, redeeming and not destroying that which had obstructed the purpose of the holy God.

It is this holiness of God which in the Bible unites the mercy and justice of God. It underlies Paul's claim in Romans 11:32: 'For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all', a claim which concludes Paul's discussion of the relation between the Church and Israel. The holiness of God places all men under judgement, for all have sinned, yet this same holiness accepts the sacrifice of

Christ as bringing mercy to all men. If the unity of the mercy and justice of God is exhibited pre-eminently in the person of the crucified Son of God, made sin for us, there are many other examples in the Bible of this co-existence of mercy and judgement. It is as Peter sees the grace of God exhibited in the huge catch of fish that he cries 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord' (Luke 5:8). The call of Isaiah (Is.6) unites the mercy and judgment of God under the apprehension of His holiness in an almost startling fashion.⁹¹ In this light we can see the meaning of Luke 17:10: 'So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty," ' a verse which is ignored in Irenaeus' extant writings.⁹²

Irenaeus makes little mention of the holiness of God, and he certainly does not explore the significance of this important aspect of the biblical witness. The same can be said of his apprehension and treatment of the graciousness of God. This is to some extent included in the concept of the mercy of God, but properly it should exclude from the concept of mercy the notion that God rewards merit possessed or gained by men. The divine mercy displayed in the Bible is fundamentally a gift, characterised by the unique reality of God.

How conscious was Irenaeus of the fact that he too, like his heretical opponents, was a sinner standing under the just and merciful judgement of God?⁹³ It would be impossible to allege that Irenaeus had no consciousness of his own unworthiness, but he does not acknowledge the fact with any clarity - unlike St. Paul. We shall have cause to return to this area of Irenaeus' theology when we consider his teaching of the freedom of the will, and evil.

Wisdom

I have argued that a proper integration of the mercy and justice of God is lacking in Irenaeus. I have also suggested that for the New Testament this integration is secured only in the crucified and risen Jesus. Up to a point Irenaeus knew this, and arguably he knew the fact better than he was able to express and explain it. Certainly there is no suggestion in Irenaeus that the close relation between the mercy and righteousness of God is simply an arbitrary or paradoxical fact which has to be accepted as such. If the ways of God are indeed mysterious (though to avoid being confused with the Gnostics he avoids saying so too often or too directly), their mystery is that of His wisdom⁹⁴ (σοφία, sapientia). For Irenaeus, God in His richness knows why and to what purpose He is good, powerful, long-suffering, merciful and just. The confidence with which Irenaeus' theology is argued and expressed reflects his belief in the wisdom of God which gives to all events in the world a meaning and order. Accordingly, this use of the concept of the wisdom of God varies as he refers to different aspects of this meaning and order. In the present context we shall take only a brief glance at this diverse usage.

God is the wise architect or artist who designed a complex but harmonious creation:

With God there are simultaneously exhibited power, wisdom and goodness. His power and goodness (appear) in this, that of His own will He called into being and fashioned things having no previous existence; His wisdom (is shown) in His having made created things parts of one harmonious and consistent whole. (IV.38.3)⁹⁵

If the wisdom of God is indeed exhibited throughout the created universe, this is pre-eminently true in the case of man:

Numbers would fail to express the multiplicity of parts in the human frame, which was made in no other way than by the

great wisdom of God. But those things which partake of the skill and wisdom of God, do also partake of His power. (V.3.2) 96

This passage occurs in the course of the extensive defence of the belief in the resurrection of the body, which dominates the first half of Book Five of A.H.

Elsewhere⁹⁷ he declares that the successive covenants 'show forth the wisdom of God.' We have already referred to his reply to Marcion (III.25.3) where the introduction of the concept of divine wisdom to some extent eased the tension between the mercy and justice of God. He returns to a similar theme later in A.H.:

Now this being is the Creator, who is, in respect of His love, the Father; but in respect of His power, He is Lord; and in respect of His wisdom, our Maker and Fashioner. (V.17.1)

The earlier contrast between the mercy and righteousness of God has given way to that between His love and His power, but the role of the divine wisdom in mitigating the contrast is essentially the same. Because God is wise, His exercise of judgement and mercy must be a wise operation. Because God is wise, the appearance of conflict and evil in creation must be for a good reason, even if we cannot perceive it directly.⁹⁸ The divine wisdom, then, undergirds and informs the whole of creation and redemption.

How close here is Irenaeus to the Logos or world-idea of the Stoics and Middle Platonists? Inasmuch as the world-idea in these philosophies is essentially immanent in the world we can say that Irenaeus' conception is significantly different. For him the world is meaningful only as it is created, ruled and redeemed by the wise God who in His intimate care and concern is the sovereign and transcendent Lord.⁹⁹ Irenaeus' teaching on the divine wisdom is in this respect fundamentally biblical.

Yet we cannot avoid raising certain questions when it comes to assessing his faithfulness at this point to the overall teaching of the New Testament concerning the wisdom of God.

In Colossians¹⁰⁰ and Ephesians¹⁰¹ wisdom is more or less identified with Jesus Christ Himself. Although he frequently refers to both epistles, Irenaeus quotes or alludes to none of the relevant verses. The part of the Pauline corpus which presents most clearly St. Paul's thoughts concerning the divine wisdom is 1 Corinthians 1-2. Here Paul is above all concerned to draw a sharp distinction between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world. This distinction is drawn where the crucified Christ is preached, for this simultaneously embodies the divine wisdom and excludes all human wisdom (1Cor.2:1-5). Again, although he refers to these two chapters more than a dozen times in his extant writings, there is no mention of those verses¹⁰² which directly associate the wisdom of God with the crucified Jesus. Why is this? In part it is because Irenaeus wishes to distinguish his position from that of the Gnostics. They evidently made much use of 1 Cor. 2:6:

Yet among the mature¹⁰³ we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.

In I.8.4 and III.21.1 Irenaeus indicates that the Gnostics used this verse to justify their claim to have received a secret and perfect gnosis whereby they were sharply distinguished from all other men. The fact that the Aeon Sophia was at the centre of their redemption myth added a confusing element to the Gnostic interpretation of any passage of Scripture which mentioned wisdom. It is interesting, therefore, that in V.6.1 Irenaeus feels free to use 1 Cor. 2:6 to support his own

contention that our souls and bodies already partake of salvation through their reception of the Spirit of the Father. It would not be easy to argue that Irenaeus is greatly influenced here by the Gnostics, but the fact remains that in common with the Gnostics Irenaeus does less than justice to Paul's association of divine wisdom with the foolishness, weakness and scandal of the cross. Irenaeus comes nearest to the teaching of St. Paul on the divine wisdom when he contrasts the intellectual and speculative Gnostics with the illiterate believers he doubtless knew in Gaul, who:

....are barbarians, so far as regards our language; but as regards doctrine, manner, and tenor of life, they are, because of faith, very wise indeed; and they do please God, ordering their conversation in all righteousness, chastity and wisdom. (III.4.2)

Although we must recognise that Irenaeus does not do justice to the specifically christological conception of the wisdom of God as clearly expressed by St. Paul, this should not be allowed to detract from the positive contribution made by the concept of the divine wisdom to Irenaeus' doctrine of God. The idea of the wisdom of God helps to clarify our understanding of the other attributes Irenaeus finds in God. We have seen how the wisdom of God can help to unite the mercy and justice of God in Irenaeus' theology. It also helps us to see how the long-suffering of God does not imply weakness, because all that occurs in the history of creation and redemption is according to the wise plan of the omnipotent Father. To some extent the concept of the wisdom of God in Irenaeus is similar to his use of the concept of the richness of God, that God is rich and wise underlying everything else he has to say. Our main regret is that he did not consistently start his exposition of these concepts from the Christological axis of the New Testament. St. Paul brings the concepts of the divine richness

and wisdom under an exclusively Christological outlook in

Colossians 2:2f:¹⁰⁴

That their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

It is appropriate at this point to reflect upon whence we have come and where we are going in this exposition of St. Irenaeus' doctrine of God. We started from his own rejection of the Gnostic belief that the supreme God lacked power and goodness. Then we followed the path which would best illustrate what in practice the divine goodness involved. In doing so we did not leave behind the supreme power of God - how could we? - but it has taken something of a back seat. The exception to this generalisation concerned the divine mercy where we found Irenaeus' exposition of the righteousness of God to be inextricably involved with it. Our concluding consideration of the wisdom of God exhibited in the harmony of creation and redemption will serve to point us back to where we began, with the power and goodness of God. Now, without in any sense ignoring the goodness, mercy and long-suffering of God we shall consider what might provisionally be described as aspects of His power, namely, the divine omniscience, omnipresence, and incomprehensibility. Arguably my earlier reference to the richness of God belongs to this second part of my exposition, but Irenaeus' understanding of the divine wealth tends to undergird everything he says about God and hence it was discussed, albeit briefly, near the beginning of my overall presentation.

Omniscience

We have seen that for Irenaeus the divine wisdom is seen in the relation of God to the whole length and breadth of creation. Irenaeus' assertion

that God in his omnipotent and rich wisdom knows all things follows naturally enough.¹⁰⁵ Anything hidden from God, he argues,¹⁰⁶ would constitute a realm which is independent of Him, and therefore the realm of a second God. Even the sin and evil which afflicts His handiwork actually is known by God, even if in this very knowledge he condemns it and turns away from it. Even if we do our utmost to reject Him, we cannot escape His knowledge and therefore His judgement. Irenaeus is particularly concerned to emphasise that the whole process of creation and redemption is 'sketched out (by God), like an architect' (IV.14.2). This in part explains why his references to God's omniscience nearly always take the form of assertions of His foreknowledge of all things. There is a teleological stress here which to some extent compensates for the emphasis upon the original and general harmony of creation in his treatment of the divine wisdom. This foreknowledge is asserted in relation to:

(i) The fall:

And that God foreknew that this would happen, the Scriptures do in like manner demonstrate, since he prepared eternal fire from the beginning for those who were afterwards to transgress. (II.28.7)

(ii) The institutions of the old covenant:

The first testament.....contained a prophecy of things to come, in order that man might learn that God has foreknowledge of all things. (IV.32.2)

(iii) The events of the new covenant:

All things which had been foreknown of the Father, our Lord did accomplish in their order, season and hour, foreknown and fitting, being indeed one and the same, but rich and great. (III.16.7)

(iv) The events at the millennium when the 'fashion' (1 Cor. 7:31), but neither the substance nor the essence of creation, passes away:

And therefore this (present) fashion has been formed temporary, God foreknowing all things. (IV.36.1)

(v) Those individuals who choose to separate themselves from God, the assertion of divine foreknowledge here

forming an aspect of the refutation of Marcion:

God, knowing the number of those who will not believe, since He foreknows all things, has given them over to unbelief, and turned away His face from men of this character, leaving them in the darkness which they have chosen for themselves....(IV.29.2)

Irenaeus is not simply saying that God is omniscient, though this is included. The 'fore' knowledge implies more than that God knows in advance. In addition to this there is present an assertion of the power and independence of God in relation to the events of creation and redemption. The priority and superiority, yet concern, of God in relation to that which He creates and redeems are at stake in the controversy with the Gnostics.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, given that Irenaeus' concept of divine action is far removed from a merely passive knowledge of events determined by other agents, we must ask how Irenaeus relates this fore-knowledge to the will of God and therefore to a concept of predestination.

The paucity of the evidence available from Irenaeus' extant works, along with the inherent difficulty of the topic, demands caution, but certain aspects of his thought are clear enough. In the first place, a belief in the free superiority of God over man leads him to deny that there can be any disjunction in God between His thought and action, knowledge and will. A contrast is drawn here with the remote and disinterested Gnostic Bythos, who detached His thought and will as two separate Aeons:

(The true God).....as soon as He thinks, also performs what He has willed; and as soon as He wills, also thinks that which He has willed; then thinking when He wills, and then willing when He thinks, He thinks, since He is all thought, all will, all mind.....(I.12.2) ¹⁰⁸

As we shall see in more detail in a later chapter, Irenaeus has some strong statements that the will of God is the direct cause of all things and events in creation. He naturally extends such thoughts to the divine

care for man, and asserts the full control of God over the plan of salvation. An expression which occurs on several occasions is that God reveals Himself 'to whom He will, when He will, and as He will'.¹⁰⁹ Reflecting his belief in the progressive revelation of God throughout the history of salvation, this free and sovereign activity of revelation on the part of God is seen in trinitarian terms:

For man does not see God by his own powers; but when He pleases He is seen by men, by whom He wills, and when He wills, and as He wills. For God is powerful in all things, having been seen at that time prophetically through the Spirit, and seen adoptively through the Son; and He shall also be seen paternally in the Kingdom of Heaven, the Spirit truly preparing man in the Son of God, and the Son leading him to the Father, while the Father confers incorruption for eternal life. (IV.20.5)

Although the anti-Gnostic context of his writings, and perhaps other influences from the wider philosophical culture of his day, restrained Irenaeus from giving much attention to the essential mystery of the will of God, when he approaches the question of predestination an exception can be observed:

But He Himself, in Himself, after a fashion which 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. (II.2.4)

When Irenaeus carries his thoughts further, towards the question of the predestination of individuals, he usually invokes, at least to some degree, the idea of what later became known as fides praevisa, or foreseen merits. This is most explicit in the later chapters of Book Four, where it is an important part of Irenaeus' response to the challenge of Marcion,¹¹⁰ but, as we shall see when we examine his understanding of the freedom of the will, the idea of passive foreknowledge has a general relevance for his theology. But does this cohere with the close relation he posits between the foreknowledge and sovereign,

purposeful will of God?

It is well established that there are two main approaches to the doctrine of predestination to be found in the history of theology.¹¹¹ On the one side, a concept of the absolute and inscrutable decree of God places all the emphasis upon the will of God either for salvation or damnation. On the other side, a greater effort is made to see the will and decree of God for salvation or damnation as conditioned by the responsible activity of the human beings concerned. The Greek Fathers constantly defended the freedom of the human will against the commonly held fatalism of their philosophical environment, not to mention the more religious fatalism of the Gnostics. However, partly because they held that God was active in the redemption of man, whose redeemed existence was essentially a participation in the life of God, the Greek Fathers were also drawn to assert that God is responsible for man's salvation. There was no challenge from Pelagianism to focus debate on how these divergent tendencies could be controlled and reconciled, and hence to those who look back to the patristic age through Augustine and his many successors there is an ambivalence in patristic teaching on predestination. Justin¹¹² asserts God's foreknowledge in the sense of the later doctrine of foreseen merits, explicitly marking his view off from a fatalist interpretation of prophecy:

So that what we say about future events being foretold, we do not say it as if they came about by a fatal necessity; but God foreknowing all that shall be done by all men, and it being His decree that the future actions of men shall all be recompensed according to their several value. He foretells by the Spirit of prophecy that He will bestow meet rewards according to the merit of actions done, always urging the human race to effort and recollection, showing that He cares and provides for men.

Origen wrestled with the question of grace and free will, posed to him both by Celsus and his exegetical work. He gave a greater place to

the causative knowledge, that is, will of God, in the salvation of men, than Justin did, but maintained at the same time that the efficacy of the will of God was conditioned by the subjective free will of men.¹¹³ In attempting to strike this balance Origen laid down the basis for many subsequent discussions of the apparent paradox of grace and free will.

As we have seen, Irenaeus adopts Justin's teaching on divine fore-knowledge, yet also modifies it, to give a more prominent role to God in achieving the salvation of man than 'urging the human race to effort'. However, the two sides of his teaching tend to lie uneasily juxtaposed, the underlying reason being that his overall conception has a too static, rationalistic feel. This in part derives from his employment of the apocalyptic idea that history only continued because God was waiting until the fore-ordained number of people had been admitted to the Kingdom.¹¹⁴ Irenaeus avoids the concept of a stationary decree which would overwhelm human responsibility, and thus empty history of effective reality, but his rather naïve employment of the idea of fore-seen merits does limit the scope allowed for the mystery of divine election, the mystery of the holy love of God, who determines the acts and decisions of free and responsible men, in ways which even the best theologians are unable to control or predict, as the parables of Jesus make abundantly clear.¹¹⁵ As a result, Irenaeus' understanding of the omniscience of God, while not without its encouraging features, reflects to some degree the concept of a God who is insufficiently free. This theme will recur as we investigate further attributes which Irenaeus ascribes to God.

Omnipresence

We will be better able to appreciate the position Irenaeus has adopted here by considering his teaching on the omnipresence of God.¹¹⁶ Again we are concerned with the implications of the divine omnipotence and lordship. Gnosticism was based on a theory of emanation from the supreme Bythus, and the process of emanation was evidently considered to involve transition through space. To this Irenaeus retorts:

If they maintain any such hypothesis, they must shut up their Bythus within a definite form and space, while He both surrounds others, and is surrounded by them; for they must of necessity acknowledge that there is something outside of Him which surrounds Him. (II.13.6)

It is in this context that Irenaeus draws the conclusion that the Gnostic Bythus is either less than Almighty God or the author of evil, as we discussed earlier. Irenaeus associates these problems in Gnostic mythology with their conception of how the Godhead is related to space and time (for the moment we are confining our treatment to His relation to space). Nevertheless, if God is not to be 'shut up within a definite form and space', how did Irenaeus relate God to space and time? His basic and repeated response is to assert that God contains all things:

God the Creator.....there is nothing either above Him or after Him.....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. (II.1.1) ¹¹⁷

Could this conception of God as containing all things be interpreted simply as God acting as a container for the universe, bounding it as an exterior limit? Irenaeus excludes this interpretation by affirming that God, in containing all things, also fills and penetrates all things:

For according to them (the Gnostics), the light of their Father will be changed into darkness and buried in obscurity, and will

come to an end in those places which are characterised by emptiness, since it cannot penetrate and fill all things. Let them then no longer declare that their Bythus is the fulness of all things, if indeed he has neither filled nor illuminated that which is vacuum and shadow; or, on the other hand, let them cease talking of vacuum and shadow, if the light of their Father does in truth fill all things. (II.8.2)

Thus for Irenaeus God contains and penetrates all things by His power. This is clearly implied in the first of the two extracts above, where the relation of God to all things is closely connected to His creation of them. Since God is the free and sovereign source of all that is created, all creation depends directly upon Him for its existence. The direct or immanent dependence of creation upon God rests precisely upon His creative transcendence. This view of creation marks off Irenaeus' position from the Stoic view that God is present throughout creation as its immanent reason, as indicated by the regularity of the universe. The Stoic position, by denying God's power and freedom in relation to creation, was no more attractive to Irenaeus than the Gnostic transcendentalism he was directly opposing. It is significant that in the majority of cases where Irenaeus describes God as 'containing all things', he associates this with His action as Creator.¹¹⁹ Here it is important to acknowledge that it is creation out of nothing which Irenaeus asserts.¹²⁰ Hence space and time are themselves created by God and cannot be conceived as limiting God's presence and action outside of His own Being, for that would be to see space and time as other than simply relations within creation. The closeness of God to His creation which Irenaeus wishes to maintain is thus to be seen as the expression of divine power, against both Stoics and Gnostics.¹²¹

The closeness of God to His creation is seen in the New Testament as a consequence of His love, if indeed it is a holy and just love. As a

consequence of this, God's presence to creation in love is an active, redeeming presence. In the Bible this action is specific as well as general; the living God in His freedom and love has specific purposes in Israel, the Church, and pre-eminently in Jesus, through whom His general creative and redemptive action for all creation is disclosed. This particularity of the omnipresence of God is presented in the Bible in a variety of ways, but fundamentally to speak of the particular presence of God to His creation is to speak of His Word, Jesus Christ, who 'reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of His nature, upholding the universe by His word of power' (Heb.1:3). For the apostolic community it is only the coming of God to His own in Jesus Christ that makes sense of the events witnessed to or narrated in the Old Testament, and that makes sense of the on-going life of the Church. In Jesus, for the author of Colossians,¹²² the Godhead dwells bodily. If anything John 1:14 puts it more concretely: ἔσκηνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν: God pitched His tent among us.

Does Irenaeus do justice to this side of the biblical teaching? The answer is a qualified yes. He refers to John 1:14 on six occasions, each time when he is asserting that God really did create this world and demonstrate His care for it in the incarnation. Towards the end of A.H. he writes:

Now we have repeatedly shown that the incarnate Word of God was suspended upon a tree. (V.18.1)

Earlier Irenaeus had opposed the Gnostic idea that, 'Jesus was merely a receptacle of Christ, upon whom the Christ, as a dove, descended from above' (III.16.1). He insists on the oneness of Jesus Christ as God and man¹²³, thus maintaining (in general) a close relation between His divinity and humanity.

Irenaeus is clearly influenced by certain biblical affirmations of the filling of the universe by God. In III.12.9 he quotes Acts 17:28, 'In Him we live and move and have our being', and in IV.19.2 he quotes Jeremiah 23:24, 'Can a man hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? says the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the Lord'. If a qualification is needed in assessing Irenaeus' faithfulness to the biblical teaching upon the presence of God to creation, it would arise out of his stress on the unity of God, with a consequent tendency to see the divine presence as uniform. In opposition, or perhaps reaction, to the Gnostic division of the Godhead according to spatial analogies, Irenaeus strongly opposes the view that God is 'a compound and corporeal Being' (II.13.5). Without in any way taking up the Gnostic position, it is possible to suggest that Irenaeus has not thought through as far as we would like the implications of the incarnation for the relation of created existence to the life of God. In practice the posing and answering of such questions was closely concerned with the development of trinitarian theology, a development which builds upon Irenaeus but also clarifies what he has to say. However, just how closely Irenaeus integrated his teaching on the presence of God in His suffering Son or Word Jesus Christ, with that on the supreme Father, is the subject of debate in the light of such passages as the following:

For the Father of all is at a vast distance from those affections and passions which operate among men. He is a simple, uncompounded Being, without diverse members, and altogether like, and equal to Himself. (II.13.3) 124

Besides the problem of developing an adequate soteriology, there is an underlying risk associated with Irenaeus' teaching upon the omnipresence of God, which becomes more clearly problematic in his doctrine of creation. Does this strong assertion of God containing and filling

all things allow sufficient 'space' for the existence of creation, with its proper created rationality? Although Irenaeus repeatedly states that there is a clear distinction between God and creation, it could be argued that he uses this distinction precisely in order to emphasise the intimate presence of God to the universe.¹²⁵ The danger then exists that the intimate presence of God becomes subtly construed as a necessary presence, that is, the presence of a God other than the free, holy, and living God. Irenaeus' intention is to establish a proper relation between God and creation, by employing the difference of God from creation, His eternal, limitless simplicity, to assure his close relation to everything which exists. The question which is posed, however, is whether Irenaeus does not attempt to solve the problem of dualism by employing, at least in part, the conceptuality which gave rise to it in the first place. For Irenaeus, God is 'always the same',¹²⁶ but, while there is a proper sense of the constancy of God, there is the danger of Irenaeus modifying the dualism in the doctrine of God in Middle Platonism and Hellenistic Judaism¹²⁷ by asserting too close and necessary a relation between God and the world. Paradoxically, this emphasis readily stimulates, and supports, a counter-balancing motif of the unknowability of this all-pervasive God by mere creatures: He is not remote, but, to an extent, He is wholly other.¹²⁸ Although logically opposed, dualism and monism share a common framework, within which an undue stress on one side can easily stimulate the other; this is a situation which can occur elsewhere in theology, for example in respect of faith and doubt, or optimism and pessimism.

Incomprehensibility

A crucial issue which Irenaeus has to face when considering the relation

between Jesus Christ as the eternal Word or Son who became incarnate, and the Father, is that of the applicability of human language to describe or indicate the differences and similarities between Father and Son. This question was posed sharply for Irenaeus by the Gnostics' use of language, a use which Irenaeus rightly regarded as grossly anthropocentric, leading to a correspondingly anthropomorphic image of God. We will discuss this here because it will closely link our discussion of Irenaeus' treatment of the spatiality of God to our consideration of his account of God's comprehensibility.

According to Irenaeus, the root of the Gnostic error in describing God as contained within, or restricted to, a definite place lay with their anthropomorphic approach:¹²⁹

For they do not know what God is, but they imagine that He sits after the fashion of a man, and is contained within bounds, but does not contain. (IV.3.1)

Negatively, Irenaeus wishes to mark himself off from the two extremes which are both present in an unrelieved tension in Gnosticism. On the one hand, there is the Gnostic emphasis upon the remoteness and hence incomprehensibility of God. On the other hand, there is the presumption that some human beings have been fully enlightened with mystical gnosis.¹³⁰ Irenaeus often exposes the contrast between these two sides of Gnosticism:

Those who have excogitated (the theory of) emissions have not discovered anything great, or revealed any abstruse mystery, when they have simply transferred what all understand (concerning human thought and speech) to the only-begotten Word of God; and while they style Him unspeakable and unnameable, they nevertheless set forth the production and formation of His first generation, as if they themselves had assisted at His birth, thus assimilating Him to the word of mankind formed by emissions. (II.28.6)

One of the characteristics of Gnosticism was its eclectic faculty for

appropriating and adapting both the thought and the vocabulary of other movements and schools. This is true of the Gnostic use of the idea of the transcendence and ineffability of God, where Gnosticism presses with unfortunate rigour the emphasis on the transcendence of God which is found in Hellenistic Judaism and Middle Platonism. The Apologists took over a good deal of this teaching upon God, but turned the negative expressions to render a more definite and positive meaning.¹³¹ The chief aim is to express the complete independence of God of all creation, either materially or morally, and His free sovereignty over everything that exists. Some of the terms were taken from the New Testament itself,¹³² where, especially with St. Paul, one can see attempts to articulate the characteristically Hebrew idea of transcendence, which is nowhere systematically expounded in the Old Testament. The basic problem with the attempts of the Apologists to develop the doctrine of God along these lines is that they tend to stress the divine transcendence and self-sufficiency more than the fundamentally biblical notion of Fatherhood. To some extent, Irenaeus reverses this trend towards an imbalance between the transcendence and immanence of God. A parallel shift is seen in Irenaeus' Christology, where the chief stress of the Apologists upon the cosmological role of the Logos is supplemented by a more direct concern with the redemptive work of the Logos-Son. At least in part, it was the Gnostic caricature of the transcendent spatial limitation of God, which excluded His immanence, allied to their obvious and unhelpful anthropomorphism, which stimulated and guided Irenaeus' search for a more biblical via media.¹³⁴

Gnosticism claimed to be a religion based upon a secret but full revelation, which, although revealing the unknowability of the supreme

God, could be explained in human language. How revelation is related to reason, and especially how it is related to human language, is inevitably considered by Irenaeus, even if he does not always make it clear that he knows the implications of what he says. Just how he believed we used our language in relation to God is indicated in the following passage:

He is all understanding, and all spirit, and all thought, and all intelligence, and all reason, and all hearing, and all seeing, and all light, and the whole source of all that is good. This is how the religious and pious speak concerning God. He is, however, above these properties, and therefore indescribable. For he may well and properly be called an Understanding which comprehends all things, but He is not like the understanding of men; and He may most properly be termed Light, but He is nothing like that light with which we are acquainted. And so, in all other particulars, the Father of all is in no degree similar to human weakness. He is spoken of in these terms according to the love (we bear Him or He bears us?); but in point of greatness, our thoughts regarding Him transcend these expressions. 135 (II.13.3f)

Such a position certainly guards against the excessive and uncritical anthropomorphism of the Gnostics, but does it avoid an over-emphasis upon the unknowability of God?¹³⁶ We are dealing here with a theological question which has aroused strong debate down to our own century. The difference between such similar theologians as Karl Barth and Emil Brunner over the relation of the 'immanent' to the 'economic' Trinity revolved around just this issue. A brief consideration of the difference between these two modern theologians will help to clarify the question we wish to put to Irenaeus.

Brunner wishes to remain at the level of the economic Trinity, believing that the doctrine of the Trinity is a human way of speaking of what cannot be spoken of by human beings, while Barth believes it is necessary to acknowledge that we should move through the economic Trinity to the immanent Trinity. This results from the fundamental axiom of Barth's

theology, that God is antecedently in Himself what he is towards us in His revelation. The difference between them can be put as follows: whereas for Brunner the mystery of God stands behind His revelation, for Barth it is precisely the mystery of God that is revealed to us.¹³⁷

There are three related reasons why Barth's position should be preferred. Firstly, an image of God which did not communicate to us, to a significant degree, the real being of God would inevitably verge on idolatry. Secondly, how could we be certain that God was eternally loving and gracious towards us, if we did not have direct experience of His love and grace? Thirdly, how is a revelation which does not reveal the true nature of God to be recognised? By definition, the criterion must be other than God, and hence would naturally tend to be either an exaltation of created existence, or a philosophical, human concept of God.

The avoidance of excessive anthropomorphism thus demands that our knowledge of God must derive from, and repose upon, His inner nature. Barth's view allows and accepts the emergence of a proper anthropomorphism, because he sees God as the One who takes up the properties and attributes of created existence into Himself in Jesus Christ as the representative of all creation, a process which, as far as our language goes, will inevitably mix the wheat with the tares.

It must of course be insisted that we know God only by faith and not (yet) by sight. Thus a measure of apophaticism is necessary inasmuch as no human language can capture and present to us God as He is in Himself. It is indeed only through the crucified Christ, and not

through our statements concerning the crucified Christ, that we can claim to know God. Just as the cross called into question all that men could do or know with regard to God, so it disclosed His inmost nature and purpose. In other words, it is precisely in positive apprehension of God that we know Him to be incomprehensible by use of the natural faculties of man. However, by faith we can claim to know - or should we say sense or apprehend?¹³⁸ - God as He truly is in Himself.

It is curious and significant that Barth, whom we are following here, insists so strongly upon our knowledge being of God as He is in Himself, while rejecting the concept of an analogy of being between God and man. It must be admitted that the theory that language and created things in general do not image ultimate reality, while they are nevertheless empowered by God to signify ultimate reality seems to be difficult to grasp. Yet is this 'difficulty' not demanded by the Bible? The difficulty we perceive here is no more and no less than the difficulty we all have in accepting and understanding the purpose of the strange history of Israel and even more peculiar account of the crucified and risen God-man in the New Testament. Between God and Israel there is an analogy of relation rather than an analogy of being. In a similar way, as the basis for the relation between God and Israel, between the divine and human natures of Christ there is not an analogy of being but rather a hypostatic union, that is, an analogy of relation.

Underlying the Gnostic anthropomorphism is a belief that the universe is hierarchically structured, and that (in a rather ill-defined manner) 'things below are images of those above'. Irenaeus challenges this Gnostic assertion on many occasions.¹³⁹ Its presence is indicated by

their choice of names for the various Aeons - Anthropos, Zoe, Ecclesia, Ennoea, etc.. Irenaeus claims that here the Valentinians adapted ideas of Democritus and Plato, along with the associated belief that the Demiurge formed the world out of previously existing matter.¹⁴⁰ The concept of imaging provided the Gnostics with the basis for their rich mythology, though this psychological salvation mythology is set against a background conception of the universe as a vast prison whose innermost dungeon is the earth. Around and above it the cosmic spheres are ranged like concentric enclosing shells. This cosmology implied an operation of fate which only the gnosis, itself dispensed fatalistically, could dispel. The idea that each level of existence was related to that above it by being in its image or shadow¹⁴¹ (i.e. a rather inferior image) was seen by Irenaeus to make the relation of God to creation a matter of necessity rather than of free grace:

(The Gnostics assert that).....everything of necessity passes away to those things out of which they maintain it was also formed, and that God is the slave of necessity, so that He cannot impart immortality to what is mortal, but everyone passes into a substance similar in nature to itself¹⁴²..... They assert that God can do no otherwise. (II.14.4)

In Gnostic theory, the production of the Aeons was not associated with a desire of the supreme God to create the world of which man was a part.¹⁴³ Creation indeed is seen as intended to benefit the Pleroma, and not, as Irenaeus would assert, the other way round. Why, then, was the Pleroma generated? Irenaeus introduces this question in order to challenge the whole notion of one level of existence imaging the next. The problem boils down to that of how to prevent an infinite regress:

If creation be an image of those things (above), why should we not affirm that those are, in turn, images of others above them, and those above these again, of others and thus go on supposing innumerable images of images? (II.16.1)

The Gnostics attempted to solve this problem by invoking the ultimate incomprehensibility of Bythus. Basilides, Irenaeus notes, exhibits both sides of the problem in an extreme form. On the one hand he 'proclaimed that three hundred and sixty-five heavens were formed through succession and similitude by one another',¹⁴⁴ and on the other hand:

When asked whence came the image of its configuration to that heaven which is above all, and from which he wishes the rest to be regarded as having been formed by means of succession, he will say, from that dispensation which belongs to the Unnameable. He must then say, either that the Unspeakable formed it of himself, or he will find it necessary to acknowledge that there is some other power above this Being, from whom the unnameable One derived such vast numbers of configurations as do, according to him, exist. (II.16.2)

Basilides, more than any other Gnostic, stressed the unknowability of God. He who, according to Valentinus, is the Abyss, according to Basilides is even 'the non-being God'.¹⁴⁵ The more elaborate the hierarchical pattern of images, the greater the stress upon the unknowability of the unknown God. This paradox of the knowledge of the unknowable God is essential to Gnosticism, providing it with mystery and religious dynamic.¹⁴⁶ Irenaeus opposes it by attempting to plot a middle course between the twinpoles of a monistic stress on the knowledge of the unknowability of Bythus and the basic dualism which Gnosticism enshrines.

The doctrine of creation out of nothing, freely willed by a loving, long-suffering God is Irenaeus' answer. It is a creation whose goodness is created and therefore not a simple image of God, although the crown of creation, man, is made in the image of God, inasmuch as God relates to him. The analogy Irenaeus sees set up between God and creation by this free and gracious act of God must be described, using Barth's distinction, as fundamentally an analogy of relation.¹⁴⁷

We may contrast the doctrine of Irenaeus here with that of Athenagoras.

Athenagoras gives no clear account of creation, which is perhaps surprising in so philosophical a writer, and he appears to have held that matter pre-existed in an undifferentiated form.¹⁴⁸ At the same time he is probably the earliest Christian witness to the use of what has become known as the analogy of being.¹⁴⁹

The main emphasis in Irenaeus is to base our ability to know God upon His omnipotent will rather than upon our participation in His Being. However, there is a subsidiary element in Irenaeus' theology, which he shares with much Patristic theology, to which we will have to return, which does maintain a quasi-logical relation between created rationality and the rationality of God. Such a conception was difficult to avoid for a writer educated in the Greek-speaking world of the second century. This subsidiary element in the thought of Irenaeus has a significant influence in parts of his doctrine of creation.

That Irenaeus did not have sufficient confidence in the fact that God has fully revealed Himself to us in His Son, is illustrated by his emphasis upon the limits of man's possible knowledge, both with regard to creation and with regard to God. In respect of the apparent mysteries of the tides, the migration of birds, changes of weather, etc., he remarks:

If, therefore, even with respect to creation, there are some things (the knowledge of) which belongs only to God, and others which come within the range of our own knowledge, what ground is there for complaint, if, in regard to those things which we investigate in the Scriptures, which are throughout spiritual, we are able by the grace of God to explain some of them, while we must leave others in the hands of God, and that not only in the present world, but also in that which is to come, so that God should for ever teach, and man should for ever learn the things taught him by God? (II.28.3)

The above passage refers to the 'spiritual' nature of the Scriptures. Immediately before and after the above extract reference is made to the 'perfection' of Scripture. The implication is that if we wish to learn about God we are restricted to what we are told in the Bible. However, if this is agreed, is Irenaeus correct to assume, as he appears to do, that our present ignorance of certain matters is absolute, both for time and eternity? What future does Irenaeus see for the advance of theology? Man is just a little too passive¹⁵⁰ on his understanding of the progress of theology:

The Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit; but we, inasmuch as we are inferior to, and later in existence than, the Word of God and His Spirit, are on that very account destitute of the knowledge of His mysteries.....and such as require to be made known to us by revelation. (II.28.2)

The restricted task of theology in the post-Apostolic era is also indicated in the following important passage:

True knowledge is the doctrine of the Apostles, and the ancient constitution of the Church throughout all the world, and the distinctive manifestation of the body of Christ according to the successions of bishops, by which they have handed down that Church which exists in every place, and has come even unto us, being guarded and preserved, without any forging of Scriptures, by a very complete system of doctrine, and neither receiving addition nor curtailment. (IV.33.8)

The warnings of Irenaeus against the danger of speculation and the desire to know everything are in part the result of his reaction against the speculations of the Gnostics. However, it would be wrong to rule out the presence of other factors. Perhaps Irenaeus did not expect the 'last times' to continue this side of the millennium for very much longer - there is no clear evidence on this point. The more subtle heresies had yet to crystallise into equally subtle theological questions, as they were soon to do. He was unlikely to receive in Gaul the intellectual stimulus Clement and Origen could hardly have

avoided in Alexandria. These and other influences - including, it should be added, Irenaeus' own free and responsible choice in the matter - doubtless conspired to produce his belief in the limited ability of man to extend and expand his knowledge in matters of theological as well as of natural science.¹⁵¹

Two centuries after Irenaeus one question he believed should not be examined by men dominated theological debate: the nature of the relation between the Father and the Son.¹⁵² The New Testament texts which speak of the Son alone knowing the Father, the Father alone knowing the hour and day of judgement, and so forth, were seized upon by the Gnostics as indicating the essential unknowability of the supreme God.

Irenaeus sees that there is an apparent contradiction in maintaining both the equality of Father and Son and accepting such a text as John 14:28. He retreats into reverent agnosticism:

'The Father', says He, 'is greater than I.' The Father, therefore, has been declared by our Lord to excel with respect to knowledge; for the reason, that we, too, as long as we are connected with the scheme of things in this world, should leave perfect knowledge, and such questions (as have been mentioned), to God, and should not by any chance, while we seek to investigate the sublime nature of the Father, fall into the danger of starting the question whether there is another God above God.¹⁵³ (II.28.8)

Had Irenaeus lived in the fourth century he doubtless would have been among those who defended the homousios. However, the need to suggest and defend the precise thought behind the homousios did not arise until the more refined Arianism had replaced the cruder Gnosticism as the threat to be countered.¹⁵⁴ Barth stresses the homousios, and the corresponding belief that our knowledge is of God as He truly is in

Himself, in the face of its denial by liberal Protestantism.

Athanasius writes in similar vein against Arianism. The basic movement of Irenaeus' theology is in the same direction, although he naturally cannot achieve the clarity and consistency that emerged in the later theologians mentioned.¹⁵⁵

Finally we will briefly indicate the positive account Irenaeus gives of our knowledge of God, which can be divided into three parts.

Most important is his belief that the Logos-Son reveals God the Father, who is Himself invisible and indescribable, to His creation. It is as Irenaeus starts to develop his trinitarian doctrine that this approach to knowledge of God replaces the arguments of natural theology. It is the dominant conception found in the later Demonstration. This trinitarian thinking develops along with more explicit reference to the οἰκονομία or 'dispensations' of God for the salvation of man. Irenaeus' treatment of the pre-existence of Christ emerges in this context: his doctrine of creation demands that God has progressively revealed Himself to man even before the Incarnation:

God.....is invisible and indescribable to all things which have been made by Him, but He is by no means unknown: for all things learn through His Word that there is one God the Father, who contains all things, and who grants existence to allTherefore the Son of the Father declares (Him) from the beginning, in as much as He was with the Father from the beginning..... (IV.20.6) 156

To support this passage Irenaeus quotes John 1:18, 'No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made Him known'. The influence of Johannine¹⁵⁷ theology is also clearly evidence in the following extract:

For no one can know the Father, unless through the Word of God, that is, unless by the Son revealing (Him);neither can he have knowledge of the Son, unless through the good pleasure of the Father.....And His Word knows that His Father is, as far as regards us, invisible and infinite; and since He cannot be declared (by anyone else), He does Himself declare Him to us.....For the manifestation of the Son is the knowledge of the Father; for all things are manifested through the Word. (IV.6.3)

These passages are closely related to those discussed in connection with the Irenaeian understanding of election. The chief difference is that the revelation of the Father is seen as to all men, so that judgement can be universal and equitable:

The Father therefore has revealed Himself to all, by making His Word visible to all, and, conversely, the Word has declared to all the Father and the Son, since He has become visible to all. And therefore the righteous judgement of God (shall fall) upon all who, like others, have seen, but have not, like others, believed. (IV.6.5)

There is a problem here. Does the revelation of God convey salvation (as in IV.6.3f.), or is the revelation of God a prelude to the response of man which will determine his salvation or damnation (as in IV.6.5)? If it is true that the answer in some way involves 'both/and' rather than 'either/or', Irenaeus does not explore the relationship with any confidence.¹⁵⁸ Perhaps as a result of this uncertainty or ambiguity Irenaeus allows two other theories of how God is known to men expression in A.H.

In a manner reminiscent of Tertullian, Irenaeus could appeal to the universal character of the innate awareness a man had of the existence of God:

For since His invisible essence is mighty, it confers on all a profound mental intuition and perception of His most powerful, yea, omnipotent greatness. Wherefore, although 'No one knows the Father, except the Son, nor the Son except the Father, and those to whom the Son will reveal Him'(Mt.11:27), yet all do know this one fact at least, because reason, implanted in their minds, moves them, and reveals to them that there is one God, the Lord of all.....And for this reason.....all beings fear the invocation of Him who created them. (II.6.1.f)

Irenaeus' remarks upon the direct intuition of God by man are rather isolated,¹⁵⁹ and it is not easy to determine precisely what he had in mind. Did he believe in a pervasive reason by participation in which all men were in rational, if instinctive, relation to God? Although, for reasons which we shall discuss in the next chapter, he does not reproduce Justin's notion of the λογος σπερματικός, we may see here echoes of the underlying idea. Perhaps we are merely observing a corollary which follows from the belief that God contains, fills and penetrates all things. The difficulty arises when one attempts to translate this general and constant presence of God to man into the basis for knowledge of God; it is rather like, for example, gravity and atmospheric pressure : they are constantly around us, and we depend upon them, yet precisely for this reason we are hardly aware of them! Irenaeus, indeed, makes more use of the a posteriori arguments of natural theology.

We saw earlier how Gnosticism challenged the basic goodness of creation. The use Irenaeus makes of what later became known as natural theology is confident - perhaps too confident - but largely restricted to supporting his belief in the oneness of the God who is Creator, and the goodness of creation:

That God is the Creator of the world is accepted even by those very persons who in many ways speak against Him..... For even creation reveals Him who formed it, and the very work made suggests Him who made it, and the world manifests Him who ordered it. (II.9.1)

On another occasion Irenaeus uses this argument to support his view that 'the entire Scriptures, the prophets, and the Gospels, can be clearly, unambiguously, and harmoniously understood by all.....since they proclaim that one only God, to the exclusion of all others, formed

all things' (II.27.2). The problems with such claims about the proof of God from the observation of creation were indicated when we considered the goodness of creation, and we shall have to return to them later in connection with Irenaeus' understanding of providence and evil.

It would be wrong to set the a priori and a posteriori types of reasoning against one another. Both reflect a belief that there is a real relationship between Creator and creation, even if the details of this relationship are seen differently or left largely unspecified. In any case, all such reasoning from creation, whether from conscience or nature, is definitely subordinated to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ:

For if the manifestation of God which is made by means of creation affords life to all living in the earth, much more does that revelation of the Father which comes through the Word, give life to those who seek God. (IV.20.7)

From a modern theological perspective, which is acutely aware of the ambiguity of evidence for the existence of God culled from the sphere of creation, this priority of divine self-disclosure is entirely correct. However, we would also wish to see a closer link established between the concept of divine self-disclosure, and its mediation through the life of man, and events in nature and history, than Irenaeus provides.

Concluding Reflections

We have attempted to survey the main features of Irenaeus' doctrine of God, paying particular attention to those aspects which will help us to understand his doctrine of creation. In the face of the meandering style and content of A.H. it has not been easy to remain faithful to

Irenaeus himself. His own inclination was to group statements together where subsequent theologians might have tried to simplify and clarify what was being said, by adopting a more systematic approach. This fact has at times made the process of unravelling into a later style what he said a difficult business, given the limited space available here. My purpose now is to draw back together the various features I have previously attempted to distinguish.

For Irenaeus God is rich, both in his eternal glory and in his long-suffering creative and redemptive activity. This is perhaps equivalent to the Biblical assertion that God is the living God.¹⁶⁰ Certainly, when we examine what Irenaeus has to say about created life, he cannot avoid bringing this into close relation with the simple fact that God relates Himself to creation. Life implies action and diversity united in a complex but integral unity. Such is Irenaeus' conception of God. We learn of this rich, living God from his action in creation and redemption, but through this action we learn of God, that is, of Him who is self-sufficient and has no need of creation. Creation expresses the richness of God, but Irenaeus never suggests that it adds to the richness of God anything that it previously lacked. For Irenaeus it is always God with whom we have to do, and not a likely divine hypothesis or conception posited by human thought at its most sublime. In this sense Irenaeus is antagonistic to philosophy.¹⁶¹ However, although we discerned a certain tendency to rely upon an idea of God as that which man is not, Irenaeus feels compelled by the revelation of God to speak of Him in a positive fashion. He makes less use of negative descriptions for God than did either the Apologists or Clement and Origen. The basic approach Irenaeus adopts can be seen in his own words:

God is life, and incorruption, and truth, And these and such like attributes have not been produced according to a gradual

scale of descent but they are names of those perfections which always exist in God, so far as it is possible and proper for men to hear and to speak of God. For with the name of God the following words will harmonize: intelligence, word, life, incorruption, truth, wisdom, goodness, and such like. (II.13.9)

The positive emphasis here is inescapable, as is the note of reserve, 'so far as it is possible and proper for men to hear and to speak of God'. Such reserve can be either helpful or unhelpful. The danger is of maintaining above and behind the positive 'perfections' (virtutes) of God a Deus absconditus, whom we cannot truly know, and therefore cannot really trust. It can hardly be said that such a conception of God is prominent in Irenaeus, though our discussion of his understanding of the divine mercy and righteousness showed that elements of such a concept of God might be present. What is more certain is that he did not guard against the development of a conception of a remote and essentially simple divinity as effectively as might have been desirable. Later theology too easily pushed the concept of a rich, living God into the background, as the seductive Platonic or Aristotelian concept of Being came to be more or less equated with God.¹⁶² The aforementioned reserve is only appropriate if it is seen as itself a consequence of the positive recognition of the revealed 'perfections' of God. In His revelation Yahweh appears in tremendous and mysterious power. The incarnate Son speaks only in parables (Mark 4:34).

Only as the God of the Bible reveals Himself is His unsearchable mystery revealed. Only as He makes Himself known is He incomprehensible. Only as the God of grace and mercy is He also the God of righteousness and judgement. Only in His long-suffering is His omnipotence disclosed. Only as He draws near in love is He known to be omnipresent. The proper reserve required of us is not to claim that God is partly revealed and

partly concealed, partly merciful and partly righteous. We have rather to recognise God in His hiddenness and in His self-revelation, both together being seen as revealing the genuine character of God. Our reserve in speaking about God must surround everything we say about His long-suffering as well as His power, His mercy as well as His righteousness, His revelation as well as His inscrutability, His love as well as His greatness. Otherwise will we not regard ourselves as unprofitable servants only on some occasions, rather than at all times?

Irenaeus does not express himself in this matter as clearly or consistently as we would like. We saw this to be especially true with regard to his treatment of the mercy and justice of God and suggested that a basic problem was an inadequate grasp of the essential Jewishness of Christianity. Yet it cannot be said that he generally allows either the being or the character of God to be divided into qualities which compete with one another, or that he is unfaithful to the biblical picture of the God who lives in eternal constancy and richness. Such competition and flux was rather a feature of Gnosticism. As we saw, basically he sees God as 'wholly understanding, wholly spirit, and wholly thought, and wholly hearing, and wholly seeing, and wholly light'. We might wish to add that God is wholly mercy and as such also wholly justice, but the fact that Irenaeus does not say this must not be exaggerated. Recollection that he expounds the divine righteousness alongside his exposition of the divine mercy in opposition to Marcion should warn us against over-emphasising their mutual independence in his thought.

Our exposition of the Irenaean doctrine of God started from the twin denial by the Gnostics of the pre-eminent power and goodness of God.

Deliberately we considered first the attributes of God which most naturally expounded and expressed His goodness. For Irenaeus the revelation of God is first and foremost good news of a good God who has acted in great mercy. His goodness indeed 'goes on before, and takes precedence' (III.25.3). It is as God loves man that He discloses His holiness and wrath, His power, omnipresence, omniscience and mystery. Hence the sequence of our exposition. It is the fact that it is this sequence, and not an unending dialectic, with which Irenaeus works, that enables us to see that God is all love just as He is all freedom, and not a Being trapped in a confrontation and competition between His goodness and His power. As we shall see, that we only know the almighty freedom of God as a result of his long-suffering love, is important for understanding the positive thrust of Irenaeus' doctrine of creation.

One final point needs explanation, and this will serve to orientate us to the next chapter. Accounts of the theology of Irenaeus commonly emphasise his Christology and Soteriology. Such treatment as may be given to his doctrine of God has tended to concentrate upon his doctrine of the Trinity, reflecting a desire to relate the theology of Irenaeus to the preoccupations of the theology of the centuries which followed him. One result of the comparative neglect of his doctrine of God has been a tendency to over-emphasise inconsistencies in Irenaeus' theology.¹⁶³ Yet, as we have seen, Irenaeus supplies adequate information to reconstruct a very full and rich doctrine of God, quite apart from his Christology and doctrine of the Trinity. The main reason for emphasis upon these latter areas of Christian doctrine is the usual one of anachronism: all too easily we read back too much of later interests and doctrine - or lack of them - into earlier authors. As long as it

is not carried too far, this procedure can put fruitful questions, but if taken too far it distorts the thoughts of the earlier author. The general drift of A.H. is to start from the doctrine of God and to work towards the doctrine of the Trinity, and we have followed the same course. Now we shall look at Irenaeus' conception of the Trinity, concentrating upon those aspects which clarify his doctrine of God and those which will help us elucidate his doctrine of creation.

1. A good deal of Adversus Haereses (henceforth, A.H.) survives only in an early Latin translation. Some fragments of the original Greek have been preserved by other writers. These fragments are largely from Book One. Books Four and Five are also available in an Armenian translation. The small later work, Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching, only survives in Armenian. Much detailed textual work is still required, involving the use of the comparatively recent Armenian discoveries, together with the comparatively sparse Syriac fragments.

2. The Aeons are generally given names bearing a positive signification, e.g. Mind, Truth, Word, Life, Man, Church, Wisdom etc.. The chief and first Aeon has more negative titles Bythus (Abyss), Proarche, Propator, Arrhetus (Unsaid). However, despite these positive titles, little is said concerning the character and essence of the individual Aeons, with the exception of Sophia, who is the focus of the Gnostic myth of fall and redemption. It is true that, for the Gnostics, that which was of positive value here below on earth in some way images the Aeons in the Pleroma - hence the particular titles chosen - but beyond this little seems to have been said concerning the essential nature of the Godhead, because what little could be known was only knowable through the mysterious and secret gnosis.

3. I use the traditional chapter division of R. Massuet (Paris, 1710, reprinted Migne 7), which is adopted in the two available English translations of A.H., rather than the different division proposed by W.W. Harvey (Cambridge, 1857). Both the English translations are from the latter half of the last century, and were published at approximately the same time. Hence they are independent of each other, which can be helpful when considering the likely sense of important or difficult passages. Generally quoted here is that of A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, vols V and IX of T. & T. Clark's Anti-Nicene Christian Library. This translation stays as close as possible to the underlying Latin and Greek and can on this account be a little awkward or obscure. Yet as this only reflects the commonly involved and prolix style of the original, it has usually been preferred to the less meticulous but more freely flowing translation by J. Keble in A Library of the Fathers (Oxford:1872)

4. The best general account of the Gnostic systems described by Irenaeus probably remains that of Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, (Boston: Beacon, 1958) esp. ch.8. For Irenaeus' specific account of the Gnostic systems, see J.R. Nielsen, Adam and Christ in the Theology of Irenaeus of Lyons, (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968), ch.2. Jonas' classic book summarises the fruits of a generation of scholarship. More recently, K. Rudolph, Gnosis, (E.T., Edinburgh : T. & T. Clark, 1983) has provided a major synthetic work, which takes account of the manifold literature since the discoveries at Nag Hammadi. However, many issues are hotly contested, and it is too early to judge the accuracy of Rudolph's judgments. For example, one may wonder whether, 'The process which is plain from the New Testament itself is twofold, the christianising of Gnosis and the gnosticising of Christianity' (p.300). More cautious here are R. Wilson, 'Nag Hammadi and the New Testament', N.T.S., 28 (1982), pp.289-302., and S.G. Hall, 'Knowing your Gnostics', J.E.H., 36 (1985)pp.103-108. Wherever I refer in this thesis to 'Gnosticism', it should be assumed that the primary reference is to the Valentinian version, unless otherwise stated.

5. See A.H. I.11.5. Henceforth, if no title is mentioned, quotations may be assumed to be from A.H..

6. See I.1.1.
7. Again there are various alternative names for these Aeons.
8. There are two particular errors which Irenaeus identifies in the Gnostic theory of the Godhead. In the first place the Gnostics separated the unknown source of the Pleroma from the inferior Demiurge who was responsible for creating the world. Furthermore, in addition to separating the Creator from the Pleroma, they introduced division into the Pleroma itself with their theory of the emanation of Aeons from the supreme Bythus. I merely mention this error here, for I shall return to it when dealing directly with Irenaeus' doctrines of the Trinity and of creation. In the second place, though admittedly closely related to this error, the Gnostic theodicy imposed a limitation of power and goodness upon the supreme God. It is this association of God with the origin of, and responsibility for, evil that I treat in the present context, for it bears directly upon the character of God.
9. Cf. R.A. Norris, God and World in Early Christian Theology, (London: A. & C. Black, 1966), p.65: 'At one level, Irenaeus attacks the Gnostic systems, by calling attention to what he regards as their logical absurdity. This form of argument is characteristic in particular of the second book of the A.H., and its special object is the Gnostic idea of God. By a diligent use of the quasi-logical, quasi-rhetorical device of the dilemma, Irenaeus tries with some success to expose the inconsistencies of a view which proclaims the infinity and supremacy of the ultimate God while at the same time denying his responsibility for the material world.' Norris believes that although Irenaeus' method may have roots in contemporary philosophy, his basic approach was to distrust philosophy. It was Scripture that truly put the lie to Gnosticism. Norris suggests (op.cit. p.65), 'that Irenaeus was prone to distrust philosophical speculation on the two grounds that it led to no certain or reliable conclusions, and that it was in any case the source of Gnosticism'.
10. An interesting contrast can be drawn at this point between Irenaeus and his near contemporary Clement of Alexandria. Clement emphasises the absolute - and perhaps rather abstract - goodness of God. Here we can see the influence of the Platonic tradition. Although Irenaeus does not for a moment cast doubt upon the goodness of God, it is not emphasised in the same way as in Clement. With Irenaeus we find a greater stress upon the power and activity of God in creation and redemption. The direct references to God's goodness are comparatively sparse and subsidiary, although not for that reason absent. Thus we shall return to the form and content of Irenaeus' teaching on the goodness of God when we discuss the mercy and long-suffering of God, in the context of Irenaeus' response to Marcion. On the primacy of the concept of goodness in Clement, see E.F. Osborn, Clement of Alexandria, (Cambridge: 1957), part II, pp.63-109.
11. For example, II.25.2; 26.3; IV.38.3. We shall return in greater depth to these passages in a later context.
12. Among Irenaeus' near contemporaries we find such a concept of power in Athenagoras. Indeed, Athenagoras' 'proof of the existence of God is based on the Aristotelian principle of causality, as mediated through Middle Platonism': see L.W. Barnard, Athenagoras (Paris:1972)

(12. continued)

p.48. In Irenaeus there is considerable emphasis upon God's power. See II.1.1; 11.1; 33.5; IV.38.1; V.22.2; 32; Dem. 4 etc.. Often the emphasis upon God's power is joined to affirmation of His goodness. Thus in a passage dealing with the power, wisdom and goodness of God he makes wisdom the subject of a separate clause but joins power and goodness together (IV.38.3). Goodness is here an attribute of a supreme act of power, creation out of nothing. In IV.38.1 Irenaeus asserts that for God, 'all things are possible', but insists that there is no point in speculating upon the hypothetical exercise of abstract power.

13. This argument for the resurrection is also found in Justin, 1 Apol. 18f; cf. Acts 26:8.

14. The omnipotence of God is a major topic in contemporary theology, a significant strand of which holds that, in various ways, we should speak of God's self-limitation. Leaving aside ideas such as the death of God, and radical kenosis, we endorse the view that the true form of divine omnipotence is that disclosed in the concrete reality of Jesus Christ. A major thrust of Irenaeus' theology points in just this direction, although the philosophical climate of the second century did not allow him to explore the issues in ways that have been feasible in modern theology.

15. Irenaeus himself admits this plausibility (II.14.8) and popularity (II.30.2). The modern mind is apt to underestimate the wide appeal of the fantastic mythological speculations of the Gnostics. The symbolism is in fact largely psychological, representing an interpretation of the conflicting urges and aspirations within man. In this way Gnosticism injects new life into the dualistic world-view which it shared with the common stock of Middle-Platonist philosophy, and from which it was itself in part derived.

16. The delimitation is important. Although, for Irenaeus, all we say about God refers to what God has done, does, and will do in His creative and redemptive work, God is in fact greater than we are able to comprehend in this way. His repeated rejection of the anthropomorphism of the Gnostics is based on just this belief. For Irenaeus God's patient love for His creation is sovereign and free and thus truly the love of God.

17. In associating the power and richness of God, Irenaeus is claiming that God is infinitely resourceful, as he makes explicit in both passages.

18. Cf. II.2.4; 35.5; IV.21.2; 25.3; 28.2; 32.2; 37.7; 39.4; V.28.2; 36.1.

19. Cf. IV.20.11; III.10.6. Commenting upon IV.14.2, the editors of the Sources Chrétiennes edition of A.H., comment with regard to Irenaeus' concept of the richness of God, 'Elle n'affecte pas Dieu dans son être, mais dans son activité salvifique' (S.C., 100, p.236). Although, as we shall see, Irenaeus does place a parallel emphasis upon the unity and simplicity of God, this does not justify the restriction of the concept of the richness of God to His economic activity, as opposed to His inner being.

20. Cf. V.32.1. The concreteness of the Irenaeian concept of the richness of God reflects His trinitarian nature. Attempts to maintain a concept of divine richness along with a non-trinitarian concept of God can readily lose content and meaning, as B. Hebblethwaite has remarked with specific reference to M. Wiles: '....Wiles' concept of God is that much vaguer, the more he retreats from the differentiations of traditional trinitarian and incarnational theology. He is reduced to affirming the "richness and complexity" of God's being, without being able to justify this assertion, let alone say anything about it'. One God in Trinity, ed. P. Toon and J. Spiceland, (London: Bagster, 1980), p.165.

21. Again it must be said that Irenaeus' conception of the richness of God is concrete and specific rather than abstract and general. The richness of God is exhibited first and foremost in the history of salvation. Thus when Irenaeus states that 'there is one salvation and one God; but the precepts which form the man are numerous, and the steps which lead man to God are not a few' (IV.9.3), it is in the context of his argument that there is a unity between the two covenants, and cannot be taken out of this context to defend a theological or religious relativism. The 'steps which lead man to God' are numerous but successive, and not alternatives from which man can pick and choose. The richness of God according to Irenaeus is fundamentally a Jewish richness. To some extent it should also be seen as evidence of Irenaeus' dependence upon the theological tradition which has come to be known, somewhat loosely and broadly, as Jewish Christianity. Irenaeus' millenarianism most clearly exhibits his dependence upon this tradition, a dependence which resulted passively from the air he breathed as much as actively from choice. Jewish Christianity (cf. J. Daniélou, The Theology of Jewish Christianity, (London, D.L.T., 1964)) laid stress upon both the transcendence and mystery of the supreme God, and upon a bizarre variety of instruments and intermediaries through which He was related to the world. Irenaeus transforms - but retains in a modified form - both these emphases when he stresses both the unity and the richness of God. The formal resemblance here to aspects of Gnosticism is clear, and Gnosticism was itself to a disputed extent dependent upon heterodox Jewish Christianity. This dependence is discussed and defended by R. Wilson, The Gnostic Problem, (London: 1958), esp. ch.7. Irenaeus' theology is to be seen as the result of a debate with Gnosticism, rather than simply as a reaction against it.

22. In IV.37.1 Irenaeus refers to Romans 2:4 'Or do you presume upon the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience'. In his own theology Irenaeus follows Paul's association of the richness of God with his patience and long-suffering in drawing creation to its appointed goal.

23. Cf. III.18.6; IV.21.3; 22.1.

24. Cf. III.20.2; IV.20.8; 37.7; V. 28.4; 32.2.

25. Cf. I.10.3. In III.20 Irenaeus aptly chooses to illustrate the divine patience by reference to the story of Jonah. In IV.20.8 he quotes Exodus 34:6-7 'The Lord God is merciful and gracious and long-suffering.....' His introduction and treatment of the biblical concept of the patience of God illustrates very well his considerable freedom from the Middle-Platonist doctrine of God which has a much greater influence upon his important theological predecessors, the Apologists, and his near contemporary Clement of Alexandria.

26. The suggestion, inter alia, of H. Berkhof, Christian Faith, (E.T. Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 133ff.

27. Marcion should also be mentioned, but I delay consideration of the influence of Irenaeus' opposition to Marcion until consideration of the Irenaean understanding of the mercy and justice of God.

28. Jonas, op.cit., p.183.

29. I.4.2ff.

30. Admittedly, in the Gnostic system these passions are seen as foreign to the Godhead, and the Creator is outside of the Pleroma when creation results from the passions. But they do originate from the Pleroma and for this reason Irenaeus' accusations to a large extent are justifiable. In II.17 Irenaeus traces the passion of Sophia back to Bythus, arguing that God cannot be both impassible and passible.

31. See, for example, J. Daniélou, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, (London: D.L.T., 1973), ch.15.

32. Irenaeus' achievement here is well though briefly described by Norris, op.cit., ch.3.

33. In the Bible there is a partial contrast between the early Hebrew idea that God attains his purposes more or less instantaneously, by the act of His will, and the increasing insistence in the New Testament upon the patience and long-suffering of God, the temptation for Jesus being the wrong use of His miraculous power. Of particular relevance here are the recurring images of growth and harvest in the parables. That is to say, we see in the New Testament a developing emphasis upon the reality of time for God : what, for us, may appear to be delay, is the time necessary to God for the achievement of His purposes. As Greek philosophy developed a clear concept of a supreme God, it solved the same problem by increasingly distancing God from time, thus calling into question its reality. In Irenaeus, we see a tension between his stress on the humanity of Christ, with the associated idea of the progressive salvation of man, and those aspects of the second-century philosophical background which he inevitably took into his theology.

34. Matthew 14:23; 26:36,39, 42,44; Mark 1:35, 6:46, 14.32,35,39; Luke 3:21, 5:16, 9:18, 28,29, 11.1, 16:27, 22.41; John 14:16, 17:9, 15,20.

35. I.8.2.

36. Luke 19:41; John 11:35. Gnostic use of Luke 19:41 is reported in I.20.2.

37. Gen.18.

38. Exodus 32:11-14.

39. To be accurate, he does refer to the episode of Sodom and Gomorrah (IV.31), but not to Abraham's pleas on behalf of the cities.

40. III.20.1.

41. There is, therefore, an important truth enshrined in the concept of divine impassibility, which contemporary theology can tend to overlook. Perhaps the word has been so battered, both by the proximity of the philosophical concept of ἀπαθεια, and by the Patristic debates of the early centuries, that it is difficult to employ it in a reasonably unambiguous fashion. Clearly the modern discussion of the concept of divine suffering raises fundamental questions, which are still in process of clarification. For assessments of the debate, see W. McWilliams, 'Divine Suffering in Contemporary Theology', S.J.T., 33 (1980), pp. 35-53, and R. Bauckham, 'Only the Suffering God can Help' Themelios, 9 (1984), pp. 6-12.

42. See for example, I.7.2; 26.1; III. 18.6.

43. See I.7.2 and III.16. Again there are variations and inconsistencies between different schools, and among our sources for the views of individual schools.

44. In the Gnostic system the Aeon Christ, being easily detachable from Jesus, to an extent occupies the role that might have been allowed for the Spirit. Irenaeus' emphasis upon the unity of Jesus Christ thus makes more room for the development of the doctrine of the Spirit. That with Irenaeus, 'the doctrine of the Spirit is not overlooked, and for the first time it takes its place in an orderly scheme of Christian teaching' (H.B. Swete, The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church, (London, 1912, p.86), has long been recognised.

45. III.17.2.

46. III.17.3.

47. III.18.1.

48. E.g. II.3.1., II.16.7; 20.1; 23.4; IV.19.3.

49. I.28.1; III.23.7. Whether Tatian did hold this view, and his precise relationship to Gnosticism, are debated issues. For an assessment of the evidence, R.M. Grant, 'The Heresy of Tatian', J.T.S., N.S., 5 (1954), pp. 62-68 may be contrasted with J. Daniélou, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, pp.390-398. Daniélou draws attention (p.387) to a significant difference between Tatian and certain other writers: 'For Theophilus the first Adam was, as it were, an imperfect sketch; and this basically is the conception found in Irenaeus, Clement, Tertullian and Methodius. Tatian, on the other hand, ascribes to Adam nobler beginnings, a view in which he displays an affinity with the speculations of Philo, the Gnostics, and the Hermetic writings.'

50. J.T. Nielsen, op.cit.. It is a weakness of this book that it does not even mention Irenaeus' opposition to Tatian.

51. For a perceptive discussion of the relation Irenaeus posits between Adam and his descendants, see L.S. Thornton, Revelation in the Modern World, (London: A. & C. Black, 1950), esp. pp. 149ff. Thornton shows how the isolation of Adam would break the coherence of Irenaeus' theology.

52. Here also it is the Bible rather than Middle Platonism which underlies Irenaeus' doctrine of God. A number of Old Testament texts (Exod.34; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15, 103:8, 145.8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2,

(52. continued)

7:18) expressly link in a credal or liturgical fashion Yahweh's mercy and long-suffering. These are obviously held to be distinctive marks of the God active in the history of Israel.

53. Marcion. Das Evangelium von fremden Gott, (Leipzig: 1921).

54. Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, p.144. Throughout his writings Irenaeus opposes any idea that belief in God comes only with the historical advent of Jesus Christ. This is brought out with special force in the later Demonstration, and could be taken to indicate that with the wane of Gnosticism it is Marcionism that Irenaeus chiefly resists.

55. 'For, like many even in our day, heretics in particular, Marcion had an unhealthy interest in the problem of evil - the origin of it - and his perceptions were numbed by the very excess of his curiosity' (Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem, I.2). Here again we see an underlying link between Marcion and Gnostic thought.

56. Irenaeus opposes Marcion and Tatian in successive chapters of his treatise. (I.27f.). However, there are differences : for example, Tatian, unlike Marcion, believes in the resurrection of the body (Ad Graecos, 6) but it is the resurrection of a body taken from an evil world.

57. Ad Graecos, 7.

58. C.f. III.9.1; 16.6; 25.4.

59. E.g. Dem.69

60. V.27.2.

61. This passage has often been overlooked by those interpreters of Irenaeus who have stressed his teaching on the explicit nature of the Church's belief and tradition (against the corresponding Gnostic secrecy in such matters).

62. For mercy as the key theme in the Epistle to the Romans see C.E.B. Cranfield, The Epistle to the Romans, (Edinburgh: T.&T.Clark, 1979), p.448.

63. C.f. Dem.56

64. Proslogion 9-11. Origen (De Princ., II.5) also makes an interesting attempt to connect the justice and goodness of God. He points out that the Marcionites turn the love of God into mere sentimentality, and the justice of God into indignant hatred. For Origen judgement is the goodness of God 'wishing well to the bad'. But why then does He not save the wicked? 'If He does not desire to do so, He will be no longer good, if He does desire it, and cannot effect it, He will not be omnipotent' (II.5.2). Thus Origen is drawn to suggest that the explicit Scriptural teaching upon judgement must be understood allegorically. His teaching upon the ἀποκατάστασις follows from this impasse. Origen conducts his argument at two levels: the exegetical and the philosophical. The latter is dominant, and at times anticipates Anselm: 'If justice is a different thing from goodness, then, since evil is the opposite of good, and injustice of justice, injustice will doubtless be something else than an evil; and, as in (the Marcionite) opinion, the just man is not good, so

neither will the unjust man be wicked; and again, as the good man is not just, so the wicked man also will not be unjust'. (II.5.3) Origen lacks the proper Christological horizon that should surround discussion of such subjects. Anslem had a more satisfactory (!) doctrine of Atonement, but is weak in handling the vicarious nature of Christ's sacrifice (cf. G.S. Hendry, The Gospel of the Incarnation, (London: S.C.M., p.65). This is to some extent also a problem with Irenaeus.

65. Theophilus von Antiochien Adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenäus, (Berlin: Texte und Untersuchungen 46.2, 1930)

66. Loofs, op.cit., p.432, quoted by M. Widman, 'Irenäus und seiner theologischen Väter', Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 54 (1957) p. 157.

67. M. Widman, op.cit., See also F.Montgomery Hitchcock, 'Loofs' theory of Theophilus of Antioch as a source of Irenaeus', J.T.S. 38, (1937), pp.130-139 and pp. 255-266; idem, 'Loofs' Asiatic Source (IOA) and the Ps-Justin De resurrectione', Z.N.W. 36 (1937) pp.35-60; L.S. Thornton, op.cit., p.118 f.

68. L.W.Barnard, 'Justin Martyr's Eschatology', V.C. 19 (1965), pp.86-98. Cf. E.F. Osborn, Justin Martyr (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1973), pp.197-198. The chief points of uncertainty concern the immortality of the soul and the existence of an intermediate state between death and resurrection.

69. See L.W.Barnard, Justin Martyr, (Cambridge, 1967) p.83.

70. ibid. p.123.

71. ibid. p.124.

72. ibid. p.125.

73. The New Testament places great emphasis upon the concept of the love of God. We are now so used to this emphasis that we are apt to overlook the correction of the common philosophies of the early centuries which this implies. Some theologians of the early Church did recognise the biblical stress upon the love of God - we may mention Ignatius, Origen and Augustine. However, it was all too easy in the second century to rely too much upon the distinction between the transcendence of God and the limitations of man. Most second-century writers whose work survives tend to treat Christ not so much as the revelation of the love of God as the 'reason' of His mind.

74. IV.41.4. There are of course many references to Paul and to the suffering and blood of Christ in the earlier books. E.g. I.24.4; II.20.3; III.11.3; 16.5 etc..

75. E.g. 1 Corinthians 15:50, Romans 8:9. Gnostic use of these texts is discussed at various points in Book Five.

76. V.35.

77. I use the translation of J.P. Smith, Ancient Christian Writers No.16. (Westminster: Newman Press, 1952)

78. Dem. 91-96. Such notions are also present in A.H., albeit with less prominence. See IV.21.3; V.10.1f; III. 17.3.

79. C.E.B. Cranfield, op.cit., p.448: 'It is only where the Church..... fails to understand God's mercy to itself, that it is unable to believe in God's mercy for still unbelieving Israel, and so entertains the ugly and unscriptural notion that God has cast off His people.' Scholars often contrast Paul's lenient attitude with that of Stephen as reported in Acts 7, but they too easily overlook Stephen's final remark upon his own murder at the hands of the Jews: 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' (Acts 7:60)

80. See J.P. Smith, op.cit., p.31

81. L.W. Barnard, Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and their Background (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), p.129; J. Alvarez, 'Apostolic Writings and the Roots of Anti-Semitism', S.P., 13 (Berlin: 1975), pp.69-76.

82. ibid p.53.

83. E.F. Osborn, op.cit., p.4.

84. L.W. Barnard, Studies in the Apostolic Fathers, p.168.

85. Barnabas was a converted Jew who, perhaps for that reason, was very hostile to the Jews. Irenaeus refers to his Gentile parentage in III.12.15.

86. I use this word in the restricted sense of 'pertaining to the Old Testament.' In books on the period with which we are dealing the adjective Jewish tends to be applied a little indiscriminately, as critics of Daniélou's great work The Theology of Jewish Christianity have pointed out.

87. Biblia Patristica I, (Paris; 1975). There are two passing references in Tertullian, but no attempt to explore the significance of such a verse. Neither reference occurs in his Adversus Judaeos, which illustrates well the trend we are describing.

88. Irenaeus makes frequent reference to Paul's letters, but this does not preclude the truth of my contention that he did not fully appreciate them. He did not refer to Romans 7:12: 'The Law is good; and the commandment is holy, and just, and good.' Such omissions may be significant, though arguments from silence must be handled with care and restraint. Although Irenaeus clearly knew the Epistle to the Hebrews, and he quotes it on five occasions, he never refers to those parts of it which present Jesus as the final and true consummation of the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. This is a little surprising, given the positive support which such passages might have given to his concept of ἀνακεφαλαιωσις.

89. While it must be admitted, the inadequacy of Irenaeus' account of the relationship between the Church and Israel should not be overstated. Irenaeus lacks the intensity of the rebuke of the Jews issued by his contemporary from Asia Minor, Melito of Sardis. (On this aspect of

(89. continued)

Melito's theology, see K.W. Noakes, 'Melito of Sardis and the Jews' S.P., 13 (Berlin, 1975), pp.244-249.) Stimulated by his opposition to Marcion, Irenaeus lays considerable stress upon the unity and continuity of the Old and New Testaments. Furthermore, the sociological importance of martyrdom will doubtless have coloured the perception by the early Christians of their relation to all other groups, including the Jews. Perhaps the difficulty in establishing a fruitful understanding of the relation between Christianity and Judaism provides an important cause of the persistent inability of patristic theology to develop a full doctrine of atonement, the legal categories of Anselm ultimately filling the vacuum. Irenaeus' inability to find a proper place for the cross in his theology will concern us at various points in his doctrine of creation.

90. R. Otto, The Idea of the Holy, (Oxford: 1926)

91. D.R. Jones, 'Exposition of Isaiah 1:21-31', S.J.T., 21 (1968) pp.320-329, has put the situation clearly: 'The image of judgement, as popularly understood, is a picture of the deliverance of adverse verdictsNow what this chapter shows is that judgement, properly understood, is itself part of the saving activity of God. This chapter expresses (without explicitly saying so) the holiness of God which consists precisely in the unity of His judgement and His grace. God is holy because His grace judges and His judgement is gracious' (p.328).

92. Notwithstanding the danger of arguments from silence, this omission is worthy of recognition, because Irenaeus is in the company of all other writers up to, and including, Clement and Tertullian: Biblia Patristica I lists no references to this rather significant verse. 56 other references to Luke 17 are listed there, including a reference in Irenaeus (III.14.3) to vv. 11ff..

93. It is true that the New Testament can speak in harsh terms of those who threaten the life of the Christian community. Twice in the Epistles we hear of the somewhat obscure event of the handing over of certain disruptive members to Satan (1 Corinthians 5; 1 Timothy 1). This was evidently a final act of Church discipline, but it is interesting that in both cases, despite the harshness of the sentence, hope is held out for those handed over. The spirit of the man guilty of incest is to be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Hymenaeus and Alexander are delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. Neither of these signs of hope is free from obscurity; however, some parallel with this ecclesiastical handing over to Satan can be drawn with Irenaeus' strictures against Gnostics. What we miss in Irenaeus is the same note of hope as we find accompanying the two New Testament incidents. Is this because Irenaeus does not recognise to the same degree as Paul his own unworthiness for salvation?

What we miss in Irenaeus is an acknowledgement that judgement will be accompanied by what, from our present perspective, will be surprises. This is not to impugn the constancy of God, but merely to recognise our limited (and hardly disinterested!) viewpoints. It has been very difficult for the Church to accept that she cannot predict the course the faithfulness of God will take through history, let alone into eternity. Again, we can perceive the difficulties inherent in the view of tradition which was developing in the second century.

94. Irenaeus sometimes uses 'Wisdom' as a technical term for the Holy Spirit, generally in association with the Second Person of the Trinity spoken of as the Word. We shall return to this restricted use of the term Wisdom. In the present context I am referring to Irenaeus' concept of the 'wisdom' of the whole Godhead. There is doubtless a relationship between these different uses of the term 'Wisdom', but this does not obliterate the distinction.

95. Cf. II.11.1; 25.1; 30.3,9; IV.27.1.

96. Cf. III.22.1.

97. IV.26.1. cf. IV.20.9; 16.1.

98. II.25.2.

99. We shall return to the question of just how successfully Irenaeus linked the transcendence and immanence of God. However, one important consequence of Irenaeus' teaching on the immanence of the transcendent One is an implicit rejection of the fatalism which beset second-century philosophy. This will become explicit elsewhere, but the emphasis upon the love and concern of God for man opens up an outlook which is otherwise closed from one or other side of its dualism, the Stoics from the inside of creation and the Platonists from the outside. Whether Irenaeus is thus able to free himself entirely from the necessitarian atmosphere of second-century intellectual culture is another question we will raise in connection with his doctrine of creation.

100. Colossians 1 28; 2:3; 3:16.

101. Ephesians 1:9,17; 3:10.

102. 1 Corinthians 1:17, 21, 25, 30; 2:1-5, 7, 13; cf. 1Cor. 3:18f.

103. τελειος. Scholars disagree over whether Paul intentionally uses a technical term taken from the mystery religions, or whether he merely draws a contrast with the υπηριος of 1 Cor. 3:1. The latter option is adopted here.

104. More verses (incidentally) which are not quoted in Irenaeus' extant writings.

105. This is made explicit in II.18.1: 'For wherever there is a want of foresight, and an ignorance of the course of useful progress, there wisdom does not exist'. Naturally, there is an element of mockery of the Gnostic account of the misbehaviour of the reckless Aeon Sophia when, especially in the early books of A.H., Irenaeus develops his understanding of the wisdom of God.

106. IV.19.3.

107. Any conception of divine omniscience on the part of the Gnostics - which, given their exaltation of ignorance, is pretty minimal - is absorbed into their fatalism. Irenaeus takes the omniscience of God very much for granted, as he did in the case of the omnipotence of God. This is illustrated by the comment of Irenaeus upon the reply of Cain to God: 'But being asked where his brother was, he said, "I know not; am I my

(107. continued)

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.' (III.23.4) The superiority of God over man is a constant theme with Irenaeus.

108. Cf. II.3.2; 13.3, 8; 28.4; IV. 11.2. For the division in Gnosticism between thought and will, see I.12.1.. The form of these various positive statements by Irenaeus bears some relation to a passage from Xenophanes, probably mediated to Irenaeus in a doxographical collection, but he has made them his own.

109. E.g., IV.6.7; 20.5,6.

110. E.g. the extract from IV.29.2 quoted above; cf. IV.39.4.

111. Cf. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics II.2, pp.34-76; John Farrelly, Predestination, Grace and Free Will (London: Burns & Oates, 1963) pp.1-37. Both authors, whose own views on predestination are markedly different, reproduce a wealth of historical information.

112. 1 Apol. 44. Cf. Osborn, Justin Martyr, pp. 149-153; L.W. Barnard, Justin Martyr, p.78.

113. See Farrelly op.cit. pp.76-78. Cf. H. Chadwick, Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition, (Oxford: O.U.P., 1966) p.119.

114. See II.33.5. This conception also features in Justin, 1Apol. 45.

115. One also has in mind here the reflections of St. Paul upon the mystery of election, pre-eminently in Romans 9-11.

116. For Irenaeus the notion that God knows all things directly involves that He is also present to all things. We have here two ways of looking at essentially the same thing. The two ideas are explicitly linked in IV. 19.3.

117. Cf. II.1.5; 3.1; 4.2; 8.2f; 13.7; 35.3; III.11.8; IV.6.2; 20.1; V.2.3; V.18.1. Irenaeus may have been influenced here by the Shepherd of Hermas, whose work in one place he quotes as authoritative. Hermas had written: 'First of all, believe that there is one God who created and arranged all things, and made all things out of nothing. He contains all things and is alone uncontained.' (Mand. 1.1.)

118. The idea that God is a light which penetrates and banishes darkness is important for Irenaeus. God is active and purposeful. In II.28.4 Irenaeus refers to God as 'all active Spirit, all light'.

119. II.1.1; 1.5; 3.1; 35.3; III.11.8; IV.6.2; 20.1; 20.6.

120. I.22.1; 10.2,4; 14.4; 33.2; IV.20.2; 38.3.

121. That God fills all things, and not merely the realms of heaven, again illustrates the manner in which Irenaeus develops the theology commonly held by his contemporaries and predecessors - see, for example, Athenagoras, Legatio 8.7 where it is said that 'God fills that which is

(121. continued)

above the world'. R. Norris, op.cit., p.69f., has also drawn attention to a certain contrast with Justin Martyr at this point: '.....it is impossible not to notice a significant difference between Irenaeus and Justin. For Justin, the chasm between generate and ingenerate existence, used to express the transcendence of the Creator over his creation, seems to imply a separation of the one from the other - a separation which is only overcome by the mediating agency of the Logos'.

122. Col. 1:19; 2:9; a variety of passages present cognate ideas. The Spirit or Christ dwells in believers, who can be called the 'temple' of God. Irenaeus' anthropology, with its crucial place for the Spirit of God, points in the same direction.

123. III.16 is a good example of his teaching upon the oneness of Christ as God and man, and shows very clearly the Gnostic background against which Irenaeus is thinking in his Christology.

124. The Gnostics based their systems upon the antithetical presence within the Godhead of passion, and a profound and deep rest, the passion of Sophia being wholly a bad occurrence. With one or two exceptions the general cultural and philosophical environment of the early church regarded 'passion' as sub-human, let alone appropriate to God. From a modern perspective we might wish to oppose Gnostic theology by reference to the proper, if differentiated, passion of the whole Godhead. Such an option was not readily available to a second-century theologian, as is illustrated by the case of Clement of Alexandria, who was even more emphatic than Irenaeus that God is above all passion. The view that men acquire wrong ideas of God because they are slaves to their passions, naturally produces the fundamental notion of God as a bare unity, with a consequent description in negative terms. See E.F. Osborn, Clement of Alexandria, ch.2.

125. E.P. Meijering, God Being History (Amsterdam : North-Holland, 1975), p. 56f: discusses the omnipresence of God in Irenaeus, but fails to connect it with his associated belief that God contains all things. Thus he is drawn to claim that, for Irenaeus, a 'gulf' exists between God and creation, and that 'God acts from outside the world'.

126. II.25.3; IV.38.1; cf.II.34.2; IV.5.1; 6.2; 11.1.

127. For a comparative discussion of the concept of the transcendence of God in Middle Platonism and Hellenistic Judaism (with Gnosticism assessed in the same context!) see J. Daniélou, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, ch.15.

128. A good discussion of the interaction of these two concepts of divine transcendence is provided by A.H. Armstrong and R.A. Markus, Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy, (London: D.L.T., 1960), ch.2. The hints in Plato of the limitlessness of God not precluding His immanence were largely lost in the increasing stress in philosophical works upon His remoteness, as exemplified by the De Mundo, probably from the late first century B.C.. One reason for this development was a suspicion that the idea of infinity was an irrational concept.

129. A brief account of the problems of the use of spatial concepts in theology is to be found in T.F. Torrance, Space, Time and Incarnation (Oxford: O.U.P., 1969). Perhaps surprisingly this book makes no mention of either Irenaeus or his Gnostic opponents. However, his account of Athanasius' teaching on the relation of God to space is similar to that provided by Irenaeus, except that Athanasius expresses himself in a more thorough and consistently trinitarian manner. A problem with the Gnostics, as with the Arians, would then be seen to arise from their uncritical assumption of a 'receptacle' concept of space. Irenaeus' arguments are less concerned with the origins of the receptacle notion of space in Greek philosophy, and bear directly upon the related issue of anthropomorphism. Ultimately Athanasius and Irenaeus overcome the problems encountered in Arian and Gnostic thought only by rejecting any concept of separation between the sensible (αἰσθητός) and intelligible (νοητός) worlds. Origen rejected the 'receptacle' notion of space (pp. 12,64), but his retention of this dualism between the sensible and intelligible worlds (or Becoming and Being) meant that the sensible world was given a greater autonomy than Irenaeus would have allowed. From this followed Origen's belief that the universe had existed eternally in the mind of God. At the same time, and quite naturally, Origen could suggest that God had endowed creation with His own rationality. This alternation between dualism and monism is still a problem for Irenaeus and Athanasius, but less so, due to their combination of a belief in the freedom and transcendence of God, who creates out of nothing, with an equally strong affirmation that God holds creation in being and interacts with it. The unending challenge here is that of articulating the relation yet distinction between the freedom and necessity involved in the interaction of God with creation.

130. Here, too, Irenaeus mocks the spatial anthropomorphism of the Gnostics: 'And that they are truly "spiritual", inasmuch as a certain part of the Father of the universe has been deposited in their souls.....' (I.19.3)

131. Just how successfully the Apologists pressed the available philosophical accounts of God into the service of theology is considered by R.M. Grant, The Early Christian Doctrine of God (University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville: 1966) ch.1. A central point of dispute concerns the ability of negative descriptions of God to connote positive attributes. G.L. Prestige, God in Patristic Thought, (2nd. Edn., London: S.P.C.K., 1952), p.41, has claimed that, 'The philologically privative terms connote ultimate self-dependency and universal responsibility, and their connotation is therefore positive rather than negative'. E.F. Osborn, The Beginning of Christian Philosophy, (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1981), p.66, has challenged Prestige's suggestion, which is certainly in need of some qualification.

132. See. R.M. Grant, op.cit. p. 5ff., and J. Daniélou, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, p.328, for some examples.

134. Irenaeus does not with any clarity make the point that the stress on transcendence is also in its own way the product of an extreme anthropomorphism. It is arrived at by arguing negatively from human existence and perception; hence the two extremes of Gnosticism have the characteristic feature of anthropomorphism as their common base.

135. For a similar distinction between love and greatness as determining our ability or inability to speak of God, cf. IV.20.1, 4,5. The attempt of R. Gregg and D. Groh, Early Arianism - A View of Salvation, (London: S.C.M., 1981), p.10, to equate these passages with statements of Arius is hardly successful, for it fails to perceive the anti-Gnostic context of Irenaeus' assertions.

136. In the Demonstration Irenaeus tends to draw a sharper distinction between the Father and the Son than is commonly implied in A.H. This leads to a tendency in the later work to stress the transcendence and unknowability of the Father, although at the same time, there is a great emphasis upon the role of the Son in revealing God. He begins his credal summary: 'God, the Father, uncreated, beyond grasp, invisible, one God the maker of all; this is the first and foremost article of our faith'. (Dem. 6)

137. These differences are explored in detail by C. Welch, The Trinity in Contemporary Theology, (London: S.C.M., 1953), especially chapters 2 and 7. I select Barth to illustrate the view that our knowledge of God genuinely reflects His inner Being, because it is a basic and repeated premiss, or exegetical conclusion, in the Church Dogmatics. However, it is an axiom which originates in explicit form in the patristic debates during the Arian crisis. It is assumed by the defenders of the homousios, as T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconciliation, (London: G. Chapman, 1975), p.222f., has described in relation to Athanasius. Cf. also, Hilary, De Trinitate, II.8., who, like Irenaeus, travelled between Gaul and Asia Minor. The contrasting reasons for their journeys (missionary zeal and ecclesiastical exile) are perhaps symbolic of other differences between the second and fourth centuries!

138. There is a parallel to what I am suggesting with regard to knowledge of God in the epistemology of problem-solving as described by Michael Polanyi (e.g. The Tacit Dimension, (London: R.K.P., 1966), pp.22-24), who took his cue from the Platonic dialogue The Meno. Plato argued that the task of solving a problem is logically absurd and therefore impossible. For if we already know the solution, there is no occasion to search for it; while if we do not know it, we cannot search for it, since we do not know what we are looking for. The task of solving a problem must indeed appear self-contradictory unless we admit that we can possess true intimations of the unknown. Thus every advance in knowledge is guided by our power for seeing the presence of some hidden aspect of truth behind yet incomprehensible clues pointing increasingly toward this yet unknown aspect of reality. In an analogous way I suggest that our search for understanding or apprehension of God must be guided by our ability (admittedly given by God) to sense that which is true concerning God, and that which is true concerning God must reflect in some immediate way how God truly is.

139. E.g. I.17; II.6.3; II.7; II.8; II.19.6; II.20; II.24. We shall return in another context to consider the Gnostic and Irenaeian concepts of the image of God in creation. The emphatic connection between the Gnostic theory of imaging, and their speculative anthropomorphism, is well brought out in IV.19.1f., where Irenaeus recalls and summarises the arguments presented in Book Two: 'For, as I have repeatedly shown, such persons will find it necessary to be continually finding out types of types, and images of images, and will never fix their minds on one and the true God. For their imaginations range beyond God....To these persons one may with justice say....To what distance above God do you lift up your imaginations?'

140. II.14.3f.

141. II.8.

142. This refers to the Gnostic threefold classification of men. Only the spiritual men image the Pleroma, to which they shall properly and necessarily return.

143. This does not imply that Irenaeus holds that the Son and Spirit were generated as a prelude to, or in association with, the act of creation - a view with which theologians before and after Irenaeus had difficulty. It is the decision for incarnation, rather than the generation of the eternal Logos, which is the act of God determined on behalf of man.

144. II.16.2. The 365 heavens image the 365 days in the year.

145. Hippolytus, Refut. VII.8f.

146. Cf. Jonas, op.cit., p.288.

147. There is considerable literature upon this aspect of Barth's thought, much of which attempts to narrow the distinction he admittedly made early in his theological career and in a somewhat polemical context. But the basic distinction remains valid for the present purpose.

148. See L.W.Barnard, Athenagoras, p.115.

149. Ibid. p.45: 'Athenagoras implies that God, the cause of man, is Being and that Being is related by analogy to the being that man has. It is doubtful if the Middle-Platonist philosophers by Athenagoras' day had evolved this idea of the analogy of being from the hints Plato gave. Athenagoras, in fact, may well be a pioneer in this connexion.' The denial of creation out of nothing goes naturally enough with the concept of analogy of being, as Plato and Aristotle witness. Later in the history of theology we do indeed find both affirmed, but is it not the case that the doctrine of creation out of nothing had been weakened, having become part of the theological furniture handed down from generation to generation rather than an important and influential axiom? The Reformers certainly felt the need to reaffirm the primacy of the will of God in His relation to created existence, and this involved giving a new precedence (i.e. restoring Irenaeus' precedence) to the doctrine of creation out of nothing. Cf. T.F. Torrance, Theological Science, (Oxford: O.U.P., 1969) p.101.

150. A different emphasis is found in Origen, who acknowledges the finality of the Apostolic teaching upon the content of the threefold rule of faith, but then goes on to indicate the many gaps in the teaching of the Church, gaps in our knowledge and understanding which he will try to remove (De Princ. I. Praef.)

151. We must be careful not to expect a ratiocinative concept of knowledge from Irenaeus. In the paragraph following that quoted above he insists that Christian knowledge is a matter of life and love as well as of the intellect. Hence Christians, unlike the heretics, are willing to be martyred for their faith (IV.33.9). (The degree to which Irenaeus was mistaken when he wrote, or the extent to which future

events were to prove him mistaken, need not concern us.) Irenaeus often brings into intimate connection the love and knowledge of God by men (e.g. IV.12.2; IV.20.1). The Gnostic conception of knowledge, although presented as a form of mystical enlightenment inasmuch as it takes the recipient out of this unpleasant world, is in fact basically speculative and intellectual. The New Testament, like Gnosticism, forges a close link between knowledge and salvation. The chief difference is that in the New Testament it is a matter not of doctrinal enlightenment but of knowledge of the Son of God (e.g. Eph.4:13). He, Jesus Christ, is the mystery of God (Col.2.2). This knowledge embraces our whole existence, and is therefore μετανοια, the repentance of the whole man. We have seen that for Irenaeus God contains and pervades all things. St. Paul takes this a step further and draws the conclusion that to know God can only be the result of being known by Him (Gal.4:9; 1Cor.8:3; 13:12). St. Paul can put this in an even sharper fashion: to know God is to have the mind of Christ himself (1Cor. 2:16). These are bold expressions adopted by St. Paul, and it is not surprising that Irenaeus, faced with a Gnosticism which exhibited a certain formal similarity to the teaching of St. Paul, chose to emphasise the limits of the knowledge man can have of God. As in the case of his understanding of the wisdom of God, Irenaeus does not fully embrace the Christocentricity of the New Testament.

152. II.28.6. Almost certainly Irenaeus would have been prepared to say more on this subject if he had had to combat Arianism as well as Gnosticism.

153. The chief question Irenaeus has mentioned in the passage immediately preceding II.28.8 as incapable of solution by human effort is the cause and origin of evil. 'It becomes us, therefore, to leave the knowledge of this matter to God...and not to rush to such an extreme danger, that we will leave nothing in the hands of God, even though we have received only a measure of grace.' (II.28.7) Again we must maintain that to assert that we have received only a measure of grace indicates that Irenaeus has not fully understood that in Jesus Christ the mystery of God hidden from the ages, while indeed remaining a mystery, has now been revealed.

154. Many of the arguments used by Athanasius in opposing the Arians are prefigured in Irenaeus' opposition to Gnosticism. The Arians did not have an elaborate myth of the generation of a pleroma of 30 Aeons, and concentrated upon the relation between the Father and Son. Athanasius repeatedly challenges their over-literal interpretation of the biblical metaphor of paternity and sonship. Athanasius, like Irenaeus before him, emphasised the need to interpret the Scriptures as a whole, in the light of the received faith. It is the importation of biological language, understood with a good deal of literalism, into theological discussion that the Arians and Gnostics share. Because the worst features of Gnosticism are not present in Arianism, Athanasius is required - not without a reverent reluctance on his part - to penetrate more deeply into what can and cannot be said concerning the nature of the relations existing within the immanent Trinity. The resultant defence of the doctrine of the homousios led to less emphasis in Athanasius upon the essential unknowability of God than we find in Irenaeus. Athanasius remarks upon the debt of the Arians to Valentinian Gnosticism in Contra Arianos, III.60.

155. W.R. Schoedel, 'Enclosing, Not Enclosed : The Early Christian Doctrine of God', in Early Christian Literature and the Classical

Intellectual Tradition, ed. W.R. Schoedel and R.L. Wilken (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979), pp.75-86, has drawn attention to Philo's reversal of the Platonic connexion between the limited and the rational, thus conceiving God as transcending the cosmos, rather than being (as in Greek Philosophy) a factor in the totality of things. Yet, as Schoedel notes (p.76), this change also introduced 'the emphasis, perhaps for the first time, on the idea that the essence of God is unknowable'. Gnosticism would seem both to reintroduce the connexion between the limited and the rational with its pervasive system of hierarchical demarcation and imaging, and also to take further the speculation upon the essential incomprehensibility of the supreme God. We can see, then, how Irenaeus, in rejecting the connexion between the rational and the limited as this presented itself to him in Gnosticism, and in rejecting the extreme doctrine of divine incomprehensibility, could nevertheless retain the modified type of understanding of the ineffability of God which (perhaps) had its ultimate source in Philo. There is supporting evidence in Irenaeus' theodicy, which depends upon a dichotomy between created and uncreated existence not unlike that which one also sees in Philo.

156. This chapter contains many trinitarian passages, linking the activity of the Word and Wisdom, the Son and Holy Spirit, throughout salvation-history.

157. The relation between the Gospel of John and such Johannine sayings as those found in Matthew 11:27 and Luke 10:22 is not easy to determine, but the presence of such sayings in Matthew and Luke should warn us against making too sharp a division between the synoptic gospels and the Fourth Gospel at this point.

158. We have already touched upon the underlying issues here in our consideration of Irenaeus' teaching upon the mercy and righteousness of God, and we shall return to them in the contexts of the divine motive for creation, and of the freedom of the will.

159. Cf. IV.15.1. 'For God at the first, indeed, warning them by means of natural precepts, which from the beginning He had implanted in mankind, that is, by means of the Decalogue.....'; V.8.2. '....those who are subject to the Spirit, and who in all things walk according to the light of reason, does the Apostle properly term "spiritual", because the Spirit of God dwells in them.' Irenaeus' thoughts are connected with his idea that to have life is to possess the Spirit of God, an aspect of his anthropology to which we shall return. Irenaeus' attempt to see relationship with God as the sole basis of the life of man may have influenced his remarks upon the universal awareness of God among men.

160. God is referred to as 'life' in II.13.9, as we shall see below.

161. That Irenaeus knew more of ancient philosophy and culture than has sometimes been allowed has been recognised in recent years. See R.M. Grant 'Irenaeus and Hellenistic Culture', H.T.R., 42 (1949) pp.41-51; W.R. Schoedel, 'Philosophy and Rhetoric in the Adversus Haereses of Irenaeus', V.C., 13 (1959), pp.22-32. But his fundamental guides are Scripture and tradition, alongside which he sees no essential place for secular learning. Nevertheless, given his relatively strong doctrine of creation, we must be careful not to press Irenaeus' occasional remarks too far. One recalls the story concerning Karl Barth, who, when asked to explain the place of reason in his theology, is reported to have said, simply: 'I Use it!'

162. Here Irenaeus reverses a trend which was apparent in the Apologists, and which reasserted itself in Clement and in much theology of the third century.

163. R.A. Norris, has drawn attention to this scholarly neglect of Irenaeus' doctrine of God, which he regards as Irenaeus' 'central concern'; and he adds the suggestive comment: 'It may be the case that this neglect of Irenaeus' central concern has a tendency to introduce a serious distortion into contemporary appreciations and criticism of his work' ('The Transcendence and Freedom of God: Irenaeus, the Greek Tradition and Gnosticism', in Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition, p.89). Although useful, Norris' essay presents only a very truncated account of Irenaeus' doctrine of God, chiefly due to his self-imposed restriction chiefly to examine material from Book Two of A.H.,...alone.

CHAPTER TWO

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

Introduction

'The Trinitarian passages in Irenaeus are numerous, but not all of the same kind'.¹ Such a judgement is empirically correct, although recognition of the diversity of expression in Irenaeus can divert attention from the inner thrust of his theology. In this area, above all, later writers have often attempted to award Irenaeus (perhaps limited) marks for orthodoxy, without making sufficient allowance for the fact that he wrote in an age which did not, as far as we can tell, set examinations upon such subjects. Up to a point, questioning Irenaeus from the perspective of later trinitarian theology is fruitful, providing that it is done with an openness to the conceptuality and mode of expression of a previous century. We shall not attempt in detail to exonerate Irenaeus from the charges of modalism and subordinationism, although at the appropriate points we shall refer to the continuing debates upon such subjects. Our aim is rather to identify and assess the basic shape of Irenaeus' doctrine of the Trinity, as this can be perceived amid and through the variety of models and expressions which he employs. It is commonly agreed that Irenaeus conceives and presents his theology of the Trinity in close association with the wider domain of his theology of God and creation, and thus our discussion will materially bear upon the overarching theme of this thesis.

The Deity of Christ and the Unity of God.

So far as we are able to judge from the surviving documents, both canonical and extra-canonical, a sense of salvation dominated the life

and experience of the Christians of the first 150 years of the Church. This may be rather exaggerated by Ignatius,² or insufficiently emphasised by the Apologists, but such variations are within tolerable limits.³ From this sense of salvation the belief arose that with Jesus Christ one had to do with God, the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth.⁴ Jaroslav Pelikan has drawn together intimations of the deity of Jesus Christ from different areas of the life and literature of emergent Christianity:⁵

The oldest surviving sermon of the Christian Church after the New Testament opened with the words: 'Brethren, we ought so to think of Jesus Christ as of God, as of the judge of the living and dead. And we ought not to belittle our salvation; for when we belittle him, we expect also to receive little'. (2 Clement 1:1-2)

The oldest surviving account of the death of a Christian martyr contained the declaration: 'It will be impossible for us to forsake Christ.....or to worship any other. For him, being the Son of God, we adore, but the martyrs..... we cherish'. (Martyrdom of Polycarp 17:2-3)

The oldest surviving pagan report about the Church described Christians as gathering before sunrise and 'singing a hymn to Christ as though to (a) god'. (Pliny, Epistle 10 96.7)

The oldest surviving liturgical prayer of the Church was a prayer addressed to Christ: 'Our Lord, come!' (I Cor. 16:22)

It was, and is, a long way from this widely held belief that Jesus Christ should appropriately be spoken of as divine, to the trinitarian and christological credal formulae of the fourth and fifth centuries. Considerable controversy,⁶ investigation and clarification were to intervene, and necessarily so, because the doctrines of the Church are neither obviously self-evident nor logically derivable from statements of Holy Scripture. This latter point, in particular, became apparent to Irenaeus in his reflections upon Gnostic theology. The Gnostics were by no means disinclined to appeal to Scripture to prove or support their case.⁷ A considerable part of A.H. is devoted to refuting various instances of Gnostic exegesis of the emerging New Testament, and the

exposition of Old Testament testimonia dominates the Demonstration.

This systematic concentration upon exposition of Scripture in Irenaeus is, at least to some degree, a new feature⁸ in the evolution of theology; in part it is a natural development, but in part it is a development influenced by the form of Gnostic theology. Irenaeus makes two inter-related main criticisms of Gnostic exegesis. In the first place, the Gnostics disregard the order and context, that is, the straightforward meaning, of the Scriptures, and, in the second place, they interpret ambiguous and enigmatic passages by those which are even less clear:

They gather their views from other sources than the Scriptures; and, to use a common proverb, they strive to weave ropes of sand.....In doing so, however, they disregard the order and connection of the Scriptures, and so far as in them lies, dismember and destroy the truth. (I.8.1)

For by the fact that they thus endeavour to explain ambiguous passages of Scripture.....they affix a more important to a less important question. For no question can be solved by means of another which itself awaits solution; nor.....can an ambiguity be explained by means of another ambiguity, or enigmas by means of another greater enigma, but things of such character receive their solution from those which are manifest, and consistent, and clear. (II.10.1)

To the Gnostics Irenaeus puts the counter-claim:

The entire Scriptures, the prophets and the Gospels, can be clearly, unambiguously, and harmoniously understood by all.... since they proclaim that one only God, to the exclusion of all others, formed all things by His Word.....and since the very system of creation to which we belong testifies, by what falls under our notice, that one Being made and governs it, those persons will seem truly foolish who blind their eyes to such a clear demonstration.⁹ (II.27.2)

Irenaeus here brushes over both the obscurity of some parts of Scripture, and the mysterious and unusual character of the meaning clearly intended elsewhere in Scripture. What he feels is clear above all is the fact that there is and can be only one God. This is argued at length in Book Two of A.H.¹⁰, against the charge that the Gnostics both divided the Godhead, and confessed an unknown Bythus who had no attributes

capable of expression in human language. This opposition to the Gnostic account of God is filled out with a doctrine of the many attributes of the one God. However, more needed to be said in defence of Catholic Christianity than a simple appeal to the unity of God declared in Scripture and creation. The growing authority of the emergent canon of Scripture demanded, in the face of alternative exegesis, and especially the sustained alternative offered by Gnosticism, an authoritative interpretation.¹¹ In this context, Irenaeus developed his conception of the rule of truth,¹² by reference to which alone would Scripture receive accurate interpretation. It is important to recognise that by this expression, and its cognates, he did not mean a particular credal formula which found (or should find) universal acceptance, or indeed any formula as such, but the actual material body of the faith which was possessed and cherished by the Catholic Church in every time and place.¹³ Obviously, this faith both can and should find expression in language and formula, but such expression is seen by Irenaeus as subsidiary, and subject to control by the ultimately ineffable rule of truth itself.

Although he does not use the terminology, doubtless due to its easy affinity to Gnostic allegorization, there is a type of spirit/letter model of Scripture and doctrine in Irenaeus.¹⁴ Certainly, both Scripture and doctrine are spiritual:

....what ground is there for complaint, if, in regard to those things which we investigate in the Scriptures (which are throughout spiritual), we are able by the grace of God to explain some of them, while we must leave others in the hands of God.....(II.28.3)

....that well-groomed system which tends to man's salvation, namely, our faith, which, having been received from the Church, we do preserve, and which always, by the Spirit of God, renewing its youth, as if it were some precious deposit in an excellent vessel, causes the vessel itself containing it to renew its youth also. (III.24.1)

It is in this context of the correct exposition of Scripture that we should view the Irenaeian doctrine of the Trinity. Although there are numerous trinitarian passages, the doctrine of the Trinity is not an independent theme in his writings. Hence Irenaeus was not concerned, as later writers would be, to guard and systematise his expressions. All the credal summaries in the Demonstration and the most important embodied in A.H. are trinitarian in structure,¹⁵ but of varying content. There are also a surprising number of credal summaries which ignore the third article,¹⁶ which fact serves to illustrate the flexible approach adopted by Irenaeus to a formulation of trinitarian doctrine. His trinitarian theology is designed to give organic structure or body to his fundamental belief in the unity of God, as this belief is tested exegetically in the light of its presence in the liturgical and catechetical tradition. Thus it is the case that the problem of reconciling the oneness and threeness of God first comes under serious discussion in Book Three of A.H., when Irenaeus begins his connected exegetical defence of the conclusions reached against Gnostics in Book Two. The trinitarian rule of truth functioned, then, to use a modern expression, as an exegetical blueprint whose form was as much implicit as explicit, securing the truths that salvation was real, of God, and addressed to creation as a whole. It was important for Irenaeus that the rule of truth was characterised by a structure which directly reflected the self-revelation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the redemption of creation. It is the uncovering of this structure which is Irenaeus' aim in A.H., and hence the frequent occurrence of trinitarian motifs and allusions, but no independent trinitarian theme. These various points are well illustrated in the following summary of his theology which Irenaeus provides:

And all those other points which I have shown the prophets to have uttered by means of so long a series of

Scriptures, he who is truly spiritual will interpret by pointing out, in regard to every one of the things which have been spoken, to what special point in the dispensation of the Lord it referred, and (by thus exhibiting) the entire system of the work of the Son of God, knowing always the same God, and always acknowledging the same Word of God, although He has (but) now been manifested to us; and acknowledging also at all times the same Spirit of God, though in these last times. He be newly poured out upon us, and upon mankind itself from the creation to the end of the world: from whom such as believe God, and follow His Word, obtain the salvation which is of Him.
(IV.33.15)

It is in this overall key that we should consider Irenaeus' doctrine of the Trinity. The tradition of the Church demanded that in a real, if undefined, sense Jesus was the divine redeemer, and the particular challenge of Gnosticism required that certain questions be posed and answered. The trust in God as revealed in Jesus, which accompanied the experience of salvation characteristic of early Christianity, carried implications which necessitated theological expression. The peculiar difficulty bequeathed by the implicit equation of God and Jesus of Nazareth led theology in the direction of a doctrine of God as triune, in order to safeguard the sovereign reality of the God who both created and sustains the universe, without prejudice to His ability to become incarnate. The doctrine of the Trinity is therefore to be seen as an attempt to explicate Christian identity : the identity primarily of the God who creates and redeems, but also of the man who experiences this God. The process by which the implicit beliefs of an individual or cultural group are rendered explicit has been the subject of extensive study in the modern era, and with hindsight we should not be unduly surprised that the development of trinitarian theology was such a slow, even painful, process.¹⁷ With Irenaeus, we are witnessing a relatively early stage in the process of explicit definition, although, because the implicit underlying experience was identical with that of later theologians, the outlines of subsequent

developments can often be seen. But certain themes were naturally dominant in the late second century, chief among them being the basic question of the unity of God.¹⁸

Unity is a pervasive theme of A.H., and Irenaeus has often been accused of modalism.¹⁹ Perhaps his contention for the unity of Jesus Christ, Old and New Testaments, and so forth, does reflect too automatically upon his consideration of the Trinity, especially in passages which occur in the earlier part of A.H., where Irenaeus reacts forcibly to the Gnostic account of the production of separated Aeons. Two examples may be cited:

For if He produced intelligence, then He who did thus produce intelligence must be understood, in accordance with their views, as a compound and corporeal Being... (II.13.5)

Each one of them must be understood as being completely separated from every other, even as men are not mixed with nor united with one to the other, but each having a distinct shape of his own, and a definite sphere of action.....qualities characteristic of a body, and not of a spirit. Let them therefore no longer speak of the Pleroma as being spiritual, or of themselves as 'spiritual', if indeed their Aeons sit feasting with the Father, just as if they were men. (II.17.3)

It is significant that closely associated with both these extracts are found instances of the Irenaeian distinction between the ineffable greatness, and the love of God of which we can at least speak (II.13.4 and II.17.11). Such a distinction, whose validity was considered in the previous chapter, could easily provoke modalist or 'economic' tendencies in Irenaeus' doctrine of the Trinity, but these have to be assessed in the light of the polemical and relatively primitive context in which he wrote. A great many passages clearly show that Irenaeus carefully distinguished the Son from the Father. There is evidence that a development occurred in Irenaeus' conception of the distinction between Father and Son between A.H. and the later Demonstration. F.R.Montgomery

Hitchcock has shown ²¹ that in the Demonstration, 'the Monarchia of the Father is more pronounced, while the Being and Initiative of the Son assume a unique importance in the economy of creation and man'. Montgomery Hitchcock has in mind here, in particular, the comparison between the credal summaries in Irenaeus' two works;²¹ but A.H. does not lack passages which present the trinitarian shape of Christian belief in direct connection with the economy of creation and salvation. An example is given above in the extract from IV.33.15, and the monarchia of the Father is well brought out in the following passage:

By this arrangement, therefore and these harmonies, and a sequence of this nature, man, a created and organised being, is rendered after the image and likeness of the uncreated God, - 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. (IV.39.3)

This passage provides a good summary of Irenaeus' theology as a whole, and illustrates why, in a thesis whose orientation is towards his theology of creation, substantial attention is being paid to the doctrine of God, which cannot be disentangled from it. Furthermore, it shows how the concept of the divine unity in Irenaeus is interpreted much more in terms of a rich harmony than of a lifeless uniformity.

The harmony is presented as close, and the concept of the unity of God is always near the surface. Irenaeus never uses the expression of Justin Martyr, 'numerically other', to describe the relation of the Son to the Father,²² and does not follow Justin in attributing Old Testament theophanies solely to the pre-existent Son. It has been argued that Irenaeus was dependent upon Justin's exegesis of Old Testament theophanies,²³ and often these are attributed by Irenaeus to the Son or Word; but whereas, due to his rigid concept of the transcendence of

the Father, derived from Middle Platonism, Justin always refers theophanies to the Son or Word, Irenaeus, whose concept of the transcendence of the Father is much less rigid, can speak of the theophany of the whole Trinity:

Since, therefore, Abraham was a prophet, and saw in the Spirit the day of the Lord's coming, and the dispensation of His suffering....The Lord, therefore, was not unknown to Abraham, whose day he desired to see; nor again, was the Lord's Father, for he had learned from the Word of the Lord, and believed Him; wherefore it was accounted to him by the Lord for righteousness. For faith towards God justifies a man; and therefore he said, 'I will stretch forth my hand to the most high God, who made the heaven and the earth.' (IV.5.5)

And so too Rahab the harlot, while she condemned herself as a Gentile, guilty of all sins, did nevertheless receive the three explorers who were exploring the whole earth, and hid them in her house, the Father I mean and the Son, with the Holy Spirit. (IV.20.12)

This is a most interesting development in Christian theology, and pre-figures the later dogma Opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt.²⁴

With Irenaeus we are beginning to see the type of dialectical development of the doctrine of the Trinity which characterised later theology, a sense of the diverse economic structure of the history of creation and salvation being balanced by an emphasis upon the unity of being and operation in God.²⁵

An equally interesting development, novel in extant Christian literature, which similarly reflects his desire to hold together both the richness and unity of the divine being and operation, is Irenaeus' assertion of God:

He is a simple, uncompounded Being, without diverse members, and altogether like, and equal to Himself, since He is wholly understanding, and wholly spirit, and wholly thought and wholly intelligence, and wholly reason, and wholly hearing and wholly seeing, and wholly light, and the whole source of all that is good. (II.13.3)

The choice here, if a nominalist interpretation is ruled out, is

either to view this passage as highly paradoxical,²⁶ or to ask if it does not fit rather well into the Irenaeian doctrine of God. While I would not wish to insist that Irenaeus is entirely clear and consistent, I would contend that the presence of this sentence in the important Chapter 13 of Book Two, from which we have already adduced several quotations, contributes towards a conceptual reconstruction of the doctrine of God as a rich but simple triunity. Irenaeus is claiming, with a degree of apophaticism,²⁷ that the supreme perfection of God, as indicated by the multiplicity and diversity of attributes which He not only has but is, is present in its totality in all that He is or does.²⁸ To deny this, for Irenaeus, is to engage in the anthropomorphic projection of spatial and temporal limitations into God, which is precisely the Gnostic error he is opposing.²⁹

The Relation between the Father and the Son

We must return now to the close relationship Irenaeus posits between the Trinity and creation, whether in theophanies or in the overall shape and progress of creation and redemption. This correlation between the doctrines of God and of creation does, however, pose the serious question as to whether the relationship is not too close. Does Irenaeus speak adequately of God as fully and completely God apart from, or even prior to, the sequence of events comprising creation and redemption? Although Irenaeus most commonly approaches the nature of God from the perspective of man and, subordinate to man, creation, and usually describes the work of the Godhead as 'it' effects the preservation and salvation of man and creation, there are passages which refer to the Trinity apart from their relations to created reality.³⁰ Twice in A.H. Irenaeus speaks of the Son of God always (semper) existing with the Father,³¹ with no hint of the eternity of creation, even as an idea

or plan in the divine counsels. The Gnostic teaching which he confronts does not involve the eternity of the world so much as its lack of even temporal reality, although some Gnostics did teach in an ill-defined fashion that creation images the Pleroma,³² and the sparks of the Pleroma temporarily lost in this world could be regarded as 'eternal' strangers ensnared in creation. But Irenaeus is careful to avoid the thought that the being of God is either complemented or determined by the existence of created reality.³³

He explicitly guards himself against this in the course of an examination of the Gnostic account of the generation of the Pleroma:

Or, again, if they declare that the Pleroma was so produced in accordance with the foresight of the Father, for the sake of creation....then creation will have greater honour than the Pleroma, if, for its sake, those things (i.e. the Aeons) were produced. (II.15.3)

Irenaeus is equally critical of a transcendentalism which denies any contact or kinship between God and creation, for such a position removes the possibility of even speaking rationally of God in the language of this world. The Gnostics are thus attacked both for the crude anthropomorphism of their theory of the sequential emanation of the Aeons in the Pleroma, and for their dualism between the Pleroma and creation. A measure of apophaticism is again evident:³⁴

If anyone, therefore, says to us, 'How then was the Son produced by the Father?' we reply to him, that no one understands that production, or generation, or utterance, or manifestation, or by whatever name one may describe His generation, which is in fact indescribable. (II.28.6)

We are now in a position to see why Irenaeus only employs the so-called 'Logos model' with reserve and careful qualification to interpret the relation between Father, Son and creation, for this model both tended to tie the generation (or procession etc.) of the Word/Son to the

divine decision to create the world, and also called into question the status and ultimate divinity of the Logos.³⁵

We have already discussed Irenaeus' answer to the first of these problems and we need only to emphasise that here Irenaeus stands apart from his contemporaries and anticipates later orthodoxy, for the Apologists and Tertullian all³⁶ saw the generation of Christ as occurring at some point prior to creation, even if the qualification is added that the Logos existed potentially (i.e. actually, but not released) in the Godhead from all eternity. This development in Irenaeus can be illustrated and confirmed by the fact that whereas the Apologists tended to avoid attributing to the Logos-Son a mediatorial role in creation, Irenaeus repeats this assertion on very many occasions.³⁷

The other, closely related, problem of the Logos model is the question mark it placed against the real divinity of the Logos-Son. As we have seen, with Justin the Son alone appears in the Old Testament theophanies, and it has often been pointed out that his use of the Logos model is influenced in part by the theological cosmology current in second-century Middle Platonism,³⁸ which drew both a relationship and a fairly sharp distinction between a 'First God', who transcends the world, and an inferior, secondary deity, who mediates between the First God and the world. The modification of Plato in Middle Platonism is highly significant: the realm of ideas, a separate and intelligible world beyond the visible universe in the thought of Plato, became in Middle Platonism eternal and changeless thoughts in the mind of the supreme God. In effect, the concept of a supreme God, of which there are mere hints in Plato, has been considerably developed and opened up for

possible assimilation to the Creator God of the Jewish-Christian tradition. Furthermore, the conception in the Timaeus of a World Soul takes over some of the functions assigned by Plato to the intelligible world of forms or ideas, and develops into a secondary, mediating deity who could be assimilated, with modification, to Jesus Christ as revealer of the Father.³⁹ However, the use of these conceptions in Middle Platonism led Justin to an inevitable dilemma: either the Logos-Son is equal in divinity to the transcendent Father, and thus should also be excluded from theophanic manifestation, or, if the theophanies are maintained and even emphasised, can he really be spoken of as God like the Father? Justin does not tackle this question, and indeed, as it was not put to him by the challenges he faced, it is understandable that he ignores it.⁴⁰

Irenaeus' presuppositions concerning the unity and purity of catholic tradition, with which Justin the respected teacher at Rome was definitely to be associated, would have precluded his taking explicit exception to Justin's teaching⁴¹ in a work such as A.H., but there is little doubt that he knew of this approach to the Christian doctrine of God and that he found it unsatisfactory. His opposition can be identified at three levels.

Firstly, he attempts to defuse or evade the question of the generation, production, utterance or manifestation of the Logos-Son⁴² from the Father, as we have seen above, by invoking an apophatic reserve (II.28.6).

Secondly, on occasions he explicitly distances himself from the language and concepts of the Logos model. We have already referred to his adaptation of the philosophic adage that 'like must be produced from

like' or 'an effect must be implied in its cause', but this brings its own problems to a Christian theology which wishes to maintain both the freedom of God and the contingency of creation, and Irenaeus does not emphasise this line of criticism. Also, his avoidance of any link between creation and the emission of the Word-Son involves an implicit, indeed almost an explicit, correction of the Logos theology of the Apologists. In part, Irenaeus is motivated by his distrust of Gnosticism, of which the language of the Logos model was all too reminiscent: a derived deity and the inevitable corollary of quasi-spatial divisions in the Godhead - and in part, we should not fail to suggest, by his fruitful meditation upon the God he experienced in scripture and tradition, and thus the positive thrust of his theology.

In addition, Irenaeus was aware of the ambiguous meaning of Logos in the Greek language,⁴³ and he would have wished to avoid ambiguity in responding to the diverse and constantly shifting formulations of the Gnostics. This is especially true here, for the Logos model seemed to suggest that an ontological change took place in the Godhead prior to creation, and the ambiguity of the normal meaning of logos both fed and concealed this problem.

Further indication that Irenaeus had given careful thought to the Logos model as embraced by his Apologetic predecessors, and rejected it, is given by his critical treatment of the Stoic theory⁴⁴ of the λογος ἐνδωθετος/προφορικος which had been absorbed into at least some Apologetic articulations of the Logos theology,⁴⁵ and may have been invoked by Gnostics anxious to defend the respectability of their views. These points are illustrated in the course of an examination (typical in Book Two of A.H.) of the internal consistency of the

Gnostic account of the Pleroma:

Where Sige is, there cannot be Logos; and where Logos is, there certainly cannot be Sige. But if they say that Logos simply exists within (endiathetos), Sige also will exist within, and will not the less be destroyed by the Logos within. (II.12.5) ⁴⁶

These two levels of opposition to the Logos model as developed by the Apologists are primarily negative, and the third level is occupied by Irenaeus' attempts to discover and articulate an alternative model which would do justice to both the relation between Father and Son-Word, and their ordered relation to creation.

Lest we do not see the wood for the trees, it must be emphasised that the whole shape and thrust of Irenaeus' development of trinitarian theology is intended by him to provide this alternative model. The distinctive components of his positive alternative which we have yet to discuss are as follows: Jesus Christ as the visible of the invisible Father; the conception of the Son and Spirit as the two hands of God; the relation of the human nature to the divine nature of Jesus Christ; the doctrine of the Holy Spirit; the pre-existence of Christ and its relation to time and to eternity.

At first sight, Irenaeus' characteristic teaching that, 'the Father is the invisible of the Son, but the Son is the visible of the Father'⁴⁷ might seem imprecise, or even mystical, and it is interesting to note that different commentators have pronounced this aspect of his trinitarian theology both modalist and subordinationist.⁴⁸ By contrast, I will attempt to indicate how it fits well into the broad sweep of his theology.

In the first place, we must recall the context of Irenaeus' writing.

Gnosticism drew a sharp distinction between the invisible and visible spheres of reality - in effect, a distinction akin to that between good and evil. At the head of the Gnostic system⁴⁹ lies the 'invisible and incomprehensible'....⁵⁰ 'unoriginated, inconceivable Father, who is without material substance'⁵¹, and the other Aeons are also by nature invisible, if this invisibility is qualified by the possession of form.⁵² Irenaeus wishes to avoid any confusion between the Godhead and created reality, but at the same time he wishes to assert the existence of a close providential and redemptive relationship between them. Thus he clearly stresses that by nature the Son is invisible like the Father, but became visible in the economy of redemption:⁵³

There is one God, who is 'above all principality, and dominion, and power, and every name which is named' (Eph.1:21); and His Word, invisible by nature, was made palpable and visible among men, and did descend 'to death, even the death of the cross' (Phil.2:8).(IV.24.2).

There are two sides to this redemptive manifestation of the Father in the Son, judgement and salvation, and it is in different ways appropriate, even necessary, for each, that the Creator and Redeemer was actually manifest to his handiwork:

....One and the same God, the Father....caused His Word to be made visible to all flesh....that in all things their king might become manifest. For it is necessary that those who are judged do see the judge, and know him from whom they receive judgement; and it is also proper, that those who follow on to glory should know Him who bestows upon them the gift of glory. (III.9.1)

To speak of judgement and salvation is to speak of God⁵⁴, and in his use of the visible/invisible concept Irenaeus is exploring the Johannine teaching of the Son as the genuine revelation of the Father.⁵⁵ But there is a further crucial component in his thought at this point which must be recognised if Irenaeus is to be understood. For him, God does not simply appear to man as God the redeemer and therefore as God the

judge and saviour - He also appears as man. The fundamental distinction between God and creation, which is one pole of Irenaeus' anti-Gnostic argument, is complemented by the divine freedom to act in creation, and pre-eminently in the history of man. This is not to say that God acts in history as an influence or presence, even a controlling one, but rather that God becomes man, and acts as man. This is brought out very clearly in a passage which has an important anthropological dimension:

And then again, this Word was manifested when the Word of God was made man, assimilating Himself to man and man to Himself, so that by means of his resemblance to the Son, man might become precious to the Father....When, however, the Word of God became flesh, He confirmed both these (i.e. the image and likeness of God): 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 means of the visible Word. (V.16.2)

This teaching that God comes to creation as man, lifting man up to God and effecting in the last Adam, from the side of humanity, the response of love and obedience which God failed to elicit from the first Adam, is an important feature of the pneumatology of Irenaeus, as we shall presently see. For our immediate purpose, we should notice the radical meaning Irenaeus gives to the contrast between the invisible and visible existence of God, so radical that, indeed, the absolute distinction between God and man is by no means abolished by the divine self-giving in Incarnation and Atonement - rather is it properly re-established in a living relationship.⁵⁶

This is the chief thrust of Irenaeus' use of the invisible/visible model of the relation between the Father and the Son; such an interpretation coheres with both the texts which present the concept, and the wider shape of Irenaeus' theology, with its close relation between

God and creation. Yet, as we saw in the previous chapter, a stress upon the intimate presence of God to creation can easily foster a corresponding dualism, with a tendency to distinguish too much between God as He is revealed and God as He is in Himself. The invisible/visible contrast between Father and Son could embody such a tendency, as we see, for example, in IV.20.5, where an explicit link is forged between the incomprehensibility and the invisibility of the Father. Some writers have seized upon such passages as evidence both that the Son does not fully reveal the Father, and that there is a consequential question placed against the eternal deity of the Son.⁵⁷ We should not deny that there are tensions in Irenaeus' position, but its central objective is to overcome the Gnostic disjunction between the visible and invisible spheres, by drawing together in the person of the one Jesus Christ both visible and invisible reality, the Word being supreme in things visible and invisible alike:

But in every respect, too, He is man, the formation of God; and thus He summed up man in Himself, the invisible becoming visible, the incomprehensible being made comprehensible, the impassible becoming capable of suffering, and the Word being made man, thus summing up all things in Himself : so that as in super-celestial, spiritual, and invisible things, the Word of God is supreme, so also in things visible and corporeal He might possess the supremacy.... (III.16.6)

The intimate presence of God to creation means both that He must be invisible - and that He must become visible! Thus, by the language of the visible and invisible, Irenaeus is attempting to overcome the weakness of the 'Logos model', which too easily tended to make the Logos an intermediary in the rather static framework of the generate world and transcendent, ingenerate Father, by the more radical claim that Jesus Christ is the actual historical presence within creation of the transcendent God Himself. The apparently dynamic, if rather

impersonal, role of the Logos in the Apologists could readily conceal the problematic framework of the relation between God and creation which their theology assumed. Irenaeus' reconceptualisation enables him to retain a clearer emphasis upon the unity of God than was possible, for example, with Justin. We can see how this approach to the relation between God and creation corresponds to the Irenaeian emphasis upon the richness of God,⁵⁸ and how it goes some way towards explaining the apparent inconsistency of his teaching upon the theophanies, whether they be of the whole Trinity, or merely of the Son alone. As is so often the case in theology, the truth is at both ends rather than in the middle!

At this point we should mention certain other concepts, or pairs of contrasting concepts, which are used by Irenaeus in a similar manner to the invisible/visible scheme. On the whole they are less suited to express both the clear distinction and the close relation between God and creation, especially in the context of the Gnostic devaluation of the material world, and Irenaeus makes less use of these conceptual schemes than of the visible/invisible complementary contrast:

The greatness and love of God.⁵⁹

The incomprehensibility and comprehensibility of God.⁶⁰

Christ as the voice of the Father.⁶¹

The Son as the measure of the immeasurable Father.⁶²

Closely related to the use by Irenaeus of the visible/invisible model is his well-known teaching upon the 'two hands' of God. There is a

romantic, almost naïve appeal in this imagery, which in part is the reason for its being given an excessive degree of attention in brief expositions of his theology.⁶³

The background to Irenaeus' conceptualisation of the Son and Spirit, or Word and Wisdom, as the two hands of God,⁶⁴ undoubtedly lies in the Old Testament where such metaphors as the 'arm', 'hand', or 'finger' of God are often found, particularly in connection with a special divine act or intervention in history.⁶⁵ Such language is also found in the New Testament,⁶⁶ but no consistent usage develops beyond the natural reflection of expressions found in the Old Testament. Theophilus of Antioch (Ad Autol. II.18) refers to the Word and Wisdom as the two hands of God, but whether Irenaeus borrowed this expression and identification directly from Theophilus is open to doubt.⁶⁷ We can identify two reasons why Irenaeus found the expression apt for his purpose.

In the first place, the expression highlights the creative power of the supreme God, who did not need to use Angels or Aeons to create man, for he possessed His own powerful hands. A hand is naturally substantial with the body to which it belongs, and from which it operates. Thus, by using this description of the Son and Spirit as the hands of God, Irenaeus affirms the co-ordinated presence of the whole Godhead to created reality, again pointing to the later doctrine opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt, but also retaining by means of a bodily metaphor, a sense of organic diversity in God.⁶⁸

In the second place, the term the hands of God easily evoked a sense that the activity of the Godhead in creation and redemption was benevolent and especially suitable for the care and preservation of man.

There is, Irenaeus maintains, a mutual adaptation between God and creation which has its source and power in the love of God, but creates a genuine reciprocity between God and creation. Within creation it is man who has been created for fellowship with God at the highest level possible, and man is firmly at the centre of God's purpose for, and dealings with, creation, but this anthropocentricity includes rather than excludes the wider domain of creation.⁶⁹ The connection between conceptualisation of the Son and Spirit as the hands of God, and the orientation of Irenaeus' theology towards the creation and glorification of man is illustrated by the fact that a significant number of references to the two hands of God expressly mention their role in creating man after the image and likeness of God.⁷⁰ The following splendid passage illustrates this intimate care for man exercised by the God who has hands:

If, then thou art God's workmanship, await the hand of thy Maker which creates everything in due time; in due time as far as thou art concerned, whose creation is being carried out. Offer to Him thy heart in a soft and tractable state, and preserve the form in which the Creator has fashioned thee, having moisture in thyself, lest, by becoming hardened, thou lose the impressions of his fingers.....His hand fashioned thy substance and....He shall have pleasure in thy beauty. (IV.39.2)

The care of man by God is an important aspect of Irenaeus' development of the terminology of the hands of God, and in this way the concept of the two hands complements the use of the visible/invisible contrast between Father and Son. Both models serve to emphasise the presence, albeit differentiated, of the whole Godhead to creation. The idea that Jesus Christ is the visible presence of the Father brings this point home with special clarity, but the teaching of the hands of God both adds a clear trinitarian dimension, and adapts easily to express reciprocity of relation between God and created man, which God establishes in power and love.

It is characteristic of Irenaeus to use a cluster of overlapping terms and models to give expression to his theology. Those who do not find this theology congenial will naturally speak of his naïvety and inconsistency, but to others, including the present writer, the methodology used often helps to bring his vision home with additional richness and force. In the process, of course, certain allowances have to be made, for there are many obscure passages in his writings, which, even to an admirer, call for clarification or correction, rather than simple agreement.⁷¹ There is often considerable variation of expression within a given strand of his thought, as well as between identifiably different strands. Thus, in the example of the two hands doctrine, Irenaeus can use the expression hand or hands of God in a non-technical, purely metaphorical reference to God as God rather than to God as Father, Son and Spirit (or Father, Word and Wisdom).⁷² In addition, other concepts and terms are often inter-woven to create an almost poetic impression. In the above extract, for instance, in addition to the concept of the hand or hands of God, we find the image of the Holy Spirit as moisture and a reference to the fingers of God, which tends to refer to the Holy Spirit rather than the Son,⁷³ although the use of the plural 'fingers' counteracts this, evoking the role of both hands, i.e. Son and Spirit, in the ascent of man to God.

This is not to say that clarification of Irenaeus' statements is not possible, and required by the ongoing development of theology, but rather to indicate the complexity (whether profound or otherwise) of the conceptual patterns and images which he uses. The next strand to be identified should be closely related to the two hands model and, understandably, has been neglected, when compared with the popular emphasis upon the conception of the two hands of God. I refer to the

notion that the Word-Son and Holy Spirit glorified the Father before the creation of the world.

God is glorified by His Word who is His Son continually, and by the Holy Spirit who is the Wisdom of the Father of all: and their powers (those of the Word and Wisdom), which are called Cherubim and Seraphim, with unceasing voices glorify God; and every creative thing that is in the heavens offers glory to God the Father of all. He by His Word has created the whole world, and in the world are the angels; and to all the world He has given laws wherein each several thing should abide, and according to that which is determined by God should not pass their bounds, each fulfilling his appointed task. (Dem.10)

The precise meaning of the Armenian has been a matter of some debate.⁷⁴

French editors in the early part of this century held that the Cherubim and Seraphim denote angelic choirs rather than the Son and Spirit, but it is now recognised that, 'The passage must be taken to mean that the Word and Wisdom, which are powers of the Father, and are also called Cherubim and Seraphim, give glory to God with their unceasing voice'.⁷⁵

Armitage Robinson dubbed this idea as 'strange to us',⁷⁶ and Daniélou puts it firmly in the category of archaic Jewish-Christian imagery.⁷⁷

Both follow the consensus of scholarship in tracing Irenaeus' use of this conception to the influence of the apocryphal Ascension of Isaiah.⁷⁸ That a literary and, to some extent, a conceptual debt to the Ascension of Isaiah is owed by Irenaeus is highly probable on several counts,⁷⁹ but I would wish to question the subsequent dismissal of this element in Irenaeus to his archaic fringe, which has usually followed recognition of a debt. The extrinsic grounds for qualifying the degree of dependence of Irenaeus upon the Ascension of Isaiah are twofold.

In the first place, those arguing for dependence as the crucial factor for the appearance of the conception in the Demonstration have not observed or noted the fact that the idea that the Word glorified the

the Father prior to creation occurs also in A.H.⁸⁰

In the beginning, therefore, did God form Adam, not as if He stood in the need of man, but that He might have (someone) upon whom, to confer his benefits. For not alone antecedently to Adam, but also before all creation, the Word glorified His Father, remaining in Him; and was Himself glorified by the Father, as He did Himself declare, 'Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made (Jn. 17:5). (IV.14.1) ⁸¹

In the second place it would appear that in the Ascension of Isaiah the Word and the Holy Spirit worshipped and praised God (ch.9), which may not be quite the same as Irenaeus' conception that they glorified God. This point can only be made with caution, partly because we have the original versions of neither the Demonstration nor the Ascension of Isaiah,⁸² and partly because recent criticism of the biblical theology movement has clearly exposed the limits of etymological arguments.⁸³ Nevertheless, it can be suggested that glorification of God by His Son and Spirit implies less separation between them than would praise and worship,⁸⁴ although it must be admitted that these concepts overlap. The distinction for which I am arguing can, however, receive reinforcement from the fact that in the Ascension of Isaiah (ch.10) there is a somewhat greater emphasis upon the ineffability of God, 'whose glory I could not see', than would normally be found in Irenaeus - hence the Ascension of Isaiah more naturally uses the language of worship and praise as characterising the relation of the Son and Holy Spirit to the supreme God, than that of glorification.

Textual study thus suggests that Irenaeus is adapting rather than merely plagiarising the Ascension of Isaiah. We have here an example of an underlying theme of this thesis, that Irenaeus is much more than a compiler of sources. He is certainly a traditional theologian who takes his bearings from what has been handed on to him, but superimposed upon the tradition is an imaginative and sustained re-thinking

which gives his work its positive feel. He takes the content of the Ascension of Isaiah but partially modifies its meaning in the light of Johannine theology,⁸⁵ where it is explicitly stated that the Father is glorified in the Son (Jn.14:13, cf. 7:18). The difference between the Father being glorified in and by the Son is not, I would argue, of great significance.

To adopt this assessment, however, poses the question of how this strand in Irenaeus' theology coheres with the intrinsic pattern of his thought. To answer this I would refer in the first place to the 'two hands' model, and to the Irenaeian emphasis upon the richness of God, which was discussed in the last chapter. The idea that the Word and Spirit glorify God enriches the 'two hands' model, which left to itself could appear modalist and to attenuate the distinction between the divine 'persons'. We may find our hands useful, even essential, and capable of performing difficult and beautiful tasks, but we would not naturally say that we were loved or glorified by our hands. It is the possible transfer of such a modalist connotation into the being of God which is guarded and modified by the glorification theme.⁸⁶

The objection might be raised that I am reading too much into two isolated passages. That is always the danger when an attempt is made to systematise the thought of a writer such as Irenaeus but, while acknowledging a certain risk, two major considerations support my case.

In the first place, with his 'glorification' theme Irenaeus must have realised that he was sailing close to a prominent theme in Gnosticism. For, when Irenaeus enquired of Gnostic thinkers the reason for the production of Aeons in the Godhead, he was told that the Aeons were

produced 'for the glory of the Father'⁸⁷. It would then be understandable that Irenaeus only draws attention to his related, but eternal, concept of intra-divine glorification, on limited occasions, and in the context of clarifying the nature and purpose of created reality. Furthermore, the glorification theme is more clearly stated in the Demonstration where anti-Gnostic themes are less prominent than in A.H..

In the second place, and following from this, it has often been remarked that Irenaeus usually develops his trinitarian conceptions in close relation to the economy of salvation.⁸⁸ Thus, apart from the presence of the Gnostic parallel just described, it would be natural for Irenaeus to give more prominence to the 'two hands' model than to the concept that the Son and Spirit eternally 'glorify' the Father, and this is the position we observe.⁸⁹

Having described them separately, we will now briefly draw together these three strands of Irenaeus' exploratory attempt to conceptualise an alternative to the 'Logos model' approach to trinitarian theology.

The visible/invisible model emphasises the reality and truth of revelation, while going some way towards a doctrine of divine accommodation to man. God is not resolved into man, but in the freedom of his divinity He assumes flesh and comes among his creatures as Lord, but also as man. This may sound paradoxical and it is certainly 'a great mystery',⁹⁰ but to those who would accuse Irenaeus of argument by assertion, or a literal and naïve interpretation of certain passages in the Gospel of John, I would point out, with caution, that modern science has uncovered a startlingly similar paradox (if this is the

right word) inherent in the unique position occupied by light in the universe. We will explore these ideas further when we consider Irenaeus' treatment of pre-existence and time, for time and light (or the revelation of God) are not unconnected, as modern science has demonstrated:⁹¹

Light....connects everything. Light is itself timeless, as we have seen, but not eternal. Light is in this world of manifestation and yet it is not in the world of time. Time derives from light. Without light there would be no time, and yet light itself is timeless. Light touches us in time, connects us with all other times, and in its touch both ties us to time and frees us from it.

The model of the two hands of God orientates the visibility or revelation of God towards a benevolent care for man and creation, while the assertion of the eternal richness and glory of God in His inner life turns our attention back to the easily forgotten self-sufficiency and invisibility of God in his own nature.⁹²

Aspects of Christology and Pneumatology

The particular Christological issue which concerns us at this point is the relationship between the divinity and humanity of Christ - surely the most intractable of Christological problems, yet one which bears directly upon trinitarian doctrine.⁹³ As so often is the case with Irenaeus, statements are found which, through the conceptual eyes of later centuries, might indicate confusion, contradiction or even incipient heresy.⁹⁴ Without wishing - or needing - to defend every sentence that he wrote, a coherence in Irenaeus can be identified.

In opposition to the Gnostic distinction between the man Jesus and the 'divine' Aeon Christ, Irenaeus repeatedly insists upon the unity of Jesus Christ as, in some sense, divine and human.⁹⁵ Thus it is the

person of Jesus Christ as God and man - what later was to be called the 'hypostatic union' - which forms Irenaeus' starting point. There is, however, no evidence that Irenaeus attempted to fit the divine and human elements or essences together in the manner which characterised the later 'Alexandrian' approach to Christology where the unity of God and man in Jesus Christ tended to compromise the fullness of his humanity. Rather, whatever man was or had, Jesus experienced or assumed in the economy of redemption:⁹⁶

Wherefore also He passed through every stage of life, restoring to all communion with God. Those, therefore, who assert that He appeared putatively, and was neither born in the flesh nor truly made man, are as yet under the old condemnation, holding out patronage to sin....
(III.18.7)

The flesh which Jesus Christ had was no ideal or purified humanity, but was genuine human flesh, subject to temptation.⁹⁷ That Jesus Christ in reality did not sin was due to the closeness of relation between the humanity and the Word, a relation which did not connect two separate or static entities, but rather a dynamic, moving, historical relation wherein, to use Irenaeus' expression, God and man are mutually accustomed:

....the Word of God who dwelt in man, and became the Son of Man, that he might accustom man to receive God, and God to dwell in man, according to the good pleasure of the Father. (III.20.2)

It is because the relationship between God and man in the one Jesus Christ is primarily history⁹⁸ rather than metaphysics, that the question of a special humanity assumed by Jesus Christ does not arise. It is this world, this historical order, which is redeemed by God in Jesus Christ; and not by a timeless or instantaneous fiat,⁹⁹ but by the patience and long-suffering of God who requires the love and obedience of man to become a reality in the created order.

Our present concern is christological, but, in order to explore more closely what it means to emphasise in this way the historical character of Jesus Christ, we must press an important point which has a strong soteriological dimension: is the God who is long-suffering also the suffering God?

Although this sounds a very modern expression, Irenaeus would almost certainly have been aware of the writings of Ignatius, which speak of the death of Jesus as 'the passion of my God' (Romans 6), and of salvation as born from 'the blood of God' (Ephesians 1). In addition, his very opposition to Gnosticism would have raised the issue, because central to Gnostic Christology was the sharp distinction between the impassible Christ and the passible Jesus,¹⁰⁰ which Irenaeus relentlessly criticised in the light of his own stress upon 'the one Jesus Christ'. Hence Irenaeus closely implicates the Word-Son of God in the achievement of salvation through obedience and suffering. Many passages would demonstrate this,¹⁰¹ but we may refer to the conclusion of Aulén in his well known book, Christus Victor:¹⁰²

The teaching of Irenaeus is clear and consistent, and.... the work of atonement is regarded as carried through by God Himself; and this, not merely in the sense that God authorises and initiates the plan of salvation, but that He himself is the effective agent in the redemptive work, from beginning to end. (p.50)

Although there is a good deal of truth in Aulén's remarks, he fails to refer to significant passages which would modify his assessment. In the first place, Irenaeus argues against the Gnostic account of the Pleroma on the basis that, if the Father is 'perfect and impassible', this must also apply to 'those productions which proceed from Him, seeing they are of the same substance with Himself' (II.17.6f). This point is made in passing, but later in A.H., after a long section

vindicating the salvation of 'flesh and blood', he draws a certain distinction between the roles of the humanity and the deity of Christ in the economy of redemption:

For if no one can forgive sins but God alone, while the Lord remitted them and healed men, it is plain that He was Himself the Word of God made Son of Man, ¹⁰³ receiving from the Father the power of remission of sins; since He was man, and since He was God, in order that since as man He suffered for us, so as God He might have compassion on us, and forgive us our debts.....
(V.17.3)

An even stronger distinction is found in the following passage, which occurs, significantly, in the very section of A.H. which most stoutly defends the unity of Jesus Christ:

For as He became man in order to undergo temptation, so also was He the Word that He might be glorified; the Word remaining quiescent, that He might be capable of being tempted, dishonoured, crucified, and of suffering death, but the human nature being absorbed in it (the divine) when it conquered, and endured, and performed acts of kindness, and rose again, and ascended. (III.19.3)

Aulén makes no reference to any of these three passages, each of which implicitly or explicitly, places a certain distinctive emphasis upon the role of the humanity of Jesus Christ in redemption. God is present as His Word or Son in Jesus Christ, but always in the historical reality of the mediator, and thus always in His humanity, a humanity which is being redeemed, but which is more actively involved than if it were merely the passive receptacle of redemption.¹⁰⁴

In response to Gnosticism, Irenaeus' greatest emphasis is upon the unity of Jesus Christ. Yet no static unity is involved, for Jesus Christ is always the mediator between God and man. When Irenaeus distinguishes the 'divine' and the 'human' in Jesus it is always in a redemptive context, and the aim is to expound the harmony achieved

between God and man. Nevertheless, we can see in these statements a certain unresolved tension, similar to that which we saw in the previous chapter in connection with both the knowability of God, and the proper relationship between His justice and mercy. Can we speak of the Word as quiescent or inactive and still retain the personal unity of Jesus Christ? Can we not see here the shadow of the disjunction between Being and becoming which, on the whole, he rejects?¹⁰⁵

A proper emphasis upon divine impassibility secures the sovereignty and constancy of God's relation to the world, yet this needs a double qualification if the concept of God is faithfully to reflect Christian truth. Firstly, by virtue of the decision to create, God has chosen a self-limitation which allows His creation to act upon Him, even if events, including the action of free agents, remain under His control. Secondly, the tragic dimension of creation, however this be conceived, must be 'felt' by God, who, at least to some degree, must be regarded as suffering, even if in His ultimate purposes this suffering will be transformed. Irenæus' rather inadequate account of the mercy and justice of God indicates that he does not fully appreciate the latter point, even given his emphasis upon God as long-suffering. The former issue will occupy us in relation to his doctrine of providence, where we will see analogous problems. But criticism must be muted by the acknowledgment that the Christology of later centuries developed many fine distinctions in order either to alleviate or to conceptualise the tension in relation between the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ, a tension of which Irenæus was rightly conscious¹⁰⁶ as crucial to the process - the history - of the redeeming interaction of God with mankind. To claim that Irenæus held a concept of the suffering of God would be to go too far, but we

cannot avoid the recognition that, implicitly or least, he wrestles with this problem, which bears so closely upon the shape of trinitarian doctrine.

I pass now to consider those aspects of the pneumatology of Irenaeus which are of direct relevance to his doctrine of God as triune; the precise shape and character of this pneumatology will become clearer as various dimensions of it are discussed in relation to the loci of creation. But Irenaeus' consideration of the Holy Spirit must not be detached from his doctrine of God, for the theme of the unity of the Godhead is never absent. Indeed, we have already encountered his teaching on the Holy Spirit in relation to the concept of the two hands of God, which serve and glorify Him. One interesting feature of the two hands concept, which we did not mention earlier, is Irenaeus' association of the Holy Spirit with the Wisdom of God.¹⁰⁷

What motivated this obviously deliberate move on the part of Irenaeus? The basic motive was, I think, to help secure the relation of the Spirit to creation, and thus bring out the differentiated unity which embraced the creative Father and His hands:¹⁰⁸

Thus there is shown forth One God....and since God is rational, therefore by the Word He created the things that were made; and God is Spirit, and by the Spirit He adorned all things.... Since then the Word establishes, that is to say, gives body and form to the diversity of the powers; rightly and fittingly is the Word called the Son, and the Spirit the Wisdom of God. (Dem.5)¹⁰⁹

The distinction drawn between the role of the Word in creating the substance, and the Holy Spirit in giving order and form to created reality, is rather forced, as is the semi-exclusive identification of the Holy Spirit with Wisdom in the first place. But the fundamental intention of Irenaeus, both to give more emphasis to the Holy Spirit than is generally found in the Apostolic Fathers and Apologists, and

to counteract the tendency in the Apologists to draw too sharp (i.e. quasi-spatial) a distinction between the created and uncreated realms, is in itself commendable.¹¹⁰

By identifying the concept of Holy Spirit with the concept of Wisdom,¹¹¹ Irenaeus makes room for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, where other writers would tend to give more emphasis to Christology. It is widely acknowledged that throughout the history of theology there has been a tendency to give inadequate attention to pneumatology, and certain reasons for this neglect have been recognised.¹¹²

These problems have always been present to stimulate confusion in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but in the second century there was an additional problem caused by the common use made of Stoic ideas, which contributed to Middle Platonism, where spirit was regarded as a subtle material substance which provides the physical basis, or, in some versions, the ruling power, of both the individual and the cosmos. The Gnostic conception of spirit can be regarded mainly as a development of the Stoic. Spirit becomes a divine substance trapped in the bodies of the elect, but seeking to return to its home in the Pleroma. In catholic writers of the second century one detects both a reaction to Stoic/Gnostic ideas when Spirit, which is often no more than a synonym for deity,¹¹³ is seen as the opposite of matter, and also a conception of the Spirit of God as a power invisibly active within the human sphere. Given the prevailing sense of spirit in intelligent discourse in the second century, this latter use would almost certainly carry an implication of materiality or physical attributes. There is perhaps a danger of this in Irenaeus, where the divine freedom of the Spirit might be thought to be compromised by His role in creation. The chiliasm

of Irenaeus also illustrates such a point, for it correlates with a reduced sense of the immediate eschatological presence of the Holy spirit. These are issues to which we will return.

Irenaeus does not reflect openly upon the consequences of adopting a rational/spiritual or word/wisdom distinction as a guide to apprehension of the nature of the eternal distinctions in God. Although the association of wisdom with the Spirit might be appropriate to a certain degree to His ineffable and self-effacing nature, it too easily obscures such crucial themes as the Pauline concept of the cross as divine wisdom and human folly. The human concept of wisdom needs modification in the light of the whole content of theology, and this might be hampered by its semi-exclusive identification with the Holy Spirit. However, we should not be too critical, and could perhaps see Irenaeus' adoption and development of this equation of Spirit with Wisdom as part of his attempt to bring sense and order into the confused and neglected pneumatology of his time.

A basic motive of his pneumatology, as noted above, is to secure a full relation of God to creation. We can illustrate this, within our present limits set by the doctrine of the Trinity, by reference to the role of the Holy Spirit on the one hand in the incarnation, and, on the other hand, in revelation and the impartation or realisation of salvation, actions of the Holy Spirit which Irenaeus brings into a close relationship.

It has been noted that for Irenaeus the Virgin Birth is more a proof of the humanity of Jesus Christ than of His divinity.¹¹⁴ But for Irenaeus true humanity cannot be separated from the Holy Spirit -

as we shall see - and the role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation is therefore presented by him as guaranteeing the humanity of Christ. This is brought out with particular clarity in the Demonstration:¹¹⁵

....He must needs be born a man among men; and the same God forms Him from the womb, that is, that of the Spirit of God He should be born. (Dem.51)

And the 'flower' (exegeting Isaiah 11:1ff) refers to His body, for it was made to bud forth by the Spirit.... (Dem.59)

And by 'shadow' he means His body (exegeting Lamentations 4:20) For just as a shadow is made by a body, so also Christ's body was made by His Spirit. (Dem.71)

This fact of creation is re-expressed from the point of view of redemption when Irenaeus deals with the role of the Holy Spirit in the baptism of Jesus. Gnostic writers readily interpreted this episode as the descent of the Aeon Christ into temporary residence in the dispensational Jesus. By contrast, Irenaeus interprets the descent of the Spirit at baptism as a special anointing of the humanity of Jesus to enable the salvation of the flesh of man to be accomplished:¹¹⁶

For inasmuch as the Word of God was man from the root of Jesse, and son of Abraham, in this respect did the Spirit of God rest upon Him, and anoint Him to preach the gospel to the lowly....therefore did the Spirit of God descend 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. (III.9.3) 117

The association of the Holy Spirit with the humanity of Christ has significant implications for the foundation of trinitarian theology. Later theology often tended to deal with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit almost as an afterthought to christology, the predominant role of the Spirit being the mediation to us of the salvation actually achieved by Christ. This restriction of pneumatology subtly introduces a subordination of the Spirit to Christ, which, in turn, has fostered

virtual binitarianism. Thus, one of the roots of the full trinitarian theology which we observe in Irenaeus lies in the link he establishes between the Holy Spirit and the humanity of Jesus Christ. In this, of course, he is reproducing the biblical teaching that the Messiah is the Christ, that is, one anointed with the Holy Spirit. In attempting to think together christology, soteriology and pneumatology, Irenaeus can often seem imprecise or confused, but undergirding his efforts we can see a perceptive and constructive theological mind.

Therefore, in relation both to the birth and baptism of Jesus, Irenaeus' doctrine of the incarnation links, in creation and redemption, Jesus Christ as God and as man anointed by the Holy Spirit. In this way he brings together in the person of Jesus Christ the two aspects of Messianic expectation in the Old Testament: direct redemption by the visitation of God and a human Messiah specially anointed with the Spirit of God.

Acceptance of Irenaeus' synthesis, if I have analysed it correctly, enables us to see the inner connections which exist between strands of New Testament christology which are often considered to be conceptually distinct. A recent survey of the different christological titles and concepts of the New Testament has been provided by J.D.G. Dunn.¹¹⁸ Of these, Son of God and Word of God roughly correspond to the Old Testament hope for direct visitation of God, whereas the last Adam and Spirit christologies roughly correspond to the hope for a human Messiah. The rather enigmatic title, Son of Man, which, significantly, would appear to have been Jesus' favourite title for himself, more naturally indicates the humanity of Jesus Christ (as it does in such early Patristic use of the term that one finds), but also includes at

least an allusion to the figure of a divine redeemer, both in the New Testament, and in inter-testamental Judaism (Dunn, op.cit., p.82). The Wisdom motif tends to indicate the divinity of Jesus Christ, but again there is some reference also to His humanity, not least in Paul's concept of the wisdom of the cross.

The theology of Irenaeus combines these different elements in a reasonably coherent fashion, taking further the development we see in the Gospel of John. Dunn pays an unintended tribute to this process, when he observes that:

Evidently then the Fourth Evangelist is moving beyond the more limiting confines of a prophet christology - hardly surprising in view of his very high Son of God christology. What is surprising, however, is that despite this he retains so much of the prophet language, and especially that he still retains the description of Jesus as one endowed with the Spirit at Jordan (John 1:32f; 3:34). (op.cit., p.141)

If one adopts the theological perspective provided by Irenaeus, arguably it is not surprising at all!

A brief look beyond Irenaeus is also instructive. The orthodox emphasis came to rest predominantly upon the Word and Son of God christologies. As a consequence, the Christian tradition has not given sufficient attention to either the Holy Spirit or the humanity of Christ. In patristic theology this tended to lead to a truncated eschatology on the one hand, and to an inadequate theology of atonement on the other. In recent theology, a reaction to the emphasis upon the Word/Son of God christology has been seen in attempts to make other models bear the full burden of christology.¹¹⁹

The type of relationship between the Son, Spirit and the created element

in Jesus Christ, which we have discussed, is closely paralleled in the distinction Irenaeus draws between the work of the Word-Son in creation at large. While this distinction is neither sharp nor consistently expressed, within the unified economy of the one Godhead he presents the Holy Spirit as the One who brings the Church into existence and gives gifts to it. A well known passage connects the Spirit with the Church in a most direct fashion:

For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God;
and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church,
and every kind of grace, but the Spirit is truth. (III.24.1)

The role of the Spirit as effecting in mankind the fruits of the redemption established in Jesus Christ is often stated, and the following passage is typical:

Since the Lord thus has redeemed us through His own blood, giving His soul for our souls and His flesh for our flesh, and has also poured out the Spirit of the Father ¹²⁰ for the union and communion of God and man, imparting God to man by means of the Spirit.....(V.I.I)

On occasions Irenaeus speaks explicitly of a double movement effected in the economy of redemption - the movement from God to man being complemented within the same unified action by the presentation of man to God, the two hands of God being active on both sides:

God the Father bestows on us regeneration through His Son by the Holy Spirit. For as many as carry (in them) the Spirit of God are led to the Word, that is to the Son; and the Son brings them to the Father; and the Father causes them to possess incorruption. Without the Spirit it is not possible to behold the Word of God, nor without the Son can any draw near to the Father.
(Dem.7) ¹²¹

The primary emphasis is upon the gift of the Spirit to the Church, but Irenaeus links this closely with the wider role of the Holy Spirit in creation.¹²² In his teaching upon the Spirit Irenaeus is drawing

out the consequences of his maxim, which we considered in the previous chapter, that by God alone may God be known. The revelation of reconciliation includes the bestowing on man of the gift to recognise and participate in it. In this way, the Irenaean doctrine of the Holy Spirit complements the once-for-all ἀνακεφαλαιωσις ; the emphasis falls equally upon both aspects of the one economy of creation and redemption.

Thus, in the aspects of both his christology and pneumatology which we have discussed, we see Irenaeus developing trinitarian modes of thought which relate God to creation. We shall now explore from a different perspective the issues raised here, as we discuss the question of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ - or the Word/Son - in Irenaeus. On the one hand, this aspect of his thought will help clarify the manner in which Irenaeus maintained both the closeness of God to creation, and also the fundamental difference between them. On the other hand, inasmuch as a consideration of the concept of pre-existence inevitably raises a distinctive form of question of the relation of time to eternity, this conclusion of our presentation of the trinitarian theology of Irenaeus will orientate us towards the following chapters, which will approach his theology from the perspective of the doctrine of creation.

The Pre-existence of Jesus Christ

The inter-relation between the concepts of pre-existence, time and eternity has not always been recognised, and this has tended to foster a rather uncritical use of the concept of pre-existence; this is true of much classical theology, but the unhappy consequences are more evident in modern theology, where issues of time and history have

received greater attention. Therefore, although a full discussion of the background and foreground of the subject of pre-existence is outwith the scope of this thesis, we need to clarify our terms and concepts before discussing the approach of Irenaeus.

At the outset, we must recognise that the very word pre-existence has an odd ring about it. While we may accept that things either do, or do not, exist (unless we are familiar with the paradoxes of modern physics!), it is not obvious that any non-trivial meaning can be given to the claim that something, or someone, pre-exists itself. Immediately, therefore, we are warned of the difficulties of definition, in the light of which we need to combine a careful philosophical and theological analysis with an open approach to the claims of the biblical witnesses.¹²³

The nature of time and of eternity, and of their possible relationship, are hardly more amenable to unequivocal definition than is 'pre-existence', but at least this fact has emerged from the extensive attention which these concepts have received.¹²⁴

In the context of our present discussion, we should be especially wary of being ruled simply or predominantly by a 'chronological' concept of time. Ever since human intelligence evolved to an extent that allowed abstract counting to take place, this method of giving structure to our reflections upon existence has been important, especially since the very regular movement of the planets in relation to the fixed stars was established. Such a concept of time has a proper and, indeed, an inevitable place in human affairs, but it can easily become too dominant. In the Bible, time is generally viewed in relation to action, whether human or divine, and, particularly in regard

to divine action, the chronology of the inanimate world can be overlaid by measurement from outwith 'clock-time' as such. What to us is a thousand years, may be to God but the day, or due season, in which His work is done. Because of this relation between time and significance, the Bible can regard time related simply to the inanimate activity of creation as of comparatively little significance, and handle it very freely, without undue attention to our modern conception of accuracy. Yet it would be wrong simply to oppose the chronological to other concepts of time, if only for the straightforward reason that a chronological concept of time is itself dependent upon the existence of regular cycles within nature.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, the linear, chronological conception of time has exercised a great influence upon both modern theology and our wider culture, and we must briefly indicate why this has been the case.

The development of Newtonian physics, which was closely allied to an increased perception of the regular movement of the planets, involved the conception of space and time as infinitely and uniformly extended, thus providing an absolute,¹²⁶ fixed and precise mathematical framework within which both the universe and any reflection upon it must occur. The elegant simplicity of this conception greatly reinforced the predominance of a linear conception of time which the concept of heliocentricity, postulated by Copernicus and developed by Kepler and Galileo, had already stimulated. A sense of the inexorably uniform flow of time, definable by precise measurement, has been bequeathed to us. This mechanical concept of chronological time has been severely modified by modern science, but theological debate from the Enlightenment onwards has often relied, tacitly or explicitly, upon just this notion. Hence, the long search to find a reformulation of the Christian faith

which could absorb this concept of time, wherein, if the Deistic option is eschewed, God can be seen as automatically and evenly related to all space and time. On the one hand, this has led to repeated questioning of any belief in the ontological uniqueness of Jesus Christ - the so-called 'scandal of particularity' - and, on the other hand, the belief that the divine element in Christ pre-existed in heaven, or in God, has been either attacked or rationalised to cohere with a linear view of time. The anthropomorphic presupposition that time is essentially a closed, uniform continuum led inevitably to the conception of the pre-existence of Christ, and of the incarnation, on the analogy of a visitation from outer-space, and therefore to their widespread rejection. The perspective from which we should examine and assess Irenaeus' approach to the pre-existence of Jesus Christ must avoid the assumptions of a basically linear view of time, which we observe in much discussion of the topic. Further reflections upon the modern understanding of the pre-existence of Christ, and its relation to discussions in the patristic age, are found in an appendix to this chapter (Appendix A).

These thoughts about the inter-relation of the concepts of time and pre-existence should guard us against an uncritical anachronism in our consideration of the place of 'pre-existence' in the trinitarian theology of Irenaeus. But in a similar manner we also require a preliminary consideration of the possible relation between pre-existence and eternity. This is because the history of the concept of eternity, particularly in Western thought, has been deeply affected by an anti-thesis between finite and infinite in general, and between time and eternity in particular. While it is essential to accept that a fundamental difference exists between time and eternity, it does not follow

that eternity is best defined by negation from what is, or appears, temporal. This is because one cannot really separate a concept of eternity from a concept of God, and if one accepts that our knowledge of God is dependent in the last analysis upon the active revelation of God as Creator and Redeemer, then arguably time should be understood in relation to (amid its radical difference from, as indicated by creatio ex nihilo) eternity, and not vice versa.¹²⁷ If accepted, such a position carries a double implication: on the one hand, that eternity should be conceived neither as timelessness nor simply as unending time, and, on the other hand, that time cannot be fully understood apart from its creative derivation from God. Admittedly, precisely how we should incorporate temporal images in our concept of eternity, and how the created nature of time is secured amid its relation to the eternal realm of God, are difficult questions. The latter topic will occupy us at various points in succeeding chapters, and some further reflections upon the former issue are presented in Appendix B, at the conclusion of the present chapter.

With these various preliminary considerations in mind, the first thing we should note about the concept of pre-existence in Irenaeus is the interesting fact that he tends to reserve the word 'pre-exist' (προϋπαρχω, προεμυ ; ante sum, praesum, prae-existo) for his description of Gnostic thought.¹²⁸ Here the connotation of 'pre-existence' is 'existence apart from and in antithesis to creation', as is shown by the instructions given to Gnostic adherents when they were catechized:

And they instruct them, on their reaching the principalities and powers, to make use of these words: 'I am a son from the Father - the Father who had a pre-existence, and a son in Him who is pre-existence. I have come to behold all things, both those which belong to myself and others, although strictly

speaking, they do not belong to others, but to Achamoth, who is female in nature, and made those things for herself. For I derive my being from Him who is pre-existent, and I come again to my own place whence I went forth'. (I.21.5)

As an extension of this use Gnostics spoke of different degrees of pre-existence,¹²⁹ those Aeons which were produced last being the most inferior. For this reason any emphasis upon the centrality of the human history of Jesus Christ was especially abhorrent to Gnostics. What was oldest, as judged by a linear view of time, was best. Here, perhaps, we see how Jewish and Hellenic currents of thought could each feed into Gnosticism, for in different ways each contained something akin to this adage.¹³⁰ Any claim that the Christian faith is new, or newly revealed as old, was readily attacked, as Irenaeus discovered in his discussions with Gnostics.¹³¹ In respect of the Virgin Birth, they raised similar objections to Trypho. It is in this context that Irenaeus presents his understanding of the 'pre-existence' of Jesus Christ:

As it has been clearly demonstrated that the Word, who existed in the beginning with God, by whom all things were made, who was always present with mankind, was in these last days, according to the time appointed by the Father, united to His own workmanship, inasmuch as He became a man liable to suffering, every objection is set aside of those who say, 'If our Lord was born at that time, Christ had therefore no previous existence.' For I have shown that the Son of God did not then begin to exist, being with the Father from the beginning; but when he became incarnate, and was made man, He recapitulated in Himself the long line of human beings, and furnished us, in a brief, comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam - namely to be according to the image and likeness of God - that we might recover in Christ Jesus. (III.18.1)

Compared with Justin's treatment of pre-existence,¹³² Irenaeus both associates the Word-Son more closely with the eternal Father, and gives greater emphasis to the involvement of the Word-Son in creation.¹³³

These two emphases are brought together in the concept of ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, which Irenaeus develops to explain the relation of the historical life of Jesus Christ to the ultimate purposes of God in creation and redemption. The ἀνακεφαλαίωσις as referring to the incarnate history of Jesus Christ is 'brief', but as referring to the universal work of the Creator it is 'comprehensive' (the two sides to compendio here). The events of the history of Jesus Christ both sum up and re-enact the whole history of mankind, setting it upon a new basis by first undoing and reversing the disobedience and fall of Adam. Thus Irenaeus makes the incarnate history both noetically and ontologically central for all time and space. Justin tended to see the incarnation simply as noetically important, as fulfilling prophecy and revealing knowledge, the ontological basis of which is a linear οἰκονομία stretching from the generation of the Son to the 'second' advent.¹³⁴ But with Irenaeus it is not so much that the incarnation is interpreted in terms of the οἰκονομία, as the reverse: the οἰκονομία is determined from 'beginning' to 'end' by the incarnation. In attempting to forge expressions to indicate what is involved, Irenaeus works towards a new concept of time centred upon the incarnation:

It was necessary, therefore, that the Lord, coming to the lost sheep, and making recapitulation of so vast an economy, and seeking after His own handiwork, should save that very man who had been created after His image and likeness, that is, Adam, filling up the times of His condemnation.....(III.23.1)

But the Son, administering all things for the Father, works from the beginning even to the end....manifesting the Father.....indifferently (communiter) throughout all time. For the Son, being present with His own handiwork from the beginning, reveals the Father to all; to whom He wills, and when He wills, and as the Father wills. (IV.6.7)

(With the Song^{of}/Symeon and the Magnificat in mind).....the rejoicing of Abraham descending upon those who sprang from him - those, namely, who were watching, and who beheld Christ, and believed in Him; while, on the other hand there

was a reciprocal rejoicing which passed backwards from the children to Abraham, who did also desire to see the day of Christ's coming. (IV.7.1)

.....nor would the Lord have recapitulated these things in Himself, unless He had Himself been made flesh and blood after the way of the original formation (of man), saving in His own person at the end that which had in the beginning perished in Adam. (V.14.1)

It would be wrong to attempt to impose upon such passages too precise a meaning, but their general drift is towards seeing the incarnation as both the expression and enactment in time of the divine will to save that which had originally been created. Irenaeus does not generally go further, and speculate upon what might have happened had Adam not fallen, although there is one passage, in particular, which, in the earlier decades of the present century, provoked a lively debate between Thomists and Scotists:¹³⁵

....the pedigree which traces the generation of our Lord back to Adam contains seventy-two generations, connecting the end with the beginning....Hence also was Adam himself termed by Paul 'the figure of Him that was to come' (Rom.5:14), because the Word, the Maker of all things, had formed beforehand for Himself the future dispensation of the human race, connected with the Son of God; God having predestined that the first man should be of an animal nature, with this view, that he might be saved by the spiritual one. For inasmuch as He had a pre-existence as a Saving Being, it was necessary that what might be saved should also be called into existence, in order that the Being who saves should not exist in vain (Cum enim praeexisterat¹³⁶ salvans, oportebat et quod salvaretur fieri, uti non vacuum sit salvans. (III.22.3))

The reply of Irenaeus to the Gnostic taunt that he compromised the pre-existence of Christ culminates in this passage, the following paragraph rehearsing similar arguments in connection with a parallel between Eve and Mary.¹³⁷ In contrast to the Gnostic account of development in the Pleroma, Irenaeus is anxious not to portray the incarnation as a response to events in creation, but rather to see the will of God expressed in the incarnation as corresponding to a

harmonious pattern of the divine will for creation and redemption. For this reason, Irenaeus does not want to see God as subject to events which occur in time, which was the danger with Justin's 'Logos model' and concept of pre-existence, but rather to see time as subject to the eternal will of God disclosed in the incarnation. In particular, he wishes to avoid the idea that God's purpose and plan for creation is affected by evil, which Irenaeus achieves both by underplaying the reality of evil (as we shall see in a later chapter) and by asserting that all events in time are expressive of the divine will.¹³⁸

Christologically, Irenaeus is concerned not to divide the divine and human elements of the one Jesus Christ, and thus while to guard the divinity requires the assertion of something equivalent to pre-existence, to guard the centrality of the true humanity Irenaeus is pushed towards the claim that the pre-existence is of the incarnate Christ. Yet he is somewhat ill at ease with such language, for it could too readily imply that time and history are essentially unreal, and that creation and redemption are necessary actions of a God who has become locked into the inexorable logic of the process. With the cosmic Aeon anthropos, this was precisely the problem with Gnosticism. Rather than 'project' the incarnation backwards, and thus downgrade the importance of the actual events of the history of Jesus Christ, Irenaeus moves towards a reconceptualization of time and space - that is, all created reality - around the incarnation itself. The problem with Irenaeus is that his overall conception of the divine plan in creation and redemption can tend to obscure the radical centrality of the incarnation, so that the relation of God to the universe, which is disclosed in the incarnation, is too necessary or

close. Where Irenaeus sees the overall οικονομια of creation and redemption as the background to the incarnation, we would prefer to assert a fuller place for the freedom of God attested in the Old Testament, in order to provide a better key in which this cosmic background could be set. Of course, there are many positive references to the Old Testament in Irenaeus, but these tend to be seen as merely part of an overarching gamut of creation and progressive salvation, conceived in universal terms. We recall here the inadequate account he gives of the justice and mercy of God, discussed in Chapter One, which we related to his unsatisfactory grasp of the nature and place of Israel in the purposes of God.

The problem of how Jesus Christ can be part of the processes of nature and of history, and at the same time be Lord of both, has puzzled thinkers throughout the Christian era. Viewed scientifically, there is no special change observable in the course of evolution consequent upon the incarnation, a fact which evidently caused Teilhard de Chardin great puzzlement.¹³⁹ Yet the position to which Irenaeus inclined offers a possible resolution of the paradox, a resolution, that is, which faith might regard as reasonable. Jesus Christ is the unique, but, because of His identity with God, also thereby the universal, expression of the efficacious will of God in creation and redemption. The co-inherence in Jesus Christ of thought and event in God thus leads Irenaeus beyond a notional concept of pre-existence, to locate within the life of God 'prior to' creation, the Saving Being who is revealed at the end - or in the fulness - of time, in order to re-establish the beginning. The struggle of Irenaeus to bring such ideas to expression is well illustrated by the following extract:

(In relation to the baptism of Jesus) For Christ did not at that time descend upon Jesus, neither was Christ one and Jesus another: but the Word of God - who is the Saviour of all, and the ruler of heaven and earth, who is Jesus, as I have already pointed out, who did also take upon Him flesh, and was anointed by the Spirit from the Father - was made Jesus Christ... (III.9.3)

In these various extracts, Irenaeus would appear to be attempting to see time on two levels, a linear, progressive level being overlaid by what we may term a recapitulatory level, in which time and eternity definitively meet. Alternatively, we might describe Irenaeus' understanding of time as comprising two aspects: fallen, linear time, which is being redeemed, and the redeemed time of the incarnate Christ,¹⁴⁰ by which it is being redeemed. These two aspects correlate with the twin Irenaeian themes of growth and ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις, between which we can thus identify a basic coherence, even if the outworking of his scheme is not free of tensions, to which we shall return.

These features of Irenaeus' understanding of the relation of Jesus Christ to time help us to understand the considerable development in pneumatology which we see in his theology as compared with that of the Apologists. The 'big ugly ditch', to use Lessing's well-known term, between the past and present reality of Christ, is often bridged in the New Testament in pneumatological terms.¹⁴¹ For Irenaeus, as we have seen, the action of the Holy Spirit is closely related to the presence of Jesus Christ, and it is this consistent presence of Christ, through the Spirit, to all creation, which receives considerable emphasis whenever Irenaeus approaches the question of pre-existence.¹⁴² Yet this consistent presence of God through the Spirit needs to be seen as an urgent eschatological presence of the God who became incarnate. The 'it is finished' of the Gospel of John needs to be held together

with the provisional, unfinished character of creation of Romans 8. The presence of Christ means that at a point between the 'already' of the past and the 'not yet' of the future, we are able to hear and experience the eschatological reality of God.¹⁴³ The development of pneumatology in Irenaeus thus allows him to express pre-existence in trinitarian terms:

(The true disciple) has a full faith in one God Almighty, of whom are all things; and in the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom are all things, and in the dispensations connected with Him, by means of which the Son of God became man; and a firm belief in the Spirit of God, who furnishes us with a knowledge of the truth, and has set forth the dispensations of the Father and the Son, in virtue of which He dwells with every generation of men, according to the will of the Father. (IV.33.7)

Does this mean that the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh is new or old? This question has often been put to the theology of Irenaeus, in part to assess his debt to Platonism. But if the above analysis is on the right lines, it is exposed as a false question.¹⁴⁴ Inasmuch as the one Jesus Christ has been present with all men from the beginning, He is 'old'; but inasmuch as all time-and-reality derive true being from the incarnation, He is radically 'new'. Both sides of the antithesis are drawn into the reconceptualization which Irenaeus explores, if the weight is distributed more to the former than the latter, reflecting the predominant tendency of the ancient world to distrust that which was new. This is not to suggest that Irenaeus in his way rationalises the mystery of why God acts as He does, or that all his statements here are clear and consistent, but that he had faced the allegation that he denied the radical newness of the incarnation is shown from his reply to Marcionites:

But if a thought of this kind should then suggest itself to you, to say, What then did the Lord bring to us by His advent? - know ye that He brought all novelty, by

bringing Himself who had been announced. For this very thing was proclaimed beforehand, that a novelty should come to renew and quicken mankind. (IV.34.1)

It is precisely the uniqueness of Jesus Christ which secures His universal significance, for the uniqueness of Jesus Christ represents the unique life of God over-flowing to create and redeem according to a wise and patiently executed plan. It is the shape and rationale of this that the trinitarian theology of Irenaeus is primarily orientated to reflect.¹⁴⁵

Concluding Reflections

We began by noting the strength of the early Christian tradition which associated Jesus Christ very directly with 'God'. The subordinationism of the third century has too often been held to cast its shadow upon the first and second centuries, but the very strength of docetism in its many forms in the first two centuries is an indirect testimony to a widespread belief in the essential deity of Jesus Christ. Such a belief seems to have been assumed by Irenaeus to be part of that universal and ancient tradition enshrined in the rule of truth or faith by reference to which Scripture would find its correct interpretation.

As a result, in part, of the incipient polytheism of Gnosticism, there is a tendency in Irenaeus to assert the unity of Father and Son in a manner which has often provoked the suggestion of modalism. This is especially true of the first half of A.H., where Irenaeus' chief concern is to refute the concept of spatial separation between members of the Godhead. However, recalling our previous discussion of Irenaeus' favourite attribution to God of 'richness', we suggested that living harmony rather than mathematical unity was uppermost in Irenaeus'

conception of the relation between Father and Son - as it was also in his conception of the relation between the different characteristics which could be attributed to God.

Issuing from the observation that Irenaeus, in order to avoid compromising this divine richness, carefully rejects the thought that God is either complemented or determined by the fact of creation, we considered his attitude towards the 'logos model', which forms the basis of the trinitarian theology of the Apologists. We saw how partial and qualified was Irenaeus' acceptance of this model, in part due to the question it posed to the true divinity of the Son.

The central section of this chapter then investigated the various strands of Irenaeus' attempt to articulate a positive alternative to the conceptualization of the 'Logos model'. These are

- (i) The Son as the visible of the invisible Father, together with various analogous contrasting pairs of concepts.
- (ii) The Son and Spirit as the 'two hands' of the Father.
- (iii) The Son and Spirit as glorifying the Father.

Particular care was given to show how these different themes cohere and complement each other, within a tension which, at least to some degree, can never be avoided in trinitarian theology. An analogous tension was observed in Irenaeus' christology, which is closely related to his soteriology - consideration of which sheds light upon the link between christology and trinitarian theology. The attempt of Irenaeus to demonstrate in human speech the harmonious triunity of God as Creator and Redeemer was next approached from the perspective of his pneumatology. The considerable development of pneumatology in Irenaeus as compared with his theological predecessors was seen, on the one hand, as a

further refinement of his teaching that 'by God alone may God be known', and, on the other hand, as an unfolding of the implications of the fact, revealed in Jesus Christ, that the true God is both present to creation and known by persons. The former point was illustrated by reference to Irenaeus' teaching upon the role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation, and the latter was illustrated by reference to the role of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification, or the gathering and nourishment, of the Church.

The closing section of the chapter was concerned with the concept of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ. This inevitably brought into relief the deep philosophical and theological questions raised by any attempt to understand the relation between time and eternity. After clearing certain possible avenues of approach of philosophical prejudices which have been commonplace in twentieth-century thought, we saw how Irenaeus modifies the related concepts of pre-existence espoused by Gnostics and Apologists, by incorporating a more direct and basic reference to the human history of Jesus Christ, while maintaining with greater strength than the Gnostics and Apologists the unity of being of the Father and Word-Son. As a result, Irenaeus moves towards a reconceptualization of time and history centred upon the incarnate and historical Jesus Christ. The consequences in Irenaeus of the understanding of the relation of God to creation at large which are implied by his position will be tested in the wider domain of his doctrine of creation.

To sum up: the doctrine of the Trinity in Irenaeus is both richer and more subtle than has usually been realised. Taken together with his doctrine of God as the One God, which we discussed in the previous

chapter, we can see in Irenaeus the movement to an interesting conceptualization of God as both a Unity and a Trinity, that is, to use the modern expression, as a Triunity. As such, it is a considerable advance upon the theology of the Apologists and Apostolic Fathers, and is no mere repetition of biblical formulas. The chief question which we have raised against his doctrines of God and the Trinity concerns a certain underlying rationalism or anthropomorphism: does his understanding of God adequately capture the profundity of the Old and New Testament? Is the Irenaeian concept of God not too inaccessible to creation, precisely because His omnipresent and omnipotent control of creation compromises the contingent independence of it? To adopt a modern expression, is creation 'swallowed up in' the trinitarian history of God, in His οικονομία and ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις? This is the basic question which we shall carry forward into our discussion of aspects of Irenaeus' doctrine of creation.

The Pre-existence of Christ

We may usefully begin with A. Harnack, whose influence upon biblical and patristic studies in the present century has been immense in many areas, but not least in the determination of the concepts of pre-existence which have been either defended or attacked. R.G. Hammerton-Kelly takes Harnack's definitions as still authoritative in his study Pre-existence, Wisdom and the Son of Man, (C.U.P.: 1973, pp.1-3,274-5). Martin Hengel, Son of God, pp.3-5 is critical of Harnack, but still accepts the questions relating to pre-existence in the manner that he had posed them, and thus attempted to defend a difficult thesis, as Mackey has shown (The Christian Experience of God as Trinity, pp.51-62).

The issue of pre-existence arises at many points in the 'Prolegomena and Presuppositions' to Harnack's History of Dogma, and in recognition of this a special appendix is devoted to the conception (History of Dogma, I. pp.318-332). He attempts to identify a Jewish and a Hellenic concept of pre-existence, both of which are said to be taken up by the New Testament.

The Jewish conception is that, 'everything of real value that from time to time appears on earth has its existence in heaven. In other words it exists with God, that is, God possesses a knowledge of it; and for that reason it has a real being. But it exists beforehand with God in the same way as it appears on earth, that is with all the material attributes belonging to its essence. Its manifestation on earth is merely a transition from concealment to manifestation There is no assumptio naturae novae, and no change or mixture. The old Jewish theory of pre-existence is founded on the religious idea of the omniscience and omnipotence of God. . . . As the whole history of the world and destiny of each individual are recorded on his tablets or books, so also each thing is ever present before him. The decisive contrast is between God and the creature. In designating the latter as "foreknown" by God, the primary idea is not to enoble the creature, but rather to bring to light the wisdom and power of God'. (p.318f.)

Alongside this Harnack set 'the Hellenic conception. . . . of pre-existence based on the contrast between spirit and matter, between the infinite and finite, found in the cosmos itself. In the case of all spiritual beings, life in the body or flesh is at bottom an inadequate and unsuitable condition, for the spirit is eternal, the flesh perishable Now if such spirits resolved for some reason or other to appear in this finite world, they cannot simply become visible, for they have no "visible form". They must rather "assume flesh", whether they throw it about them as a covering, or really make it their own by a process of transformation or mixture. . . . The characteristics of the Greek ideas of pre-existence may consequently be thus expressed. First, the objects in questions to which pre-existence is ascribed are meant to be enobled by this attribute. Secondly, these ideas have no relation to God. Thirdly, the material appearance is regarded as something inadequate. Fourthly, speculations about phantasma, assumptio naturae humanae, transmutatio, mixtura, duae naturae, etc. were necessarily associated with these notions' (p.319).

The historical accuracy of these generalised definitions cannot be discussed here; rather we should note how influential the hermeneutical pattern outlined has been. The 'Jewish' idea is closely associated with apocalyptic, and scholars have readily invoked the categories of symbol, myth and speculation to re-interpret such texts as link Christ with mediation at creation or presence to all (and especially Old Testament) times as expressions of the omniscience and omnipotence of God (e.g. Mackey, op.cit., p.64). The fore-ordination texts are agreeable to an adoptionist christology which emphasises the view of Jesus Christ as an inspired prophet and teacher, a theme dear to Harnack. Yet unless one downgrades the claims of theology intoto, it is questionable whether the admittedly varied, but nevertheless astonishing, claims of the New Testament writers about the relation of Jesus Christ to the cosmos are not obscured rather than explained by this tactic.

Defenders of the Hellenic pattern have modified considerably the account Harnack has given, by recourse to the development of the classical position in Middle Platonism. As we saw in connection with the 'Logos model', Middle Platonism was more overtly theistic, giving a clearer assertion of the existence of a First God, than one finds in Plato, and its proponents were prepared to develop the concept of the world-soul into a second, mediating deity. The Apologists, with their rational intention, understandably made use of Middle Platonism. Yet - and this is what Irenaeus saw or sensed - precisely by its clearer theism, Middle Platonism is actually more dualistic than Plato. The Platonic teaching that the Χρῶνος of the earth reflects as its 'moving shadow', and the Χρῶνος of the heavens as its 'moving image', the eternal realm of αἰών together with the associated theories of μυθῶν and μεθεξῆς, maintained a real relation between time and eternity, while containing also an emphatic sense of their distinction, and a strong hint of dualism. The Apologists' use of Middle Platonism is well documented, but the distinctive place of a concept of pre-existence in their thought has only recently been analysed in depth in a study of the concept in the influential Justin (Trakatellis, op.cit.). The chief conclusion of this study which concerns us here is that Justin's theology was penetrated throughout by 'three fundamental christological concepts of pre-existence, incarnation and exaltation' (p.173), with the incarnation interpreted in particular as humiliation. Trakatellis argues that Justin brings out the meaning of such N.T. passages as John 1:1-14; Phil. 2:1-6; Hebr.1:1-12 and Col. 1:15-20, although he does acknowledge that Justin is also influenced by 'current theological problems', and that this influence is most marked 'on the level of the concept of Christ's pre-existence in a status of God....but other parts of the scheme were also affected, particularly the incarnation and also the exaltation' (p.174). I would go further and argue that in Justin we see a rationalisation of the New Testament texts, at the bottom of which lies a basically linear concept of time and a timeless concept of pre-existence. The introduction by Justin of a clear distinction between the first coming of Christ in humiliation and his second coming in glory (Dial. 31f., 51, 110f.) corresponds to this. It is a similar rationalisation of pre-existence which one often sees in modern discussions which attempt to find a place for the concept in the New Testament. R.H. Fuller's seminal The Foundations of New Testament Christology, and J.D.G. Dunn's Christology in the Making, which may prove to be equally influential, evince this in relation to their discussions of Johannine christology.

Whether the emphasis has been placed upon the more symbolic, quasi-Jewish, or upon the more rationalistic, Hellenic approach, or whether

the New Testament has been carved up between the two, the common factor has generally been a basically linear, chronological approach to time which leaves room only for either a metaphysical or a timeless concept of pre-existence. Orthodox theology tended to prefer the timeless rationalism we see in Justin. In Origen the same ideas are expressed in relation to Neoplatonism, which was even more dualistic than Middle Platonism. The Platonism of Athanasius is disputed in detail but few could deny an influence of some degree, particularly in his earlier writings. Arguably the dispute with Arianism concerned the extent and nature of the pre-existent Word-Son, both parties tacitly accepting the approach to pre-existence worked out by Justin and Origen. Thus a certain pre-occupation with the divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit diverted attention from the centrality of the earthly history of Jesus Christ, and the subtle and difficult issue of the relation of this earthly history to all time and eternity was not given due attention. Mackey (op.cit., ch.12 'Arius , Orthodoxy and Pre-existence') has argued that Athanasius and Arius both operated with a concept of pre-existence which prejudiced proper consideration of the human life of Jesus Christ in relationship with His Father. While it can be said that Mackey perhaps over-simplifies Athanasius and ignores the place given to the humanity of Jesus Christ in such writings as Contra Arianos, his basic point carries considerable force. My analysis would differ in that behind the shared concept of pre-existence I would identify a concept of time which was too linear. Then, before dismissing any concept of pre-existence in favour of its refinement into adoptionism in the furnace of myth, symbolism and speculation, which may be stimulated by a linear view of time in Mackey himself, it is worth asking whether greater justice to the various New Testament texts traditionally associated with pre-existence might not be done by a conceptual reconstruction which takes careful note of the basic issue, which New Testament writers are not unwilling to consider, of the relation of God and Jesus to time and eternity. Such a reconstruction, which would attempt both to embrace and to get behind the alternatives identified and posed by Harnack, inevitably leads in a trinitarian direction, as Macquarrie, who recognised the dilemma surrounding the modern discussion of pre-existence, has argued ('The Pre-existence of Jesus Christ', Expository Times, 77, (1965-66) pp. 199-202).

Eternity and Time

Just how one should incorporate temporal images in our concept of eternity is a difficult question. Plato seems clear on this point, at least, when on approaching the issue he coolly remarks: 'But this, perhaps, may not be the right moment for a precise discussion of these matters' (Timaeus 38B; ed. Cornford, p.98). Further consideration of the matter in the schools resulted eventually in the classic definition of Boethius, which Plato himself would probably not have disputed: 'Eternity is the simultaneously total and perfect possession of life that does not end' Aeternitas est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio (De Cons. Phil.V:6). Although regularly quoted in Medieval theology, it was usually interpreted through the Neoplatonic opposition between time and eternity, as Karl Barth has demonstrated in an illuminating discussion (Church Dogmatics II.1, pp.608-640). Yet, as it stands, the Boethian definition does not necessarily imply that eternity is simply timeless. Rather, eternity is sharply distinguished from the passing nature of the present, the separation between before and after - much as Plato distinguished the perfection of αἰών from the refracted, broken nature of (especially earthly) χρονος. The theories of μυμησις and μεθεξις support this by maintaining that time is derived from, and thus to a degree reflects the nature of, eternity.

It is interesting to set alongside this the Old Testament approach to the eternity of God. 'From the time that Yahweh appears he is a major God whose eternity could be affirmed (Ps.90:2; 139:16), but the idea of eternity is secondary to that of life. God is not living because he is eternal, but he is eternal because he is living. The Israelite felt God as an active power before positing him as an eternal principle. God is never a problem, he is not the ultimate conclusion of a series of reflections; on the contrary, it is he who questions and from whom the initiative comes'. (E. Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, Hodder and Stoughton, E. T. 1958, p.38). This statement is very reminiscent of Irenaeus.

There is an illuminating modern discussion which is primarily philosophical, but fully aware of the scientific and theological dimensions of the issue (J.R.Lucas, A Treatise on Time and Space, Methuen, 1973). 'Eternity is much misunderstood....Eternity is not timelessness. For eternity is an attribute of God, and God is a person, a conscious personal being, and time is an inevitable concomitant of consciousness. To say that God is outside time, as many theologians do, is to deny, in effect, that God is a person....A timeless Deity may be the Truth; and it may possibly provide us with the Way or at least with a Goal; but it cannot ever be the Life. It remains necessarily τὸ θεῖον not ὁ θεός. Even Plato, in the Timaeus, has to distinguish the Demiurge from the Forms. To be alive, to be a person, to be conscious, to be active, one must be, in some sense, in time. Verbs can conjugate in persons only if they can conjugate in tenses too.

Nor is eternity changelessness, as theologians have understood the term....We meet an old friend, and exclaim that he has not changed one bit. But we do not mean by this that he has been in a state of

suspended animation since we last saw him.....We take into account only some features, not all features.....God may not wax old as doth a garment, or perish or be changed as a suit of clothes is changed and cast off (Psalm 102:26f). But this is not to say that God cannot alter in any respect, and cannot be moved and cannot act..... Theologians, however, are tempted to wish an absolute changelessness on God. God, they say, is the same yesterday, today and for ever, not only in all essential respects, but in all respects whatsoever. But such a changelessness is open to the same objection as timelessness, namely, that it is incompatible with personality.....It is only an improper use of the theological superlative and St. Augustine's failure to rethink the Neo-platonist doctrines he had earlier espoused (his account of eternity is reminiscent of that of Plotinus) that has led us to speak of God in an incoherent way, which makes Him out to be dead and finished instead of alive and ever new..... To understand eternity, therefore, we should not think of it as timeless or changeless, but as free from all those imperfections that make the passage of time for us a matter for regret.....God, unlike men, does not feel the future bearing down on Him and pressing upon Him, because He can make all His dispositions in good time, and is not going to be caught un-awares, and does not feel caught up in a rush and in need of extra time to take stock and think things out properly....which is as much as to say that God is not one of time's sons, but rather is the father of time....God is the master of events, not their prisoner; time passes, but does not press. All time is present in the divine mind, in the sense that none is remote or far away or absent, but not in the sense that all is simultaneous, nor that eternity is a timelessness in which nothing ever happens, nor can be conceived of as happening ' (pp.300-307). This line of argument may be open to challenge and qualification, for the issue it tackles is more mysterious and difficult than Lucas always admits (as we shall also identify in his treatment of providence and freedom), but his basic points are well made. A compatible, if rather more cautious, critique of the idea of the timelessness of God has also been provided by N. Pike, God and Timelessness, (London: R.K.P., 1970).

But do such treatments of God's relation to time not need to be expanded and modified by the inclusion of divine spatiality? It is very doubtful if space and time can be considered separately in this - or in any - context, and our discussion of the pre-existence of Christ must relate to both space and time. The abstraction of time from space, will inevitably introduce a rather abstract account of both, as arguably we see even in Athanasius' contention for a full doctrine of incarnation, where the debates too easily occurred within a framework of opposition between time and eternity provided by Origen. For an interesting and suggestive attempt to relate created space and time to the infinity and eternity of God, see T. Pierce, 'Spatio-Temporal Relations in Divine Interactions', S.J.T., 35 (1982), pp.1-11.

1. J. Daniélou, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, p.357.
2. Exaggerated in the sense that Ignatius adopted a rather cavalier approach to martyrdom. In this he claimed to be imitating his Lord (Romans 4), but we must ask whether St. Paul's calm willingness to avoid unnecessary martyrdom (Acts 22 ff.) did not express a more balanced appreciation of the demands laid upon a Christian by the experience of salvation.
3. It has often been remarked that for the Apologists cosmological concerns dominate soteriology. Their use and development of the Logos theology, with its intellectual respectability and the ease of its adaptation to illustrate and interpret a wide range of biblical material, tended to divert attention from the Cross and Resurrection. Nevertheless, one should underestimate the Apologists' own sense of salvation neither in their writings (e.g. Justin I. Apol. 18f.; Dial. 26, 48f.), nor in their readiness to suffer the consequences of their public confession and apology (Justin was flogged and beheaded after a summary trial).
4. One sees this movement from experience of salvation to ascription of deity (however we may wish to understand and articulate this) to the mediator of salvation already in the New Testament (e.g. Matthew 12:28; 14:30-3; 27: 52-54)
5. The Christian Tradition, Volume I, (University of Chicago Press, 1971), p.173.
6. With hindsight we can see the relative necessity, at least, of doctrinal controversy. Blind allies are only mapped as such by those who are prepared to follow them to their conclusion at least once. Heresy thus performs the double function of both crystallizing error and of stirring up a corresponding search for truth. We should prefer that the Fathers had recognised this and conducted themselves with a greater degree of charity towards those whom they felt called to oppose. One consequence of this recognition is a certain relationship between a given heresy and that theology which was produced in opposition to it. If past studies often underestimated the connection and relationship, formal and material, between the 'heresy' and 'orthodoxy' propounded in a given controversy, however, the contemporary danger is the opposite one of overestimating such mutual dependence. In the case of Irenaeus and Gnosticism, the discovery of the Coptic Gnostic Library of Nag Hammadi in 1945, whose works are now appearing in various editions and translations, has given fresh impetus to comparative study, as R. Van Den Broek has recently described ('The Present State of Gnostic Studies', V.C., 37 (1983) pp.41-71). Van Den Broek both praises and criticises the essay of Barbara Aland, 'Gnosis und Kirchenväter', in Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas, (Vanden Hoeck Ruprecht in Göttingen: (1978), pp.158-215, which attempts to argue that, 'the Gnostics ...understood Paul better than most of their fellow-Christians who tended to express salvation in the ethical categories of merit and reward' (p.70). Further studies of the relationship between Gnostic and early Christian thought are evidently needed, and will be facilitated by the recent discoveries at Nag Hammadi. Van Den Broek concludes his review with the challenging claim that, 'the study of Gnosticism is still in its infancy.'

7. It is important to note that, unlike Marcion, Valentinus is not accused of having altered the text of Scripture, but of having misunderstood and perverted its meaning.

8. I refer here to the exegesis of New Testament documents. Justin Martyr had previously appealed to 'memoirs of the apostles' in his recorded discussion with Trypho (e.g. Dial.103), but his references to our New Testament scarcely go beyond the synoptic gospels, which he may have known in the form of a primitive synopsis (see H.Chadwick, 'Justin's Defence of Christianity', B.J.R.L., 47 (1964-5), p.283.) The use of Old Testament Testimonia in connected argument is known prior to Irenaeus, most especially in Barnabas and Justin, although the Demonstration exhibits a more theologically integrated use of the proof texts, not least in terms of Irenaeus' doctrine of the Trinity.

9. On other occasions, Irenaeus admits that Gnostic exegesis is often plausible (e.g. III.15.2) and recognises that the parables present a particular problem of interpretation (e.g. II.27.3; II.28.3). However, he appeals to the very obscurity of parables to ease the problem presented to him by Marcion's trenchant argument that the God of the Old Testament was the author of sin because he hardened the heart of Pharaoh and his servants (IV.29.1f).

10. On the other side, the charge is developed that the Gnostics on the one hand divided the Godhead and denied the unity of God, and, on the other hand, developed a doctrine of the unknown Bythus who has no attributes capable of expression in human language.

11. This is the expression employed by R.M. Grant A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible, (University of Chicago Press: 1965), especially chs. 5 and 8, to chart the development of exegesis from Irenaeus to Augustine. Grant describes Irenaeus (p.55) as, 'the Father of authoritative exegesis in the Church'.

12. This is Irenaeus' favourite expression, although he does on occasions speak of 'the substance of the tradition' (I.10.2), or of 'the deposit of faith' (III.24.1). No significance should be attached to these variations of form which are characteristic of the style of Irenaeus.

13. This point has been emphasised recently by T.F. Torrance, 'The Deposit of Faith', S.J.T., 36 (1983), p.4ff., and is made by J.N.D.Kelly, Early Christian Creeds, (London: Longman, 1972), p.76. In II.28.1 Irenaeus speaks of, 'having the truth itself as our rule'. Irenaeus' approach to truth, tradition and the rule of faith is set in a wider patristic context by G. Florovsky, Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View, (Massachusetts: Norland, 1972), esp. ch.5.

14. The strong connection between Spirit and life made by Irenaeus, to which we will return in a later chapter, is relevant here. Like a body which retains its formal constitution immediately after its death, Scripture is dead, i.e. unproductive, for the Gnostics, because through and in it they do not discern and relate to life and Spirit. On the modern discussion of the spirit/letter distinction in hermeneutics, see Charles Wood, 'Finding the life of a Text: Notes on the Explication of Scripture', S.J.T., 31 (1978), pp.101-111 and his more recent The Formation of Christian Understanding, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), especially p.108f. Although no specific reference is made,

Wood's understanding is similar to that of Irenaeus. A good example of Irenaeus' method of exegesis of a disputed passage is found in V.9-14 where Irenaeus disputes the literal Gnostic interpretation of 1Cor. 15:50, 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God', by invoking a relation of strict order, in anthropological terms, of Spirit and flesh.

15. Dem. 3,6,100; A.H. I.10.1; IV.33.7,15.

16. E.g. III.1.2; 4.2; 6.5; 15.3; 16.6. These passages reflect 1Cor.8:6 which is also binitarian in structure. To some extent these passages can be explained by a strong element in Irenaeus' thought wherein the Holy Spirit in a self-effacing manner designates the Father and Son as Lord - e.g. III.6.1, 'Since, therefore, the Father is truly Lord, and the Son truly Lord, the Holy Spirit has fitly designated them by the title of Lord.'

17. Various insights from such fields as social anthropology, sociology and epistemology have contributed to the rise of 'narrative theology', which has shed interesting light upon the role of doctrine in the Church, and the process of its emergence. G. Stroup, for example, has explored links between narrative, identity and trinitarian theology: 'The metaphysical questions that make up the doctrine of the Trinity are not self-generated, but emerge out of the particularity and complexity of Christian narrative.....The Trinity, therefore, is a necessary description of God's identity, but it presupposes those narratives which witness to God's relation to the world' (The Promise of Narrative Theology, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), p.246.)

18. A question which, it need hardly be said, continues to arise even amid the sophistication which the centuries have added to the doctrine of the Trinity. See, for example, the dialogue between P. Lapedes and J. Moltmann, Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine, (E.T., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981).

19. At various points Irenaeus defends the unity of Scripture, God, Jesus Christ, salvation history, tradition and man, as Benoit has emphasised: Saint Irénée, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960), pp.203-217. This section occupies pride of place in his chapter 'Les Grand Thèmes de l'Adversus Haereses'. The influential histories of dogma by Seeberg and Loofs popularised the charge of modalism (see the discussion by J. Lawson, The Biblical Theology of St. Irenaeus, (London: Epworth, 1948), pp.129ff.). Harnack, however, vigorously defends Irenaeus and claims, 'it is absolutely incorrect to attribute modalistic ideas to him' (History of Dogma, II, p.264).

20. 'The Apostolic Preaching of Irenaeus and its Light on his Doctrine of the Trinity', Hermathena, 14, (1907), pp.307-337, the quotation being taken from p.337.

21. Cf. F.R. Montgomery Hitchcock, 'The Creeds of St. Irenaeus and St. Patrick', Hermathena, 14 (1907), pp.168-182.

22. Dial. 61, 62, 128, 129. In Dial. 128 Justin explicitly opposes modalism. Irenaeus would have been suspicious of asserting a numerical distinction between Father and Son lest it imply the type of spatial

distinction in the Godhead which the Gnostics held. However, the contrast between Justin and Irenaeus here should not be exaggerated, for Justin was writing in the context of a discussion with an orthodox Jew, and against the background of a substantial Jewish population at Rome. The Jewish influence upon Gnosticism, which has been, and will be, much debated, was of the more heterodox type, which gave a greater place to the role of angelic intermediaries.

23. See. D.C. Trakatellis, The Pre-existence of Christ in Justin Martyr, (Harvard: Scholars Press, 1976), ch.2, where reference is made to the detailed study of Prigent, Justin et l'Ancien Testament. It cannot finally be proved, of course, that Justin and Irenaeus did not share a common source which is no longer extant.

24. For the fourth-century explication of this maxim, see E.J. Fortman, The Triune God, (London: Hutchinson, 1972), p.142 ff. There were, and are, different emphases here in different writers and especially in the different traditions of East and West. The western development, from Augustine to Aquinas, placed the greater systematic emphasis on this maxim, with the consequence that in Aquinas it is assumed that the Trinity is perceived in creation only as a unity, and the split between De Deo Uno and De Deo Trino becomes established in the schools. One effect of this development is an increasing conception of the remoteness of God to creation, his relation being reasserted in formal, static and sacramental terms. Although we see hints of the dogma opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt in Irenaeus, both in the type of passage which we have quoted, and in other features of his theology, such as the 'two hands of God' motif, which we shall shortly consider, we do not see the unfortunate consequences of its over-emphasis.

25. This may be illustrated in two significant ways from Book Four, chapter 31. The forgiveness of sins is attributed both to the 'advent of our Lord' (para.1) and to 'the Spirit of the remission of sins, through means of whom we are quickened' (para.2). In addition, creation is attributed both to the Word and to the Spirit of God (para.2): 'Now the Father of the human race is the Word of God....who created you' and 'The Spirit of God, by whom all things were made, was commingled and united with flesh.....'. While it is true that the early Fathers could sometimes refer to Christ as 'Spirit of God', Irenaeus nearly always maintains a clear distinction between Christ and the Spirit.

26. This is the attitude of G.C. Stead, Divine Substance, (O.U.P.: 1977) p.187f., who attempts to give meaning to the apparent paradox or contradiction, on the one hand by interpreting 'wholly' as meaning 'not exclusively', and on the other hand by reducing the theological reference with the claim that Irenaeus takes this 'highly abstract and philosophical discussion' from what is 'probably a pre-Christian development'. Certainly the shape of the passage derives from Xenophanes, as Stead explains, but Irenaeus replaces Xenophanes' verbs by nouns, thus increasing the referential level of the named attributes. As A.Heron has remarked (in T.F. Torrance, ed. The Incarnation, (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1981), p.76, n.1), Stead deals mainly with historical and philosophical analysis of the terms οὐσία, substantia, and their derivatives. This is done with masterful scholarship and one is reluctant to carp at his omissions, but one consequence of his method of approach is to focus, for example, upon Irenaeus' use of the term ἰσοουσιος which is in

contexts other than that of his doctrine of God, because of Gnostic use of the term in the doctrine of God. Hence, I would suggest, Stead misses the shape of Irenaeus' doctrine of God, which I am attempting to uncover.

27. Immediately prior to this sentence from II.13.3 he quotes with approval the well-known verse from Is. 45:8 'God is not as men are; and His thoughts are not like the thoughts of men'.

28. In addition to this approach to the divine attributes Irenaeus maintains a similar position with regard to what was later to be called the περιχωρησις of the persons of the Trinity. For example, from III.6.2: 'Therefore God has been declared through the Son, who is in the Father, and has the Father in Himself'. We are witnessing here the influence of Johannine theology upon Irenaeus, as T.E. Pollard, Johannine Christology and the Early Church, (C.U.P. : 1970) has re-affirmed (p.48): 'With Irenaeus, the Asian who became a bishop in the Western Church, the Antiochene or Asia Minor theology with its strong Johannine flavour becomes a dominant theological influence in the West'. By contrast, it is uncertain whether Justin Martyr even knew the Gospel of John (see H. Chadwick, 'Justin's Defence of Christianity', p.296).

29. See especially, in close proximity to the above quotation, II.13,5,6,8 and 10.

30. G. Florovsky, 'St. Athanasius' Concept of Creation', S.P., 6 (Berlin: 1962), pp.36-57, has demonstrated how hard it was for early Christian theology to reach this insight, a difficulty compounded in the third century by Origen's subtle combination of truth and error.

31. III.18.1; IV.20.3 Cf. also Dem.10, where an Armenian word meaning 'daily, continual, perpetual' is used of the Son's relation to the Father - see the edition of Armitage Robinson, p.79, n.4. Another important indication that Irenaeus believed in the full deity of the Son, in the sense that he was reluctant to draw an ontological distinction between Father and Son, is given by his use of the expression: 'So then the Father is Lord and the Son is Lord, and the Father God and the Son is God' (Dem.27); cf. also II.6.1, where the Holy Spirit is included.

32. E.g. 1.5.5; 18.1f., 30.6; II.7.4; 14.3; 19.6; 30.4; III.11.2.

33. The passage which is sometimes taken to show that for Irenaeus the Son/Word and creation have correlative origins is V.18.2 'For the Father bears (portans) the creation and His own Word simultaneously, and the Word borne by the Father grants the Spirit to all as the Father wills'. But too much should not be read into this (i) because the context is strongly soteriological, with Irenaeus defending the genuine redemption of this world, and (ii) because the passage comes towards the end of A.H. and remote from the chapters where the basic relation of God and Christ to creation is most discussed. We should also take into account the fact that for Irenaeus 'Father' is not so much a technical term for a person of the Godhead, as a means of referring to the fact that the one God was the creator of the universe and Father of all mankind. This idea has Jewish origins and is used by Paul, or his disciple, in Eph.4:6: 'One God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in us all', a verse which Irenaeus quotes later in V.18.2. The richness of the divine life 'prior to' creation is emphasised in

IV.14.1, in a passage to which we will return: 'For not alone antecedently to Adam, but also before all creation, the Word glorified His Father, remaining in Him; and was Himself glorified by the Fatherfor He is rich, perfect and in need of nothing'.

34. Irenaeus' criticism of the emanation theories of the Gnostics is well analysed by Stead, op.cit. p.197ff.. The problem for Irenaeus is that if he maintains that objectionable consequences follow whatever kind of derivation is involved between Father and Son, he will tend to confuse the proper distinction between them. Traditional philosophical criticism of emanation theories had tended to be based upon the claim that any imperfection in emanated subordinates implies imperfection in their source. This is employed by Irenaeus in II.17.3, but could be turned against his doctrine of creation as a work of a good God. His response to such a charge is again to claim that human beings are not given an answer to the problem of the origin of evil (II.28.7).

35. For two good recent assessments of this much discussed christological concept see R.A. Norris, God and World in Early Christian Theology, ch.2 and A.I.C.Heron, 'Logos, Image, Son: Some Models and Paradigms in Early Christology', in Creation, Christ and Culture, ed. R.W.A. McKinney, (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1976). For a less broad overview, but more detailed analysis of the position adopted by Justin, see Trakatellis, op.cit., passim.

36. There are differences of emphasis, clarity and certainty in the different writers, but the generalisation is, I think, acceptable, as A.I.C.Heron (op.cit.) has argued in detail.

37. To take the case of Justin, with but few exceptions (1Apol. 59(?), 64; 2Apol. 6) he attributes creation entirely to the transcendent Father. Justin's attitude might have been affected by his desire to give no opportunity for Marcion's acute mind to find a defence for his views, and also by his concern to present as reasonable as possible a gospel to Trypho and other Jews, as well as by his likely ignorance of the Fourth Gospel.

38. Norris, op.cit. ch.2 'Justin Martyr and Platonism' brings this out with judicious clarity, but several other streams of ancient thought fed into the conception of Jesus Christ as the Logos of God. Their mutual importance is much debated and I merely mention the rich background from which those who assembled the model drew: the Old Testament concept of Word of God, mediated through the LXX; Philo's extensive modification of Old Testament ideas by their conjunction with the philosophical traditions, especially Stoic and Platonic, of ancient Greece; the Gospel of John, or those traditions which led to its prologue including, perhaps, Ignatius' remarks concerning the Word proceeding from silence (Magn.8. cf. Rom.2). Ignatius' apparently enigmatic thought here is possibly no more than a reflection of such Old Testament verses as Psalm 83:1 'O God, do not keep silence' or Psalm 81:5b 'I hear a voice I had not known', although the concept of silence in Ignatius has been the subject of considerable debate. On this, see the remarks and references in C. Trevett, 'Prophecy and Anti-Episcopal Activity: a Third Error Combated by Ignatius?', J.E.H., 34 (1983), pp.1-18.

39. Cf. Norris, God and World in Early Christian Theology, and Daniélou Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, chs. 4 and 15. For a fuller

account of Middle Platonism, see J. Dillon, The Middle Platonists, (London: Duckworth, 1977). The more theistic character of Middle (and Neo) Platonism as compared with Plato was a mixed blessing, because this was bought at the price of a sharper dualism between God and the world.

40. An apologist operated with something akin to the ancient and modern concept of legal advocacy, a basic principle of which is scrupulous inattention to the weaknesses of the point of view which is to be defended!

41. Or to that of Theophilus. It is not certain that Irenaeus knew of Theophilus' work, which contains a particularly clear exposition of the 'Logos model' (Ad Autol. II.22).

42. It is doubtful whether Irenaeus saw any distinction in meaning between the description of the 'second person' of the Trinity as Word or Son of God. The credal summaries at the beginning of the Demonstration make this especially clear: 'Rightly and fittingly is the Word called the Son, and the Spirit the Wisdom of God' (Dem.6)... 'The Word of God, Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord, who was manifested to the prophets....' (Dem.7). But the same equality is expressed in A.H.: 'He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: through His Word, who is His Son, through Him He is revealed and manifested....' (II.30.9). Other texts which equate Word and Son are discussed by D.J. Unger, 'The Divine and Eternal Sonship of the Word according to St. Irenaeus of Lyons', Laurentianum, 14 (1973), pp.357-408. One might relate this equality between Word and Son to that between logos and nous in God which Irenaeus maintains (II.13.8; 28.5). Also, the tendency of Irenaeus to employ a flexible terminology may reflect the reverent (rather than the philosophical) apophaticism upon which we have already remarked. Irenaeus is reasonably clear that God has genuinely revealed Himself, but due both to the created and to the sinful nature of man, every human metaphor or symbol is inadequate univocally to express the being of God. Hence the advisability of employing images which are treated as complementary equals - which is the position Irenaeus seems explicitly to employ with regard to Word and Son language.

43. 'But which Logos? For there is among the Greeks one logos which is the principle that thinks and another which is the instrument by means of which thought is expressed' (II.28.4 - in the context of criticism of the Gnostic theory of emissions). Harvey suggests that this may be a scribal interpolation, but does not argue the case. However, it fits the context in a natural manner and Harvey's suggestion, which has no textual support, may be ignored.

44. Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Church Fathers, vol.I, (Massachusetts: 1956), has argued that this concept was taken up and developed by Philo before its assimilation by the Apologists.

45. This is most clear in Theophilus of Antioch, Ad Autol. II.10.22, where the technical terms are employed, but exactly similar conceptions in varying terminology are found in Tatian Ad Graecos 5; Athenagoras, Legatio, 10.3; and Justin, Dial. 61f.

46. A similar criticism of the προφορικος (emissibilis) aspect of the theory is found a little later in II.13.2. Given these explicit criticisms of the concepts employed in the 'Logos model', and the attempts made by Irenaeus to develop alternatives, which we shall shortly

describe, it is surprising how many scholars appear to assume that Irenaeus does employ the 'Logos model'. G.C. Stead, for example, has claimed that, 'This distinction, developed in the Stoic phrases logos endiathetos, and logos prophorikos, was taken over and applied to God himself with some confidence by Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Irenaeus'. ('The Concept of Mind and the Concept of God in the Christian Fathers', in The Philosophical Frontiers of Christian Theology, ed. B. Hebblethwaite and S. Sutherland, (C.U.P.: 1982), p.50). A similar inability to see the contrast between Irenaeus and the Apologists at this point is exhibited in the following selection of authors: J.P. Smith, in his edition of the Demonstration, p.181; C.B. Kaiser, The Doctrine of God, (London, M.M. &S., 1982), p.56f.; and J. Ochagavia, Visible Patris Filius: A Study of Irenaeus' Teaching on Revelation and Tradition, (Rome: 1964), p.103. A partial exception is provided by R.W. Jenson, The Triune Identity, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), p.69f., although Jenson himself fails to appreciate the reversion to the Apologetic 'Logos model' by Tertullian.

47. IV.6.6. Cf. III.9.1; 10.2; 11.5f.; 16.6; 20.4; IV.6.3; 20.5; 24.2; V.18.1; Dem.6.

48. For the subordinationist charge, see Fortman, op.cit., p.107 and for the modalist charge, see Lawson, op.cit., p.129.

49. I refer primarily to the Valentinian school, which itself was far from homogeneous, but the generalisation implied in my remarks is, I think, supportable.

50. I.1.1.

51. I.14.1. 'Without material substance' renders ἀνουστος, which could also mean without being or reality, which meaning Irenaeus, but not his opponents, would have endorsed.

52. The nature of this qualification is not altogether easy to determine, although it is clearly asserted, e.g. I.14.1. Cf. the discussion in the early part of Chapter One.

53. For the invisibility of the Word in the act and economy of creation, see V.18.3.

54. Cf. Luke, 5:21, etc..

55. There seems little doubt to me that Irenaeus was strongly influenced by those verses in the Gospel of John which speak of Jesus Christ as the visible presence of the Father, verses that in the Gospel are given special prominence: 1:18; 12:45; 14:9. Cf. I John 1:1-3.

56. This also illustrates a basic feature in Irenaeus' theological method. If the incarnate Christ is not just a reflection of the invisible God, but mysteriously embodies the invisible God in a truly visible manner, we must faithfully follow the life and teaching of the incarnate Christ if we, as fellow visible creatures, are to know the invisible God. Hence we should abandon intellectual speculation, especially as attempted by the Gnostics, and obediently follow the actual revelation of God in space and time, tracing the richness of the economy of creation and redemption back to its source in the inner life of God. Thus I would maintain that Irenaeus has a concept of an 'immanent Trinity', but not one that is separable in human thought from the 'economic Trinity'. Later theology drove a logical wedge between the immanent and economic trinities and tended to dissolve the inner life of God into timeless and static abstractions. In faithful

over-reaction, much modern theology has abandoned any distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity, settled simply for the latter, and thus risked a loss of contact with the real being of God who is Creator as well as Redeemer.

57. J.Ochagavia, op.cit., argues this case at length, building upon various earlier studies by H. Zeigler, Irenäus der Bischof von Lyon, (Berlin:1871); N. Bonwetsch, Die Theologie des Irenäus, (Gütersloh: 1925); and A. Orbe, Hacia la Primera Teologia de la Procesión del Verbo, (Rome: 1958). Although he does not acknowledge the tensions in Irenaeus' theology, a convincing answer has been provided by D.J. Unger, op.cit..

58. If I have understood his thought correctly, Clement of Alexandria should be contrasted with Irenaeus here. Although veiled somewhat in the symbolism he loved, Clement appears to maintain a strong distinction between the transcendent source which is the indivisible and ineffable One, and the many names and symbols which point to the One (e.g. Strom, V.12 f). Clement appears to be participating in the drift from Middle Platonism to Neo-Platonism, whereas Irenaeus is moving from Justin's partial espousal of Middle Platonism in precisely the opposite direction; Cf. E.F. Osborn, Clement of Alexandria, ch.2.

59. II.13.4; III.24.2; IV.20.1; 4f.

60. III.11.5. Cf. those passages which speak of the Son as the knowledge of the Father: IV.6.3; Dem.7 cf. III.11.6. Irenaeus might have made more use of this explicit Johannine theme were the threat of Gnostic misrepresentation not so near at hand.

61. V.16.1; 17.2.

62. IV.4.2.

63. To some degree, it is this which has led to the popular misconception that the doctrine of the Trinity in Irenaeus is basically modalist, or has strong modalist leanings. There is, of course, nothing wrong with bringing into theology language and metaphor which has a popular, homely appeal, as long as one is aware of both the misconceptions which arise from unguarded anthropomorphism and the imbalance of attention which more popular imagery easily attracts. A more scholarly reason for the recent attention devoted to Irenaeus' conception of the 'two hands' of God is the fact that Loofs used this extensively in his attempt to prove Irenaeus' strong dependence upon Theophilus.

64. The quasi-technical identification of the Son and Spirit, or Word and Wisdom, as the hands of God is first found in IV.Praef.4 and occurs on several subsequent occasions: IV.20.1; V.1.3; 5.1; 6.1; 15.2f.; 16,1; 28.4; 35.2; Dem.11

65. Lawson, op.cit. p.123f., gives many illustrative examples.

66. For 'arm', e.g. Luke 1:51; for 'hand', e.g. Luke 1:66; for 'finger' e.g. Luke 11:20.

67. Because Ad Autolyicum must have been written after March 180. F.R. Montgomery Hitchcock, 'Loofs' Theory of Theophilus of Antioch as

a Source of Irenaeus', J.T.S., 38 (1937), pp.130-139 and 255-266. has argued strongly against Irenaeian dependence upon Theophilus, and for a common source issuing from the LXX and/or Philo, who had called the divine Logos and Wisdom the hands of God. The expression 'the hands of the Lord which formed you from earth' is found in Melito, On Pascha, 79; whether this is a deliberately trinitarian use is open to question. Often overlooked in this connection is 1Clement 33: 'Above all, with his holy and pure hands he formed man, his outstanding and greatest achievement, stamped with his own image'.

68. The anti-Gnostic character of the two hands doctrine is prominent. It is interesting to note that Athanasius had recourse to the image of the Son of God as the hand of God (De Decretis III.7) to illustrate the homousios of Father and Son, in contrast to the Arian teaching that the Son was an instrument detached from the Father.

69. This becomes particularly clear in Irenaeus' eschatology, which, picking up strands of thought from the Old Testament and Paul, emphasises the total renewal of creation. However, the question whether Irenaeus perceived the full depth of the relation between man and creation will occupy us in a later chapter.

70. IV. Praef. 4; IV.20.1; V.1.3; 6.1; 15.2f.; 28.4; Dem.11

71. The use of the term the two hands of God was not taken up by subsequent orthodoxy, although imaginative or descriptive use of the symbol 'the hand of God' with reference to Christ is found in various writers - e.g. Tertullian (De Res. 5). Cyprian (cited by Daniélou, The Origins of Latin Christianity, p.291), and Athanasius (De Decretis III.7).

72. For example, in relation to the question why creation is as it is, and afflicted by evil, Irenaeus answers that such questions 'should be left in the hands of God' (II.28.7). The close juxtaposition of significant references to the hand of God as non-technical and technical terms (IV.19.2f.; 20.1) illustrates the fluidity of expression.

73. The image of the Holy Spirit as vivifying moisture is taken from the Old Testament and had previously been introduced by Irenaeus in his discussion of the incident of Gideon's fleece (III.17.3). The finger of God, again following the Old Testament, is associated with the mediation of salvation of man earlier in A.H. (III.21.8; IV.29.2) and expressly identified with the Holy Spirit in Dem.26.

74. This is traced and summarised by Daniélou, Theology of Jewish Christianity, pp.134-140.

75. Daniélou, ibid, p.138, quoting Dom Lanne, 'Cherubim et Seraphim', R.S.R. 43 (1955), pp.527-530. This is the interpretation of the English editions of the Demonstration by Armitage Robinson and Smith.

76. In his edition of the Demonstration, (London: S.P.C.K., 1920), p.43.

77. Ibid., p.140. Despite the fact that he follows the amended reading of Dem.10, Daniélou still discusses this conception in the course of an extended treatment of 'The Trinity and Angelology', and makes no reference to it in his separate treatment of Irenaeus' doctrine of the Trinity.

78. See. E. Hennecke, New Testament Apocrypha, Vol. II, (E.T., London: Lutterworth, 1965), pp.642-663. The editors date the work, which may be composite, as possibly from the second century A.D.. Various parts or fragments of the book are available in Latin, Greek, Old Slavonic, and Coptic, but the entire work has come down to us only in Ethiopic translation. A minority view has held that it is the influence of Philo that is observable here in Irenaeus, but, as Daniélou argues convincingly (p.139), this is difficult to maintain.
79. Cf. Armitage Robinson, p.43; Daniélou p.139.
80. The important point here is that other evidence linking Irenaeus to the Ascension of Isaiah, viz. the account of the seven heavens and the secret descent of the Saviour, is only found in the Demonstration (9 & 84).
81. Cf. IV.7.4; 17.6.
82. This is certainly true of the Demonstration, which only survives in Armenian, and probably true of the Ascension whose original language is not known with certainty. Ch.9 is available in Old Slavonic, Latin, Ethiopic and, in part, in Coptic.
83. I have in mind the several works of James Barr upon this theme.
84. This can be shown, I think from the different uses of δοξαζω, προσκυβω and σεβομας in the New Testament. Σεβομας is relatively rare and usually refers to pagan or synagogue devotion. Προσκυβω is normally used to describe the approach of men to God. But δοξαζω and δοξα, which occur more frequently, are very often associated with God in a general way, either denoting (δοξα), or following from (δοξαζω), the revealed presence of God. This difference between δοξαζω (and δοξα) and προσκυβω is especially clear in Revelation, the New Testament book which is most relevant to our subject and literary genre. Both words occur frequently, but whereas δοξαζω and δοξα are used to denote the divine presence and being, προσκυβω denotes the worship due from created beings to God.
85. A verse from the Gospel of John (which is replete with the theme of glory in various contexts) is, of course, quoted in the extract above. The imagery of Revelation may also be in the background; arguably linked with the Johannine corpus, with its millenarianism endorsed by Irenaeus, it places a special emphasis upon the glory of the Godhead. The contrast between the Gospel of John and the apocalyptic ideas present in the Ascension of Isaiah has been well exposed by J.D.G. Dunn, 'Let John be John', in Das Evangelium und die Evangelien, hrg. von P. Stuhlmacher, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1983), eg. pp.324,329,331.
86. The link, yet dialectical distinction, between these two elements in Irenaeus' thought may be illustrated by the contexts in which they are to be found. We have seen how the 'two hands' teaching points to the care and benevolence of God towards man. The extracts from IV.14.1 and Dem.10 quoted above are both qualified by creation themes as well, but with a difference. The emphasis here is upon the self-sufficiency as well as the loving action of God ad extra. Created beings must always respect the divine freedom which self-sufficiency implies and 'not pass their bounds, each fulfilling his appointed task' (Dem.10);

they must respect the fact that 'God did not stand in need of man' (IV.14.1). Among commentators upon his doctrine of the Trinity there are relatively few who have adequately perceived this anti-Modalist aspect. An exception here is D.J. Unger, op.cit., p.381. One reason for this neglect has been the unfamiliar feel of such ideas to Western ears, influenced by the predominantly 'monarchical' model of the Trinity. J. Moltmann, 'The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit - Trinitarian Pneumatology', S.J.T., 37 (1984), pp.287-300, has contrasted the 'monarchical' and 'eucharistic' views of the Trinity, and has commented upon the 'eucharistic' model in language reminiscent of Irenaeus: 'The Holy Spirit glorifies the Son and - through the Son and together with him - glorifies the Father, until the goal of creation and all God's works is reached and the praise of God fills heaven and earth and imbues all created beings with bliss' (p.299). To some degree, the two hands of God corresponds to the monarchical model, and the glorification motif to the eucharistic model, it being necessary, as Moltmann insists, to hold both together. If Irenaeus puts too great an emphasis upon the 'monarchical' aspect, this may reflect his tendency to undervalue the contingency and independence of creation, a tendency which will occupy us in subsequent chapters.

87. This claim is introduced right at the beginning of A.H. (I.1.2) and undergirds the whole Gnostic position. It is interesting to note that in I.14.8, in relation to the Marcosian branch of Valentinianism, reference is made to 'the seven powers who glorify the Word'.

88. E.g. F.R.Montgomery Hitchcock's 'The Apostolic Preaching of Irenaeus and its Light on his Doctrine of the Trinity', p.336: 'Irenaeus regards the nature of God chiefly from the standpoint of man, and describes it, therefore, in terms of man's needs. The Incarnation is his chief concern, and his thoughts are fixed on it in such a way that the Divine Persons have interest for him chiefly as they effect the regeneration and salvation of man. But there are passages....which show that man is not altogether the centre of his system, and that he could think of the Trinity apart from their relations to humanity.' This may over-state the position somewhat; I wish to contend for a stronger place in the theology of Irenaeus for a concept of the 'immanent Trinity'.

89. Eternally and temporally, in the life of God 'before' creation and in the events of redemption. These two elements are intricately interwoven in the theme of glorification in the Gospel of John.

90. Cf. Ephesians 5:32. It may be that v.8-14 of this chapter influenced Irenaeus' development of the concept of Christ as the visible of the Father. Perhaps Irenaeus talks much more of 'visibility' than of 'light' because of Gnostic speculation upon the theme of light in the Gospel of John and Ephesians - see I.8.5.

91. Michael Shallis, On Time, (London: Burnett Books, 1982), p.195. My attention was drawn to this passage by J.R. Lucas in a review of this book in the Journal of the Science and Religion Forum, Summer 1983. There are, of course, differences between the uniqueness of created and uncreated light: I claim no more than an analogy. It is a 'natural miracle' that parts of creation, and in particular eyes, are specially adapted to see light. Similarly, according to Irenaeus, there is, as we shall see, a special adaptability in man to relate interpretatively to God - a 'miracle' of both creation and redemption.

92. We have in this examination of Irenaeus' alternative(s) to the 'Logos model' come close to certain concerns in the most recent discussions of trinitarian theology and it will help to put Irenaeus' conceptions in perspective if passing reference, in an extended note, is made to these developments. The agenda was set in large measure by the publication in 1953 (E.T. 1956) of Barth's Church Dogmatics, Vol. IV.1, and specifically paragraph 59, 'The Obedience of the Son of God', where the condescension of the Son of God in Incarnation and Atonement was, consistently with Barth's method, traced back into the inner being of God, to the concept of 'obedience which takes place in God Himself. Obedience implies an above and below, a prius and a posterius, a superior and a junior and subordinate' (p.195). This teaching is a considerable development from the more traditional Western doctrine of the Trinity found in C.D.I.1, a fact which has been obscured by repeated assessments of Barth which have ignored the major modification of C.D. I.1 introduced in C.D. IV.1. (Most recently, see J. Mackey, The Christian Experience of God as Trinity, (London: S.C.M., 1983) p.210.)

Those writers who have attempted a proper assessment of the later trinitarian theology of the Church Dogmatics have divided, as far as I can see, into three basic camps:

(i) Those who have wanted to go further in the direction of pluralism, towards what has sometimes been called the social model of the Trinity (e.g. Moltmann, von Balthasar). The danger here is that of starting with an all too human notion of division in God, indicated by the Cross, and then being bogged down in attempts to overcome this division.

(ii) Those of a more conservative or traditional outlook, who see Barth as exceeding the bounds of revelation or the traditional philosophical/theological understanding of the unity of God (e.g. Berkouwer). The danger here is of starting with an all too human notion of the unity of God and thus compromising the faithfulness of revelation and attenuating a proper concept of the living God.

The contribution of J. Mackey, mentioned above, is a curious and impressive combination of both (i) and (ii) wherein a search for a straightforward logical account of the nature of God, which leans towards (ii), is combined with a search for a 'Christology from below' which is a semi-agnostic version of (i).

(iii) This illustration of how the interests of (i) and (ii) above may invite a juxtaposition or synthesis brings us to those writers who have attempted to defend and enlarge upon Barth, with relatively little modification. E. Jüngel is the best known example of this category, and in Britain the clearest exposition and defence of Barth has been given by J. Thompson, Christ in Perspective in the Theology of Karl Barth, (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1978).

It is unnecessary in the context of this thesis to examine these different approaches (which are only a strategic selection), except to point out that if Jüngel is correct in his assessment of Barth's contribution here as one of the crucial developments in modern theology, a reassessment of the history of dogma will inevitably be evoked. From his own standpoint the recent book by J. Mackey attempts (sketchily, within the limits of space available) just this, but it is perhaps significant that he makes little reference to Irenaeus and clearly thinks he embraced the Logos theology of the Apologists and Tertullian (p.116). There is truth in the contention that contemporary Greek theology/philosophy influenced both pre-Nicene subordinationism and the post-Nicene interpretation of homousios as identity of being, but I would suggest that I have demonstrated that in Irenaeus, where the philosophical concerns are less

obvious (though not absent), we see a useful start in the construction of a doctrine of God which points neither to a divided nor to a remote unity, but to a rich and living triunity.

But to call Irenaeus' efforts a start is subtly to overlook the fact that the dominant influence here is Johannine. Despite - or because of? - his anti-Gnostic concern, Irenaeus did not doubt the importance and authority of the Fourth Gospel and quarried chiefly from this source his sense of unity and diversity in God. (That there is in the Fourth Gospel such a sense has been emphasised in recent times by C.K. Barrett in an influential essay, "'The Father is greater than I'" (John 14:28): Subordinationist Christology in the New Testament', in Neues Testament und Kirche, ed. J. Guilke, (Freiburg: 1975), pp.144-159.) S.W. Sykes, in Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued, ed. M.Goulder, (London: S.C.M., 1979), p.125, remarks with reference to Barrett's article: 'There is sufficient evidence that John himself realised the severity of the theological problem of a Sonship which was at once one with its Father, and yet wholly subordinate. There has never been any final or single resolution of this difficulty. Rather, what the history of Christian doctrine reveals is a series of attempts, of greater or lesser sophistication and degrees of success, at mitigating the inherent difficulties....Incarnational theology continues to consist of a variety of different articulations of the incarnation, whose primary form is the story of God's self identification with the human condition'.

Mackey op.cit., has attempted to chart and divide such mitigation into pre-Nicene subordinationist and post-Nicene strict identity of being models. My suggestion is that both Irenaeus and Barth attempt carefully not to mitigate, but to absorb into the very centre of their thought, the theological tension between unity and division in God which we find in the Gospel of John. Irenaeus modifies the Logos theology of the Apologists, and Barth classical Western trinitarian doctrine; these are very different starting points, but the journeys upon which they embark do exhibit some common features. One thinks also here of a certain similarity between Irenaeus' concept of ἀνακεφαλαιωσις and the Barthian concept of Stellvertretung (as expounded, like the modification to his doctrine of the Trinity, in C.D. IV and explained briefly by the English editors in C.D. IV.1; preface).

But these connections must not be overstated. To give theological expression to such a unique reality as the being of God is an ambitious task, yet plausibly it can be claimed that the New Testament itself presents this uniqueness to us. Jesus prayed to God as Father, using the word Abba. J. Jeremias, New Testament Theology, Vol.1, (London: S.C.M., 1971), p.64, has exposed the striking originality of this language: 'In the literature of Palestinian Judaism no evidence has yet to be found of "my Father" being used by an individual as an address to God.....it is quite unusual that Jesus should have addressed God as "my Father"; it is even more so that he should have used the dramatic form Abba'.

93. At Chalcedon, a Church wearied by constant debate, argument and misunderstanding opted for a fairly broad set of limits within which acceptable positions might be taken. Alongside the official Symbol, it gave recognition to Cyril's two letters and Leo's Tome as guarding against Nestorianism and Eutychianism respectively. This breadth, and the negative formulation of a crucial section of the Symbol, led to further argument and strife, which was revived in the acerbic debates between Lutheran and Reformed theologians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The underlying problem of Chalcedon was its apparent

starting point in the dual nature of Jesus Christ, with a corresponding assumption that each nature was already understood in its own right. Inevitably this led to the importation of foreign conceptions into christology and theology, not least in regard to the nature of God Himself, and therefore to renewed conflict.

94. Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol. II, pp.284ff., attempts to show contradiction in Irenaeus at this point; he charges Irenaeus with asserting (in Nestorian fashion) 'two independent existences in Christ', despite his opposition to the similar views of Gnosticism, and concludes, 'that one cannot think in realistic fashion of the deus homo factus without thinking oneself out of it' (p.285).

95. This is the constantly repeated theme of III.16-23.

96. This is well brought out by J.T. Nielsen, Adam and Christ in the Theology of Irenaeus of Lyons, who shows the importance to Irenaeus of the Adam-Christ typology and anti-typology.

97. Irenaeus quotes Rom.8:3, 'who was made in the likeness of sinful flesh', to prove this point (III.20.2; IV.2.7). Cf. II.20.3: 'But the Lord, our Christ, underwent a valid, and not a merely accidental passion; not only was He Himself not in danger of being destroyed, but He also established fallen man by His own strength, and recalled him to incorruption.'

98. In order to clarify what is meant by this noun, we should contrast Irenaeus here with certain other patristic writers. Clement of Alexandria is not a docetist in the full sense (far from it), but he does maintain that Jesus Christ ate and drank not because food was necessary to Him, but to prevent the spread of heretical notions (Strom. VI.71, quoted by H. Chadwick, Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition, p.51). Athanasius had a strong sense of incarnation, but can claim (De Inc. 16) that Jesus could have appeared only briefly before 'completing the sacrifice on behalf of all and delivering his body to death'. While not wishing to join the debate on Athanasius' relation to Apollinarianism, and accepting that De Incarnatione is a relatively early work which received some modification in Contra Arianos, Athanasius' thought here is some distance from that of Irenaeus. With the Athanasius of De Incarnatione there is a metaphysical tendency to see salvation as effected by the presence of God to humanity, which is rather the reverse of Anselm's metaphysical or legal concept of redemption granted in reward for the presence of obedient humanity to God. Irenaeus takes up both interests, God-manward, and man-Godward in the history of Jesus Christ, in the activity and actualisation of the mediator between God and man. Although acknowledging Athanasius' emphasis upon the capacity of God to involve Himself in the historical order, R.D. Williams has noted the difference between Athanasius and Irenaeus at this point: 'Awkwardness remains, notably in the notion (to become a commonplace in both Eastern and Western Fathers) that the activities of divinity and humanity are discernible, so to speak, side by side in the life of Jesus: "In the case of Lazarus, He spoke as man, in a human voice, but raised him from the dead in a divine way, acting as God" (Contra Arianos, III.32). In this naïve distinction we are some way from the Irenaeian Christ, whose divinity is manifest in his fulfilled and perfected humanity' (The Wound of Knowledge, London: D.L.T., 1979, p.49f.).

99. This was the Gnostic approach to salvation. Some Gnostics held that the Aeon Christ departed from Jesus before the crucifixion (e.g. I.26.1), and others attenuated the duration of Jesus' ministry (II.20.1). It was perhaps in reaction to this latter fact that Irenaeus was led to assert that Jesus lived until well into His forties (II.22.5f), although this also helped to cement the Adam-Christ typology and the sanctification of old age.

100. E.g. I.26.1: 'But at last Christ departed from Jesus, and then Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassible, inasmuch as he was a spiritual being'.

101. The most direct statement that God suffered in Jesus Christ is to be found in III.18.6, but the subject of that paragraph is Jesus Christ, rather than 'God', although in the course of affirming the real and genuine suffering of Jesus Christ, Irenaeus does refer to Him as 'Master', and, 'A most holy and merciful Lord, who loves the human race'.

102. E.T., London: S.P.C.K. 1931.

103. Irenaeus always refers the title 'Son of Man' to the human nature of Jesus Christ, and the Apologists never use it. Some Gnostic circles used the term (which would appeal to their imaginative mythology) to refer to an archetypal Son of Man - e.g. the Sethian-Ophites (I.30.1).

104. Thus Aulén, in his concentration upon Christus Victor, does not give enough attention to the elements of Christus Victima and Christus Advocatus. The struggle between God and evil involves the loving condescension of the Son of God into a redeeming relation with the humanity He takes to Himself. The richness of God is truly in our world, as the Son of God is present in the obedience of Jesus Christ in a divine and human obedience, which reflects the eternal glorification of the Father by the Son and Spirit. This is the link between Irenaeus' Christology, at which we are merely glancing, and his trinitarian theology. Aulén's one-sidedness is well illustrated by the following remarks, from the conclusion to his chapter on Irenaeus: 'When Irenaeus speaks.....of the obedience of Christ, he has no thought of a human offering made to God from man's side, but rather that the Divine will wholly dominated the human life of the Word of God, and found perfect expression in His work' (op.cit., p.50)

105. As we saw in relation to the 'Logos model', it is in Justin and the other Apologists that we see the division between Being and Becoming borrowed from Middle Platonism. Also in Justin there is a very considerable emphasis upon the incarnation as humiliation (as Trakatellis op.cit., ch.4, has shown), and a corresponding division between the two comings of Christ - the first in humility and the second in glory (e.g. Dial. 14). We are seeing reflections of this here in Irenaeus, but Justin's scheme is qualified, for in III.19.3, as quoted above, the triumph and glorification of human nature in Jesus Christ is already occurring during his ministry as he conquered and endured (temptation, suffering etc.), and as he 'performed acts of kindness'. Here Irenaeus is picking up certain themes from the New Testament. In the Synoptic Gospels the events of Easter are linked to the ministry of

of Jesus both by the predictions of the passion, and the sense of movement or journey to Jerusalem. The predictions of the passion usually occur at climaxes of the pre-Easter story. This is another aspect of Johannine thought which Irenaeus is assimilating into his theology, even if the expression here is not as clear as one finds in the Gospel of John. Further evidence that Irenaeus could soften the mystery of atonement and redemption is found in his reference of the term Son of Man to the human nature of Christ - for example in the discussion of Mt. 16:13 in III.18.4, where suffering and rejection are associated primarily with the 'Son of Man'. The sense that the Son of God suffers in and with (and as?) the Son of Man is not absent in this paragraph, but the sense of mystery which surrounds the title Son of Man in the Gospels (cf. Acts 7:56, the solitary and dramatic reference to the Son of Man in that book) is certainly diminished by Irenaeus.

106. It is commonly recognised today that this tension is evident in The New Testament, not least between the different Synoptic gospels. William Barclay, Gospel of Matthew, (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1956), p.xix, summarises three related differences between Matthew/Luke and Mark which relate to our theme:

- (i) Matthew and Luke change Mark to remove any suggestion that Christ's power is limited; compare Mark 6:5f and Matthew 13:57.
- (ii) Matthew and Luke leave out little touches of Mark in case they could be taken to belittle Jesus. They omit Mark 3:5, 21; 10:14, verses which attribute human emotions of anger and grief to Jesus.
- (iii) Sometimes Matthew and Luke slightly alter things in Mark in order to get rid of statements which might seem to show the Apostles in a bad light; compare Mark 10:35 with Matthew 20:20.

This theological tension in writers prior to Irenaeus is also evident in Ignatius: (Ephesians7): 'There is one physician, of flesh and of spirit, generate and ingenerate, God in man, true life in death, Son of Mary and Son of God, first passible and then impassible, Jesus Christ our Lord'.

107. For direct identification, see II.30.9; III.24.2; IV.7.4; 20.1, 2,3; V.2.3; Dem. 5,10. This is an interesting feature in Irenaeus because the general attitude of patristic (and biblical) writers is to associate or equate Wisdom with the Word/Son. It is generally recognised that the Logos prologue of the Gospel of John is in part indebted to Jewish Wisdom speculation and the Gospel of Matthew ^{speculation and the Gospel of Matthew} 'Q' to equate Jesus with Wisdom (see J.D.G. Dunn, Christology in the Making, (London: S.C.M., 1980), p.197). The identification of Christ with Wisdom is particularly prominent in Paul, and is strongly implied in Hebrews 1. Justin (Dial.129), Tertullian (Adv. Prax. 6f), and Origen (see Demonstration, ed. J.A. Robinson, p.51), to name significant patristic writers either side of Irenaeus, all equate the Word/Son and Wisdom. An interesting exception is Theophilus of Antioch (Ad Autol. I.7,13; II.15) although, perhaps due to the apologetic nature of Ad Autolyicum, he is not as clear as Irenaeus at this point. It has sometimes been assumed that Irenaeus is simply dependent upon Theophilus, but the fact that Theophilus wrote in 180, at the earliest, must cast doubt upon this, although complete independence is equally unlikely. The identification of Christ with Wisdom in Irenaeus certainly has greater theological significance than we find in Theophilus' passing references.

108. At some stage verses such as Job 10 = Psalm 119:73, 'Thy hands fashioned and made me', must have been influential; an influence mediated, perhaps, through Hellenistic Judaism.

109. The language of 'adorning', and the identification of the Spirit and Wisdom, is also found in IV.20.1f.

110. Once again, we see here in Irenaeus the emergence of certain themes which are prominent in the Fourth Gospel. There, although the language and expression is on occasions reminiscent of Gnosticism, the stress is on the firmly anti-Gnostic, 'The Word became flesh' (Jn.1:14), and the emphasis upon the Holy Spirit is in marked contrast with the Synoptic Gospels. (It must be admitted, though, that the contrast may be more linguistic than material, as the concept of the Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels bears a strong resemblance to Johannine teaching on the Holy Spirit.)

111. For a summary of current scholarly opinion on this concept, see J.D.G. Dunn, Christology in the Making, ch.6. The extent to which the concept of Wisdom is hypostasised in pre-Christian Judaism is a matter for debate, but there is little doubt that Irenaeus' concept of Wisdom, which he relates to various texts from Proverbs (IV.20.3f), is at least partly hypostasised. This use by Irenaeus of the concept of Wisdom should thus be distinguished (if not entirely separated) from his general attribution of wisdom as a characteristic to the one God, which we examined in the previous chapter.

112. The identification of these reasons depends somewhat upon the theological stance that is taken. Those who are critical of the basis of classical trinitarian theology in any form tend to emphasise the spirituality of God qua God and thus point to the hypostatisation of the Holy Spirit as the source of confusion and subsequent neglect. Among a host of claimants for mention here, I single out as representative of this position in recent British theology, Maurice Wiles ('The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology', originally published in Theology, 66 (1963), pp.223-7, and reprinted in his Explorations in Theology, S.C.M., 1979, ch.6), and Geoffrey Lampe (God as Spirit, O.U.P., 1977).

Writers more sympathetic to the broad pattern of classical trinitarian theology tend to point to the unusual nature of the hypostatisation of the Spirit as an intrinsic cause of the neglect. I refer to T.F. Torrance to illustrate this: 'The Holy Spirit is not cognoscible in Himself, but it is in the Spirit that we are confronted with the ultimate being and presence of God....He does not show us Himself, but shows us the Face of the Father in the Face of the Son, and shows us the heart of the Son in the heart of the Father. By His very mode of being as Spirit He hides Himself from us so that we do not know Him directly in His own hypostasis'. (God and Rationality, O.U.P., 1971, p.167). In addition, and as a consequence, it is often claimed that substitutes for the Spirit readily usurp in a more visible fashion the true place of the self-effacing Spirit. These 'false spirits' may be aspects of the Church such as the hierarchy, tradition, Scripture etc., or the religiosity and piety of its members, or wider features of individual or national culture, such as human reason or the Zeitgeist of nineteenth-century Europe.

While leaving open the question of the degree of hypostatisation of

the Spirit as a 'person', but being willing to suggest as worthy of greater attention the possibility that, while 'person' is on balance an appropriate indication of the nature of the Son, 'mode of being' is on balance the most appropriate expression to indicate the nature of the Spirit (for why should it be the case, as is usually assumed, that the same language must be used of Son and Spirit?), I would support this latter approach to understanding the reasons for the neglect of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, I would suggest that the relative neglect of the Holy Spirit correlates in the Apostolic Fathers with an over-emphasis on piety, and in the Apologists with an over-emphasis upon human reason.

Irenaeus picks up the rich scriptural background to a doctrine of the Holy Spirit (as well expounded in the recent monographs with this title by A.M. Ramsey (1977) and E. Schweizer (1978; E.T. 1980)) and in doing so opposes the Gnostic confusion between Spirit and created man. The danger in Irenaeus is a restriction of both the freedom of the Spirit, and the freedom of creation, as we shall discuss in later chapters.

113. In distinction from the Stoic conception of Spirit, this usage is biblical. The divine ruach of the Old Testament is firmly the presence and activity of God, but neither is its being hypostatized alongside the Father nor is its activity specified exclusively in certain directions. In the New Testament we have the direct description of God as Spirit (John 4:24) and the risen and ascended Jesus is called by Paul 'spiritual' and 'a life-giving spirit' (I Cor. 15:45f); alongside such references, of course, are those which clearly distinguish Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

G.L. Prestige has drawn attention to a similar ambiguity in (especially early) patristic writings, and he lists a number of occasions where Spirit simply denotes divinity (God in Patristic Thought, p.xx; 17ff). Some instances of this are found in Irenaeus: e.g. III.10.3; V.1.2; Dem. 71, but as a rule, unless he is speaking of the human spirit, Irenaeus speaks of the Spirit as the third member of the Godhead.

114. This is shown convincingly by Wingren, Man and the Incarnation, (E.T. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959), p.96f. There are passages which connect the Virgin Birth with a sign of the divinity of Christ (e.g. V.1.3, in response to Ebionism) but, 'For Irenaeus....the miraculous birth of our Lord testifies rather to His connexion with Adam. Adam was taken from the virgin soil and had no earthly father.....And in order to establish this contact with Adam, the Son of God received human form from the Virgin Mary'. There is a marked contrast here with Justin, who links the Virgin Birth with the sign and means of the entry of the pre-existent Christ into our world (see Trakatellis, op.cit. pp.146-157). Justin's approach was easily adapted by, or paralleled in, Gnostic Christology: A.H. 1.7.2 records the Valentinian belief that, 'Christ passed through Mary just as water flows through a tube'.

115. Reflecting, perhaps, an anti-Marcionite emphasis in this work, for Marcion rejected the sending of the Holy Spirit.

116. This is the point that Harnack missed when, in relation to this passage, he accuses Irenaeus of separating the humanity of Christ from the Logos in quasi-Gnostic fashion (History of Dogma, II, p.285). He asks the rhetorical questions: 'Of what importance is an anointing with the Spirit to him who is God? What is the meaning of Christ being born by the power of the Holy Ghost?' The answer which Irenaeus

gives us ~~is to~~ conceive the humanity of Christ as having a soteriological rather than a metaphysical role.

Objections more recent than that of Harnack to the christology of incarnation have also tended to ignore the important soteriological dimension. It is noteworthy, for example, that of the contributors to The Myth of God Incarnate, ed. J. Hick, (London: S.C.M., 1977), only Frances Young, in one of her essays (ch.2), gives serious consideration to the implications for soteriology of changes in the doctrines of incarnation and trinity.

117. Cf. the extended discussion in III.17.1-4.

118. Christology in the Making.

119. For an exclusive 'Adam' Christology, see M. Goulder, 'Jesus, the Man of Universal Destiny', in The Myth of God Incarnate, and for an exclusive concentration upon Spirit — Christology see G. Lampe, God as Spirit. An interesting attempt to combine the emphasis upon Being in the Son/Word models, and upon Becoming in the Adam/Spirit models, is to be found in E. Jüngel's Gottes Sein ist im Werden, (Tübingen: 1966; E.T. 1976), a book whose style is about as different from Irenaeus as one could imagine, but which contains many passages which remind one of Irenaeus concepts — although no debt or relationship to Irenaeus is suggested by the author.

120. This, language, which occurs elsewhere, has been taken to indicate that Irenaeus affirms the later doctrine of the filioque, but such a claim is at best tenuous. I suspect Irenaeus would have proffered a reverent agnosticism on such a question, as he did to other questions which tried to specify the nature of relations in the Godhead. Irenaeus' statements are, however, compatible with an affirmation of filioque.

121. This passage expresses the role of the Holy Spirit with a clarity that is often lacking in the earlier A.H.. Generally speaking, the trinitarian statements in the Demonstration are clearer and more concise than in the earlier work, although the thought is basically similar. Indeed the Demonstration contains many phrases and expressions common in A.H.. The edition of J.A. Robinson (p.76), for example, notes the striking parallels between Dem.7 and portions of A.H.. To illustrate the relative clarity and systematic precision of the Demonstration, we may compare an extract from A.H. IV.20.7 'And for this reason did the Word become the dispenser of the paternal grace for the benefit of men, for whom He made such great dispensations, revealing God indeed to men, but presenting man to God'. The thought is the same as in Dem.7 but the trinitarian structure, while explicitly present in IV.20 on several occasions, could be exhibited with greater systematic care. Cf. IV.14.2..

122. We will consider this question further in later chapters. At this stage it will suffice to point out that Irenaeus gives more prominence than do the New Testament writers to the Old Testament teaching on the activity of God in the wider sphere of the created world, but, in common with the New Testament, Irenaeus' greatest emphasis is upon the new order that the coming of Christ and the Spirit has inaugurated.

123. New Testament specialists, in particular, have too readily attempted either to prove or to disprove the attestation of 'pre-existence' in a given passage. Although in many ways a most scholarly work, James Dunn's Christology in the Making largely identifies 'Incarnation' in texts by the claimed presence of 'pre-existence'; it is true that he refers (p.9) to the danger of beginning with definitions of pre-existence and incarnation, but he offers no discussion of the different possible conceptions of time and eternity which in large measure determine the senses given to pre-existence and incarnation. In particular, he does not remark upon the interesting - and suggestive - fact that the noun προυπαρτις and its cognates occurs only once in the New Testament, and that not in the prologue to the Gospel of John but in the unpromising context of Luke 23:12: 'And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.' This in itself should warn us that any concept of pre-existence to be identified in the New Testament is likely to be subtle and unusual. (cf. the remarks of D.M. MacKinnon in his review of Dunn's book, S.J.T., 35 (1982) p.364).

Systematic theologians have been more likely to identify the depth of the difficulties which beckon here. Among recent authors, James Mackey (The Christian Experience of God as Trinity, ch.6, 'The problem of the Pre-Existence of the Son') has given special emphasis to the enigmatic character of the language of pre-existence. This is a useful corrective, and his attack upon Martin Hengel's argument in his Son of God (E.T., London: S.C.M., 1976) is effective. But to label any notion of pre-existence as merely speculative (p.64), as if all that mattered was the historical Jesus (another tortuous concept requiring careful definition), surely obscures the intention of the New Testament texts, which certainly indicate something along the lines of pre-existence (cf. the conclusion of the review of Mackey's earlier Jesus, the Man and the Myth, (London: S.C.M., 1979), by James Dunn, Theology, 83 (1980) p.293f.): 'The main defect is a New Testament exegesis in which selectivity and special pleading determine the results....the construction of the systematic theologian shows itself to have exegetical feet of clay.' The particular feet used in the discussion of pre-existence in the latter book are provided by Harnack (p.51) and Kant (p.63), and they strongly influence the view taken of any association of 'pre-existence' with the historical Jesus. These contrasting examples of the contributions of prominent biblical and dogmatic scholars to the recent discussion of 'pre-existence' illustrate the complexities which attend this subject.'

124. Many authorities could be cited here. From rather different, but influential, philosophical camps, I choose Augustine and Hume.' Augustine puzzles at length (Confessions XI) over the 'most entangled enigma' of time, circling around an almost mystical sense of the present moment as the central reality - in a manner which echoes, if distantly, the reflections upon the subject stimulated by modern Physics. Interestingly enough, the same may be said of Hume's claim (An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Selby-Bigge and Nidditch, (O.U.P.: 1975), p.156) that, 'The chief objection against all abstract reasonings is derived from the ideas of space and time: ideas which, in common life and to careless view, are very clear and intelligible, but when they pass through the scrutiny of the profound sciences (and they are the chief object of these sciences) afford principles, which seem full of absurdity and contradiction.' Both of these classic thinkers point to an inextricable and mysterious connection of time with experienced

reality, a connection which the 'profound sciences' have indeed exposed in this century. However, although clarified, the mysterious and paradoxical nature of space and time has not been explained. A.C. Ewing warns the enquirer (The Fundamental Questions of Philosophy, (London: R.K.P., 1951), p.143) that, 'the subject is far too difficult for anything faintly approaching adequate treatment to be possible in an elementary work on philosophy'. This is to leave aside the associated problem of eternity, which is closely related to a concept of God.

125. An insufficiently clear recognition of this has marred much of the modern debate about the biblical concept - or concepts - of time, and led to an exegesis which has been too selective. This point was forcefully made by James Barr (Biblical Words for Time, S.C.M., 1962, developing views expressed in The Semantics of Biblical Language, O.U.P., 1961) in relation to the works of Cullmann, Marsh and Robinson. This debate merged with the wider discussion of the theology of the Old Testament, and in particular the concept of revelation in history. But in the Old Testament, as is now widely accepted, there is the claim that God acts both in history and in His continual blessing of creation, and any attempt to divorce linear from cyclical time will result in severe exegetical problems. Barr has rightly exposed the dangers of basing exegesis upon supposed contrasts between Greek and Hebrew thought, which are supported by strained lexicographical arguments, and he has recognised 'the prominence of philosophical-theological considerations, both in the posing of the problems about time and the solutions offered' (p.151). However, he offers no contribution on the level he commends, and here, at least (as he recognises, p.44), Marsh has made an interesting contribution (The Fulness of Time, London: Nisbet, 1952).

126. Thus, in a curious manner, the modern confusion between God and the world has developed, because the concept of the 'absolute' is surrogate for that of the 'divine'. Yet the idealist and romantic response to Deism ensured that the confusion is more that between God and man, than between God and nature. Thus caught between materialistic and idealistic conceptions of himself, it is little wonder, in the face of manifest evils, that the modern experience of the meaninglessness of existence has developed pari passu.

127. In response to the Gnostic form of argument from creation to God, wherein words and numbers were held to contain secret symbolism of the Pleroma, Irenaeus makes an analogous claim: 'A system does not spring out of numbers, but numbers from a system; nor does God derive His being from things made, but things made from God' (II.25.1).

128. The two occasions where he uses the word 'pre-exist', without qualification, of the Son are in Dem.30 and 51. Of course we have here only an Armenian translation, but the English and French editors are unanimous that this is the correct translation. As remarked earlier, this work was probably written after the heat of the Gnostic controversy had cooled somewhat, at least in the Western Mediterranean, and in the compact credal statements of the Demonstration Irenaeus may have felt willing to use the language of pre-existence without danger of the misunderstanding of the term in a Gnostic direction. On the other hand, the dependence of the Demonstration upon Justin has been shown to be very likely (the notes to the edition of Armitage Robinson emphasise this), and Irenaeus may simply have been

prepared to take over the exegesis of Old Testament testimonia, which included an emphasis upon the 'pre-existence' of the Son, which Justin had provided ready at hand.

129. The supreme Aeon is thus most pre-existent: 'They maintain, then, that in the invisible and ineffable heights above there exists a certain perfect, pre-existent Aeon.....Eternal and unbegotten, he remained throughout innumerable cycles of ages in profound serenity and quiescence' (I.1.1). For degrees of pre-existence and honour, see II.4.1.

130. We can see the influence of this belief in Justin Martyr. In his Apologies there is the appeal to analogies and parallels to Christian belief in ancient writers, and a rather disproportionate appeal to prophecy. In the Dialogue the appeal to heathen writers is understandably reduced in favour of an even greater reliance upon the argument from the fulfilment of prophecy. That this involved a corresponding emphasis upon a rather rationalistic concept of pre-existence, timeless precisely because of the need to fit it into a linear concept of worldly time, is discussed in Appendix A. It is interesting, however, to see how Trypho accepts this concept of pre-existence without too much difficulty, even though it involves a considerable modification to the late Jewish belief in the pre-existence of the Torah (among other things), but cannot understand how it could cohere with the birth or baptism of Jesus. For the former, see Dial. 78: 'And Trypho said, "You endeavour to prove an incredible and well-nigh impossible thing; (namely) that God endured to be born and become man".' Justin accepts that the reasonableness of this cannot be demonstrated except by the weight of prophecy which could be brought to bear.

For the latter, see Dial. 87: 'How can He be demonstrated to have been pre-existent, who is filled with the powers of the Holy Ghost, which the Scripture by Isaiah enumerates, as if He were in lack of them? Justin acknowledges the acuteness of Trypho's point and, missing the connection between the Holy Spirit and the humanity of Christ, makes no effective reply.

131. Perhaps this is why Marcion, for all his subtlety and simplicity, never had wide popular appeal.

132. For some remarks upon Justin's concept of the pre-existence of Christ, see Appendix A. For a fuller account, see Trakatellis, op.cit., passim.

133. The former point is obvious from the passage: there is no hint of any ontological relation between the generation of the Son and creation. The latter point is made in several ways here. Firstly, Irenaeus simply maintains that the Word was always present with mankind, preferring this to the partial presence of the λογος σπερματικός. Secondly, the mediation of the Word in creation is stated whereas Justin, as we saw, avoids this idea. Thirdly, there is the Adam-Christ typology. All three of these themes are constantly repeated by Irenaeus, whereas they are either incidental or qualified in Justin.

134. A similar view of Christ as the 'mid-point' of time is found in O. Cullmann's Christ and Time, (E.T., London: S.C.M, 1951).

135. See Wingren, op.cit., p.92f., for various references.

136. The only use of this word in A.H.

137. Editors and translators have evidently puzzled long over this paragraph, the nineteenth-century Scottish translators of the Ante-Nicene Christian Library claiming that, 'It is very difficult to follow the reasoning of Irenaeus in this passage'. The Latin of the essential part is as follows: Et propter hoc lex eam quae desponsata erat viro, licet virgo sit adhuc, uxorem eius qui desponsaverat vocat, eam quae est a Maria in Evam recirculationem significans: quia non aliter quod colligatum est solveretur, nisi ipsae compagine alligationis reflectantur retrorsus; ut primae conjunctiones solvantur per secundas, secundae rursus liberent primas. Yet if one reads this as part of Irenaeus' attempt to replace a linear sense of time by one which is strictly christocentric, the passage does not seem problematic. Thus Keble, who translated A.H. for A Library of Fathers, renders the passage smoothly and without comment. Irenaeus emphasises this understanding in the sentences which immediately follow: 'And on this account the Lord said, "The last indeed shall be first, and first last"For our Lord being born, the First-born of the dead, and receiving the old Fathers into His bosom, regenerated them to the life of God: becoming Himself the beginning of those that live, because Adam became the beginning of the dying'.

138. Earlier in A.H. Irenaeus is at pains to maintain the unity of God and His will ad extra. We simply have to accept that, 'The advent of the Son of God took place in these last times, that is, in the end, rather than the beginning' (I.10.3), trusting the wisdom of 'one and the same God'. Furthermore, with God thought and action coincide, so that, 'as soon as God formed a conception in His mind, that was also done which He had thus mentally conceived', which, for Irenaeus, means that for the Gnostics, 'to affirm that what was mentally conceived and pre-created (praeformatum) by the Father of all, just as it has been actually formed, is the fruit of a defect, and the production of ignorance, is to be guilty of great blasphemy' (II.3.2).

139. A point brought out by J.A. Lyons, The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin: A comparative Study, (O.U.P.: 1982)

140. This concept of 'the redeemed time of the incarnate Christ' might be regarded as an explication of the concept of 'divine motion' proposed by T. Pierce, op.cit.

141. To choose a central example, Romans 8:11, 'If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you'.

142. The central role given by Irenaeus to the Holy Spirit in mediating and revealing the presence of God to creation has been emphasised recently by R. Tremblay, La Manifestation et la vision de Dieu selon saint Irénée de Lyon, (Münster: 1978)

143. Irenaeus' eschatology is not without its problems, as we shall see in Chapter Five, but we pass over these for the present.

144. A question, nevertheless, which E.P. Meijering, God Being History, p.74, has pressed, charging Irenaeus with an 'apparent contradiction', which 'is either caused by the fact that Irenaeus repeatedly argues ad hoc, or can perhaps be harmonized into the view that, according to Irenaeus, Pagans could have known that there is one God who is the Creator. That they in fact refused to acknowledge this makes the Christian doctrine new to them, that they had the possibility, to know it makes the Christian doctrine not entirely new to them.' But is either suggestion convincing? Is the solution not in Irenaeus' christocentric view of time?

145. I would wish to suggest that Irenaeus is primarily guided by certain passages in the New Testament which indicate an unusual relationship of Jesus Christ to time. For the most part the interpretation of these passages is controversial and they cannot be discussed in detail here. An assessment along lines not wholly dissimilar to Irenaeus, but more systematic and explicit, is found in Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, II.2. pp.437-511, the greater part of which is given to exegesis of the passages I have in mind. A similar, if brief, treatment of many of these passages has also been given by C.E.B. Cranfield, 'Thoughts on New Testament Eschatology', S.J.T., 35 (1982), pp.497-512. Cranfield's article has the particular merit of capturing in the New Testament that combination of the eschatological newness and continuity through time of Jesus Christ, which we have also identified in Irenaeus. The Irenaean treatment of pre-existence is perhaps another area where the influence of Johannine theology is evident. Arguably the theme of the Gospel of John is 'the non-historical that makes sense of history, the infinite that makes sense of time, God who makes sense of men and is therefore their saviour'. (E.C.Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, Faber & Faber, 2nd edit. 1947, p.129f., and ch.8., 'The Theological Tension of the Fourth Gospel', passim). The tendency in Irenaeus to see the incarnate Christ as 'pre-existent' corresponds to the 'Before Abraham was, I am' of John 8:58. That Gnostics made considerable use of this Gospel would have intensified the pressure upon Irenaeus to integrate its themes into his theology.

DOCTRINE OF CREATION : PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

The previous chapter began with the claim that a sense of salvation dominated the life and experience of the Church in the 150 years which passed before Irenaeus wrote A.H.. The rationale of this experience of salvation led to a reconceptualization of God towards what was later to be called the doctrine of the Trinity. Yet it would be a mistake to overlook the fact that, although much modified in content, there was no serious move to qualify the basic tenet of monotheism. That this was especially the case with Irenaeus has been argued in the previous two chapters, but he does not stand alone, and this central point in his theology undoubtedly reflects 'a distinctive Asia Minor tradition in Christian theology which is now largely lost'.¹

This strong defence of monotheism almost certainly owes a good deal to the Jewish context which is thought to have provided the most significant background to the Gospel of John, and probably to other writings emerging from the churches of Asia Minor.² Thus, although the New Testament concerns itself largely with the salvation brought by Christ, to the apparent neglect of the motifs of the doctrine of creation, the emerging church could readily expand the New Testament theme of creation by reference to the extensive heritage provided by the Old Testament. A major stimulus for the development of this process was provided by the rise of Gnosticism, but the process itself doubtless had a dynamic similar to that which scholars have identified

in the Old Testament, where belief in creation apparently arose from the experience of salvation.³

In this chapter we will survey some of the basic aspects of Irenaeus' approach to the doctrine of creation. After an account of the Gnostic background against which he wrote, we will examine Irenaeus' attribution of creation to the one, supreme God. What was the motive of God, if creation is not the accident claimed by Gnostics? Where did the nature and pattern come 'from'? If from 'nothing', in the sense that only from the will of God, what does this imply about the nature of created reality? What distinction is and ought to be made between Creator and creation? Our general consideration of these questions will undergird the more specific topics in Irenaeus' doctrine of creation which will occupy the remainder of this thesis.

The Gnostic View of Creation

A brief summary must suffice.⁴ Although individual Gnostic systems differ considerably in detail, the central feature of Gnosticism is the belief in a radical dualism that governs the relation between God and the world, which in turn, due to the division within man himself in Gnostic anthropology, results in a corresponding dualism between man and his environment. God is the antithesis of the world and naturally remote from it; the world is the work of powers 'beneath' the true God, which, although they may in some manner derive from God, do not know Him, and indeed tend to obstruct the transmission of such knowledge to others 'lower' down the scale of reality.

The existence of this chasm between the supreme deity and the world provides scope for the speculation concerning the intermediate levels

of being and beings which characterises Gnosticism. These speculations can take quite different forms (as Irenaeus delights to point out⁵), but uniting them is a view of the universe akin to a vast prison whose innermost dungeon is the earth. Around and above it the cosmic spheres are ranged like concentric enclosing shells - up to 365 in the case of Basilides.⁶ Man is thus separated from God both by vast physical distance, and also by the action of the misguided or demonic powers who guard the movement from one sphere to another. These factors combine in a determinist concept of fate, to which we will return when we consider the teaching of Irenaeus on the freedom of the will.

Although he describes various schools and branches of Gnosticism, Irenaeus gave most attention to Valentinianism, especially as interpreted and developed by Ptolemaeus and Marcus.⁷ In this system the act of creation is an indirect and unintentional consequence of the error of the lowest Aeon, Sophia, in passionately seeking to know the supreme God (Bythus). She was restrained by the limiting power (Συνομις = virtus, not one of the 30 Aeons) Horos, which supports everything outside of, and prevents encroachment upon, the unspeakable and unknowable Bythus.⁸ Two of the alternative names for Horos are especially significant: Stauros (cross; also stake, indicating the confining, limiting function of Horos), and Lytrotēs (redeemer). Thus there is here the idea that Sophia is redeemed, which involved separation from her passion.⁹ This is then conceived as an independent 'spiritual being', but shapeless and without form, a quasi-Aeon but no more (I.2.4). She is called Achamoth (from the Hebrew chokmah, wisdom) and suffered much passion and perplexity on account of her ignorance. This troubled the other Aeons, who united in prayer to

Bythos and obtained from him the emanation of a new pair of Aeons, Christos and Holy Spirit. Their function is to restore serenity to the Pleroma, which in turn requires the control and impartation of form to the wandering Achamoth. This impartation of form effectively imprisons Achamoth outside the Pleroma, and her passions eventually result in definite states of being in the 'created' world. In order to give form to these 'substances', Achamoth fashioned the Demiurge from the intermediate ('psychic' or 'animal') level of existence. It was this Demiurge who, in ignorance of Achamoth and the Pleroma, separated the substances into their different types, Achamoth secretly supplying the sparks of divinity in some men 'through an unspeakable providence'.¹⁰

The question of the influences upon the rise and development of Gnosticism has been the subject of a lengthy and continuing debate, which has been complicated by the unpredictable syncretism characteristic of Gnosticism. In relation to the Valentinian cosmology outlined above, some connection with Platonism is generally agreed. Jonas¹¹ acknowledges a formal debt, but argues that a 'vast gulf' separates the spirit of Valentinianism from Plato. More recently J. Dillon¹² has shown both how certain interpretations of Plato in Middle Platonism came close to radical Gnosticism in their valuation of the material world and man's position in it, and how the Valentinian myth of Sophia and her offspring the demiurge has at least a partial dependence upon the interpretations of Plato in Middle Platonism.

Some criticism of Dillon's assessment has been offered by R. Van Den Broek¹³ who stresses the complex and variegated nature of Gnosticism, and asserts that, 'The spirit of Gnosticism cannot be explained from

Platonism nor from any other Greek school of thought'. Nevertheless, there is an important sense in which Gnosticism differs from Plato, as far as creation is concerned, precisely by proposing a solution to a problem recognised but left largely open by Plato himself, namely the origin of evil. The Gnostics could claim to offer a new cosmological explanation of the misery of human existence,¹⁴ and an avenue of salvation therefrom, without seeming to depart too radically from either Greek cosmic religion, the mystery cults, or some strands of contemporary Jewish Christianity.¹⁵

One of the attractions of Gnosticism was its ability both to recall and develop (or distort) other traditions, and this in part accounts for its plausibility, which, despite its extravagant mythology, even Irenaeus is forced to acknowledge.¹⁶ The challenge is thus issued: how is catholic Christianity to defend its commitment to the reality and goodness of creation without compromising the mystery of redemption?

God the Creator

However the details might vary, Gnostics agreed that creation was an accident emanating directly or indirectly from someone, other than the supreme God, who was also the product of an accident.¹⁷ Irenaeus argues strenuously against both mishaps: the supreme God is the creator, and creation is carefully planned and executed. Perhaps even the expression 'the supreme God is the creator' might be misleading unless it is understood that the converse is equally true, that the creator is the supreme God. For Irenaeus, as we saw when we considered aspects of his doctrine of the Trinity, primarily works towards an understanding of God from His revealed activity in creation and redemption. This is the reason for his extensive exegesis of Scripture to defend the unity

of God, and of creation and redemption as the works of the one God, which occupies much of Books Three to Five of A.H.. Book Three opens with the statement that the various apostolic authors

.....have all declared to us that there is one God, creator of heaven and earth, announced by the law and Prophets. (III.1.2)

Book Four continues to defend the attribution of creation to the one and only God, but develops the argument by attempting to forge a close link between creation and redemption:

This, then, is the aim of him who envies our life, to render men disbelievers in their own salvation, and blasphemous against God the creator. For whatsoever all the heretics may have advanced with the utmost solemnity, they come to this at last, that they blaspheme the Creator, and disallow the salvation of God's workmanship, which the flesh truly is.... (IV. praef. 4.)

In Book Five the link between creation and redemption is expressed even more emphatically; not only is God the creator, but He also came to share and experience our created existence:

.....our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself. (V. praef.)

Towards the end of this chapter we will consider whether the close relation drawn between creation and redemption was at the expense of the assumption of the former into the latter. For the moment we should emphasise that Irenaeus, although he gives the existence of the Saviour a priority over the existence of the creation that is to be saved,¹⁸ nevertheless is careful to give a full appreciation of creation a position of first importance in his refutation of the Gnostic heresy:

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....(II.1.1)

Irenaeus concludes his arguments in Book Two with an extensive 'hymn'

to God the creator, from which only a short extract will be quoted:

....He is discovered to be the one only God who created all things, who alone is omnipotent, and who is the only Father founding and forming all things....He is the Former, He is the Builder, He the Inventor....He is Father, He is God, He the Founder, He the Maker, He the Creator...(II.30.9)

Irenaeus' beliefs that the doctrine of 'God the creator' was the 'first and most important head', of the theology from which Gnosticism was to be subject to 'exposure and subversion' (detectio et eversio, II. praef.2), is further illustrated by his claim that successful refutation of error at this point would provide the key to the overthrow of every kind of heresy:

For they who duly dispute with these, dispute with all who have bad views: and the refuters of these refute every heresy.

For no creed is so blasphemous as theirs, since they maintain that the Maker and Former, who is one God, as we have shown, was produced from a defect and apostasy. (IV. praef. 2f.)

Given this affirmation that the supreme (and only) God is the Creator is a corner-stone, arguably even the keystone, of Irenaeus' theology as received and developed from the tradition, it is interesting to notice that Irenaeus is not unwilling to offer a philosophical defence of his credal viewpoint.¹⁹ A major target is the sharp and spatially conceived dualism between the supreme God and the world. I have already drawn attention to Irenaeus' theological critique of the limitation of power and goodness which the Gnostic dualism imposed upon the supreme God, but in addition he subjects the Gnostic account of the dualism between God and creation to a searching examination of its internal consistency. Throughout Book Two of A.H. Irenaeus repeatedly argues from the presuppositions of Gnostic theology to expose its inconsistency and implied or open absurdity. A good example of this

procedure is provided by the analysis of the central claim of 'gnosis':

And that they are the truly 'spiritual', inasmuch as a certain particle of the Father of the universe has been deposited in their souls, since, according to their assertions, they have souls formed of the same substance as the Demiurge himself, yet that he, although he received from the Mother, once for all, the whole (of the divine) seed, and possessed it in himself, still remained of an animal nature, and had not the slightest understanding of those things which are above, which things they boast that they themselves understand, while they are still on earth; - does not this crown all possible absurdity? For to imagine that the very same seed conveyed knowledge and perfection to the souls of these men, while it only gave rise to ignorance in the 'God' who made them, is an opinion that can be held only by those utterly frantic, and totally destitute of common sense. (II.19.3)

By this and many analogous arguments Irenaeus identifies a central weakness of the Gnostic systems. How can the Gnostics claim to know that which they profess to be unknowable? Having asserted that there is a radical gulf between the supreme God and created things, they generate a speculative mythology of emanated Aeons and deposited seeds of spirit in order to bridge the dualism.

Further aspects of Irenaeus' arguments in Book Two will come into focus as we explore the doctrine of creation involving a God who is not separated from his world, which Irenaeus maintains and develops in response to Gnosticism. For the present, we should note that in defending the belief that the supreme God is the creator, Irenaeus uses a combination of exegetical and philosophical arguments.²⁰ This interesting juxtaposition of theological methods has provoked a continuing debate over the relative priority which Irenaeus grants to each. To a considerable extent the questions here have been framed in accordance with the distinction between revealed and natural theology, which, admittedly in varying forms, has been a commonplace of much Roman Catholic and Protestant theology.²¹

Commentators have given different assessments of the relative importance which Irenaeus ascribes to each side of his theology at this point, the modern tendency being to give more emphasis to the 'philosophical' element in his method,²² but it is better to look behind the loaded form in which the question has often been put, and to ask whether the two approaches to the doctrine of 'God the creator' are not combined yet differentiated precisely in the doctrine of creation, arguably neglected in Western theology, which Irenaeus defends and develops? The close connection between 'natural' and 'revealed' theology which Irenaeus asserts on the basis of his doctrine of creation is well illustrated by the following extracts:

A sound mind....will eagerly meditate upon those things which God has placed within the power of mankind, and has subjected to our knowledge....by means of daily study. These things are, partly, such as fall under our very sight, and partly such as are openly and unambiguously in express terms set forth in the sacred scriptures. (II.27.1)

Since, therefore, the entire Scriptures....proclaim that one only God, to the exclusion of all others, formed all things by His Word....as I have shown from the very words of Scripture; and since the very system of creation to which we belong testifies, by what falls under our notice, that one Being made and governs it, - those persons will seem truly foolish who blind their eyes to such a clear demonstration.....(II.27.2)

There is an interesting co-ordination here between 'natural' and 'revealed' theology. Since, for Irenaeus, Jesus Christ is the revelation of the Creator, we cannot deny that outside of His human history there is evidence of the Father's creative will. That is to say, if Jesus Christ is the key to the understanding of the world, the world provides an appropriate keyhole. Perhaps only a Christian can perceive this, and hence there is a polemic in A.H. against a direct use of philosophy by heretics, but secular misunderstanding of the revelation of God in creation is not the same as an absence of understanding.

God the creator, by his sovereign and therefore inexpressible power, reveals Himself in the history of salvation, the οικονομία, and thereby reveals that He is the source of a good, beneficial creation which is well adapted to host the progressive revelation of God. But this harmonious and well adapted creation is also able to testify for itself to its creator to those who have eyes to see, and in this way provides powerful evidence in support of the claims of Scripture.²³ The place of reason is not denied, because God is the creator of human beings and their faculties, but this place is guaranteed only by the God who contains and fills all things. Irenaeus is unwilling to grant a place to human reason as a phenomenon or faculty which can act independently of God to supply or validate knowledge of Him, for the principle 'by God alone may God be known' cannot be evaded.²⁴

The close relationship which Irenaeus posits between 'natural' and 'revealed' knowledge, to use categories which, as we have seen, are at least to some extent alien to him, arguably throws an interesting light upon a feature of his theology which has concerned many writers: the imprecision with which he often uses his terminology. R.A. Norris, a perceptive and sympathetic Irenaeian scholar, has written:

While Irenaeus is quick to take over words and ideas from other people, he is equally quick to employ them in expanded or contracted, or slightly skew senses. One cannot often gather what Irenaeus means by understanding what his 'source' meant in the same sort of language. His use of ἀνακεφαλαιώω and its derivatives is a shining example of this type of procedure; and indeed so is the content of the concept of γενεσις as he develops it in A.H. IV.38.1. The fact is that Irenaeus is not always very good at accurate use of someone else's ideas. He garners and employs notions for what they mean to him, or what he can make of them. ('The Transcendence and Freedom of God', op.cit., p.92f.)

Norris' observation is accurate in so far as it goes, but is in danger of missing an important point, because he does not discuss the possible reasons for Irenaeus' unusual method. It seems to the present writer that it is Irenaeus' strong affirmation of a doctrine of creation, involving the intimate presence of God to created reality, which impels him both to take over without scruples elements of secular or non-Christian learning while adapting them freely to his own purposes, which are, he believes, the true purpose of the Creator who bears the ownership of all truth. Irenaeus' free adaptation of established concepts and terminology does not erect a 'smoke-screen' (Norris, ibid., p.93) to a proper appreciation of this theology; rather this illustrates the centrality of his use of the motif of creation, and a feature of his doctrine of creation itself.

Confirmation and illustration of this is provided by Irenaeus when, in replying to the Marcionite argument that the God of the Old Testament directed the people of Israel to pillage the goods of the Egyptians, and thus participate in unrighteousness,²⁵ he defends both the action of the ancient Israelites and also the Christian use of possessions acquired by the processes of secular life:

For from what source do we derive the houses in which we dwell, the garments in which we are clothed, the vessels which we use, and everything else ministering to our everyday life, unless it be from those things which, when we were Gentiles, we acquired by avarice, or received them from our heathen parents, relations, or friends who unrighteously obtained them? - not to mention that even now we acquire such things when we are in the faith. For who is there that sells, and does not wish to make a profit from him who buys?..... (IV.30.1)

Irenaeus is not offering here a naïve defence of capitalism, as he shows in the continuation of the argument. The Israelites did not engage in a total plunder of the Egyptians, but acted within the

limits of natural justice (IV.30.2). It is much the same with the Roman Empire; although his predecessor and other Christians at Lyons had been unjustly martyred, Irenaeus acknowledges the hand of God in the role of the Roman rulers in guaranteeing peace and freedom of safe travel (IV.30.3). This is not to whitewash the dark reality of sin, but to acknowledge the power and presence of the creator:

Not of course that we rebuke not sinners, nor that we should consent to those who act wickedly; but we should not pronounce an unfair judgement on the dispensations of God, inasmuch as He has Himself made provision that all things shall turn out for good, in a way consistent with justice. (IV. 30.3).

Christian use of the 'mammon of unrighteousness'²⁶ is thus no licence for selfishness, but an opportunity to use created things in the service of God²⁷, as Irenaeus illustrates by quoting appropriate verses from the Gospels²⁸. Resources of questionable origin are thus used, because the world is not alien to God, 'to the Lord's advantage' (IV.30.3). Irenaeus' approach to secular learning is rather similar, and in both cases the languages of creation and redemption are held closely together:

And we are proved to be righteous by whatsoever we do well, redeeming, as it were, our property from strange hands. But thus do I say, 'from strange hands,' not as if the world were alien to God, but that we have gifts of this sort, and receive them from others, in the same way as these men had them from the Egyptians who knew not God.....(IV.30.3)

The Motive for Creation²⁹

If Irenaeus was concerned to establish an orthodox alternative to the alleged Gnostic blasphemy against the Creator implied in the assertion that creation is the accidental result of a 'defect', there is little evidence that he was tempted to embrace the 'cosmic religion' which had developed in varying ways in the Greek tradition, and which in some respects, at least, occupied the opposite extreme to Gnosticism.³⁰ It

was in the context of, and in dialogue with, these divergent lines of thought that the early Christian doctrine of creation was developed and expounded. For Irenaeus creation is neither eternal and unchangeable as a whole, nor is it necessary to God as a manifestation of His being. He is careful to stress that God in no way stands in need of creation, either in its existence or in its response to Him pre-eminently, though not exclusively, through mankind. If this opposes the necessitarian aspect of 'cosmic religion', it also presents a contrast with Gnosticism. The lengthy and sometimes rather involved arguments in Book Two of A.H. can be reduced to the contention that in the Valentinian system there is no God in the strict meaning of the term, but rather groups of Aeons with no freedom, who are generated from the incomprehensible and unalterable Depth and Silence. The Irenaeian emphasis upon the freedom and self-sufficiency of God is developed in opposition to these ideas, as he argues with particular force when expounding his understanding of the eucharist in A.H. IV.15-18.³¹

Irenaeus begins by discussing the role of ordinances and sacrifices under the old covenant. These were laid down by God to prepare mankind for the greater experience of salvation which was to come under the new covenant. As such their purpose was to educate and discipline the people of the old covenant. Obedience to the decalogue and the later prophetic call for pureness of heart are exalted at the expense of the cultic law, which was introduced because of their hardness of heart (IV.15). God is here pictured as a 'wise artist' (IV.16.1) who cleverly designed and masterminded the movement from decalogue to cultic sacrifice to the prophetic criticism of sacrifice and the revelation of a new covenant, the entire process being for the benefit of man. As a result, the change is from the bondage of slavery to the freedom of sonship.

Now these did indeed make man glorious, supplying what was wanting to him, namely, the friendship of God; but they profited God nothing, for God did not stand in need of man's love. For the glory of God was wanting to man, which he could obtain in no other way than by serving God. (IV.16.4)

The context of Book Four, is, in part at least, anti-Marcionite, and Irenaeus is careful to avoid seeming to support a radical change between the old and new covenants. While the cultic law is abolished, the demands of the natural law are increased for Christians.

These things, therefore, which were given for bondage, and for a sign to them, He cancelled by the new covenant of liberty. But He has increased and widened those laws which are natural, and noble, and common to all, granting to man bounteously and without grudging, by means of adoption, to know God the Father, and to love Him with the whole heart, and to follow His Word unswervingly while they abstain not only from evil deeds, but even from the desire after them. But he has also increased the feeling of reverence; for sons should have more veneration than slaves, and greater love for their father. (IV.16.5)

In these chapters Irenaeus presents many Scriptural quotations to demonstrate that God does not need sacrifices, but at the same time he is careful to emphasise that the increased freedom under the new covenant deepens the relation between God and man, and brings with it the need of man to live and act accordingly, to 'serve' and 'venerate' God. If He does not seek 'sacrifices and holocausts', this in no way reduces the desire of God to receive from men 'faith, and obedience, and righteousness, because of (propter) their salvation' (IV.17.4). For Irenaeus this intimate relation between God and man in the new covenant both explains, and is illustrated by, the true nature of the eucharist.³²

The significant thought presented by Irenaeus is that by offering bread and wine with the simplicity of a pure heart, we offer to God in gratitude the first fruits of His creation.

For it behoves us to make an oblation to God, and in all things to be found grateful to God our Maker, in a pure mind, and in faith without hypocrisy, in well-grounded hope, in fervent love, offering the first-fruits of His own created things. (IV.18.4)

Irenaeus' concern here is in part anti-Gnostic, to use the eucharist as an example of a proper appreciation and use of created things.³³ Recognition of this motive has tended to defuse the considerable and acrimonious debate which has taken place over the correct text and interpretation of A.H. IV.18 since the Reformation. Certainly, Irenaeus is so careful to oppose the view that mankind should make any offering to God save the 'pure sacrifice' of a 'pure conscience' (IV.18.3) that there is little doubt how far from his mind was the later concept of eucharistic sacrifice.³⁴ Yet there is an aspect of his thought at this point which bears at least some relation to issues which were to come to the fore later in the Pelagian controversy and its medieval aftermath. This is well brought out in the paragraph which concludes the discussion of the eucharist in Book Four:

Now we make offering to Him, not as though He stood in need of it, but rendering thanks for His gift³⁵, and thus sanctifying what has been created. For even as God does not need our possessions, so do we need to offer something to God; as Solomon says 'He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth to the Lord' (Prov.19:17) For God, who stands in need of nothing, takes our good works to Himself for this purpose, that He may grant us a recompense of His own good things, as Our Lord says: (Irenaeus quotes the parable of the sheep and goats, Matthew 25:34 ff.)....As, therefore, He does not stand in need of these (services) yet does desire that we should render them for our own benefit, lest we be unfruitful; so did the Word give to the people that very precept as to the making of oblations, although He stood in need of them, that they might learn to serve God....(IV:18.6)

A certain ambiguity in Irenaeus emerges from these different extracts. Is salvation the presupposition of good works, as seems to be implied in IV.17.4, or the reward for good works, as seems to be implied in the above extract? If God has no need of man and his sacrifices, as

Irenaeus frequently states in these chapters,³⁶ it would seem that one strand of his thought maintained that the achievement of God's plan of salvation was dependent upon the 'freedom and power of self-government in man' (IV.15.2). The root of this ambiguity may lie in the separation between the mercy and justice of God which was discussed in Chapter One, and we will give this further consideration in the context of his anthropology and theodicy, but for our present purposes we should note that man is drawn intimately into the process by which God achieves His purposes in creation and redemption. Thus, if 'prior to' creation God stood in no need of creation or man, because of His richness and perfection, this does not imply an identical state of affairs 'once' God decided to create and redeem.³⁷

The motive of God in creation has thus to be deduced from His whole unfolding purpose. As Irenaeus expressed this, the goodness and mercy of God who is rich, perfect and in need of nothing, overflows in the plan of salvation designed as if by a divine architect. God wishes to create those upon whom He could confer His benefits throughout the course of creation and redemption. The converse is also stated: creation by its very nature is present to God and has a continuous need of a correct relation to Him:

In the beginning, therefore, did God form Adam, not as if He stood in need of man, but that He might have (someone) upon whom to confer His benefits.....Nor did He stand in need of our service when He ordered us to follow Him; but He thus bestowed salvation upon ourselves....for He is rich, perfect and in need of nothing. But for this reason does God earnestly seek service from men, in order that, since He is good and merciful, He may benefit those who continue in His service. For, as much as God is in want of nothing, so much does man stand in need of fellowship with God. For this is the glory of man, to continue and remain permanently in God's service....Thus it was too, that God formed man at the first, because of his munificence (munificentiam)... He Himself, indeed, having need of nothing, but granting communion with Himself to those who stood in need of it,

and sketching out, like an architect, the plan of salvation to those that pleased Him.....Thus, in a variety of ways, He adjusted the human race to an agreement with salvationsince the Father is both rich and great. (IV.14.1f.)

Later in Book Four a clearer distinction between creation and redemption is drawn, where creation is seen as 'an attribute of the goodness of God', and men are enjoined to 'await the hand of your Maker, who creates everything in due time', the goal of the process being 'participation in the glory of God' (IV.39.2).³⁸ This differentiation is important, but is only made by Irenaeus within a carefully co-ordinated overall conception of the economy of creation and redemption.³⁹

It might be argued, with some justice, that by stating so clearly and emphatically that God had no need of man or creation or anything else, Irenaeus speculates in an area where clarity, humanly speaking, must be bounded and limited by the deep mystery of God. Nygren characterises God's motive for creation according to Irenaeus as 'unmotivated goodness' (op.cit., p.181), but, while appreciating the truth of this, one cannot avoid examining the concept of an unmotivated motive! It is, of course, extraordinarily difficult to determine the balance of freedom and necessity which, in some form, must inhere in our understanding of God.⁴⁰ The particular emphasis in Irenaeus upon the fact that God did not need to create may reflect his rather unsatisfactory discussion of certain aspects of the doctrine of God. For example, he maintains that God is 'truly and for ever the same, and always remains the same unchangeable Being'.⁴¹ Although this is clearly directed against the eventful Pleroma of Gnosticism, it bears the hallmarks of the Platonic tradition. There is a tension here in Irenaeus, for his strong doctrine of incarnation implies that history - change - is in at least one sense real for God. If God is indeed changeless in His faithfulness and love, His changeless

purposes in Jesus Christ, properly conceived and affirmed, would seem to embrace change. Furthermore, the very idea of creation implies that God wills changes that must surely, in some sense at least, affect Him. On occasion Irenaeus raises the question whether the revealing activity of God changes Him,⁴² but emphatically denies this. We recall in this context the tensions latent in Irenaeus' presentation of God's omnipresence and incomprehensibility; arguably in these various areas an aspect of the truth is stated in such a manner as to risk compromising another aspect of the same ultimately ineffable truth.⁴³

The Irenaean stress upon the freedom of God in creating is counter-balanced by an emphasis upon His goodwill and mercy in redemption:

But when this righteousness and love to God had passed into oblivion, and become extinct in Egypt, God did necessarily, because of His great goodwill to men, reveal Himself by a voice, and led the people out of Egypt with power....(IV.16.3)

To speak of a necessity in the relation of God to creation in this context is to risk the opposite error to that which exists with Irenaeus' conception of God's motive in creation.⁴⁴ The Old Testament can speak of God's compassion upon his suffering people, but it can also attribute God's decision to redeem his people to a concern for the honour of God's holy name.⁴⁵

We will attempt to shed more light upon the Irenaean understanding of freedom and necessity in God, as this affects his doctrine of the divine motive for creation, by examining his use of the idea of creation out of nothing.

Creation out of Nothing

Irenaeus clearly affirms the belief that God created the universe out of nothing:

The rule of truth which we hold is that there is one God Almighty, who made all things by His Word, and fashioned and formed, out of that which had no existence (fecit ex eo, quod non erat....), all things which exist. (I.22.1)⁴⁶

It is against the Gnostic conception of God as remote from created things, that Irenaeus develops this aspect of his doctrine of creation. If God is limited by some other reality, then that before which his omnipotence and omnipresence is limited, is, in all but name, God. It makes little difference to Irenaeus whether matter is the eternal and uncreated substratum to creation or whether it resulted from a cosmic accident: the point is that in either case our thinking does not begin and end with the one supreme God. Indeed, in Gnosticism these two concepts of matter interact with each other, the Demiurge fashioning matter which, from his perspective, was pre-existent,⁴⁷ although from the perspective of the supreme God it was the result of an accident or defect. Against Gnostic dualism Irenaeus affirms the doctrine of creation out of nothing to defend the true divinity of the Creator God, as the source of all that exists 'outside' Him. Thus the idea of creation out of nothing is to be closely associated with the arguments advanced in Book Two of A.H. against the Gnostic doctrine of God. Irenaeus' espousal of this idea sheds light on his development of the doctrine of creation, but before we examine this it is necessary to note the need for caution.

In the first place, it is apparent that the idea of creation out of nothing was part of the tradition of Christian theology which Irenaeus had inherited. This is clear from his interesting quotation from the

Shepherd of Hermas, which book he regarded as scripture⁴⁸ (scriptura = γραφη):

Truly, then, the scripture declared, which says, 'First of all believe that there is one God, who has established all things, and completed them, and caused that from what had no being, all things to come into existence:' He who contains all things, and is Himself contained by no one. (IV.20.2)

In the second place, it should be remarked that although part of the tradition, it can hardly be claimed that the idea of creation out of nothing was yet well established, let alone in a clearly defined form. If it is true that in addition to the Shepherd of Hermas Theophilus of Antioch attests the doctrine,⁴⁹ it is also the case that Justin states that God formed the world out of unformed matter (ἐξ ἀμορφου ὕλης)⁵⁰. Furthermore, although for centuries it was assumed that the New Testament clearly asserted creation out of nothing,⁵¹ modern biblical study has questioned this and also drawn attention to the ambiguity (or silence) of the canonical Old Testament in regard to this subject.⁵² In fact, Irenaeus does not appeal to any verses of Scripture to justify his belief in creation out of nothing. In this context, it is instructive to examine briefly the place of the idea of creation out of nothing in the credal summaries provided by Irenaeus and by other early Christian writers.

With Irenaeus there is an ambiguous position: sometimes creation out of nothing is attested, sometimes not. Thus, for example, in the credal passage in I.10.1 it is omitted, while the analogous confession in I.22.1 (quoted above) provides a clear reference. Similarly, creation out of nothing is found in Dem. 4, but not in Dem. 6.

It is interesting to note that a similar flexibility is evidenced by Tertullian, who includes the expression ex nihilo⁵³ in one of his

chief references to the rule of faith (De Praescriptione 13), but omits this elsewhere.⁵⁴ Denial of creation out of nothing is the primary charge which Tertullian brought against Hermogenes (Adv. Herm. I), and it is significant that the remainder of his attack upon Hermogenes is reminiscent of Book Two of A.H., except that Tertullian makes more frequent and specific use of the doctrine of creation out of nothing in his arguments.⁵⁵

The exclusion of a reference to creation out of nothing from the developed creeds does not mean that the doctrine was denied in orthodox circles: it was present in the tradition,⁵⁶ although not generally discussed in detail. Indeed, it was not until the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) that the concept of creation out of nothing was made an 'official' part of Christian dogma. Significantly, it was a resurgence of heresies of a Gnostic type with the Bogomiles and Cathari that occasioned this aspect of the conciliar definitions.

The third reason for caution may shed light upon the curious place in which the idea of creation out of nothing has occupied in Christian tradition. The idea is highly philosophical, a fact of which Irenaeus would certainly have been aware, given that the prevailing intellectual climate of his day encouraged a certain confusion over the status of non-being. Hence, perhaps, an underlying reason for the limited attention which he and subsequent patristic tradition was to give it. It was appropriate that it was left to the more philosophical atmosphere of Medieval theology to find an official place for creation out of nothing.⁵⁸

The underlying issue is the ambiguity of the word 'nothing'. Is it an ontological concept? If so, creatio ex nihilo can be linked with

the Greek principle ex nihilo nihil fit, and made to support a view of the cosmos as unstable (as Ehrhardt and Ford argue).⁵⁹ On the other hand, if 'non-being' does connote non-existence, the interpretation of creatio ex nihilo proceeds more in the direction of the voluntarism of Scotus and Occam, serving to highlight the foundational nature of the will of God. In different ways, a position at either extreme can tend to deny rationality to creation qua creation..

These considerations may indicate why Irenaeus, although clearly embracing the idea of creation out of nothing, handled it with a certain reserve. Interpreted one way, the principle ex nihilo nihil fit, as a specific instance of the more general rule that like must be generated from like,⁶⁰ could be used against the very idea of creation; alternatively, it could nourish the notion that created reality is unstable. For Irenaeus, with his strong concept of creation, the former possibility is excluded, but, as we shall see, he does allow this latter idea to influence his view of created reality. The problem arises when the affirmation of creation ex nihilo is unqualified by other affirmations. While the dogma properly indicates the dependence of all created reality upon God, it does not so easily indicate the proper independence of creation, and consequent relationship between God and creation. With his strong doctrine of the sovereignty and self-sufficiency of God, Irenaeus is unwilling to consider the possible consequences for God of the act of creation, the admittedly mysterious possibility that, in choosing to create, God has chosen to limit Himself before, and open His inner being to, the venture of creation. The consequential tendency of Irenaeus to see creation as inherently unstable precisely because of its close dependence upon

God, has provoked considerable controversy in the context of his theodicy, but in the present chapter we will approach the questions raised by examining his understanding of the role of the will of God in creation.

Creation as an Expression of the Will of God

Earlier we saw that Irenaeus maintained that God was entirely free to create or not to create. This presupposes that God has free will, analogous to the free will which man has, and Irenaeus states this explicitly:

But because man is possessed of free will from the beginning, and God is possessed of free will, in whose likeness man was created, advice is always given to him to keep fast the good, which thing is done by means of obedience to God. (IV.37.4)⁶¹

Arguably, this close relation between human and divine freedom is drawn too quickly and univocally. The will of God is so closely bound to the nature of God that it must be shrouded in mystery as we contemplate it. The will of God has a holiness which marks it as quite different from our own, even if it shares some fundamental characteristics.⁶² Indeed, other passages indicate that Irenaeus was well aware of the need to qualify the analogy between divine and human freedom. Three elements in this qualification can be identified. Firstly, he strongly opposes the Gnostic projection upon God of human processes of change, and asserts an identity between divine will and thought. Secondly, he draws attention to the infinitely greater power of the divine will, which can create out of nothing (e.g. II.10.3 f), or resurrect bodies (e.g. V.3.5). Thirdly, he qualifies the sovereign power of God by making it a direct expression of the divine goodness (e.g. IV.38.3).

These various considerations show that Irenaeus maintained rather a tense analogy between divine and human freedom. Up to a point such a tension is inevitable, for the intelligibility of the idea of creation must remain for man partial and incomplete. We have no experience of absolute creation, and our intellects are obliged to grope rather uncertainly, with the help of analogy, to try to frame concepts to express the relation of the eternal God to the temporal world. The question we must raise in relation to Irenaeus, however, is whether he does not tend to draw too univocal an analogy between divine and human freedom, and assume in too human a fashion that 'once upon a time' God decided to create, even if he refuses to speculate and appeals to our limited knowledge relating to such questions:

For that this world....received a beginning in time,
the Scriptures teach us; but no Scripture reveals
to us what God was employed about before this event.
(II.28.3)

I would suggest that the limitations concern the framework within which the question is asked, as much as the answer to the question itself. The framework, of course, was to an extent given to the theologians of the early church from the surrounding intellectual climate, and the particular emphasis upon the fact that God has free will is of fundamental importance for Irenaeus, both in his defence against Gnosticism, but also in distinguishing his doctrine of God from that found in contemporary philosophies.⁶³

The fundamental character of the will of God solves for Irenaeus the problem of the infinite regress which resulted from Gnostic attempts to bridge the unbridgeable dualism between God and creation,

and which was the source of its elaborate mythology. It is no accident, therefore, that the more remote from the world God is conceived to be, the more extensive the mythological bridge which is needed to secure at least a minimal relation between them. This was the case with Basilides:

For it must needs be, either that the intention (of creating) dwelt in that God who made the world, so that of his own power, and from himself, he obtained the model of its formation; or, if any departure is made from this being, then there will arise a necessity for constantly asking whence there came to that one who is above him the configuration of those things which have been made;....This difficulty presented itself to Basilides after he had utterly missed the truth, and was conceiving that, by an infinite succession of those beings that were formed from one another, he might escape such perplexity.... (II.16.1f)

Between God and creation, then, lies a decision and act of the will. This decision is not arbitrary but rather gracious and loving, yet from our human perspective it is irreducible.⁶⁴ We are faced here with the mystery of why there is a created world at all; with the idea of creation which is, from our human perspective, basically unthinkable from within the categories of creation itself. Philosophically we must admit virtual defeat and a necessary limitation upon our powers of thought. Yet precisely by accepting that the idea of creation is fundamentally beyond our powers of analysis, we open ourselves to the possibility of an honest recognition that our knowledge of creation and the Creator can only be revealed to us. Only a God who is not 'naturally' conceivable by us can make a unilateral covenant with us. Only such a God can stand over against us as a Person facing created people, for a personal relationship presupposes a genuine discontinuity. Not a gulf which cannot be crossed, as in Gnosticism, but a discontinuity which respects the genuine truth of creation, a truth which is as much an article of faith as the truth of redemption.⁶⁵

Against the elitism and anthropomorphism of the Gnostics Irenaeus insists upon a basic distinction between God and creation, implied in the very idea of creation itself. Created reality, earthly and spiritual, is carefully distinguished from the gracious God who relates to it in creation and redemption. This relationship is asserted in strong terms in order that Irenaeus should not fall back towards the Gnostic devaluation of created things, which he is attacking.⁶⁶ Thus Irenaeus is drawn to develop a concept of nature wherein not only is creation not alien to God, it is the very expression of his will. Indeed, Irenaeus appears to go so far as to claim that the will of God is the substance of created things:

Or, again if (which is indeed the only true supposition, as I have shown by numerous arguments of the very clearest nature) He made all things freely, and by His own power, and arranged and completed them, and His will is the substance⁶⁷ of all things, then He is discovered to be the one and only God who created all things, who alone is omnipotent, and who is the only Father founding and forming all things, visible and invisible....(II.30.9)

There are different ways of understanding the complex word 'substance' which is introduced here and Irenaeus does not elaborate on what he intends.⁶⁸ What does seem fairly clear, however, is that he wishes to express a close relation between God and the nature of created reality, while keeping a basic distinction between them.

This close relation is explored from the different but related perspective of redemption when Irenaeus discusses the resurrection of the body in Book Five. Here there is a great stress upon the resurrection of the actual flesh of our bodies. The basic argument presented is that the omnipotent Creator who gives life to created human bodies would have no difficulty in giving eternal life to those same bodies.

The point in this context is that life, both temporal and eternal, is given directly by the God who has power to created out of nothing:

For if He does not vivify what is mortal, and does not bring back the corruptible to incorruption, He is not a God of power....And surely it is much more difficult and incredible, from non-existent bones, and nerves, and veins, and the rest of man's organisation, to bring it about that all this should be, and to make man an animated and rational creature, than to reintegrate again that which had been created and then afterwards decomposed into earth....(V.3.2)

Here, of course, Irenaeus' opponents would include Platonists as well as Gnostics, for the Platonic tradition maintained that eternal life cannot belong to the world of change and variation. A Platonist would have reacted with incredulity to such realistic talk of the resurrection of the flesh to eternal life. It is interesting to see how Irenaeus argues here: his basic appeal is not to a special goodness or natural eternity of the body, but to the power of God who created the world out of nothing as an act of His will, and can therefore transform it as He decides. Irenaeus is thus putting forward a distinctively Judaeo-Christian concept of the world as neither a system which includes God at its highest level of being nor an immutable order closed to effective change. Creation is the expression of the will of God, and hence the will of God provides the basis from which we think out the nature⁶⁹ of creation. Creation is the expression of the will of God, and therefore no aspect of Christian teaching can be considered as opposed to the 'nature' of things, be it the goodness of creation or the realism of redemption.

It is not at all easy to be sure exactly what Irenaeus had in mind when he spoke of the will of God as the 'substance' of created reality. The ambiguity inherent in the term 'substance' is compounded by the

unsystematic expression of his thought upon this as upon other matters. The idea of the sovereign power of God manifest in the redemption of creation, is present. In addition it is relevant to observe that for Irenaeus creation comprises two types of created reality, the visible and the invisible, as stated in the extract from II.30.9 quoted above.⁷⁰

Immediately prior to the assertion that the will of God is the substance of created things, we find an interesting discussion about the nature of heaven. The Gnostic claim was that the Demiurge had created heaven, conceived as akin to an upper storey of the material creation, while all spiritual beings had been emanated 'by a spiritual process of birth' (II.30.6). Irenaeus accepts that there are indeed two dimensions to creation, the visible and the invisible, earth and heaven, and therefore agrees at one level with the Gnostic claim that heaven is a created reality like earth. Yet heaven presents a mystery to earth, and from an earthly perspective must remain incomprehensible apart from the revelation given through Scripture or by a special vision.⁷¹ The information given through Scripture indicates that the heavenly realms are immensely rich and varied in their depth and incomprehensibility. Irenaeus challenges the Gnostics:

.....let them inform us what is the nature of things invisible, recount the number of Angels, and the ranks of the Archangels, reveal the mysteries of the Thrones, and teach us the differences between the Dominations, Principalities, Powers and Virtues. But they can say nothing respecting them. (II.30.6)

To illustrate his views, Irenaeus discusses the passage 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 which speaks of St. Paul being caught up in the third heaven, his chief point being that even St. Paul was allowed only thus far,

there remaining a further four heavens beyond to which he was not admitted. Irenaeus is uneasy with the symbolism of the seven heavens for, although it - or something akin to it - seems to be assumed by St. Paul, he is aware of its ease of adaptation to Gnostic use, and refers to it as 'according to their manner of speaking' (II.30.7). Earlier (I.5.2) he had noted the doctrine of the seven heavens as part of Valentinian belief, the implication being that this was as much a part of the fanciful Gnostic mythology as anything else. A little later, indeed, he denies along with other aspects of Gnostic belief, the existence of 'a series of heavens' (II.30.9). However, by the time he wrote the later Demonstration he is prepared to give unsolicited approval to a belief in the existence of seven heavens. The reasons for this change of mind are not easy to specify and need not detain us.⁷² For our present concern we should note that for Irenaeus heaven is part of creation, invisible and mysterious, yet richly populated and present in a direct manner to our earth, being visible at its lowest level.⁷³

The place of heaven in the thought of Irenaeus, expressing the closeness and presence of God to creation as a whole, is further illustrated by his associated understanding of angels. There are scattered references to angels throughout A.H., but the fullest statement concerning them is found in the Demonstration, immediately following the description of the seven heavens:

This God, then is glorified by His Word, who is His Son for ever, and by the Holy Spirit, who is the Wisdom of the Father of all. And their Powers (those of the Word and of Wisdom), which are called Cherubim and Seraphim, with unfailing voice glorify God, and the entire establishment of heaven gives glory to God, the Father of all. He has established with the Word the whole world, and angels too are included in the world; and to the whole world He has given laws, that each one keep to his place and overstep not the bound laid down by God, each accomplishing the work marked out for him. (Dem.10)

Angels are thus part of creation, and are neither emanated intermediaries between the supreme God and the world, like the Gnostic Aeons, nor (evenless) creators of the world, like the Demiurge. Rather, the angels minister in two directions, both to God and to the world. J.P. Smith has suggested that Irenaeus is here distinguishing between two sets and types of angels: those belonging to the 'establishment of heaven' and those belonging to the 'terrestrial regions'.⁷⁴ Such a distinction seems improbable, however, because it is not at all clear from the text and would seem to conflict with Irenaeus' basic intention which is to express the real presence of God to creation. Taken this latter way, the teaching on angels strengthens the argument: the very angels who glorify God in His presence also administer the world in their appointed way, mediating the presence of God by carrying out His will.⁷⁵

In assessing the relation between heaven and earth, as taught by Irenaeus, we should refer again to his account of the eucharist.⁷⁶ Set in the context of his defence of the goodness of creation and its appropriate participation in redemption, the emphasis is firmly upon the distinction, yet closeness of relation, between earth and heaven:

But our opinion is in accordance with the eucharist, and the eucharist in turn establishes our opinion. For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit. For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the eucharist, 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. (IV.18.5)

Discussion of this text and those in Book Five which deal briefly with the nature of the eucharist⁷⁷ has tended to concentrate upon the meaning of the 'epiclesis' which seems to be asserted.⁷⁸ More than

one interpretation is doubtless possible, and it is safest to endorse the opinion that, 'we simply agree that Irenaeus regarded an "epiclesis" as "consecratory" and admit that the exact nature of the "epiclesis" remains obscure'.⁷⁹ Yet the danger with accepting this approach is that by putting too much emphasis upon the effect of the 'epiclesis' we may overlook the basic thrust of Irenaeus' argument, which these passages are designed to illustrate and reinforce, namely that God is present to all His creation in sustaining and redemptive power.

It is as if the very relationship between earth and heaven, which was and is close in creation itself, is deepened by the incarnation, this increased depth being expressed above all in the eucharist.⁸⁰ That the understanding of Irenaeus' view of the eucharist should be approached in this way, and from the wider context of his understanding of the relation between earth and heaven in creation and redemption, receives support from some interesting remarks about the altar where the eucharist is offered:

Thus it is, therefore, also His will that we, too, should offer a gift at the altar, frequently and without intermission. The altar, then, is in heaven (for towards that place are our prayers and oblations directed); the temple likewise (is there), as John says in the Apocalypse, 'And the temple of God was opened'; the tabernacle also: 'For, behold', he says, 'the tabernacle of God, in which He will dwell with men'.⁸¹ (IV.18.6)

The close relationship between earth and heaven which Irenaeus asserts throws some light upon his statement that the will of God is the substance of created reality.⁸² Although it has considerable value, and recalls such New Testament motifs as the Pauline citizenship of heaven, and the Johannine bread from heaven, it must be asked whether the relation between heaven and earth is drawn too tightly. It might

be suggested that the fundamentally Greek idea that God was in need of nothing has been conjoined with the Hebrew idea of the will of God as determining reality, the latter thus being given a rather static quality. Be that as it may, the emphasis upon the will of God raises an important question with which our next section will be concerned: given that creation is contingent upon God's will, to what extent is it rational qua creation? Does Irenaeus in fact draw too close and tight a relationship between God and created reality?

The Rationality of Creation

Alongside the claim by Irenaeus that the will of God is the substance of created reality, we must place a claim which sounds more conventional, that the will of God governs and rules all things. This claim is presented and developed at various points throughout A.H., but is given a particular importance at three junctures.

The first of these occurs in Book Two. We have already recorded the manner in which Irenaeus here uses the concept of the will of God to replace the Gnostic mythological regress from creation to supreme God, but the concept is also invoked to counter the idea of a natural eternity of the soul.⁸³

.....the soul, and the life which it possesses, must be understood as being separate existences. When God therefore bestows life and perpetual duration, it comes to pass that even souls which did not previously exist should henceforth endure, since God has both willed that they should exist, and should continue in existence. For the will of God ought to govern and rule in all things, while all other things give way to Him, are in subjection, and devoted to His service. (II.34.4.)⁸⁴

The second occasion in A.H. where this idea is given a particular prominence is in the early part of Book Five, in the defence of the

resurrection of the flesh.

Neither the nature of any created things, therefore, nor the weakness of the flesh, can prevail against the will of God. For God is not subject to created things, but created things to God; and all things yield obedience to His will. (V.5.2)⁸⁵

Thirdly, in Book Three, a cluster of references present Christ as fulfilling, or carrying out, either the 'will of God' or, 'understandably in this context, the 'will of the Father'. Here the execution of the will of God is related closely to the divine foreknowledge.⁸⁶

By which is made manifest, that all things which had been foreknown of the Father, our Lord did accomplish in their order, season, and hour, foreknown and fitting, being indeed one and the same, but rich and great. For He fulfills the bountiful and comprehensive will of His Father.... (III.16.7)

The christological interpretation of the will of God, and its assimilation to divine foreknowledge, should lead to caution in our assessment of the place of the will of God in the contexts of Books Two and Five of A.H.. Irenaeus is far from presenting a theology of the divine will as naked, blind omnipotence or omnicausality.⁸⁷ His strong defence of the freedom of the human will should assure us of this. Nevertheless, it is clear that, on the whole, he sees a sharp distinction between divine and human freedom, and gives the former a scope and power which are altogether more important. The basic question raised by the position he appears to adopt concerns the existence and reality of such 'secondary' causes or wills as the human will. What place do they have in his scheme? What, therefore, is the general ontological status of created reality as he conceives it?

There certainly need be no necessary quarrel with the claim that the will of God rules and governs the universe, and that all things yield

in obedience to Him. But qualification and explanation is required because such statements could be - and frequently have been - made by, for example, Islamic theologians, in the defence of ideas which verge suspiciously towards a totalitarian concept of divine power. The key question is this: does Irenaeus have an appreciation of what was later to be called the 'permissive' will of God?⁸⁸ To put this another way, granted that the will of God provides the ultimate basis of all created reality, does Irenaeus distinguish sufficiently between the actuality and the possibility of events in the sphere of creation?⁸⁹ Does he distinguish adequately between necessity and contingency in the nature of created reality? God wills the origin and preservation of creation, but He does this in order to produce and rule neither an extension of Himself nor a reality dualistically opposed to Himself. He wills creation in its necessity and contingency, with its divinely decreed boundaries and character, but also with its genuine creaturely freedom and possibilities. In his eagerness to claim creation for God, did Irenaeus over-estimate the balance of necessity as against contingency required by a Christian concept of creation?⁹⁰ In claiming that God fills all things, is enough space left for creation?

A doctrine of divine omnivolence needs to be handled with care. If God wills the existence of created wills which have the possibility of thwarting what might reliably be supposed to be the purpose of the divine will, it may well be the case that the divine will both does and does not rule, depending upon how the concept of will is defined. The divine will may rule in judgement or in salvation, but it will operate very differently in each case. Therefore, we need to add the qualification that if God wills everything, this is in various appropriate ways, with a proper differentiation between them. Anticipating

a further discussion of this question when we investigate, in the context of anthropology, the Irenaeian account of human free will, we can say that the will of God operates differently at different levels of creation, with God relating in a different manner to each level, might have seemed too similar to the hierarchical, emanationist aspect of Gnosticism.

Irenaeus certainly offers a firm defence of the freedom of the human will, as we shall see, but he does not attempt to integrate this side of his theology with those areas in which he claims the absolute and direct sovereignty of the will of God. Of course, this might be regarded as an argument from silence, and in any event it would be wrong to expect too much consistency from one who could justly be called a theological pioneer, whose almost charismatic lack of a neat system is clear to all who study him. Nevertheless, there is other evidence that the desire of Irenaeus to posit a close relation between God and creation could jeopardise the contingent integrity of the latter.

One example is provided by his limited conception of the boundaries of human knowledge of the world.

.....many of those things which lie at our very feet (I mean such as belong to this world, which we handle, and see, and are in close contact with) transcend our knowledge, so that we must leave them to God..... (Irenaeus cites springs, migration of birds, tides, weather, the shape of the moon etc.)....On all these points we may indeed say a great deal while we search into their causes, but God alone who made them can declare the truth regarding them. (II.28.2)

Admittedly, this passage needs to be seen in its context, which is the rejection of Gnostic claims to know the inner secrets of the mind behind the universe. Just as our knowledge of nature is properly limited, so

is our spiritual knowledge. The limits of our possible knowledge of created reality is not the chief question at issue; indeed, Irenaeus does not himself devise the list of apparent mysteries in the natural world, but takes it from a contemporary philosophical doxography.⁹¹

Perhaps he did not think carefully about the implications for the metaphysics of creation which such an approach to the intelligibility of created reality might imply. But against this we must recognise that Irenaeus normally adopted a cautious attitude towards the use of the common philosophical opinions of his day, and therefore it is reasonable to assume that he endorsed the view of creation presupposed and expressed here.⁹²

Two closely related metaphysical problems are raised. Questions are placed on the one hand against the ability of man to use his rational, enquiring mind to understand the world, and on the other hand against the genuine independence of a rational creation from God. That such ideas are properly part of the Christian doctrine of creation has emerged with some clarity in modern research upon the metaphysical and historical foundations of natural science.⁹³ A key question posed if the basic thesis that the rise of natural science required a Judaeo-Christian⁹⁴ belief in creation is accepted, is 'why did it take so long for natural science to develop?' Part of the answer is supplied by the attitude of Irenaeus to the phenomena of the physical world: even a theologian with a basic suspicion of Greek philosophy could adopt some of those ideas from the Greek world of thought which modern research has shown to have hindered the development of science.⁹⁵

Other factors doubtless also helped to delay the rise of modern science. The strong if admittedly confused eschatological expectation in the

early church would have tended to divert attention from a detailed quest to understand the natural world. Similarly, the pursuit of salvation might easily have led some Christians to a view that there was something impious, in its own way even quasi-Gnostic, in attempting to comprehend from motives of mere intellectual curiosity, a world which was believed to be the creation of God.⁹⁶ In addition, there are a host of cultural requirements for the rise of science, and the extent to which these were satisfied in the early centuries of the Christian era is debatable;⁹⁷ nevertheless, the intellectual attitude which Irenaeus supports would have been most unhelpful.

The careful scrutiny of the interaction between religious views of creation and the rise of modern science has shown that a delicate balance is required between the free and necessary rationality of God; tip the balance either way and belief tends towards either an unintelligible or a necessary world - both of which are inimical to the growth of science. In other words, the doctrine of creation properly involves both the absolute dependence of created things on God, and also their complete differentiation from Him. Irenaeus' attitude in A.H.II.28 and parallel passages suggests either a divine necessity in the rationality of creation which, like the rationality of God Himself, is in significant measure mysterious from a human perspective, or an exaggerated contingency, which sees the world as it is because God in his inscrutable freedom has willed it so. Both interpretations are possible, but the latter is perhaps more significant; in fact the two positions can easily reinforce each other, an apparently contingent will of God locating in God what should properly belong to the world itself.⁹⁸

Recent scholarly discussion of Irenaeus' approach to the understanding

of creation by man has focused on the extent to which he adopts an epistemological scepticism as a metaphysical principle. R.M. Grant⁹⁹ suggested that Irenaeus was inclining towards a basic scepticism in his concept of knowledge of nature, and he attempted to trace this to Stoic influence. W.R. Schoedel subsequently extended the charge, by asserting that Irenaeus 'goes far beyond the Sceptics in using philosophical doubt as a device by which to recommend biblical revelation'.¹⁰⁰ W.C. Van Unnik¹⁰¹ has challenged this interpretation of Irenaeus' position. He sees him holding a belief that some things are intelligible to man while others are not, this being a differentiation set by God in creation at large, rather than fundamentally a limitation in human intellectual capability. Just as God reveals enough in Scripture for man to attain communion with Him, although man will always have more to learn, so it is with his knowledge of creation.

We may agree with Van Unnik that any apparent scepticism is largely incidental and not the point Irenaeus wishes to press. Our interest, however, is in the wider metaphysical question of what concept of creation is employed by Irenaeus, and we can see the analysis of all three scholars as pointing to an unsatisfactory aspect of his thought at this point. In over-emphasising, or, rather, emphasising in the wrong sense, the dependence of creation on God, Irenaeus fails sufficiently to differentiate God from creation. As a result, the proper independence of man, within a deep relation of dependence, is compromised.¹⁰² In assessing this aspect of his theology, however, we should bear in mind that he is reacting to the Gnostic theory of types and examples, of which the world is a poor image, these types and examples being superior to the Gnostic Demiurge. Irenaeus claims (II.14.3) that the Gnostics 'manifestly rehearse' the Platonic doctrine of forms, and it is true

that in the Timaeus the Demiurge transforms pre-existent chaotic matter according to types outside of him. Yet in Middle Platonism, as in Philo, these types or models tend to be regarded as eternal thoughts of the First God. Thus, in different ways, Irenaeus here opposes both Middle Platonism, by asserting the unity of the 'supreme' and 'secondary' deities, and Gnosticism, by lodging the thought and pattern of creation firmly in the free decision of the one God. The very close relation posited by Irenaeus may therefore be seen as a result of an over-reaction on his part to emphases in contemporary culture.

Another indication that Irenaeus could tend to compromise the proper created, contingent rationality of the world is provided by his occasional references to magic. On a number of occasions he claims that the Gnostics (or at least some of them) practised magic. To a considerable extent Irenaeus believed that clever deception was involved, but he leaves open the possibility that 'actual' magic has occurred at their hands.¹⁰³ By contrast, Irenaeus claims, orthodox Christians have 'often' performed miraculous bodily cures and, 'when the occasion has demanded', there have also been resuscitations of the dead.¹⁰⁴ The logic of his comparison with contemporary Gnostics clearly requires us to interpret Irenaeus as claiming that these things were continuing to happen in his day.¹⁰⁵

Away from the context of immediate anti-Gnostic polemic, Irenaeus makes two further references to magic, and on both occasions 'magic' refers to actual unexpected physical events. The first of these occurs when he is discussing the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, a subject dear to Marcion's heart. What is interesting is the way Irenaeus seems to describe magic as a feature of nature:

And for the reason that the Lord spake in parables, and brought blindness upon Israel, that seeing they might not see, since He knew the unbelief in them, for the same reason did He harden Pharaoh's heart; in order that, while seeing that it was the finger of God which led forth the people, he might not believe, but be precipitated into a sea of unbelief, resting in the notion that the exit of these (Israelites) was accomplished by magical power, and that it was not by the power of God that the Red Sea afforded a passage to the people, but that this occurred by merely natural causes (sed naturaliter sic se habere). (IV.29.2)

The second instance occurs in the apocalyptic conclusion of A.H. where, under the inspiration of the Book of Revelation, Irenaeus says of Antichrist:

He shall perform great wonders, so that he can even cause fire to descend from heaven upon the earth in the sight of men, and he shall lead the inhabitants of earth astray. Let no one imagine that he performs these wonders by divine power, but by the working of magic. And we must not be surprised if, since the demons and apostate spirits are at his service, he through their means performs wonders, by which he leads the inhabitants of earth astray. (V.28.2)

Although there is a reference forward here, to a future crisis and the millennium, frequent references to Gnosticism in the final chapters of A.H. show that Irenaeus to some extent had in mind the state of affairs when he was writing; if Antichrist had not yet come, the 'demons and apostate spirits' were, in Gnosticism, providing a foretaste.

These different examples illustrate the residual effect of the surrounding culture upon Irenaeus,¹⁰⁶ but it is also the case that his particular employment of the concept of the will of God in determining the nature of created reality is conditioned by a polemic which opposes Gnosticism at a point where it was itself dependent upon a view of the relation between divine and created reality present in contemporary thought. Throughout Books One and Two of A.H. there are recurrent attacks upon the Gnostic belief that created things were images or types of the divine Pleroma;¹⁰⁷ we have already outlined this aspect of Gnosticism in Chapter One. In the present context we should notice

the lack of freedom in the Gnostic account of creation. As events unfold, creation, if nevertheless the accidental fruit of a defect, occurs according to a supposedly inevitable, necessary scheme.¹⁰⁸ The passion of Sophia produced matter; her repentance, soul; and the reception of light after her purification, spirit. In order to preserve some sense of purpose and meaning in this process, it was claimed to conform to patterns and archetypes located in the Pleroma. The Gnostics evidently were prepared to elaborate in considerable detail the created types and images of the Pleroma.¹⁰⁹ For example, number symbolism was an important source of alleged parallels between the earthly and divine worlds:

They maintain, then, that first of all the four elements, fire, water, earth and air, were produced after the image of the primary Tetrad above, and that then, if we add their operations, viz. heat, cold, dryness and humidity, an exact likeness of the Ogdoad is presented. (I.17.1) 110

Letters and words are also used in this way, especially in Gnostic exegesis, which attempted to find secret references to the gnosis in the Scriptures.¹¹¹

It is against this background that Irenaeus presents his theology of the will of God as the basis from which we should understand creation. I have argued that he over-reacts to the Gnostic scheme by exalting the will of God in a manner which can tend to under-estimate the inherent, if contingent, rationality of creation. In so doing Irenaeus allows the problem in Gnosticism which he is attempting to avoid to enter unnoticed into his own theology. Too great an emphasis either upon the necessary rationality of creation which images and typifies the divine world, or upon the contingent dependence of creation upon the immediate will of God, results, in both cases, in a tendency to under-value the 'independent' rationality of creation which a proper understanding of contingency would admit.¹¹²

In Gnosticism this tendency becomes rampant and pervasive. With Irenaeus it is no more than a relatively slight, if significant, inclination. It has been examined at some length because the predominant view of theological textbooks is generally to emphasise that, in opposition to Gnosticism, Irenaeus saw creation as the good product of a good God. Such a view is by no means mistaken, but more attention needs to be given to the question of whether in Irenaeus' view creation has its true (and God given) independence, and an inherent goodness.¹¹³

Concluding Reflections

The slightly critical approach to an aspect of Irenaeus' doctrine of creation which was developed in the last section, should not be allowed to obscure its basic health and veracity. He does wish to distinguish God from creation, and, indeed, a basic element in his theodicy derives from a clear distinction between uncreated and created reality. Yet the plan - or οἰκονομία - of God is presented as determinative for reality in a way which perhaps has its dangers. We need not doubt the ultimate triumph of God's will and purpose if we nevertheless consider individual, penultimate events at a different level and on a different basis.

An important aspect of Irenaeus' conception and presentation of the divine οἰκονομία is the mediatorial role of Jesus Christ in creation. As we noted in Chapter Two, whereas the Apologists made but scant reference to the New Testament concept of the role of the Son in creation, Irenaeus makes very many such references.¹¹⁴ This considerable change in emphasis from the Apologists to Irenaeus serves to underline the close co-ordination between creation and redemption which we meet in his theology. This finds expression in different uses of the concept of the οἰκονομία of God in Irenaeus and, for example, in Justin.¹¹⁵

Justin¹¹⁶ gives a central place to a 'theology of history' as part of his attempt to place both pagan and Jewish worlds in a meaningful

relation to the coming of Christ. The term οἰκονομία applies primarily to the Incarnation, and especially to the mysteries of Virgin Birth and crucifixion-resurrection; but it is also applied to the pre-figuration of the Incarnation in the events of the Old Testament. In Irenaeus there is a double reference of the concept οἰκονομία - on the one hand to the events of the Incarnation, but on the other hand to the whole plan of God in creation and redemption. This broader concept of the οἰκονομία of God is filled out by the concept of ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις, which, as has often been noted, appears to contain the ideas of both restoration and development.¹¹⁷ By the interpenetration of the concepts of οἰκονομία and ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις, the doctrines of creation and redemption are brought into a close relation.

Pointing out that Irenaeus introduces into extant Christian theology the expression universa dispositio (= οἰκονομία) Dei, M. Widman has spoken of this interpenetration as follows:

Die ganze Geschichte hat ein bestimmtes inneres Ziel: die Erscheinung des Gottmenschen. Oder umgekehrt: der Erlöser bezieht sich innerlich auf die gesamte Geschichte. Seine Tat ist dies: omnia in se recapitulari. Erlösende Einverleibung der Menschheitsgeschichte, das ist das Innerste der Theologie des Irenäus. Und so scheint uns, dass sich für Irenäus nicht nur der Okonomie-Begriff "geweitet" hat, auch der Begriff der Rekapitulation ist reicher, umfassender geworden. Er bedeutet jetzt mehr als in der Adam-Christus-Antithese. Sofern die Menschheitsgeschichte von Anfang an verfehlt war, behält recapitulatio den Sinn: Wiederherstellung; sofern die Menschheitsgeschichte aber in ihrem Verlauf auf die Erlösung angelegt ist, bekommt recapitulatio den Sinn: Vollendung; sofern die Menschheitsgeschichte in der Erlösung ihre Ordnung in Gott bekommt, bekommt recapitulatio den Sinn: Unter-ein-Haupt-Fassen. In allem aber geht es um die Einbeziehung in Ihn (in semetipsum); alle verschiedenen Nuancen lassen sich daher zusammenfassen in dem Sinn: Einverleibung. 118

There is more than a formal resemblance between this Irenaeian juxtaposition and combination of the concepts of οἰκονομία and ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις in the use by Karl Barth of the concepts of creation and covenant.¹¹⁹

This aspect of the theology of Karl Barth has been the subject of criticism on the grounds that he underestimates the genuine independence and freedom of creation.¹²⁰ We cannot assess the validity of the stock criticism of Barth, but it is interesting in that it to some extent parallels the criticism of Irenaeus which has been developed in the latter part of this chapter. We will approach this issue from different perspectives when we examine further aspects of Irenaeus' doctrine of creation.

It would be wrong, however, to end the present chapter on a critical note. Irenaeus offers many splendid insights into the doctrine of creation, building upon a none too extensive basis in the New Testament. His attempt to bring into an organic unity the works of God in creation and redemption, to reflect in this way the unity of God as Creator and Redeemer is, especially in a Gnostic context, highly laudable. If he was too quick to affirm a unity without the recognition of a corresponding differentiation or diversity in various aspects of creation and redemption he was touching upon issues which are matters of heated debate in contemporary theology.¹²¹ Certainly, we should beware lest we read back into the thought of Irenaeus our own mathematical concept of unity when he speaks of unity.

We may recall here a favourite Irenaeian attribute of the one God: richness. This finds an analogy in the richness and variety, yet harmony, of creation which Irenaeus portrays.¹²³ Perception of this rich but concordant diversity is evidence both that creation is the good and important product of the will of the one God, who troubled to adorn¹²⁴ creation, and that creation cannot be the limited image of a limited Pleroma.¹²⁵ One aspect of Irenaeus' argument here serves to orientate

us to a future question: if it is indeed true that 'those things, which constitute such a multiform creation, which are opposed in nature to each other, and disagree among themselves, and destroy the one the other' cannot be 'the images and likenesses of the thirty Aeons of the Pleroma' (II.7.5), does this recognition of suffering and enmity not put a difficult question to his own concept of creation as the product of a good and omnipotent God? We will examine this question directly in the final chapter, but first we must look more closely at Irenaeus' doctrines of providence and man.

1. A.I.C. Heron, The Holy Spirit, (London: M.M.&S., 1983), p.64. An example of this theology from a contemporary of Irenaeus can be found in the Peri Pascha of Melito of Sardis; see the edition by S.G.Hall, (O.U.P., 1979), Introduction, p.xiiff., for a discussion of the 'naïve modalism' of Melito. Underlying both Irenaeus and Melito is the Gospel of John, a dominant concern of which is arguably the defence of monotheism in the light of developing Christian claims for the intimate association of Jesus with 'God'. Although he somewhat overstates his case (because of a neglect of the soteriological context of Johannine Christology), J.D.G. Dunn has recently argued that, 'In short, however we may think John's Logos-Son Christology stretches monotheism, it is only when we understand John as an expression of Christian monotheism that we understand it aright' ('Let John be John', p.337). In connecting Johannine themes with Irenaeus I am implicitly, if not necessarily, endorsing the view that, 'All in all, none of the arguments for abandoning the long Irenaeian tradition of Ephesus as the home of the gospel possesses real cogency' (J.Marsh, Saint John, London: Pelikan, 1968, p.41).

For an extensive bibliography on Asia Minor and its churches, see J.K. Elliot, A Home for the Homeless : A Sociological Exegesis of I Peter, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), pp. 88-90.

2. It is hazardous to speculate upon the precise distribution of Jews in the diaspora during the first two centuries of the Christian era, but clearly the importance of Jewish-Christian relations, and the changes they endured, can hardly be over-estimated. For a recent defence of the Jewish background to the Gospel of John, see J.D.G. Dunn, op.cit.. The Peri Pascha of Melito of Sardis is steeped in Old Testament ideas, and shows strong evidence of contemporary debate over the relation of Church to synagogue. A distinctive positive influence upon Christian theology from the hellenistic Judaism of Asia Minor may perhaps be seen in the application by Irenaeus and Theophilus of the concept of Wisdom to the Holy Spirit.

3. That the assimilation into Christian proclamation of the teaching of the Old Testament on creation was already under way in the first century is shown by the hymnic celebration of creation included in the First Epistle of Clement, ch.33.

Creation in the Old Testament, ed. B.W. Anderson, (London: S.P.C.K., 1984) provides a representative selection of contributors to the lively twentieth-century debate over the place of creation-faith in the Old Testament. Although G. von Rad's thesis that, 'the doctrine of creation....(is) invariably related, and indeed subordinated, to soteriological considerations' (p.62) has been subjected to considerable criticism, not least by H.M. Schmid in his essay in this collection, as G.M. Landes observes, von Rad's 'view on this issue continues to predominate within Old Testament scholarship' (p.137). However, even if a certain priority to soteriological considerations is conceded, the situation which confronts us perhaps has the character of a chicken omelette, rather than of its separate ingredients: the liberating God of the Exodus controls the wind and the sea.

4. A judicious survey of Gnostic cosmology is given by H. Jonas, op.cit. p.42ff.. K. Rudolph, op.cit. pp.67ff., 317ff., provides a more recent account, drawing from fresh research, but thereby pays less attention to the particular forms of Gnosticism which were of greatest concern to Irenaeus. We will survey Gnostic anthropology in a later chapter.

5. E.g. I.4.3f, where heavy sarcasm is employed to make this point.

6. I.24.3-7.

7. It was Marcosian Gnosticism which Irenaeus had encountered at first hand in the district of the Rhone (I.13.7) where, if we are to believe I.13.5, Marcus himself was active. However, Irenaeus seems to have given a certain precedence to Ptolemaeus, perhaps seeing Marcus as his disciple (I. praef.2).

8. Cf. I.2.2.

9. That is, a divine Aeon is redeemed, rather than anything created. The enormous gulf between Christian and Gnostic thought, especially in its Valentinian form, is obvious. Cf. Jonas, 'Evangelium Veritatis and Valentinianism' S.P., 6 (Berlin: 1962), p.109, 'The distinguishing mark of that type of Gnosticism to which the Valentinian School belongs is the bold resolve to place the origin of darkness, and thereby of the dualistic rift of being, within the godhead itself. Hence issue the various attempts to develop the divine tragedy, the necessity of salvation arising from it, and the dynamics of this salvation itself, as wholly a sequence of inner-divine events'.

10. I.5.6. This summary of the Valentinian account of the origin of the world is taken from Irenaeus' more extensive description in I.2.5. A fuller discussion which draws on other sources besides Irenaeus is provided by Jonas op.cit. pp.179-194. Many details of the Gnostic scheme of creation are unclear or even baffling - see Jonas' slightly exasperated comments ibid., p.193.

11. Op.cit., p.194; cf. p.239.

12. The Middle Platonists, pp.202ff., 384ff.

13. Op.cit., p.66.

14. That insecurity and pessimism characterised the second century more than one might superficially have expected in a time of apparent material well-being and outward progress has been shown by E.R. Dodds, Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety, (C.U.P.: 1965).

15. It is generally held that Gnosticism presents the Demiurge as evil. Although there is truth in this claim, a qualification needs to be entered. Irenaeus records a neutral view of the Demiurge as being 'incapable of recognising any spiritual essences', and leaves room for a separate 'devil, whom they also call Cosmocrator (the ruler of the world)...(who) has knowledge of what is above himself, because he is a spirit of wickedness; but the Demiurge is ignorant of such things, inasmuch as he is merely animal.' (I.5.4). Whether this distinction between Demiurge and Cosmocrator is coherent is a moot point, and may reflect the importation into Gnosticism of a concept of 'the devil' from Jewish Christianity.

16. E.g. I.9.2; 31.2; II.2.4; 13.10; 14.8; 17.8; III.15.2. The two chief grounds of plausibility lie in exegesis and the assimilation of divine to human processes. Harnack (Hist.Dogma, I, pp.233-237)

acknowledged that amid and alongside its fantastic mythology Gnosticism had a simple and attractive appeal. There are some parallels here with the later Arian controversy.

17. Irenaeus characterised the Gnostic creator as 'the fruit of a defect' (e.g. II. praef. 1; 1.1; 3.2; 28.4), the Greek of which is ὑστερηματος καρπος (see Harvey, I, p.251n.1 for the different Latin phrases which correspond to this). An interesting sidelight upon this expression, and on the background to the Gnostic myths of creation, has been provided by P. Fredriksen, 'Hysteria and the Gnostic Myths of Creation', V.C., 33 (1979), pp.287-290. She demonstrates a link between ὑστερημα (defect, deficiency) and ὑστερα (womb), and between Gnostic myths of creation and ancient medical superstition concerning respiratory difficulties caused by wombs, dried out through lack of intercourse, wandering round the body. Fredriksen draws various parallels between the suffering (passion?) of the womb deficient in moisture and Sophia's παθος του ὑστερηματος which results in the coming into being of ὑστερημα, the realm of deficiency (see A.H. I.18.4). The discovery of these parallels lends some support to Irenaeus' repeated claim that Gnostic theology is highly anthropomorphic.

18. As illustrated by the passage from III.2.3 discussed in the previous chapter: 'For inasmuch as He had a pre-existence as a saving Being, it was necessary that what might be saved should also be called into existence, in order that the Being who saves should not exist in vain'.

19. In Book Two of A.H. Irenaeus assembles a meandering but nevertheless powerful argument to undergird his own view of the relation of the supreme God to the world, but he is not dependent upon any one philosophical tradition. Irenaeus' acquaintance with, and use of, yet independence from, the common philosophy of his day has been demonstrated by R.M. Grant, who has drawn attention to Stoic, Sceptic, Platonic and Aristotelian elements in his argumentation ('Irenaeus and Hellenistic Culture', H.T.R., 42 (1949), p.47). W.C. van Unnik, while supporting Grant's basic thesis, has challenged the assertion of Sceptical influence ('Theological Speculation and its Limits', in Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition, ed. W.R. Schoedel and R.L. Wilken (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979)). Recently W.R. Schoedel has argued that in Book Two of A.H. Irenaeus makes significant use of the methodological orientation of Empiric medicine ('Theological Method in Irenaeus', J.T.S., N.S., 35 (1984) p.34).

20. A striking example of this juxtaposition. is found in II.13.3, where a clear allusion to Isaiah 55:8 is followed by an equally clear adaptation of lines from Xenophanes, to make a common point.

21. The broad distinctions needed here might be indicated as follows. In Medieval times revelation primarily referred to truths which were not accessible to reason - for example, the doctrine of the Trinity. Following the Reformation, revelation was associated with Scripture, rather than being defined in antithesis to reason. In the twentieth century, the meaning of Revelation has shifted somewhat into a soteriological key, to indicate the unveiling of truth which is not naturally accessible to man, but which is of existential, as opposed to intellectual, significance. This modern development has rather clearer links with Irenaeus than the earlier distinctions, although historians have often not grasped the change, as the debate over the place of reason in the theology of Irenaeus illustrates.

22. See the articles by R.M. Grant, W.C. van Unnik and W.R. Schoedel listed above.

23. Cf. E.F. Osborn, The Beginning of Christian Philosophy, p.57, 'The Gnostics' rejection of the world is a major reason for their ignorance of God. No man who misses the many-splendoured goodness of God in creation can hope to find God and understand his ways. The hand of God gives light to the heavens, tests the hearts of men, nourishes and preserves them, and works in secret ways. He who cannot discern God's open goodness will never know his secret greatness'.

24. R.A. Norris is therefore right (God and World in Early Christian Theology, p.66) to emphasise Irenaeus' hostility toward philosophy *qua* philosophy, but he overstates this hostility with the claim that, 'If Irenaeus does make any constructive use of philosophical sources, therefore, it is most likely that he does so more or less unconsciously and at secondhand'. The articles referred to above by R.M. Grant, W.C. van Unnik and W.R. Schoedel have shown a clear dependence of Irenaeus upon philosophical sources, probably in doxographical form, although they generally miss the theological key in which the ideas are brought into play. The unifying factor which all these writers tend to miss is the central and basic role Irenaeus gives to the doctrine of God the Creator. A more recent essay by R.A. Norris ('The Transcendence and Freedom of God: Irenaeus, the Greek Tradition and Gnosticism', in Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition, may be said to exhibit the same limitation inasmuch as it deals with the concepts of God used by Irenaeus which are held rather separate from the doctrine of creation. On the other side, a contrasting critique can be offered of E.P. Meijering, who has also given extensive attention to the question of the influence of pagan philosophy upon Irenaeus (see the various essays collected in God Being History). Although he develops a series of stimulating insights, two related criticisms are warranted. In the first place, Meijering tends to assume that the existence of a certain similarity between an argument of Irenaeus and that of a previous philosopher is tantamount to proof of dependence. For example, on p.35f., Irenaeus is said to utilise two of four arguments found in the school of Epicure when he defends the resurrection of the flesh. But the arguments are relatively obvious, there is no technical vocabulary used, and only half the projected 'source' is employed. In the second place, Meijering concludes from the (true, but overstated) fact that, 'the philosophers did provide him with an arsenal of rational weapons' that 'analytical research into the writings of Irenaeus confirms Harnack's famous (and much criticised) statement: "Das Dogma ist in seiner Conception und in seinem Ausbau ein Werk des griechischen Geistes auf dem Boden des Evangeliums"' (p.37). But is such an arsenal not used by Irenaeus primarily to elucidate, express, and defend dogma, rather than in its basic conception and development?

25. 'Urrighteousness at two levels: on the one hand in the very act of plunder, and on the other hand in the use of goods which bear the character of their heathen owners. The relevance of this passage to an understanding of Irenaeus' attitude towards philosophy is well discussed by H.B. Timothy, The Early Christian Apologists and Greek Philosophy, (Assen: van Gorcum, 1973) pp.36ff.

26. IV.30.3, quoting Luke 16:9 somewhat inaccurately. This verse is taken from the parable of the unjust and unscrupulous steward, a parable

which has baffled many commentators, but which may find its correct interpretation upon the lines laid down in this chapter of A.H..

27. A similar combination of openness to the usefulness of established goods and institutions, with an attitude of qualification and adaptation, is widely exhibited in the Gospel presentation of Jesus. For example, temple, family, political and economic order are all subjected to this combination of acceptance and qualification, which has in each area stimulated prolonged debate about how seemingly conflicting statements can be harmonised. Is such a harmonisation possible unless recourse is made to a close, but not confused, relation between the doctrines of creation and redemption? Reference might also be made to the teaching on the state in St. Paul, and the invocation of this by Irenaeus in A.H. IV.36.6, with the gloss 'because all men are the property of God'.

28. Luke 3:11; Matthew 6:3; 25:35f.

29. That this subject is appropriate for study by human beings is acknowledged by Irenaeus in II.4.1, 'The cause, then, of such a dispensation on the part of God, is to be inquired after; but the formation of the world is not to be ascribed to any other'. For a brief survey of modern approaches to the question, 'Why is there anything and not nothing?', which Heidegger regarded as the first question of metaphysics, see G.S.Hendry, 'The Eclipse of Creation', Theology Today, 28 (1970-71), p.414 f.

30. The chief features of ancient 'cosmic religion' are well summarised by R.A. Norris, God and World in Early Christian Theology, ch.1, and A.H. Armstrong and R.A. Markus, Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy, ch.4. Armstrong and Markus comment: 'The "cosmic religion" had its origins in Plato, and right down to the end of paganism we find Platonists, Plotinus, Julian, Proclus, Simplicus, vigorously defending its cardinal doctrines, the eternity of the visible universe and the divinity of the heavenly bodies, against Gnostics and orthodox Christians' (p.33)

31. Explicit reference to the eucharist is only found here in chapter 18, but this forms the conclusion of the discussion of the nature of sacrifices which extends across the previous three chapters. As has been remarked, 'It is significant here that Irenaeus is not setting out to prove something about the eucharist as such, but arguing from it', A.I.C. Heron, Table and Tradition, (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1983), p.64.

32. 'But our opinion is in accordance with the eucharist, and the eucharist in turn establishes our opinion' (IV.17.5). Such a statement almost has a Johannine ring, given the interesting integration of eucharistic with other themes which one finds in the Fourth Gospel.

33. This is further illustrated when he returns to the theme of the eucharist to support a belief in the resurrection of the body (V.2). Here one finds a recurrence of the theme that God needs nothing from man: (We have been) 'redeemed graciously. For we have given nothing to Him previously, nor does He desire anything from us, as if He stood in need of it; but we do stand in need of fellowship with Him. (V.2.1)

34. Cf. R.P.C. Hanson, Eucharistic Offering in the Early Church, (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1979) pp.8ff., and R.J. Daly, The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice, (London: D.L.T., 1978),pp 91ff.

35. Or 'governance': the text fluctuates between dominationi and donationi. See Harvey II., p.209 n.3

36. E.g. IV.14.1, 2, 3; 15.3,4; 17.1.5; 18.1,3,6. The theme that 'God has no need of man' originates in Book Two, where the Gnostic view that Christ and Holy Spirit were generated after the fall of Sophia is pilloried: 'Creation will have greater honour than the Pleroma, if, for its sake, those things (in the Pleroma) were produced' (II.15.3, cf. II.19.9). It also seems to have influenced Irenaeus' development of the concept of the Son and Holy Spirit as eternally glorifying the Father, which, as we have seen, develops his doctrine of the Trinity beyond that which we find in the Apologists. This concept first appears in IV.14 alongside the repeated emphasis upon God's eternal richness and lack of need for creation.

37. Issues of grace and merit have surfaced recently in relation to Irenaeus' account of the eucharist, in a response by R.D. Williams, Eucharistic Sacrifice - The Roots of a Metaphor, (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1982), to the earlier pamphlet by R.P.C. Hanson, Eucharistic Offering in the Early Church. Williams wishes to retain the use of sacrificial language in the context of the eucharist, and he summarises Irenaeus' teaching thus: 'Once it is clear that no Christian "sacrifice" can be a bribe to God, because nothing can add to his abundance, and his mercy never needs to be coerced, we are free to consider the eucharist as a gift whose sole motive and purpose is gratitude....To see the eucharist in such terms prevents us from falling into the obvious and dangerous traps of treating our prayer and praise and thanksgiving as primarily functional, designed to obtain something, or at least to fulfil an obligation whose non-fulfilment would cause God to withdraw his grace.....' (p.12). Williams misses the tension in Irenaeus' theology of the eucharist as a spiritual sacrifice : as we shall note later, this links with a corresponding neglect in Williams' account of Irenaeus' understanding of human freedom.

In his account of Irenaeus' understanding of the eucharist, Williams also remarks (op.cit., p.9) that, for Irenaeus, 'all sacrifice is expressive rather than functional', and that he had a 'general lack of interest in the imagery of propitiation by bloodshed'. Up to a point, this can be granted, but there are many references in Irenaeus to the blood and passion of Christ, and it would be better to retain an open mind as to their precise meaning. To take one example, V.1.1. would seem to speak of rather more than a merely metaphorical sacrifice : 'The Word....redeeming us by His own blood in a manner consonant to reason, gave Himself as a redemption for those who had been led into captivity....Since the Lord has thus redeemed us through His own blood, giving His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh....'

38. Cf. III.25.5, where Plato is quoted approvingly, and IV.38.3, where the decision to create is explicitly grounded in the goodness of God.

39. The unity of creation and redemption in Irenaeus has been especially emphasised by A. Nygren, Agape and Eros, Part II Volume I, (London: SPCK, 1938, p.180f.) who attempts to ground creation solely in the love of God. Although Irenaeus only once alludes directly to love as the basis of creation (V.17.1), it may be said that Nygren produces an accurate summary of Irenaeus' position, which he tended to express in other terms such as goodness, mercy and glory. At first sight the idea, familiar from many traditional catechisms, that God created all things for His glory, might sound almost selfish, and rather the opposite to an act of love. But the glory of a person is the manifestation of their essential being, which, in the case of God (at least according to St. John), is love. Thus God's glory in His creation is the manifestation of His love.

40. See, for example, the discussion by H. Chadwick, 'Freedom and Necessity in Early Christian Thought about God', Concilium (June 1983) pp.8-13. Chadwick no doubt wisely notes that the difficulty here 'arises in large part from the anthropomorphic images which tend to lie behind the debate' (p.10). Cf. G.S. Hendry, Theology of Nature (Philadelphia : Westminster Press, 1980) pp.124-128, 'Freedom and Necessity in God'.

It is likely that new light upon these old issues will come from the dramatic changes which are occurring in our understanding of the nature of, and relation between, chance and necessity in the physical and biological world. Recent Nobel laureates Eigen and Prigogine, in particular, have shown how in open thermodynamic and biological systems 'we see chance and necessity not as irreconcilable opposites, but each playing its role as a partner in destiny' (I. Prigogine and I. Stengers, Order out of Chaos, London: 1984, p.xxxiii). For a wider appraisal, see. A.R. Peacocke, Creation and the World of Science, O.U.P.: 1979, ch.3. 'Chance and the Life-Game', and the various articles collected under the overall title 'Order and Disorder : Thermodynamics, Creation and Values', in Zygon, 19.4 (Dec. 1984)

41. II.34.2; cf. II.26.3; IV.11.1; 38.1.

42. E.G. III.12.4; IV.6.2; 9.2.

43. One may express this point in a different way by saying that the doctrines of creation ex nihilo and διὰ Χριστοῦ need to be balanced and interwoven.

44. Cf. III.23.1., 'For if man, who had been created by God that he might live, after losing life, through being injured by the serpent that had corrupted him, should not any more return to life, but should have been utterly abandoned to death, God would have been conquered, and the wickedness of the serpent would have prevailed over the will of God'.

45. Ezekiel 36:22ff., in the context of the prophecy of a new covenant, and Nehemiah 9:10 ff., when Ezra read the rediscovered Book of the Law.

46. Cf. II.10.2.4; 14.4; IV.20.2; 38.3; Dem.4

47. Irenaeus deals with this point in II.14.4. The sharpest defence of the view that ultimately our thinking about creation must rest in a final and ultimate cause, which by definition is God, is given in II.16 in the refutation of Basilides' exaggerated doctrine of the 365 heavens.

48. Later, Athanasius also quoted this passage from the Shepherd of Hermas, to defend the doctrine of creation out of nothing. But by that time the book was definitely excluded from the canon (Epistle 39), although it was able to be read as 'a most helpful book' (De Inc.3). A Rousseau (S.C. edn. of A.H., Book IV, p.629 n.1) has argued that Irenaeus did not regard the Shepherd of Hermas as 'Scripture', but his reasoning is rather forced. However, it is very likely that for Irenaeus the Shepherd of Hermas was less authoritative than many other books of the New Testament.

49. Ad Autol. I.4, probably quoting 2 Maccabees 7:28.

50. I Apol.10. Justin's position has been variously interpreted - see the discussion of this and of other relevant passages by L.W. Barnard, Justin Martyr, pp.111 ff.

51. Reference being made especially to Rom. 4:17 and Hebrews 11:3.

52. For an interesting assessment of the nature of divine creativity in the Old Testament, see the contribution of G.M. Landes to Creation in the Old Testament, ed. B.W. Anderson. He discusses the use of the verb bara to denote the unique creative activity of God, both in bringing things into existence, and in the fulfilment of His purposes in history.

53. Tertullian was apparently the first to put forward the actual expression ex nihilo, although he also used the form de nihilo. See S.L. Jaki, Cosmos and Creator, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1980), p.72 n.21.

54. See J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Creeds, 3rd Edition (1972), p.82ff., for the texts. Kelly does not remark upon this variation either in Tertullian or in Irenaeus. Indeed, he makes no mention at all of the inclusion (or exclusion) of the qualification 'out of nothing' in the developing creeds. This is an omission which reflects his basic interest in Christological and Trinitarian controversies. In dealing with the fourth and fifth centuries such preoccupation is reasonable, because, as Kelly notes, 'The original import both of Father and of Almighty very early faded into the background. After the fourth century, if not before, exegetes and expositors almost always interpreted the Fatherhood as referring to the special relation of the first to the second Person within the Holy Trinity. Once the theological conception of the triune Godhead had begun to become explicit, it was inevitable that churchmen should come to regard the creed as a compendious exposition of current Trinitarianism' (p.372). But it is less than reasonable to devote nine pages of discussion to the first article of the old Roman creed (pp.131-9) and omit any reference to the inclusion or exclusion of the concept of creation out of nothing. This is another example of the tendency of patristic scholarship to view the earlier centuries through the preoccupations of the Nicene period. The doctrine of creation in general fares little better in Kelly's other important book, Early Christian Doctrines, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 5th ed, 1978), where the focus is also upon Christological and Trinitarian themes.

55. Adversus Hermogenem contains an almost continuous stream of references to the doctrine of creation out of nothing. Other references are found, particularly where the power of the Creator and the goodness of creation are defended - e.g. De Res. Carn. 2.

56. See, for example, the important reference in John of Damascus, De Fide Orth. II.2.

57. See S.L.Jaki, op.cit., p.78. Cf. M. Deansley, A History of the Medieval Church, (London: Methuen, 9th edition, 1969), p.114f.

58. Historically and conceptually the question of the philosophy of creation out of nothing is highly complex and I can only allude to the issues. The Reformers would appear to have retained the dogma, but not to have given it much prominence - one searches Calvin's Institutes, for example, in the vain attempt to discover any reference to creation out of nothing, although neither is there any denial of it. But some more recent Protestant theology, encouraged no doubt by the recognition of the apparent ambiguity of Scripture at this point, has tended to criticise the appropriateness of the dogma. A. Ehrhardt (Studia Theologica (Lund) 4 (1951), 'Creatio ex nihilo', and The Beginning: A Study in the Greek Philosophical Approach to the Concept of Creation from Anaximander to St. John, (Manchester University Press, 1968)) has argued strongly both for the philosophical origins of the idea of creatio ex nihilo, and for the danger of its inclusion in the body of Christian doctrine. A powerful attack upon Ehrhardt has been made by S.L. Jaki, (op.cit. ch.3 'The Dogma of Creation'), upon both historical and philosophical grounds. If somewhat overstated, Jaki makes a series of important and telling points. From the other side, attacks upon the idea of creation out of nothing have also come from process theologians, i.e. from those who most self-consciously advocate the admixture of philosophy and theology. Most recently, see Lewis S. Ford, 'An Alternative to Creatio ex Nihilo', Religious Studies, 17 (1983), pp.205-213.

59. There is some evidence that Gnosticism made such use of the concept of creation out of nothing. Hippolytus (Refutation 9f.) records that Basilides speculated about creation out of nothing to prove or illustrate the 'non-existence' of God, i.e. his absolute transcendence over this world and human categories of thought. The discussion of the system of Basilides which Irenaeus provides is considerably shorter and does not include a specific reference to these speculations. Nevertheless one may perhaps perceive here an additional reason why Irenaeus was somewhat restrained in his explicit use of the concept of creation out of nothing.

60. See G.G. Stead, op.cit., p.197f.

61. Cf. III.5.4, where God is spoken of as liber et suae potestatis, which most likely renders ἀνεξουσίος, and III.8.3 where God omnia fecit libere et quemadmodum voluit. A similar train of thought is evident in Dem.11, '..... man became like God in inspiration as well as in frame. So he was free, and his own master, having been made by God in order to be master of everything on earth'.

62. We may recall here the absence in Irenaeus of the explicit attribution to God of holiness, discussed in Chapter One, which we suggested resulted from (or underlay) his unsatisfactory separation of the mercy from the justice of God.

63. In relation to contemporary philosophies, or to the components of the philosophical syncretism which characterised the second century, it is from Stoicism that Irenaeus' views here are to be most clearly distinguished, as he himself indicates in II.14.4.. The Stoics did

not believe that Zeus had freely created the world. The divine 'will' is really no more than the unalterable course of history. Fate and providence are indistinguishable. Platonism was less hostile to the conception of divine freedom, because 'God' was not tied so closely to creation as in Stoicism. Yet Platonism fell short of the biblical emphasis upon the creative and redemptive freedom of the divine will. At this point Irenaeus would seem to be much closer to the biblical teaching than Origen or even Augustine, who both 'lay great stress on the immutability of God, and on a denial that the creating of the world is an act in time' (H. Chadwick, 'Freedom and Necessity in Early Christian Thought about God', p.12). Celsus, who was deeply influenced by the Stoic and Platonic traditions, was vehement in his rejection of the idea that God had 'free will', on the basis that this would be arbitrary and anthropomorphic.

64. Cf. Rev. 4:11 where acknowledgement of this passes naturally into worship and praise: 'Worthy art thou, our Lord and God to receive glory and honour and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created.'

65. The modern age of evolution has seen numerous attempts to conceive the relation between Creator and creation as essentially continuous, as monistic rather than as dualistic. The evolutionary theme in Irenaeus, which holds creation and redemption closely together, may lead him towards these modern dangers, but fundamentally, on the basis of a strong doctrine of creation, he draws both a sharp distinction and a clear relation between God and creation. Even in the millennium, and thereafter, the distinction is preserved, for man will still have much to learn and receive. One is reminded, perhaps, of the thought of D.H. Lawrence, much misunderstood in ecclesiastical circles, which is in part a reaction to nineteenth-century naturalism: the true depth of the male-female relationship depends crucially upon recognition of a basic male-female polarity.

66. The situation is more complex, because a Platonic strand remains in Irenaeus. We will consider this in the context of his treatment of evil.

67. Harvey, surprised by this assertion, proposes to substitute causa for substantia, conjecturing that the translator had οὐσία by mistake for ἀίτια. But there is no textual evidence for this, and parallel passages in Irenaeus can be found - e.g. IV.20.1 ipse a semetipso substantiam creaturarum...accipiens. This thought may underlie the basic response to anthropomorphic thinking given in II.25.1: 'For system (regula) does not spring out of numbers, but numbers from a system, nor does God derive His being from things made, but things made from God'. On the other hand, there are passages which link the substance of creation with the will of God in a more traditional manner, along the lines of Harvey's proposed emendation.

68. For a full account of the range of meanings of οὐσία and, to some extent, ὕποστασις, see C. Stead, Divine Substance, and the relevant entries in G.H. Lampe, A Patristic Greek Lexicon, (O.U.P.: 1961).

69. Introduction of the concept of 'nature' should not pass unremarked, because it is exceptionally ambiguous. R.W. Hepburn advises writers who would make significant use of the words 'nature' and 'natural'

to choose words of greater precision ('Nature, Philosophical Ideas of', The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, ed. P. Edwards (Collier-Macmillan, London, 1972), vol. 5, pp.454-7). 'Nature' points to a fundamental human experience, which results in the ambiguity of meaning, because its range is as wide as the cultural and conceptual horizon of its users. A.O. Lovejoy and G. Boas, (Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity, John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1935, pp. 447-56) have listed at least 66 distinct meanings of the term 'nature'. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary devotes a whole column to the noun. These references, and a more extensive survey of the ambiguity of the concept of 'nature', can be found in A.R. Peacocke, op.cit., Appendix B, pp. 364-66.

A useful survey of the 'variety of meanings and nuances' of φύσις and natura current in second-century Graeco-Roman thought is provided by H. Remus, Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century, (Philadelphia Patristic Foundation: 1983) pp.14-26. On p.19 Remus quotes from Galen, a second-century physician, a criticism of a concept of nature similar to that defended by Irenaeus: Galen wishes to maintain that all things are not possible to God, for some things, perhaps many things, are 'impossible by nature'. Whether Remus is right in his basic aim to interpret the different concepts of nature employed by different writers in terms of their socio-cultural conditioning is, however, questionable; we shall return to this question.

70. References to the visible and invisible realms of creation is made in Col.1:16, but Irenaeus is apparently the first Christian author whose writings are extant to use this expression, which was eventually included in the Nicene creed.

71. Even in the Bible the concept of heaven is rather complex, and this must be recognised in relation to the Irenaeian usage. In the Bible broad distinctions can be made between three confluent meanings: (1) the visible starry firmament; (2) a higher created reality, inaccessible to human observation, where God is praised and served; (3) the sphere, the space of God Himself. (See H. Berkhof, Christian Faith, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p.177. For further distinctions see Kittel, T.W.N.T., Vol.5, pp.497-543). Thus the Gnostic view is that only (1) was created by the Demiurge. Irenaeus tends to work with one over-arching concept of heaven, which encompasses these different aspects.

72. J.P.Smith, in his edition of the Demonstration (p.146,n.57) thinks it probable that Irenaeus took the concept of the seven heavens from contemporary Jewish-Christian writings, notably the Ascension of Isaiah. Smith is doubtless correct, but this leaves open the interesting existence of strong Gnostic parallels - perhaps the denial of the seven heavens teaching in A.H., in the face of St. Paul's apparent espousal of it, is simply an antagonistic response to Gnosticism.

73. Two interesting differences between the 'seven heavens' as presented in the Demonstration and in the Ascension of Isaiah should be mentioned here. In the first place, Irenaeus numbers the heavens in an opposite manner to that found in the Ascension of Isaiah, with the 'top' heaven being the 'first': it could be suggested that Irenaeus approaches the seven heavens, perhaps subconsciously, from the perspective of God rather than from that of earth. In the second place, whereas in the

Ascension of Isaiah the seven heavens are definitely in the invisible realm, with 'the prince of this world' (10.29) dwelling in the firmament, in the Demonstration the seventh heaven is the firmament which we can see, it being illuminated by the Holy Spirit (Dem.9).

74. J.P. Smith, ed. Demonstration, p.148 n.63.

75. Smith may well have been influenced in his judgement by the later teaching on the hierarchy of angels. This originated in large measure from the De Caelesti Hierarchia of Pseudo-Dionysius (ca.500), and was developed in Medieval theology. But the earlier church fathers were much more reserved in their references to angels, and it is interesting to observe that moves to admit into Christian theology ideas along the lines of Judaeo-Christian angel worship were on the whole not taken up by the early Fathers. Thus the apologetic of Justin in opposition to the charge of atheism (I Apol.6), which referred to Christian worship of the Father, Son, Spirit and 'the host of good angels' (cf. Dial.128), where Christ is termed 'angel', and also Athenagoras Legatio 10.5), was ignored by Irenaeus, who instead emphasised their created nature. Among more modern writers it is Karl Barth, (C.D. III.3, para 5, pp.368-531) who has rekindled interest in the question of angelology. His chief thesis is that the main biblical emphasis is upon the concept of angels as messengers of God, rather than upon their status in heaven or the divine court. We cannot assess this thesis here, but it can be remarked that Irenaeus' approach to the question of angels is not wholly dissimilar. His emphasis, while not without relation to the prevailing concept of cosmic mediators between God and creation, falls upon the role of angels in carrying out the will of God, both towards God in worship, and also towards creation in providential care. Like the Apologists, Clement of Alexandria exhibits the influence of Judaeo-Christian angelology, but thereafter the subject falls into relative decline until Pseudo-Dionysius (See J. Daniélou, Gospel Message and Hellenistic culture, p. 459).

76. In addition, we should note in advance the relevance of his anthropology. For Irenaeus, man stands at the boundary between earth and heaven, firmly rooted in the former but open to the latter and constituted in being by the Holy Spirit. To understand man is to see in him the mystery of earth and heaven, of visible and invisible reality, in their diversity yet also in their unity as the creation of God. This mystery is manifest in the God-man Jesus Christ, as the mediator of creation, who is the visible of the invisible Father.

77. V.2.2f.

78. See J.H. McKenna, Eucharist and Holy Spirit, (Essex: Mayhew-McCrimmon, Alcuin Club Collection No.57, 1975), pp.51-3 for a survey of the main interpretations which have been applied to these passages.

79. McKenna, op.cit., p.53.

80. A good deal of New Testament evidence could be produced which also indicates that a change in the relationship between earth and heaven was wrought by the saving event of Jesus Christ. See Kittel, op.cit., vol.5, pp.514-520.

81. Rev. 11:19; 21:3.. R.D. Williams, Eucharistic Sacrifice - The Roots of a Metaphor, p.11, describes this introduction of the image of the heavenly altar as 'slightly unexpected'; in a sense, this is true, but I would suggest that it fits well with the overall shape of Irenaeus' doctrines of eucharist and of creation. Perhaps Williams, in concentrating rather more significance on the eucharist than we see in Irenaeus, misses the wider context of the close relation between heaven and earth in the doctrine of creation in Irenaeus.

82. Implicitly, Irenaeus is presenting a conception of the created universe which is at considerable variance with that of ancient cosmology. In varying degrees, the different strands of ancient Greek philosophy posited a dichotomy between heaven and earth. The clash between Christian and pagan conceptions varied, of course, between different theologians. S. Sambursky, The Physical World of Late Antiquity (London: R.K.P., 1962) ch.6, 'The Unity of Heaven and Earth', has shown that different conceptions of the relation between heaven and earth provided a major area of conflict in the sixth century with the contribution to the doctrine of creation by John Philoponus. However, Sambursky does not note the interesting anticipation of some of Philoponus' emphases by Irenaeus.

83. As Irenaeus notes (II.33.2) this idea was a commonplace of Greek philosophy, but it was used in Gnosticism by assimilation to the notion of divine 'sparks' temporarily embedded in bodies.

84. Very similar passages are found in the two preceding paragraphs (II.34.2,3).

85. Again, very similar statements are found in adjoining passages, V.4.2 and V.6.2.

86. For adjacent texts, see III.16.2; 17.1; 21.7. The introduction of the concept of the divine foreknowledge should warn us against placing Irenaeus too quickly at the Scotist end of the Thomist/Scotist debate. For Irenaeus will and knowledge are closely associated - cf. I.12.1f where he counters the Gnostic division between thought and will with a statement of their mutuality.

87. Fragment 4, defended by Harvey as genuine, did seem to speak directly of omnicausality: 'The will and the energy of God is the effective and foreseeing cause of every time and place and age, and of every nature'. But this fragment is among those which were proved by A. Harnack to be forgeries (Texte und Untersuchungen 20.3, Leipzig:1900).

88. In medieval theology a series of distinctions in the divine will and knowledge were made: See K. Barth, Church Dogmatics II.1 pp.567ff. and 590ff. for an extensive description and assessment. I choose the distinction between the effective and permissive will as representing the key idea which the whole series of distinctions was intended to make.

89 We may note in advance of a fuller discussion the importance of the recognition of the concept of 'possibility' in creation for the growth of modern science. The concept of nature assumed there includes all phenomena whose existence is not precluded by the laws which govern the physical world. Experimental science recognises the existence of

possible states of affairs, which are created artificially to test the predictive power of a hypothesis or theory. The Greek mind found the concept of possibility difficult to envisage or accept - hence the emphasis upon the simple observational science of astronomy, at the expense of experimental science, Cf. S. Sambursky, The Physical World of the Greeks, (London: R.K.P., 1956), pp.177f., 235. Confidence in the experimental method requires not only the invention of artificial possible states, but also the reliable repetition of the states, with no interference from demons or a 'surd' element in nature. Among theologians, E. Jüngel has given particular attention to the ontological significance of possibility, as J.B. Webster has recently emphasised: 'It is againstan accordance of ontological primacy to actual states of affairs that Jüngel directs himself....in the programmatic essay "Die Welt als Wirklichkeit und Möglichkeit".' ('Eberhard Jüngel on the Language of Faith', Modern Theology, I (1985), p.261.

90. The terms 'necessity' and 'contingency' require careful definition. A mistaken emphasis on the omnivulence of God can take either a 'necessitarian' or a 'voluntarist' form, depending upon the doctrine of God which is invoked or assumed. Here 'necessity' refers to both forms of a mistaken concept of the omnivulence of God.

91. This connection was first noticed by R.M. Grant, 'Irenaeus and Hellenistic Culture', p.43. Elsewhere, also, Irenaeus clearly used a philosophical manual - for example, in his survey of philosophical opinions given in II.14.

92. Parallel passages might be quoted, for example: 'It is therefore better, as I have said, that one should have no knowledge whatever of any one reason why a single thing in creation has been made, but should believe in God, and continue in His love, than that, puffed up through knowledge of this kind, he should fall away from that love which is the life of man' (II.26.1). This whole chapter, a meditation upon 1Cor. 8:1, 'knowledge puffs up, but love builds up', assumes a quantitative mathematical, rather than a qualitative, scientific, concept of knowledge. Irenaeus confuses the primarily spiritual knowledge referred to in 1 Corinthians, with knowledge of the natural world. II.26.3 has a continuation of Irenaeus' attack upon the possibility and value of scientific knowledge, and the same theme returns in IV.19.2.

93. Modifying to some extent an earlier thesis of A.N. Whitehead (from his Science and the Modern World, published in 1926), important articles by M.B. Foster in Mind, 43 (1934), pp.446ff.; 44 (1935), pp.439ff.; and 45 (1936) pp.1ff., presented the argument that the Christian doctrine of creation was the seminal influence upon the rise of modern science. This thesis has been refined and to some extent qualified by the recognition of the role played by other, chiefly cultural, factors, but extensive research has supported Foster's basic claim. For details of some of the most important recent publications in this area, see A.I.C. Heron, A Century of Protestant Theology, (Lutterworth: 1980) p.206, and D.W. Hardy, 'Natural Science and Christian Theology', Kings' Theological Review, 3 (1980), pp41ff..

94. A certain distinction must, of course, be made between the Jewish and Christian doctrines of creation. The former has tended to give less place to original sin, with significant consequences that flow elsewhere in the doctrine of creation. This has been emphasised recently by

A.P.Hayman: 'Rabbinic Judaism and the Problem of Evil' , S.J.T. 29 (1976); 'Theodicy in Rabbinic Judaism', Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society, 26 (1975-6); and 'The Fall, Freewill and Human Responsibility in Rabbinic Judaism', S.J.T. 37 (1984). On the other side, the Christian doctrine of creation has been influenced by the doctrines of the Incarnation and of the Trinity.

95. Of course, this is to assume that the development of modern science should be welcomed from a Christian perspective, a position which I believe to be defensible.

96. Cf. E.L. Mascall, Christian Theology and Natural Science, (London: Longmans, 1956), p.98.

97. A good summary of the cultural requirements is given by P.E. Hodgson, 'The Christian Origin of Science', Occasional Paper 4 (Oxford: Farmington Institute, 1982). One might have thought that after Constantine, in particular, conditions would have been favourable for the development of science. An interesting discussion of this question is provided by T.F. Torrance, The Ground and Grammar of Theology (Belfast: Christian Journals, 1980), ch.3 'Creation and Science'. On the one hand, the promising 'scientific' work of John Philoponus in the sixth century was without immediate influence, partly due to his erroneous designation as a monophysite heretic, but partly due also to his own inadequate grasp of the intelligibility of the cosmos to man (See Sambursky, The Physical World of Late Antiquity p.152f.). On the other hand, the great authority of Augustine established a 'subtle but admittedly beautiful blending of Christian theology with Neoplatonic philosophy and Ptolemaic cosmology' (Torrance, ibid., p.61), which, by its cultivation of an other-worldly attitude, diverted attention from the phenomena of this world.

98. This is seen in II.26.3 which argues along similar lines to II.28. Here the 'greatness' of the Creator is emphasised, as is the 'transcendent knowledge' and 'divine intellect' which providentially formed the world as it is.

99. Op.cit., pp.42-47.

100. 'Philosophy and Rhetoric in the Adversus Haereses of Irenaeus', V.C., 13 (1959) p.24.

101. 'Theological Speculation and its Limits, in Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition.

102. We may refer back to the discussions in Chapter One of Irenaeus' unsatisfactory accounts of the impassibility and incomprehensibility of God. Such ideas tend to foster the view that the activity of creation, including knowledge by created men, is grounded directly in God. As Irenaeus himself says, the pattern of creation originates from the 'truly divine intellect' (II.26.3); Cf. 'since God is λογικος therefore by λογος he created the things that were made' (Dem.5, the play on words being preserved in the Armenian).

103. I.13.7; 15.6; 23.1,4,5; 25.3; II.31.2f; 32.3.

104. II.31.2.

105. We need not dispute the possibility and actuality of miracles both in Irenaeus' day and in our own time, but the ease and frequency claimed by Irenaeus for miracles, including resuscitations from death, arouses justifiable suspicion.

106. H. Remus, op.cit., has provided a valuable study, from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, of the place of miracle and magic in second-century thought. He emphasises the complexity of the situation, with various concepts of 'nature', 'miracle' and 'magic' competing for legitimisation by various social and socio-religious groups. As our own study indicates, there is a relation between Irenaeus' theology and the surrounding culture; the danger with Remus' methodology is that it can lead to an underestimation of the intrinsic power of new ideas. Thus, in relation to Justin, he asks quizzically (p.144), 'how Justin came to positions so uncharacteristic of the Middle Platonism which is his general philosophical position'.

107. The question of Platonic influence upon Gnosticism has been much debated, but is clearly present at this point, which is emphasised in Valentinianism. See H. Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, p.193. As we shall see, Irenaeus' use of the concept of the image of God in creation is handled differently from the Gnostic use of such language: the image of God is restricted to man, and is conceived on a different basis from that employed in Gnosticism.

108. We see how chance and necessity are here conceived in a manner which recalls the widely known contemporary work, Chance and Necessity, by Jacques Monod (London: Collins, 1972). T.F. Torrance has commented as follows upon Monod's basis thesis: 'Sheer randomness is contrasted with necessity in the process of natural selection, but since randomness is geared into the necessity of the consequences of purely chance events it does not appear to be ultimately different from the old dialectic of the accidental and the necessary, in spite of the fact that chance is now given the status of a dogmatic metaphysical idea!' (Divine and Contingent Order (O.U.P. 1981) p.154n.14). For recent (and radical) criticism of Monod by a biochemist who has taken account of the fresh discoveries in thermodynamics, see J.S. Wicken, 'The Cosmic Breath: Reflections on the Thermodynamics of Creation', Zygon, 19 (1984), pp. 487-505.

109. Among the various Gnostic groups, the greatest detail here is provided by Valentinianism, as R. Wilson has observed (The Gnostic Problem, p.203f.)

110. Irenaeus continues with an account of parallels to all thirty Aeons. References to the Gnostic theories of imagery and typology in creation are found throughout Books One and Two of A.H., but particularly significant discussions are found in I.14-18; II.6-8, 20-25, 30.

111. See especially the series of examples provided by Irenaeus in I.3,8,18, 19, 20; II.10, 21, 22, 23. He attacks what might be called the monistic pole of Gnosticism on three basic grounds: it is speculative, anthropomorphic, and inconsistent with the opposite, dualistic pole of Gnosticism (for the charge of inconsistency see, for example, II.7.6).

The nature of Irenaeus' arguments has been the subject of extensive and disputed research, as we have already noted in the limited respect of one passage, II.28.2. Assessment of this research lies largely outwith the scope of this thesis, which is devoted primarily to the more neglected area of the substance of Irenaeus' theology. However, negative comment must be passed upon a recent essay, 'Irenaeus' Refutation of the Gnostics', by Gérard Vallée, in the important collection, Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, Vol. I. ed. E.P. Sanders (S.C.M. 1980). Vallée's essay makes the double claim that Irenaeus concentrated his attack 'almost exclusively' (p.180) on Gnostic dualism, and that the reason for this exclusivity is to be found in his socio-political conservatism, which contrasted with the 'strong revolutionary impetus' (p.183) of Gnosticism. If the latter claim needs a more careful examination and stronger evidence than Vallée provides, the former claim is clearly distorted. Indeed, to account for such a claim, it is tempting to ask whether it itself is not motivated by a (modern) desire to find socio-political determinants of theological positions! It is important that this criticism and correction of Vallée be heard, both because the collection in which it is found is likely to be influential, and because his article could tend to obscure the arguments of a much better essay in the same collection 'Why the Church Rejected Gnosticism', by G.W. Macrae, which confines its attention to possible anti-Gnostic argument in the Pauline and Johannine documents of the New Testament, explicitly leaving Irenaeus' arguments to Vallée's essay (p.127). Vallée has extended his own position in A Study in Anti-Gnostic Polemics, (Ontario: Waterloo, 1981). Vallée's methodology has similarities with that of Remus' Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century, and with the various publications of E. Pagels (see, for example, her The Gnostic Gospels, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1979). Pagels' contrast between Gnostic radical individualism and Catholic institutional uniformity, if not without a measure of truth, can hardly be regarded as the 'mainspring' of Irenaeus' 'polemics' without considerable distortion of their content. Do the 'religious ideas enshrined in the creed...coincide with social and political issues in the formation of orthodox Christianity?' Ideas have more power than Pagels' can admit: 'Since historians themselves tend to be intellectuals, it is, again, no surprise that most have interpreted the controversy between orthodox and Gnostic Christians in terms of the "History of Ideas", as if human action, battled (presumably in some disembodied state) for supremacy' (Op.cit., p.143)

112. We may recall here an element in Irenaeus' account of the basis of our knowledge of God, which we discussed in Chapter One: 'For since His invisible essence is mighty, it confers on all a profound mental intuition and perception of His most powerful, yea, omnipotent greatness. Wherefore, although "No one knows the Father, except the Son, nor the Son except the Father, and those to whom the Son will reveal Him", yet all do know this one fact at least because reason, implanted in their minds, moves them, and reveals to them that there is one God, the Lord of all' (II.6.1). Here a concept of intuitive knowledge of God is developed by reference both to the omnipotence of God and 'implanted' reason within man, analogous to the pattern of the contingency and necessity of creation as a whole which we have discussed. The anti-Gnostic polemic is evident in this passage, with the quotation of Matthew 11:27, a verse which Gnostics could present as 'the highest testimony and, as it were, the very crown of their system' (I.20.3).

113. The close relationship at this point between doctrines of creation and of God has been well emphasised by Mackey, op.cit., pp.254ff.. He draws attention to the need to link closely concepts of freedom and grace in a Christian theology of God and creation. In an age greatly influenced by existentialist conceptualities our understanding of freedom needs an appreciation of grace, lest it border on the nihilism exhibited by Sartre, but our understanding of grace needs a proper sense of the transcendence of Creator over creature, lest the freedom of the latter prove an illusion (p.260).

114. E.g. I.9.2; 15.5; 22.1; II.30.4,9; 32.5; III.2.2; 6.5; 8.2f; 11.8; 22.1, 2,3; 23.1; 24.1; IV.6.2; 7.1, 4; 10.2; 18.4; 20.2; 24.1 etc.. Occasionally, Irenaeus also speaks of the Holy Spirit as mediating creation : e.g. IV.31.2.

115. In making a comparison between the concepts of the οἰκονομία of God displayed by different patristic writers we must bear carefully in mind the variety of meanings which the word and its cognates could convey, and thus guard against the danger of an unwilling substitution of linguistic for conceptual analysis. On the range of meaning of οἰκονομία in patristic theology, see G. Prestige, op.cit. ch.3.

116. See the discussion of the concept of the οἰκονομία of God in Justin in J. Daniélou, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, pp.157-166, and the various references therein.

117. E.g. R.S. Franks, The Work of Christ, (London: Thomas Nelson, 1918 and 1962), p.25. Without the accompanying concept of the οἰκονομία of God, it would be easy to lay against Irenaeus the charge that the concept of ἀνακεφαλαιώσις cannot contain both the elements of restoration and development; this charge is brought, for example, by R.F. Brown, 'On the Necessary Imperfection of Creation' S.J.T., 28 (1975), p.17. Irenaeus' development of the concept of the οἰκονομία of creation and redemption contrasts strongly with the Gnostic account of the οἰκονομία of the Pleroma. This contrast, which may help us to understand why Irenaeus was drawn to over-emphasise the closeness of the relation between God and creation, has been well explored by R.A. Markus, 'Pleroma and Fulfilment: The Significance of History in St. Irenaeus' Opposition to Gnosticism' V.C., 8 (1954), pp.193-224. Markus summarises Irenaeus' concept of οἰκονομία as follows (p.213): 'All God's dealings with men throughout history are a process of "accustoming men to bear His Spirit and have communion with God"; and thus, in his magnificent phrase, Irenaeus sums up the Old Testament history as God's work of "adjusting the human race, in manifold ways, to harmony with salvation" (IV.14.2; cf. IV.38.1,3; 39.2; 21.3). God does nothing "out of due time and unfittingly" (III.16.7; cf. IV.4.2 etc.) - everything, with Him, is apto tempore, in its own kairos, the moment assigned to it in the unfolding of His plan. According to this plan or economy, the Word as the Father's steward brings forth his treasure for men (IV.9.1).'

118. Op.cit., p.170.

119. C.D. III.1, paragraph 41, 'Creation and Covenant' ; 'Creation as the External Basis of the Covenant'; and 'The Covenant as the Internal Basis of Creation'.

120. Among many contenders, I mention G.S. Hendry who has developed this criticism in several books and articles, e.g. The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology, (S.C.M., revised edn., 1965), pp.108 ff., and 'The Freedom of God in the Theology of Karl Barth', S.J.T., 31 (1978), pp.229-244.

121. We noted in the last chapter that Irenaeus' doctrine of the Trinity could verge towards modalism. André Benoit, (op.cit. p.203f, and other notes thereto) has shown how the theme of 'unity' is of key importance for Irenaeus: 'Le thème que la lecture de l'ouvrage Contre les hérésies accentue avec le plus de force est celui de l'unité..... Cette affirmation de l'unité s'applique surtout à Dieu. Il n'y a qu'un seul Dieu, elle se rencontre, fréquemment à propos du Christ: il n'y a qu'un seul Christ. L'expression unus Spiritus ou ses équivalents sont, part contre, relativement rares. Plus le thème se ramifie: il n'y a qu'une seule foi, il n'y a seul salut, il n'y a qu'une seule tradition, il n'y a qu'une seule prédication de l'Église, il n'y a qu'un Évangile, il n'y a qu'un seul genre humain, un seul corps du Christ. Modern study has shown that any claim concerning the unity of Scripture, for example, must reckon with a diversity of some degree or kind, which Irenaeus clearly failed adequately to recognise.

122. Here I refer to the popular 'mathematical' concept of unity. In fact modern mathematics, for example with the invention of complex numbers, has a complex concept of unity.

123. E.g. II.2.4, 7,3-7, 25.2, 28.2, 30.1, 3; IV.4.1, 38.3; V.3.2.

124. Irenaeus speaks of God 'adorning' creation in II.30.1,3; IV.20.1,2.

125. This implication is explored in detail in II.7.3-7.

DOCTRINE OF CREATION: PROVIDENCE AND FREEDOMIntroduction

In this chapter we will continue our investigation of various basic aspects of Irenaeus' doctrine of creation by looking at his treatment of the related subjects of providence and the freedom of the will. Obviously, the treatment of each subject cannot be exhaustive, but our purpose does not demand this, because primarily we are looking for the overall pattern of Irenaeus' doctrine of the relation of God with creation.

Providence

The confession of God as Παντοκράτωρ, or 'Father almighty', was one of the first and basic components of the creeds of the early church. J.N.D. Kelly has demonstrated this in detail ¹, and in the process he established a significant delimitation:

The underlying meaning of παντοκρατωρ, in Greek, however, and the meaning taken for granted in the second-century Church, was by no means identical with that of 'Almighty' in English or omnipotens in Latin. The exact equivalent of these would have been παντοδυναμος. Παντοκρατωρ is in the first place an active word, conveying the idea not just of capacity but of the actualization of capacity. More important, the basic conception involved is wider than that contained in 'Almighty'. Παντοκρατωρ has the meaning 'all-ruling', 'all sovereign'. This is brought out in the numberless patristic contexts, but with particular force in the first few chapters of the second book of St. Irenaeus' Adversus Haereses.
(op.cit., p.137)

Kelly was fully justified in his reference to Irenaeus' stress upon the sovereign, providential power of God, and especially in the early part of Book Two ². We recall in this context our discussions, in Chapter One, of the attribution to God of supreme

power, goodness, richness, omniscience, and our discussion, in Chapter Three, of the considerable stress laid by Irenaeus upon the fundamental nature of the will of God for all created activity. We concluded the last chapter by referring to Irenaeus' assertion that creation, although diverse, is well adapted for its purpose, to the extent that it can be spoken of as 'adorned' by God. That belief in the general providence of God was to the forefront of his defence against Gnosticism is illustrated by the fact that he quotes Matthew 5: 45b, 'for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust' on six occasions³; no verse from the Bible is quoted more frequently, and the only other verse quoted six times, Matthew 25:41 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels', with its theme of judgement, is, as we shall see, brought into a close connexion with the defence and explication of providence.⁴

Irenaeus' development of the concept of providence needs to be seen against the double-sided background of Gnostic and Marcionite ideas, on the one hand, and the traditional philosophical defence of Greek notions of providence on the other. Marcion and Gnostic writers denied any general concept of providence: verses in the Gospel of Luke about the Father's being mindful of sparrows and each hair on one's head were among those excised by Marcion as Judaistic interpolations.⁵ Nevertheless, a form of 'special' providence was given a prominence which was sharpened precisely by this denial of 'general' providence. For Marcion, the 'supreme and extraordinary' love of the Good God is graciously demonstrated in his sudden appearance at Capernaum.⁶ In many Gnostic systems τροπικα was held to be a key component, designating the plan of salvation, or, sometimes, the descent of the Saviour in partial execution of that plan.⁷

This selective, 'special' notion of providence was bolstered by the esoteric Gnostic typology, which Irenaeus discusses at some length, wherein features of the visible world 'image' corresponding features of the invisible world. In his response, he does not deny that there is a connection between God and the detailed arrangement of creation, for to do so would have been to approach the underlying assumption of Gnosticism itself. Instead, Irenaeus presents a close relationship between God and the whole of creation:

If any one, however, say in reply to these things, What then? Is it a meaningless and accidental thing, that the assigning of names ⁸, and the election of the apostles, and the working of the Lord, and the arrangement of created things, are what they are? - we answer them: Certainly not; but with great wisdom and diligence, all things which God has made have been exactly arranged and adorned, His Word forming both things ancient and those of the last times. (II,25.1)

The Gnostics are not to pick and choose which aspects of creation speak of God, for this results in the production of an unlimited number of diverse theories among different Gnostic writers. We see, then, that the emphasis in Irenaeus is upon what became known in later theology as 'general', as opposed to 'special' providence. However, he does not draw clear distinctions between 'general' and 'special' providence, or between other aspects of the divine care and provision for the world such as initial creation, continued sustaining, and miracles, which, in contemporary theology, are commonly held to be conceptually differentiated. ⁹ All are brought together in one overarching concept which may be said to be centred in the notion of 'general' providence.

In order to explore more deeply the distinctive features of Irenaeus' conception, it is instructive to examine briefly the other background dimension against which he wrote, that provided by Greek philosophy. For Epicurus there was no question of the gods (whose happy, unconcerned existence he affirmed) exercising providential care, for

the whole Epicurean system was based upon the belief that pleasure was best sought and found if there was no purposeful creation, and no divine judgement to fear! Creation is the result of an accidental sequence of atomic collisions. Irenaeus twice¹⁰ accuses the Gnostics of emulating these Epicurean ideas, and Meijering¹¹ has drawn attention to the consideration of Epicurean arguments against providence which is implicit in Irenaeus' defence of the resurrection of the body: God is both willing and able to overcome evil and death, and with supreme providential power He will do so.

By contrast with the Epicureans, the Stoics strongly defended a concept of providence. How could pleasure lead to real happiness unless all is arranged by God for the best? Evidence of divine providence was adduced from the design of the world, with its order and vitality. God has necessarily formed the world, He will take it back into Himself through a universal conflagration, and this process continually repeats itself, with each new world resembling its predecessor in all particulars, every individual man, for example, occurring in each successive world and performing the identical actions that he performed in his previous existence.¹² By affirming providence, the Stoic faces the truth of his situation, which he cannot alter, but in which he can actively participate. Providence here is hardly distinguishable from a fatalistic conception which denies that there is any ultimate distinction between good and evil. The totality of the cosmos is perfect, even if, when viewed separately, parts of it appear imperfect. This essential determinism is modified, the Stoics claimed, by human freedom, which allows a man to vary his perception of, and attitude towards, events, to see and welcome them as the expression of the πνεῦμα, Universal Reason, or

'will of God', which constitutes Reality. Irenaeus fixes on this tough fatalism, and denounces it as no better than Epicurean libertinism.¹³ As we have seen, among the different philosophic schools Irenaeus is least hostile to Platonism. In the Timaeus, the Craftsman or Demiurge produces a world which will reflect, albeit imperfectly, the beauty of the transcendent Ideas. This creative 'act' is an overflowing of divine goodness, which nevertheless leaves God wholly self-sufficient and in need of nothing: 'creation' accords neither with Epicurean chance nor with Stoic necessity. This aspect of Plato's teaching is singled out for praise by Irenaeus, especially as it is accompanied in Plato by the thought that God exercises a just and providential judgement.¹⁴

There are two chief tensions latent in Plato's scheme. In the first place, the presence of evil in the world arguably offers to Platonism a challenge even more acute than to Christian teaching which acknowledges a Fall. Later Platonists attempted to lessen this tension by developing further the doctrine of a hierarchy of metaphysical and moral being which is sketched by Plato himself. In Neo-Platonism the depreciation of matter is much sharper than in Plato, but this is distinguished from Gnosticism, inter alia, by a strong emphasis upon the universal agency of soul. In the second place, there is a tension within the Platonic doctrine of God: while the created world is the outflow of His goodness, He nevertheless remains unconcerned, self-sufficient and in need of nothing. Later Platonists attempted to ease this tension by linking more closely the supreme God and the transcendent Ideas, which in Philo and Middle Platonism become lodged in the mind of the supreme God.

As we have indicated, Irenaeus is relatively favourably disposed to the Platonic understanding of God's relation to the world, even if his teaching has a distinctively Christian character. This Platonic inclination is evidenced, for example, by the fact that both tensions which we have identified in Plato, recur in Irenaeus. We have already discussed the problem of the changelessness of God, and we will consider the relation of created reality to evil in the next chapter.

Although on the surface Irenaeus appears to be hostile towards the Stoic conception, to some extent he modifies the dualism inherent in Plato's position by adopting a viewpoint with features akin to those found in Stoic thought. We discussed at some length in the last chapter the proposition that partly in reaction to Gnosticism, and partly in reflection of contemporary philosophy, Irenaeus conceived the relation between God and creation as too close and necessary. At the conclusion of Chapter Two we asked analogous questions about his view of time as determined by the abiding reality of the ἀνακεφαλαιώσις of all things in Christ. Similar questions confront us now in relation to his doctrine of providence, and to other areas of the doctrine of creation which will be considered. We will examine these influences on his doctrine of providence as they are exhibited in his understanding of the relation between providence and judgement, his use of secular analogies to explicate providence, the argument from providence to the existence of God, and his discussion of the relation between created and uncreated Light.

(i) Providence and Judgement

Despite their differences, both Stoic and Platonic speculations upon

the theme of providence were in large part motivated by a concern to find a rational basis for morality. Although partially expressing a disillusionment with the traditional myths of the gods, writers in both traditions attempted to construct a theological model of the cosmos in order to portray the meaning and goal of human life.

To encourage appropriate moral restraints in men, this embraced a system of reward and punishment for good works, and early Christian writers readily seized upon such a point of contact with their own beliefs.¹⁵ A good example of this recognition is provided by Clement of Alexandria, a writer much influenced by Stoic and Platonic ideas:

But the things which co-operate in the discovery of truth are not to be rejected. Philosophy, accordingly, which proclaims a Providence, and the recompense of a life of felicity, and the punishment, on the other hand, of a life of misery, teaches theology comprehensively. (Strom. VI.15)

Similar thoughts are commonplace in the writings of the Apologists, as the following extracts illustrate:

So then, if we did not think that God presided over the human race, would we remain so pure? Certainly not!..... Plato said that Minos and Rhadamanthys would judge and punish evil men; we say that no one, not a Minos or a Rhadamanthys or the father of them both (Zeus) will escape the judgement of God. (Athenagoras, Legatio, 12.2.)

For such poets as Homer and Hesiod.... spoke out of imagination and error..... except that sometimes some poets, becoming sober in soul and departing from the demons, made statements in agreement with those of the prophets in order to bear witness to themselves and to all men concerning the sole rule of God and the judgement and the other matters they discussed. (Theophilus, Ad Autolyicum, II.8)

Irenaeus makes analogous statements about providence and judgement, his interests focussed in part by Marcion's denial of providence

and judgement alike:

The God, therefore, who does benevolently cause His sun to rise upon all, and sends rain upon the just and the unjust, shall judge those who, enjoying his equally distributed kindness, have led lives not corresponding to the dignity of His bounty.....Plato is proved to be more religiousfor he allowed that same God was both just and good, having power over all things, and Himself executing judgement..... (III.25.4f)

We discussed the immediately preceding passage in Chapter One, in the context of Irenaeus' treatment of mercy and justice as divine attributes. Here we are concerned primarily with the universality of the conception of the providence of God, which prompts for intellectual coherence the affirmation of a highest common factor of 'natural justice' to bind together the history of Israel and the Church with that of the wider history of creation. Such an affirmation is not unreasonable, given the scriptural support in both Testaments for a universal judgement according to works,¹⁶ but in Irenaeus, as in the second-century Apologists, it is not put in a sufficiently mysterious, Christological key. This is not to claim that Irenaeus was unaware of the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, but that he failed adequately to integrate this with his teaching on providence and judgement.¹⁷ This is illustrated with particular clarity in the anti-Marcionite chapters in Book Four of A.H. where he is forced into rather tendentious exegesis of Old Testament passages which do not condemn, or appear even to acquiesce in, what might reliably be identified as sin. For example, in IV.31 Irenaeus discusses the case of Lot's incest, as presented in Genesis 19. Before proceeding to exculpate Lot on the grounds of his involuntary participation in the incest, and to plead the

'simplicity and ignorance' of his daughters, Irenaeus sets down the basis for interpreting those scriptural passages which relate the 'misdeeds' of the patriarchs and prophets. On the one hand, we should 'give thanks to God on their behalf, inasmuch as their sins have been forgiven them through the advent of our Lord', and, on the other hand, we should not pass judgement where Scripture itself does not, 'for we are not more exact than God, nor can we be superior to our Master; but we should search for a typological meaning'.¹⁸

The underlying issue of the relation between the mercy and justice of God, as exhibited and revealed in the peculiar history of Israel, culminating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is undoubtedly among the most difficult in Christian theology. Having made a determined effort in chapters 9 and 11 of the Epistle to the Romans to think the questions through, St. Paul testifies to the mystery in words which have proved a solace to many subsequent interpreters:

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and how inscrutable His ways! (Romans 11:33)

Irenaeus refers to this verse¹⁹, but uses it to justify theological ignorance rather than to stimulate enquiry. In an anti-Gnostic context this is understandable, for subtle theological discussion could easily be misconstrued, but an avenue is left open for simplicity to replace subtlety. General affirmations of divine providence illustrate this process, as is nicely shown by Irenaeus' attempt to extend his anthropological understanding of providence and judgement into the animal kingdom:

And on his account all things have been placed under the sway of Him who is styled the Most High, and the Almighty.... How then could it be, that those angels who were superior to us, or even He whom they call the Creator of the world, did not know the Almighty, when even dumb animals tremble and yield at the invocation of His name? (II.6.2) 20

According to the New Testament there is a sense in which God has put 'everything in subjection to Him, leaving nothing outside His control', but Irenaeus does less than justice to the continuation of Hebrews 2:8f:

As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to Him. But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for every one.

In his emphasis upon the themes of general providence and judgement, Irenaeus is typical of second-century Christian writers. It is against this background that we should interpret the interesting development, towards the middle of the second century, of speculation upon the 'cosmic cross', found in both orthodox and Gnostic writers, to express the universality of the activity of the risen Christ.²¹ This is, in part, an attempt to baptise the ideas of general providence which we have been considering. Doubtless due to the proximity of the Gnostic speculations, Irenaeus introduces the idea of the 'cosmic cross' only towards the end of Book Five²² of A.H., and then, even more explicitly, in the Demonstration:

So by the obedience, whereby He obeyed unto death, hanging on the tree, He undid the old disobedience wrought in the tree. And because He is himself the Word of God Almighty, who in His invisible form pervades us universally in the whole world, and encompasses both its length and breadth and height and depth - for by the Word of God everything is disposed and administered - the Son of God was also crucified in these, imprinted in the form of

a cross on the universe; for He had necessarily, in becoming invisible, to bring to light the universality of His cross, in order to show openly through His visible form that activity of His: that it is He who makes bright the height, that is, what is in heaven, and holds the deep, which is in the bowels of the earth, and stretches forward and extends the length from East to West.....(Dem.34)

There are echoes here of Justin and Plato, as well as of Ephesians and Colossians: Christ at the same time gathers together and controls heaven and earth, and all that occurs on earth. The cosmic cross symbolism of John 12:32 is also in the background, this linking well with the emphasis upon the cosmic cross as bringing judgement and giving life, which is found in V.18.3. Earlier in the Demonstration (c.8) analogous expressions to those in c.34 are put in a context of universal judgement.

As we have said, the truth in Irenaeus' various statements about providence and judgement are compromised by their simplicity; we will return to these issues when considering his understanding of the freedom of the will. We will now further illustrate this simplicity by investigating his use of secular analogies to divine providence.

(ii) Secular Analogies and Illustrations

The unusual reference in the extract from II.6.2 quoted above to dumb animals trembling and yielding at the invocation of the name of God is not explained or expanded by Irenaeus, but on a number of occasions he does refer to the divine approval resting upon the Roman Empire and its government. This is first introduced in A.H., also in II.6.2., to oppose the Gnostic idea that most people are ignorant of the supreme God: Irenaeus replies that just as all people know

and respect (or fear) the Roman Emperor, even if they have not seen him, so it is with all men, indeed with all creation, and God.²³

The same theme reappears in the anti-Marcionite chapters of Book Four, partly to counter Marcion's direct arguments against providence and the goodness of creation, and partly to argue that if the Roman government is basically good, one can hardly quibble at the behaviour of the Israelites in Old Testament times. The first exploration of this theme in Book Four is in chapter 30, portions of which were quoted towards the beginning of the last chapter in connection with Irenaeus' attitude towards philosophy. Here he restricts himself to the comment that, through the instrumentality of the Romans, 'the world is at peace, and we walk on the highways without fear, and sail where we will' (IV.30.3). Church historians have commonly agreed that this ease of travel was of significant benefit to the early Christian missionary movement, and no question need be raised; but when he returns to the theme in chapter 36, further claims are made which deserve attention. He introduces a long quotation from Romans 13 as follows:

For He who is good, and righteous, and pure, and spotless, will endure nothing evil, nor unjust, nor detestable in His wedding chamber. This is the Father of our Lord, by whose providence all things consist, and all are administered by His command; and He confers His free gifts upon those to whom it is appropriate; but the most righteous Retributor punishes according to their deserts, most deservedly, those who are ungrateful and insensible of His kindness; and therefore does He say, 'He sent His armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city' (Mt.22:7). He says here, 'His armies', because all men are the property of God. 'For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and all that dwell therein' (Ps. 24:1)... (IV.36.6.)

Romans 13 receives further exposition in Book Five, chapters 24 and

25, in Irenaeus' corroboration of his defence of the essential goodness of the human body. Although he acknowledges that there are different types of government which have varying attitudes towards their subjects, this is explained as determined by God in response to the merits of the subjects in question:

For by whose command men are born, by His command Kings also are established, suitable for those who at the particular time are ruled by them. For some of them are given for the correction and benefit of subjects, and the maintenance of justice: others again unto fear, and punishment, and rebuke: and yet others unto mockery, and reproach, and pride, even as men deserve: the just judgement of God, as we said before, passing equally over all. (V.24.3)

In the next chapter, however, Irenaeus does acknowledge a difference between 'righteous' and 'legitimate' kings, but contrasts both with the sole exception to rulers brought forth by the providence of God, that is Antichrist:

For he being endued with all the power of the devil, shall come, not as a righteous king, nor as a legitimate king, in subjection to God, but an impious, unjust and lawless one; as an apostate, iniquitous and murderous; as a robber, summing up (recapitulans) in himself satanic apostasy, and setting aside idols to persuade men that he is God..... (V.25.1)

Irenaeus supports these statements by quoting from the apocalyptic verses in II Thessalonians 2, and from the Book of Daniel. It may seem to us a mistake to attempt to identify a specific, literal, historical fulfilment of apocalyptic prophecy,²⁴ here as in his millenarian speculations; although equally we should beware of wishing to evacuate hoc est into hoc significat. The better way, surely, is to see the mystery of iniquity, symbolised by Antichrist, as under the providence of God, along with everything else, and as influencing

all events in a world which corporately groans in travail.²⁵ But in the process the concept of providence needs to change somewhat from that assumed by Irenaeus to one which perceives in the activity of creation a great deal of ebb and flow which is not foreseen or predetermined in detail. A simplistic understanding of the role of the state does not offer a good analogy to the operation of divine providence, unless a simplistic and rather rationalistic concept of providence is in view.

Of course, it is easy to offer anachronistic criticism, however merited this may be in relation to the truth as currently perceived.²⁶ But this should not involve significant personal criticism of Irenaeus, because there were two features of his environment which encouraged him to develop his views in the way that he did.

In the first place, his basic strategy in countering Gnosticism involved the positing of a close relation between creation and redemption, and consequently of the goodness of creation. The resulting understanding of saving history could too easily threaten to sacrifice historical uniqueness to a theoretical divine plan, thus pushing the conception of history and time back towards cyclical Greek ideas, to which Gnosticism itself was related. A fully authentic Christian confession of the tragedy of sin would have posed too great a threat to the rational balance of Irenaeus' scheme, and would have demanded a dialogue with, as well as a refutation of, Gnostic and Marcionite theology.

In the second place, the tradition to which Irenaeus was heir contained a series of claims about the role of the Roman Empire in God's

providential plan which pointed Irenaeus in the direction which he took. Some writers, for example the Apologists Aristides and Justin, and the author of Ad Diognetum, had asserted that God refrained from consummating history in the last judgement, with all the negative consequences implied therein, because of the existence of the Church.²⁷ Melito of Sardis had made the further claim that by divine providence the destinies of Church and Empire were intertwined.²⁸ Athenagoras does not endorse this specific claim, but almost obsequiously he pleads the loyalty of Christians to an Empire which enjoys a 'profound peace' through the wisdom of its Emperor.²⁹

Typically, Irenaeus attempted a more penetrating integration of these ideas into his theology, to provide an analogy to, as well as an illustration of, the providence of God. Closely related to this is the relationship into which he brings providence and the processes by which God is known to man.

(iii) Providence and Knowledge of God

We refer back to the concluding section of Chapter One for our previous discussion of Irenaeus' account of the revelation of God available to man, both from the harmonies of creation and from a direct apprehension of God. In the present context we want to draw out the connexion between the Irenaeian concept of providence and the processes by which God is known. The following example indicates the closeness of this relation:

How, again, could either the angels, or the Creator of the world, have been ignorant of the Supreme God, seeing they were His property, and His creatures, and were contained by Him? He might indeed have been invisible to them on account of His superiority, but He could by no means have been unknown to them on

account of His providence. For though it is true, as they declare, that they were very far separated from Him through their inferiority, yet, as His dominion extended over all of them, it behoved them to know their Ruler, and to be aware of this in particular, that He who created them is Lord of all. For since this invisible essence is mighty, it confers on all a profound mental intuition and perception of His most powerful, yea, omnipotent greatness. (II.6.1.)³⁰

The idea that God is revealed in His works is very common in the Fathers,³¹ and, as we saw in Chapter One, this forms an aspect of Irenaeus' thought. However, Irenaeus' distinctive way of handling the relation between providence and knowledge of God is well illustrated by this passage. The invisible Father, who fills all things, cannot but be known, if partially and corrigibly, by His active presence to His creation. It is not solely that God's existence and lordship are to be inferred from the harmony of the world and the divine governance, but, in addition, that there is a direct apprehension of God by man. In patristic authors this is not a common idea,³² and represents a development in Irenaeus from the Apologists.³³ An interesting comparison exists here with Theophilus:

Just as the soul in a man is not seen, since it is invisible to men, but is apprehended through the movement of the body, so it is that God cannot be seen by human eyes but is seen and apprehended through His providence and His works..... As a pomegranate, with a rind surrounding it, has inside many cells and cases, separated by membranes, so the whole creation is surrounded by the Spirit of God, and the surrounding Spirit, along with the creation, is enclosed by the hand of God. As the pomegranate seed, dwelling inside, cannot see what is outside the rind since it is itself inside, so man, who with the whole creation is enclosed by the hand of God, cannot see God. (Ad Autol. I.5.)

Irenaeus does not use such spatial analogies to indicate the manner of God's relation to the world, and hence his concept of the

providence of God undergoes a significant modification. The invisible and visible worlds are fully one in the incarnate Son who recapitulates the whole history of mankind, expressing perfectly that which was only imperfectly true in created reality. A close link between the incarnation and creation is thus achieved and exposed, which in itself is basically healthy.³⁴ However, it is arguably the case that Irenaeus offers insufficient safeguards against the opposite of the Gnostic danger, and consequently that he asserts too close, or necessary, a relation between God and the world. As a final illustration of this in the context of the doctrine of providence we will take a brief look at another, related issue.

(iv) Created and Uncreated Light

Those verses from the Gospels which speak of God providentially sending sun and rain on all men are interpreted by Irenaeus to mean that God directly provides the light of the sun. This divine provision of light is linked with the intimate presence of God to creation which we have just been discussing:

To what distance above God do ye lift up your imaginations, O ye rashly elated men? Ye have heard 'that the heavens are meted out in the palm of (His) hand' (Is. 40:12): tell me the measure, and recount the endless multitude of cubits, explain to me the fulness, the breadth, the length, the height, the beginning and the end of the measurement, - things which the heart of man understands not, neither does it comprehend them..... God it is who fills the heavens, and searches out the depths; who is also present with every one of us.....For His hand lays hold of all things, and that it is which illumines the heavens, and lightens also the reins and the hearts, is also present in hidden things, and in our secret thoughts, and does openly nourish and preserve us. (IV.19.2)³⁵

With the anti-Gnostic context prominent, we are back in the sphere of ideas presented in the second half of Book Two of A.H., where the limits of our scientific knowledge were adduced as evidence for similar

limits to our knowledge of God. It is helpful to view Irenaeus' remarks from the perspective of modern physics, which understands the process of nuclear fusion, by which the sun give light, on the same level as its understanding of purely 'earthly' phenomena. Interestingly, this perspective arguably is more akin to that found in the Bible than that of pre-twentieth-century science, with its sharp distinction between organic and inorganic substances, and its materialistic account of the latter. In the Old Testament the sun is regarded as neither divine nor purely inanimate,³⁶ although a certain change might be identified in the New Testament. Nature is now seen to have more independence, for example when adverse winds delay and disrupt Paul's journey,³⁷ and the presence of God to creation takes the explicit form of the cross.

With Irenaeus we are seeing a certain move back towards one aspect of the Old Testament witness, with a strong doctrine of providence putting the sun under the direct control of God, and even envisaging God as the immediate source of the power manifest in its light and heart. He is perhaps influenced by the Semitic traditions of Asia Minor,³⁸ as well as by the anti-Gnostic concerns and the philosophical influence which we have already discerned. Espoused by such an influential writer as Irenaeus, such ideas easily became established in Christian tradition and would not readily be ejected. Thus the long delay in the establishment of a view of creation amenable to experimental science becomes more easily understood.

Athanasius provides an interesting illustration of the reproduction of these thoughts which we find in Irenaeus. Images of light and of the sun are very important to Athanasius,³⁹ and in Contra Gentes

they play a significant role in his discussion of the harmony of the universe. The Irenaean teaching on the direct apprehension of God does not appear, but repeatedly Athanasius asserts that God is known from the harmony of creation, even if men perverted this knowledge in the manner described by Paul in the early chapters of the Epistle to the Romans.⁴⁰ Having completed a lengthy rejection of idolatry, Athanasius develops his argument in an interesting fashion. It can hardly be doubted that there is a harmony in the operation of the Universe, but when analysed this is remarkable, for there are so many features of created activity which seem to be mutually opposed. How can water be carried in clouds, when air is much lighter than water?⁴¹ It is precisely this unexpected orderliness⁴² which points not only to a Creator but to a Creator who actively orders the universe:

He is the good Word of the good Father, and it is He who has established the order of all things, reconciling opposites and from these forming a single harmony. He, the power of God and wisdom of God, turns the heaven, has suspended the earth, and by His own will has set it resting on nothing. Illuminated by Him, the sun gives light to the world, and the moon receives its measure of light. Through Him water is suspended in the clouds, rains water the earth..... (C.G.40)

Even allowing for the context of opposition to polytheism, there is an unsatisfactory feel to these arguments, similar to that which we have identified in Irenaeus. There may well be a useful analogy between created and uncreated light, but the fundamental distinction between Creator and creation must be upheld.⁴³ One side of Irenaeus' theology does affirm a very clear distinction between God and creation, but, as we shall see in connection with his theodicy, this inclines towards the platonic dualism between Being and becoming. Partly because this dualism is present in a radical form in Gnosticism, the other side of Irenaeus' theology, which we are presently examining, has a certain tendency towards monism.

Individual and General Providence

The four subjects discussed above have demonstrated the influence upon Irenaeus' anti-Gnostic theology of the rather static model of providence in the Greek conception of the universe as a harmoniously organised cosmos, as influenced and modified by more primitive semitic ideas.⁴⁴ What is missing is an appreciation of the mysterious if relative independence of the activity of creation from the direct control of God, as this is indicated, above all, in the New Testament reflection upon the cross. There a mysterious tension is maintained in the perception of the cross as both the work of sinful men but also as a fulfilment of the divine plan. The responsibility of men is not denied, but in these same events is disclosed the ultimate wisdom of God, whose power is exhibited in the folly of the cross. The Gospel writers present this tension in their narration of the parables of Jesus, which tell of the strange and unexpected nature of the Kingdom of God. The relation of God to the world is indirect, if definite; allusive, if dramatic.⁴⁵

To offer this criticism of Irenaeus is by no means to assert that his understanding of providence was unaffected by the biblical development of the theme. In particular, we should note the emphasis he places upon the value and freedom of the individual. In their different ways both Stoic and Platonic thought asserted a general, but eschewed an individual, concept of providence.⁴⁶ By contrast, the Judaeo-Christian tradition tended to approach general providence through and in relation to a confession of the particular action of God. This encouraged a full doctrine of creation, which in turn reflected back upon the underlying conception of divine action.

We can see the rationale of the process by briefly reconsidering the development of the doctrine of creation out of nothing. On the one hand, this indicated the particularity of the divine activity in its assertion that creation is fully dependent upon God for its origin and continuation alike. But precisely these ideas undercut the general philosophical idea of providence, for belief in the pre-existence of matter inevitably produced a belief in providence as the imposition upon it of universal form. By contrast, the doctrine of creation out of nothing stated that matter, the basic principle of individuation according to the philosophical conceptuality of the day, was as much under the providence of God as the realm of the soul or intellect. Christian theology was thereby driven to accord a much more central role to the individual than was common in the surrounding culture: a creator who creates each individual would surely care for each individual.⁴⁷ In its early Christian development, this perception was compromised by a simplistic understanding of judgement according to universal laws, as we have seen, but the thrust towards a development of the concept of the individual person was there, and is clearly exhibited in Irenaeus.

This development in Christian theology was aided by the parallel development of a trinitarian concept of God, as a living, acting God. For Irenaeus, as we have seen, in the trinitarian economy of creation and redemption there is a double movement from Father through the Son and in the Spirit, and in reverse as humanity is re-presented to the Father. Individual existence and meaning is established as a person is both constituted by, and caught up in, this dynamic process.⁴⁸ Today, by a curious inversion, the concept of the individual, through being removed from its proper context of creation and thus being

treated as an atomistic unit, is threatened by absorption in a new collectivism. Western democracy, if conceived and practised as if people are beans rattling in a can, may illustrate this as powerfully as the more obvious example of totalitarianism. The true concept of the individual person is subtle and open to various misinterpretations. It is towards Irenaeus' anthropology that we now turn, beginning our discussion with a consideration of the question, closely related to that of providence, of the freedom of the will.

Created Freedom

(i) Introduction

According to Kant, the three most intractable problems of philosophy are God, freedom and immortality.⁴⁹ The question of the existence and nature of created freedom has been the subject of extensive discussion, not least in recent decades.⁵⁰ In presenting and assessing Irenaeus' understanding of freedom in creation we cannot, and should not, avoid an implicit dialogue with the subsequent controversies, from Origen, Pelagius and Augustine, to the present day. For this reason, a few general remarks in clarification are necessary.

Broadly speaking, two concepts of freedom have been recognised: on the one hand, freedom from constraint, and, on the other hand, rational, controlled behaviour which is partly, but not wholly, determined by factors external to the agent concerned. They might be called respectively 'negative' and 'positive' freedom, or 'freedom from' and 'freedom for'. The use of the same word for both forms of 'freedom' has undoubtedly engendered a good deal of confusion in what is, in any case, an intrinsically difficult area.⁵¹ As we shall see, both ideas are prominent in Irenaeus and it may be that Irenaeus is an

important source of subsequent controversy and confusion. A brief glance at the place 'freedom' has in the Bible is important. As we have been sharply reminded by liberation theology, freedom, in the sense of the event rather than the concept of liberation is a basic theme of biblical theology. The story of Exodus is at the theological centre of the Old Testament, even if such motifs as the fall and the exile must not be overlooked.⁵² Among its neighbours, Israel was the only nation in which the existence of slavery was radically questioned.⁵³ Yahweh Himself is the free God, who is not bound to any sanctuary or image, and He calls His people to freedom.

Salvation as liberation is also a basic theme of the New Testament, especially in John and Paul.⁵⁴ As in the Old Testament, the emphasis is on the event, or gift, of liberation, but we also see, especially in Paul, the use of a concept of freedom (ἐλευθερία) which had natural associations both with the Greek ideal of the free citizen as distinct from the slave, and, at least to educated readers, with the inwardly-free Stoic sage who is not a slave of his passions. It is no surprise that the leader of the Gentile mission should make extensive use of this established conceptuality to commend and explain the reality of freedom, which was at the centre of the Gospel message. Clearly these ideas received considerable modification as they were baptised into Christian usage, not least by the strongly eschatological key into which they were put.⁵⁵ There are signs even within the New Testament itself⁵⁶ that the early Church struggled fully to understand Pauline theology, and a similar pattern emerges in the second century.

Justin Martyr illustrates this grappling with the reality and concept of liberation, for his theology exhibits 'the supreme importance of

freedom',⁵⁷ This emphasis upon the freedom of the will provides Justin's chief defence of the power and goodness of God, and the essential goodness of creation, in the face of evil. This involved the understanding of just judgement which we have already described, and Justin's references to the subject are generally accompanied by assertions of a freedom of choice between good and evil granted to man.⁵⁸ Clearly in the theology of Justin we are seeing a continuation of the interaction between Greek and Biblical views of freedom, stimulated by the apologetic context in which he wrote. In the process, a significant change in the concept of freedom occurred, from a primary emphasis in Paul upon 'positive' freedom, to 'negative' freedom in Justin.⁵⁹

In fairness to Justin, he allows a 'positive' view of freedom a place alongside the doctrine of autexousia, as is shown by his assertion that it belongs equally to men and to angels,⁶⁰ and by his development of the idea of the Λογος, or λογος σπερματικος, rationally persuading men freely to perceive and to follow the path of righteousness.

In addition to the rather difficult background in Justin, Irenaeus had to contend with Gnostic views of freedom. The situation here is confused, for Gnosticism contained both the radical denial and radical affirmation of 'freedom': on the one hand, the world is an alien, unredeemed place, ruled by Fate, but, on the other hand, the knowledge of this alienation relieves one of responsibility for the world, and everything is permitted. Gnostics practised both extremes of asceticism and libertinism, although modern research has tended to give more emphasis to the former.⁶¹ Although they have something in common, at least at certain points, these two approaches to freedom assume very different views of the created order. Yet the choice was not simply between the

optimism of the Apologists and the pessimism of the Gnostics, even if the truth approximated more closely to the former. For in a sense, judged from the perspective of Paul, the Gnostics were right: the world is in a sorry state, as the cross has demonstrated. What the Gnostics failed to see was that redemption had come through that same cross. While he was not as blind to Paul and John as Justin, we will see how Irenaeus failed fully to perceive this particular truth of the Gnostic position, when challenged to bring together the truths, or elements of the truth, attested by both Apologists and Gnostics.

Glancing now at the broader background, Irenaeus occupies a very interesting position in the development of the notions of freedom and authority in the early church. Morality ultimately demands that authority should operate by obligation rather than by compulsion, and obligation presupposes a certain degree of 'negative' freedom, the character of which is transformed in the acceptance of obligation. Thus, in the New Testament, there are strong affirmations of both apostolic authority, whereby the mind of Christ is expressed, and of the spiritual liberty of the Christian. More than anyone else, it was St. Paul who tried to think together these two aspects of Christian truth, with his interpretation of freedom in terms of spiritual life and love. His own possession of the freedom conferred by Roman citizenship provided a useful analogy to Christian freedom, precisely because it was a gift and privilege conferred by the authority of Rome. Thus, in a similar way, Christian freedom was for him a gift and privilege conferred by the citizenship of heaven, which only those in Christ could attain. It could hardly have occurred to St. Paul to construe freedom in our modern 'negative' sense, as characterising a sphere of toleration where authority refrains from operating.

St. Paul's remarkable attempt to demonstrate how authority and freedom were properly to be understood as correlative did not lack its own tensions, and was soon threatened by the gradual demise of a key component of his position, the belief that the Spirit was vividly alive in the whole body of Christians. The Church began to include many for whom St. Paul's conception of spiritual liberty meant relatively little, and, in addition, the leaders of the Church embraced a rather different understanding of their apostolic ministry from that of St. Paul. Missionary zeal to establish new Churches in the eschatological power of the Spirit gradually gave way to a guarding of the faith with which the Church had been entrusted, a faith which received further definition when the misinterpretations of heretics demanded. In the process, faith came gradually to be identified less with the joyful embracing of new life in Christ than with correct opinion concerning Him. Gradually, subtly, but inevitably, the test of such orthodoxy was regarded as assent to propositions. As a result, freedom lost its sense of release from false constraints into the 'glad service' of the Creator and Redeemer who had adopted Christians as His children, and became interpreted as the right to hold private opinions in matters left undefined by authority, the presence of the Spirit being more often associated with the established authorities. Thus, freedom and authority, instead of being correlative, were seen as opposed to each other. This development reached its zenith beyond the patristic age, but its roots struck early in the history of the Church, and it is against this overall background that we should view the competing notions of freedom which are espoused by Irenaeus, as he wrestles with the immediate questions posed by the theology of the Gnostics and Apologists.⁶²

(ii) Negative Freedom in Irenaeus

A series of passages in the last two books of A.H. and in the Demonstration refer to man as αὐτεξούσιος, and other passages assume such attribution, especially when a 'free-will' theodicy is being advanced.⁶³ In part he simply follows the tradition which we have observed in Justin, in part he wishes to assert a close relation between God and man, and therefore between divine and human freedom,⁶⁴ and in part he is reacting to the fatalism of his opponents. Perhaps due to the rather confused picture which we have noted in Gnostic thought, the strong emphasis upon the freedom of the will emerges most clearly in his refutation of Marcion. According to him, the Good God's relation to the world was completely unexpected and undeserved: a paradoxical act of pure grace quite apart from any call to repentance, or from any appreciation of atonement and judgement. It is in response to this radical and distorted neo-Paulinism that Irenaeus presents the three remarkable chapters of A.H. IV.37-39, which deal extensively with the theme of the freedom of the will. These chapters are closely, if repetitively, argued and it is not necessary to quote from them to demonstrate the points being made. Marcion's God is coercive, and unjustly ignores the consequences of sin, which are real and result from a misuse of free will. The gratuitous and instantaneous salvation effected by Marcion's Good God does not respect the nature of persons, who, as creatures of flesh and blood, need to mature slowly to be enabled to overcome the inevitable drawbacks associated with their creaturely nature. Here we see even within these chapters evidence of ideas which modify the pure concept of autexousia, for the freedom of man is limited both by his inevitably imperfect created nature⁶⁵ and his need to await 'a

faculty of the Uncreated, through the gratuitous bestowal of eternal existence upon them by God' (IV.38.3). The apparent 'Pelagianism' of his teaching upon judgement and autexousia will be discussed in the next section, and the interesting remarks about the imperfection of created things in our later consideration of his theodicy. For the present, we will illustrate how Irenaeus has departed from certain prominent aspects of biblical teaching by examining his view of the ability of man to know the difference between good and evil.

For after His great kindness He graciously conferred good (upon us), and made men like Himself, in their own power that man should be made after the image and likeness of God, having received the knowledge of good and evil. (IV.38.4)

Man has received the knowledge of good and evil.... that the eye of the mind, receiving experience of both, may with judgement make choice of the better things... (IV.39.1)

Clearly Irenaeus does not anticipate the tradition springing from Augustine, and embraced by the Reformers, that the prohibition of the fruit of the tree of good and evil was a neutral test, failure in which by Adam occasioned a radical fall. Rather, he views the knowledge of good and evil as approximating to divine knowledge, and therefore to divine power and freedom. With this interpretation Irenaeus anticipates the predominant view of modern exegetes that to know the differentiation of good and evil is to become like God.⁶⁷ Irenaeus presents this as unambiguously a good thing, and it is here that there is a sharp contrast with Genesis 1-3, where man is prohibited from grasping this knowledge. According to these chapters, man is forbidden from seeking the autexousia which would enable him to choose and decide for himself in the matter of knowledge of, and therefore power over, good and evil. Man can eat of every tree, including the tree of life, provided that he abstains from claiming that equality

with God symbolised by the tree of good and evil. Once he has eaten from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he is prevented from eating from the tree of life, for having presumed to be the source of life, a mortal conflict would ensue if he came into direct contact with the true Source of Life. This is surely how these chapters of Genesis should be interpreted, and hence the possession of the knowledge of good and evil is not unambiguously beneficial to man. It is as if, when Genesis 1 and 3 are put together, we obtain a confrontation between two differing conceptions of the divine image, with Irenaeus failing properly to appreciate the emphasis of Genesis 3, and therefore on occasion lapsing into suspiciously 'Pelagian' statements.⁶⁸ With this aspect of Irenaeus' theology we are seeing again that curious, if understandable, process whereby an insufficient distinction between God and man provokes a counterbalancing dualism. For man to have freedom analogous to that of God inevitably constitutes man as existent over against God, if not as His enemy, then on neutral territory.⁶⁹ However, if this tendency is regrettable, we must set it alongside another feature of Irenaeus' thought which points in a different direction.

(iii) Positive Freedom in Irenaeus

Alongside the disputed Gnostic teaching on the 'neutral' freedom of the ψυχικολ, we find the assertion that the πνευματικολ have been freed from bondage to this world, and especially to the body, by the coming of the Aeon Christ.⁷⁰ Irenaeus frequently claims that under the new covenant Christ brought freedom to the world, although he is careful to avoid any suggestion that this freedom liberated man from the demands and limitations of created existence.⁷¹ The idea that the preaching of the Gospel has, by an act of God, brought liberty, is

clearly of considerable importance for Irenaeus. We should note some characteristic emphases here, before looking more broadly at the coherence of the different concepts of freedom employed by him with his doctrine of providence.

In the first place, given the anti-Gnostic and anti-Marcionite context, Irenaeus often draws a surprisingly sharp contrast between freedom under the new covenant and bondage under the old covenant. This theme is particularly prominent in the early chapters of Book Four, where he tries to explain the true meaning of various verses and incidents from the Bible which appeared on the surface to support Gnostic and Marcionite positions. In order to link and to distinguish the two covenants, Irenaeus develops his idea of the progressive unfolding of the revelation of God as one covenant is superseded by the next:

Further, also, concerning Jerusalem and the Lord, they venture to assert that, if it had been 'the city of the great King' (Matt. 5:35), it would not have been deserted. This is just as if any one should say, that if straw were a creation of God, it would never part company with the wheat; and that the vine twigs if made by God, would never be lopped away and deprived of the clustersSo also Jerusalem, which had in herself borne the yoke of bondage...when the fruit of liberty had come.... was deservedly forsaken.... For all things which have a beginning in time must of course have an end in time also. (IV.4.1)⁷²

We see here another example of that rationalisation of the mystery of God's dealings with Israel upon which we have already commented. In a similar way, in order to avoid falling into that very denigration of the old covenant which he was anxious to avoid, Irenaeus can speak of the new covenant of liberty deepening the moral or natural aspects of the old law.⁷³ Arguably both the ordinances of the old

covenant, and the eschatological teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, require a more Christological interpretation than Irenaeus allows. The theme of ἀνακεφαλαιώσις, and the linking of creation and redemption in the Adam-Christ typology, point to this Christological interpretation, but the integration is not fully achieved by Irenaeus himself.⁷⁴

We should note, however, that in Book Five of A.H. the theme of the present liberty of the new covenant largely disappears from view. The predominant emphasis of the early chapters, upon the salvation of the flesh by the omnipotent action of God, leads to a stress upon the presence of God as Holy Spirit to man. That His presence produces liberty⁷⁵ is not denied, but the emphasis is more upon the dependence of man upon God than upon his liberation as man. Indeed, the eschatological perspective which is opened up in Book Five leads to the assertion that the liberation of creation fundamentally will only be revealed in the future consummation.⁷⁶

Clearly there is a considerable measure of fluidity and ambiguity in Irenaeus' account of created freedom, even within the confines of his understanding of the ἐλευθερία brought by Christ. Often the different themes are simply developed in isolation, but there are indications of attempts to relate them in a coherent fashion. Three strands may be discerned here. First, there are occasions while he speaks, in effect, of a co-operation between God and man which deepens a relationship initiated and made possible by God Himself.

For He did not set us free for this purpose, that we should depart from Him (no one, indeed, while placed out of reach of the Lord's benefits, has

power to procure for himself the means of salvation), but that the more we receive His grace, the more we should love Him. Now the more we have loved Him, the more glory shall we receive from Him, when we are continually in the presence of the Father.(IV.13.3)⁷⁷

We examined related passages from the subsequent chapters of A.H. in the last chapter, where we identified certain ambiguities in Irenaeus' discussion of the divine motivation for, and need of, creation. The positive contribution which should be noted here is Irenaeus' orientation towards a dynamic, historical view of personal development: man is characterised by freedom and self-responsibility, growing to maturity through the exercise of that freedom which, by divine gift, is his privilege. This growth issues in the development of freedom itself from possibility to actuality, from a negative self-orientation to a positive relation to God, both stimulated and evidenced by a growing mastery over sin. Secondly, potentially more fruitful light is shed upon the relation between autexousia and ἐλευθερία from the link established between creation and redemption in the Adam-Christ typology. As has often been noted, the Irenaeian concept of the ἀνακεφαλαιωσις of all things in Christ contains both the notion of the restoration of what was lost in Adam and the elevation of Adam to a higher state of being. Thus through the use of this concept, the created autexousia of man is seen as restored and transformed into ἐλευθερία in Christ, the action of Christ being at the centre of time and thereby effective both for all time, as the basis of created autexousia, and for the special time of the Church, the new covenant of liberty. Irenaeus does not attempt such a precise analysis, but there are passages which point in this direction, for example:

But this is Adam.....the first formed man.....and

as we are from him, therefore have we inherited his title. But inasmuch as man is saved, it is fitting that he who was created the original man should be saved..... For God is neither devoid of power nor of justice, who has afforded help to man, and restored him to his own liberty. (III.23.2.)

The important question here concerns the relation between Adam as an individual and as the representative man. In Irenaeus there is always a tendency for these two aspects of 'Adam' to merge, thus facilitating the conceptualization of the relation between creation and redemption which sketched above.⁷⁸ This almost mystical view of the redemptive recapitulation of creation qualifies the strand of Irenaeus' theology involving ideas of merit and judgement. Just as the contemporary Eastern Fathers did not easily understand the questions involved in the Pelagian controversy, but preferred to think in categories of a progressive and never ending growth towards God, so Irenaeus' ostensibly 'pre-Pelagian' espousal of the concept of autexousia, with the associated idea of judgement by merit, has to be viewed within the overarching scheme of a theology of the whole history of mankind which fulfils the divine plan. Therefore we should beware of reading back into Irenaeus the unfortunate extremes of later Western theology, even if the seeds are nevertheless visible.

The third way in which Irenaeus begins to link the human possession of freedom with the divine liberation of man develops the insights provided by the Adam-Christ typology, and involves the idea of God as patient and long-suffering. This aspect was explored in more detail in Chapter One in connection with his doctrine of God, but in the present context we should draw out the implications for the relation between divine and human action. God has created man as free, that is, in His likeness,⁷⁹ and therefore as both freely independent

of God and yet naturally orientated towards Him. In other words, although God is not coercive in His dealings with man, there is a proper sense in which He is persuasive.⁸⁰ The form of this persuasion is the skilfully executed plan of creation and salvation, encompassing both the action of God in sending the prophets and Jesus Christ, and the action of God in continually testing and disciplining man in the exercise of his freedom.

And indeed those things are not esteemed so highly which come spontaneously, as those which are reached by much anxious care. Since, then, this power has been conferred upon us, both the Lord has taught and the apostle has enjoined us the more to love God, that we may reach this (prize) for ourselves by striving after it.....The Lord has therefore endured all these things on our behalf, in order that we, having been instructed by means of them all, might be in all respects on our guard for the time to come, and that having been rationally taught to love God, we may continue in His perfect love: for God has displayed long-suffering in the case of man's apostasy..... that the Church may be fashioned after the image of His Son, and that man may finally be brought to maturity at some future time, becoming ripe through such privileges to see and comprehend God.
(IV.37.7)

These three approaches to relating the concepts of divine and human activity in the liberation of man show both the breadth and subtlety of Irenaeus' theology, and its relatively undeveloped character. Each is characterised, however, by a certain tendency towards rationalism: the co-operation of God with man, the all-encompassing recapitulation of man in Jesus Christ, and the 'rational education' of man to love God. Irenaeus' understanding of God ultimately fails to do justice to the mystery of the holy love of God who freely acts and chooses; for Irenaeus the anti-Gnostic emphasis upon God as 'one and the same'⁸¹ tended to foster a rather Stoic view of God in His universal activity, despite all the forces leading him to a fuller

appreciation of the living God attested in the Bible. Once again, we see how monistic and dualistic tendencies can reinforce each other.

Concluding Reflections

I have argued that the various attempts of Irenaeus to understand the providential ordering of the created universe, although containing many splendid insights, are compromised by the adoption of a doctrine of God which is ultimately too static, and a relation between God and the world which is too necessitarian. The teaching on human autexousia, while formally in contrast, in practice supports this scheme.

Irenaeus' theology of creation needs to recognise that there is a sense in which God put Himself, as it were, 'at risk' in creatively evoking the natural world, and especially self-conscious man within it. This is not to advocate the existentialist view that man has such radical freedom that it would not be possible for him to act freely and at the same time fulfil the providential plan of God, except by coincidence. Modern analysis of the concept of freedom has shown how free actions are not necessarily uncaused in all or most details,⁸² but, if men have free will, then it follows both that complete explanations of their actions cannot be given, and that it is possible that they could frustrate the achievement of the divine plan. Arguably, Irenaeus does justice neither to the mystery of free action nor to the vagaries of its income. We can see here the influence upon him of the general belief of the ancient world that the entire system of natural causes could be understood by analogy from human action: for example, a man using a stick. On the one hand, such a conception breeds an optimism which is opposed by the stark reality of life; but

on the other hand, in order to bring the theory into balance with observable facts, a belief is stimulated that something, somewhere, has gone badly, even hopelessly or inevitably, wrong with parts of the universe. A conception of the world which is too optimistic (in the technical sense) readily breeds a counter-balancing pessimism.

Where does this leave the doctrine of providence? Is God ultimately subject to frustration by human activity? What are the proper limits of a concept of divine vulnerability? At this point a full theology of the cross is essential, for just as suffering and love are corollaries in human experience, so the infinite love of God for His creation involved the 'infinite' vulnerability demonstrated on the cross. The vulnerability of the cross, implied in the very act of creation, is reflected throughout history, as the purposive love of God encounters resistance and frustration. To continue to speak of providence in the traditional sense then requires us to attribute to God an attitude of 'flexible response' to the somewhat unpredictable situations thrown up by the course of history. The nature of such 'flexible response' is not easy to specify in human language, and we must always beware of importing distortion from analogous ideas in human society - one thinks, immediately, of the place a notion of 'flexible response' has in NATO nuclear planning! But we can, I think, affirm that, in a manner of speaking, God has chosen to 'come to terms' with the world, as a result of this free choice to create. This coming to terms with creation is focused in the event of Jesus Christ, who is to be understood by reference to the central co-ordinates of incarnation and atonement, the uniqueness of which cannot fully be captured in words or theories. To suggest that the God disclosed in the incarnation is vulnerable to the choices exercised by His creation does not necessarily imply that God is weak; the converse could be

asserted: vulnerability is freely accepted by God in the act and consequence of creation precisely because, as the God who is capable of the novelty of creation, He is infinitely equipped with a resourcefulness which will allow him to secure a wholesome outcome to the adventure of creation and redemption. That is to say, rather than speak with Irenaeus simply of the plan of God for His world, we should also recognise the infinite number of sub-plans which God will employ to secure a satisfactory fulfilment of His overall plan. The God who, in Irenaeus terms, is rich, is thereby resourceful and adaptable. On occasions, Irenaeus can begin to forge a link between the riches and resourcefulness of God, but the axiom of unchangeability ensures that the understanding thus achieved retains a static quality.⁸³

However, it should be recognised that any talk of the divine plan for creation would have been offensive to the philosophical ears of the second century, because of the natural association of planning with contingency and arbitrariness. Even if influenced by the prevailing culture, Irenaeus' theology is profoundly Christian.

The view of the operation of providence which we are suggesting is true to the Bible, where the inexorable sense that the free God will achieve His purposes is the result, in part, of the lack of ready co-operation from His creation in general, and mankind in particular. When the biblical witness was quarried for theological purposes, it was a natural mistake to read the overall sense of divine control into all individual events, although the flexibility of the concept of cause does allow some sense of divine causality to be attributed to all events in creation.⁸⁴ The encounter with Greek philosophy, with its aversion to the concept of the 'possible', consolidated this transfer from a general to a particular understanding of providence.⁸⁵

From this perspective, a relatively straightforward account of petitionary prayer is available, because the problem of determinism does not generally arise at the level of particular events.⁸⁶

A relatively straightforward place for petitionary prayer is assumed in the Bible, of course, and it is perhaps suggestive to observe the almost complete absence of any reference to prayer in Irenaeus' extant writings.

I am arguing that we should recognise divine and human activity as occurring on two levels, which are separate but coordinated, the meaning of events at the 'lower' level of creation being determined by God at the 'higher' level, the action of God at this 'higher' level being flexible and adaptive in the face of aberrations at the 'lower' level.⁸⁷ Such a conception is an extension of the traditional concepts of providence: secondary causes are affirmed but the primary cause, although omnipotent, in the sense of being infinitely adaptive, has to contend with secondary causality which thwarts the intention of the primary cause. Similarly, I am suggesting a revision, or further explication, of the traditional notion of the divine succursus, that following of the activity of creation by which God directs it towards its appointed end. Irenaeus points us in this direction, with his doctrine of the divine richness and the good, varied nature of creation, but the influences which we have described limited the development of his theology in this area.⁸⁸

One further aspect of the doctrine of providence needs to be identified. The danger in the above account is that the operation of providence is limited to the macroscopic purposes of the world, and barely operative at the level of the individual. We want to believe not only that God

will be all in all, but that His purposes for us as individuals will be fulfilled. These questions are surrounded by a proper eschatological mystery, in the light of which we cannot afford to affirm long-term providence at the expense of individual providence, and our critique of Irenaeus does not imply that we should do so. Similarly, a belief that God generally relates to the world in the manner sketched here does not preclude the special intervention of God, provided that this does not occur with such frequency as seriously to compromise the contingent intelligibility of the created universe. This is not simply to suggest that we allow divine intervention in creation providing that it is statistically undetectable, for the issue is more subtle and theological than such a conception would indicate. But, within our overall conception of the relation between divine and human activity, there is rational scope for the unique action of God, in the incarnation and elsewhere. Again Irenaeus is not unaware of this, with his strong sense of ἀνακεφαλαωσις, but the emphasis is firmly upon general regularities in the relation of God to creation.⁸⁹

1. Early Christian Creeds, 3rd Edn., pp.131-139.
2. Eg.II.1.1,5; 2.1,4; 3.1; 5.4; 6.1f etc.
3. II.22.2; II.25.4; IV.13.3; 36.6; V.2.2; 27.1.
4. We may note in passing that, although not quoted in full on so many occasions, I Cor.15:50, 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God', does receive sustained consideration in Book Five. We shall consider the significance of Irenaeus' exegesis of this verse in the next chapter.
5. H. Jonas, The Gnostic Religion, p.142f.
6. The significance of the Marcionite challenge at this point is recognised by Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem, I.17.
7. K. Rudolph, Gnosis,.62, 79, 139f.
8. We should note Irenaeus' passing claim here, that even the assigning of names to people accords with the divine will. Even granted such biblical examples as Peter and Paul, such an assertion is rather surprising, at least in such unguarded form. Note also the conjunction of 'meaningless' and 'accidental': as we argued in the last chapter, that which is 'accidental' may not be meaningless at all.
9. See, for example, M.J. Langford, 'Providence' in A New Dictionary of Christian Theology, (London : SCM, 1983), and the same author's more extensive discussion in Providence (London: SCM, 1981).
10. II.14.3; 32.2.
11. Op.cit. p.35f. As we noted earlier, the question of the direct dependence of Irenaeus upon an Epicurean source should be left open.
12. Cf. the discussion of Stoic cosmology by F.C. Copleston, The History of Philosophy, Vol.I, (London : 1946) pp. 387ff.
13. II.14.4.
14. III.25.4.
15. For a wider account of the fundamental place occupied by systems of reward and punishment in most religions, see D.J. Davies, 'Natural and Christian Priesthood in Folk Religiosity', Anvil, 2 (1985), pp. 43-54.
16. Scriptural support which has understandably been played down in the Protestant tradition, but which is being forced back into the forefront of theological discussion by such influences as liberation theology, and the renewed interest in a theology of Paul which is not perceived from a Lutheran standpoint.
17. E.F. Osborn has discussed at length the influence of philosophy upon a slightly later writer in his Clement of Alexandria, (C.U.P., 1957). Having identified a similar presentation of the idea of judgement, he draws attention to the influence of Aristotelian ethics, which applied judgement only to voluntary actions (op.cit., p.101).

18. Wingren, op.cit., has related Irenaeus' understanding of judgement to the form of his millenarianism : 'Since those who are in Christ rise in the first resurrection, and judgement according to works takes place after the second resurrection, judgement as a threat passes to a certain extent from the Church to the world - the Church awaits the last day in unclouded hope and without fear' (p.198, n.49). Such sentiments may capture one aspect of the teaching of the New Testament, but they need balancing by other aspects, such as that represented by I Peter 4:17, 'For the time has come for judgement to begin with the household of God....'

The critique we would offer of Irenaeus' understanding of judgement has been well expressed by K. Barth: 'We are thus parting company with an imposing ecclesiastical consensus when we state that....the so-called historico-critical biblical study of the modern age....has rendered a not yet fully appreciated service to theological knowledge with its discovery of the eschatological character of the New Testament in general and the message of the Kingdom of God in particular... Whether in the early Church, the Reformers, more modern or even the most recent authors, exposition....has constantly suppressed the point that the Kingdom of God is a unique entity or factor not only in relation to the world but also in relation to the Christian World' (The Christian Life, Edinburgh : T. & T. Clark, 1981, p.244).

19. I.10.3.

20. Cf. IV.38.4, 'For these (dumb animals) bring no charge against God for not having made them men; but each one, just as he has been created, gives thanks that he has been created.'

21. For the development of the motif of the 'cosmic cross' from associated speculations upon the mysterium crucis, see J. Daniélou, Theology of Jewish Christianity, ch.9. In Justin Martyr (I Apol.60) an attempt is made to link the cosmic cross speculation with remarks by Plato about the soul of the universe, and the junction between the sphere of the planets and that of the fixed stars. This type of speculation developed in Gnostic circles (see Daniélou, op.cit. pp.284 ff), as Irenaeus himself indicates at various points in Book One of A.H., but the emphasis here is not upon the universality of the cross, but rather upon its symbolic importance for the understanding of the spiritual world.

22. Chs. 17 and 18.

23. The same illustration is given by Theophilus (Ad Autol. I.5), along with the analogy of a ship steered by an unseen pilot. However, there are significant differences between Irenaeus and Theophilus at this point to which we will presently return.

24. The most alarming contemporary manifestations of this emanate from North America, where conservative Christians are urged to accept the inevitability of the arms race on the basis of such interpretations of apocalyptic. It is a short step to see the inevitability also of a nuclear Armageddon, with the promise of miraculous divine salvation to Christians who will be plucked from the gathering inferno.

25. For a penetrating and balanced exposition of the various nuances of the New Testament teaching upon the role of the state in the divine purposes, and the appropriate response of Christians, see C.E.B. Cranfield, The Service of God (London : Epworth Press, 1965), ch.5. My analysis assumes the basic veracity of Cranfield's essay.
26. I have written elsewhere upon my understanding of the doctrine of providence, in Belief in Science and in Christian Life (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1980) ed. T.F. Torrance, ch.5 'Providence and Prayer'. Among modern authors I would acknowledge particular and complementary debts to the writings of K. Barth and J.R. Lucas upon providence. For the former, see Church Dogmatics, III.3, and for the latter, Freedom and Grace, (London : S.P.C.K., 1976) and The Freedom of the Will, (O.U.P.: 1970).
27. Aristides, Apol. 16; Justin, I Apol.28, II Apol.7; Ad Diog.6.
28. Fragment 1.
29. Legatio, 1.2; cf. 2.1-3, 6; 16.2; 37.
30. Cf. the similar linking of providence and an innate awareness of God in III.25.1.
31. G.L. Prestige surveys many examples in God in Patristic Thought, ch.3.
32. 'The Fathers are emphatic that the revelation of the divine nature is not made directly to the mind of man, but is to be inferred from God's works, and apprehended thus by the exercise of rational faculties' (Prestige, op.cit. p.56). Prestige misses the side of Irenaeus' teaching under consideration, and fails at least to qualify his statement by the maxim, 'by God alone may God be known', which is fundamental to Irenaeus and to other patristic writers.
33. The contrast, although real, must not be overstated. Justin (Dial.4) accepts, at least in theory, the advice of the 'old man' who led him to Christianity : 'Will the mind of man see God at any time, if it is uninstructed by the Holy Spirit'. Irenaeus, of course, has a much more extensive pneumatology than Justin, and arguably he picks up this strand of thought, which was not developed by the Apologists themselves.
34. We may compare this relation between the Apologists and Irenaeus with that delineated by T.F. Torrance between Origen and Athanasius (Space, Time and Incarnation, ch.1).
35. Cf. the similar ideas expressed above in the extract from Dem.34.
36. Some writers have maintained that in Genesis 1 vv.14-18 the sun is presented as purely inanimate, thus laying a foundation for similar modern views. But the idea that the sun should 'rule' the day seems to imply something more, as do those passages which ascribe to the sun an ability to stand still (Joshua 10 v.12) or bow down (Gen. 37:9) etc.. It is as if the heavenly bodies have an appropriate 'personality', as do various material objects on earth. For examples of the latter see H.W. Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament, (O.U.P. : 1946) p.12 ff..

37. Clearly, verses like Matthew 5:45 need to be interpreted in this broader light : the sending of sun and rain upon the just and unjust is a summary statement of a complex process, as the juxtaposition of the just and the unjust indicates.

38. In addition to the Old Testament background, one thinks of the Johannine corpus, with its close association between God and light, although this is not extended to an association between God and the sun, but rather remains at the spiritual level. We will return to the connexion between Irenaeus and Johannine thought here when we consider questions of anthropology, for in the Johannine literature life and light are also closely related.

39. Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione, ed. R.W. Thomson, (O.U.P. 1971), p.5.n.4. For an extended discussion, see J. Pelikan, The Light of the World, (New York, 1962).

40. E.g. C.G. 4, 7, 27, 34f, 38ff, 44f, 47.

41. This is but one aspect among many listed by Athanasius in chs. 35-40.

42. It might be argued that Athanasius' concept of 'unexpected orderliness' is the patristic equivalent of that 'contingent intelligibility' which T.F. Torrance (see, in particular, Divine and Contingent Order, O.U.P., 1981) has identified as a key feature of the Christian doctrine of creation. Certainly we must be careful of simply judging Athanasius from a contemporary standpoint, but there is a significant difference between the intrinsic intelligibility identified by Torrance, and the more extrinsic orderliness described by Athanasius (and Irenaeus).

43. Renewed attention has recently been given to 'The Theology of Light' by T.F. Torrance, Christian Theology and Scientific Culture (Belfast: Christian Journals, 1980) ch.3.. Irenaeus and Athanasius would appear to be at least partial exceptions to his claim that, 'In the early centuries of the Christian era there emerged a clear-cut distinction between uncreated and created light....' (p.85). Torrance outlines various fascinating parallels and contrasts between the theological understanding of divine light and created light, as understood since Einstein. A significant correction, however, is needed to his statement that, 'If we commonly speak of light as "visible", it is not because it really is, but because the human eye is adapted to see, not the radiation itself, but its effect in lighting up whatever reflects it. I recall in this connection a visit I paid several years ago to a meteorological station where photographs of the cloud cover over the earth were being received regularly from a man-made satellite. The concentrated stream of light signals was quite invisible, but when I cut the stream with a sheet of paper immediately there appeared on it a spot of light : the invisible became indirectly visible' (p.91f). Had Professor Torrance placed his eye in the beam of light he would certainly have seen it, so much so that it might have damaged his retina. Created light of the range of wavelengths of the 'visible' spectrum is certainly visible (!), if rather uninteresting when viewed directly. There is a greater distinction between created and uncreated light than he, Irenaeus, and Athanasius generally allow.

44. Which may, of course, have had significant influence upon Greek philosophy, especially in its Stoic form.

45. The struggle between emerging natural science and the conception of the universe adopted, at least in part, by Irenaeus may be illustrated by a passing reference to two deeply held erroneous opinions, which were eventually discarded : the assumptions that the orbits of planets must be spherical, and that species could not have become extinct.

46. Justin perhaps intended at least a partial excuse of Platonism when, in response to Trypho's comment^{that} the philosophers repeatedly speak of God, he remarked : 'But the most have not taken thought of this, whether there be one or more gods, and whether they have a regard for each one of us or no, as if this knowledge contributed nothing to our happiness; nay, they moreover attempt to persuade us that God takes care of the universe with its genera and species, but not of me and you....But it is not difficult to understand the upshot of this; for fearlessness and licence in speaking result to such as maintain these opinions, doing and saying whatever they choose, neither dreading punishment nor hoping for any benefit from God' (Dial.1).

However, in Platonism there is also a predominant stress upon a general notion of providence, as Chadwick has observed in relation to Celsus : 'The nerve-centre of the Platonist onslaught in Celsus lies in his denial of freedom in God and his insistence that the immutability of the cosmos and the immutability of God are correlative. A universal providence exercises a general benevolence that excludes all particularity, and the concept of a unique Incarnation is unthinkable' (Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition, p.49).

47. For recent discussion of the (somewhat over-maligned) place assigned to the individual in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, see S.W. Sykes, The Identity of Christianity, (London : S.P.C.K., 1984), esp. ch. 2.

48. The danger of Irenaeus seeing the universe as a falsely unified harmonious cosmos therefore corresponds to the danger of an undue, modalistic stress in his doctrine of the Trinity.

49. For the references in Kant, see J.R. Lucas, The Freedom of the Will, p.1.

50. The publication of Ryle's The Concept of Mind, (London: 1949) provided a major stimulus to those alike who have defended and attacked traditional views of freedom. The unresolved state of the debate was well attested recently by the 1984 Reith Lecturer J. Searle, Minds, Brains and Science, (London: B.B.C., 1984), ch.6.

51. For an interesting development of the charge that Karl Barth confused different forms or aspects of freedom, see G.S. Hendry, 'The Freedom of God in the Theology of Karl Barth', S.J.T., 31 (1978), pp.229-244. Hendry is concerned with the freedom of God rather than of creation, but the analysis of the concept of freedom which he develops is germane for our theme.

52. A critical, but sympathetic assessment of the use and interpretation of the Exodus motif in liberation theology is provided by J.A. Kirk, Liberation Theology, (London: M.M. & S. 1979). This is assessed in relation to the wider concepts of freedom by J. Lochmann, Reconciliation and Liberation, (Belfast: Christian Journals, 1980).
53. Practice did not always match the theory, but even if compromised, the institution of the Jubilee Year pointed towards an eschatological promise of liberation and justice.
54. Freedom from bondage and oppression is also the theme of the key Lukan pericope, Luke 4:18-21. The central passage in John is 8:31-38 : The 'Son' and the 'truth' bring freedom.
55. E.g. Romans 7 and 8. A similar stress on eschatology characterises the promises of liberation found in the later prophets of the Old Testament.
56. 2Peter 3:16.
57. Daniélou, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, p.34.
58. From the First Apology, for example, see chs.10, 28, 43. Justin links this side of his thought with his great stress upon the fulfilment of prophecy, by recourse to a doctrine of divine foreknowledge: for the juxtaposition of freedom, prophecy and foreknowledge, see 1 Apol. 44.
59. Paul could never have written; 'For as in the beginning He created us when we were not; so do we consider that, in like manner, those who choose what is pleasing to Him are, on account of their choice, deemed worthy of incorruption and of fellowship with Him' (1 Apol.10). The theme of the freedom of the will in Justin has received considerable attention, for example from E.F. Osborn, Justin Martyr, (C.U.P., 1973), ch.11. An interesting point in his introduction of the description of the free man as αὐτεξουσος, that is, as having self-determining authority over himself. This introduction without explanation indicates that the word was in use before Justin, but he brings it into prominence in Christian literature. W. Telfer, Autexousia, (J.T.S., N.S., 8 (1957), pp.123-129), has traced the rise of this concept, noting its ambiguity: 'like "independent", αὐτεξουσος was susceptible to tones of a good, neutral, or disparaging kind' (p.123). Although useful, however, Telfer's study misses the theological tension we have identified; for example, we may cite his claim that, 'The notion of autexousia as a prerogative of all men is so abundantly present in scripture, and particularly in the New Testament, that it is an essential of Christian thought'(p.124).
60. This is interesting, and has wider consequences for his theodicy and anthropology, to which we will return. Justin's espousal of the concept of autexousia would seem to have relations with Jewish, or Jewish-Christian angelology, and with the idea that evil originated from the fall of angels. After Justin, Clement of Alexandria discusses autexousia as something shared by angels and men, and he even attributes autexousia to the devil (Telfer, op.cit. p.125). Origen took such speculations much further.

61. We can only touch upon this complex subject. A lively controversy surrounds the freedom of the intermediate class of men, the ψυχικοι. In the same paragraph Irenaeus appears to assert both their freedom and their bondage in fate (I.7.5). Returning to the question later (II.29.1), Irenaeus claims that this confusion is present in Valentinianism itself. E. Pagels, 'Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatology: Irenaeus' Treatise vs. The Excerpts from Theodotus', H.T.R., 67 (1974), pp.35-53, has challenged Irenaeus' account as simplified and distorted. But even if the ψυχικοι of Valentinian theology had the freedom of the will which Pagels claims, the inconsistency in the Gnostic treatment of the ψυχικοι and the υλικοι is enhanced rather than diminished, as is that between the ψυχικοι and the strictly elected πνευματικοι.

62. For a perceptive discussion of authority and freedom, to which I am indebted, see the Cambridge University Sermon of 1937, 'The truth shall make you free' (John 8:32), by O.C. Quick, published in The Cambridge Review, 22.1.37., pp.195-197.

63. IV.4.3; 15.2; 37.3,4,5(x2); 38.4; 39.3; V.29.1; Dem.11. The Greek is preserved in IV.37.3 and IV.39.3, and the use of αυτεξουσιος can be recognised by the distinctive Latin circumlocutions employed by the translators. R.D. Williams (The Wound of Knowledge, p.25) is therefore less than accurate when he states that, 'Irenaeus....does not deny the unfreedom of the empirical human condition'. Williams largely picks up the aspect of Irenaeus' teaching which we will consider in the next section.

64. As discussed in chapter 3, where we noted the qualification of dissimilarity expressed in other passages. Nevertheless, the closer relation between God and man in Irenaeus as compared with Justin served to underline both the freedom of man and the dependence of man on God.

65. The strong statement of human autexousia in Dem.11 is likewise closely followed in Dem.12 by the qualification that Adam was a child and, 'wherefore also he was easily misled by the deceiver'.

66. Similar statements are found in Justin, e.g. II Apol.7.

67. See, for example, G.M. Landes, 'Creation and Liberation', in Creation in the Old Testament. This interpretation is based upon the predominant meaning of 'the knowledge of good and evil' elsewhere in the Old Testament.

68. A failure to acknowledge this side of Irenaeus' discussion of freedom mars the interesting work of G. Wingren, Man and Incarnation: 'Irenaeus frequently says that the man who is not in Christ has no freedom - he is a captive....For this man there is no freedom, but the opposite of freedom, and by his choice his very humanity is dislocated. Irenaeus does not begin by thinking of pure humanity as being complete and finished and then go on to argue whether or not this humanity will be saved. Salvation would then be something supernatural, an addition to man's humanity. But salvation is life, human life, lived under the hands of God. To be saved is to be man. To resist God is to destroy one's very manhood' (p.199f). Wingren systematizes a side of Irenaeus'

teaching on freedom which we will shortly consider, and in the process misses the aspect we are considering at present. He thereby exhibits the same danger as that found here and elsewhere in Irenaeus' theology, that is, of conceiving the relation between God and man as too close and 'necessary'.

69. The problem here is also illustrated sharply by the Book of Job, where the hero's 'friends' affirm a theology similar to that which we have been observing here in Irenaeus. In fact, at no point in his extant writings does Irenaeus make any reference to the Book of Job.

70. E.g. I.22.2; 24.4; 25.4; 30.3.

71. E.g. III.5.3; 10.5; 12.14; 13.3.; 15.3; 19.1; 20.1, 2,3,4; 22.4; 23.1,2,7; IV.4.1; 7.4; 9.1,2; 11.1,3,4; 13.1,2,3,4; 16.5; 18.2; 20.4, 11; 22.2; 33.1,14; 34.1,2,3; 37.1,4; 39.3; V.32.1; 33.3; 36.3. The Latin in these passages is either the noun libertas, or the verb libero, the underlying Greek generally being ἐλευθερία or ἐλευθερω, this varying if the idea of salvation or deliverance is particularly prominent. A modern writer who has expressed views similar to those found in this extensive range of passages from Irenaeus is Erich Frank, 'Letter and Spirit', in Creation: The Impact of an Idea, ed. D. O'Connor and F. Oakley, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p.153f.: 'The Christian...through repentance becomes aware of his genuine ego; he envisions a new and higher self, which he must actualize in his life...Modern man does not accept such a concept of repentance. He is prone to say: Let us not repent, let us rather amend our wrongs...(but) true repentance does not concern our various actions only, but is aimed at a complete change in our very essence. Repentance means that process through which man is transformed into his true self by renouncing the stubborn resistance of his merely particular and subjective personality. Through conscience and repentance man acquires a new dimension, that of depth - a new awareness of himself and his own freedom'.

72. A similar contrast is drawn in succeeding chapters, e.g. IV.9.1f; 11.3f; 13.1ff; 16.5.

73. For the expression 'the new covenant of liberty', see, for example, III.10.5; 12.14; IV.16.5; 34.3. For the new covenant involving a stricter law than the old covenant, see pre-eminently the extended discussion in IV.13; cf. also, IV.18.2; 34.4, and the presentation of the new law in Dem. 86-96.

74. Indeed, his teaching that the old covenant is characterised by bondage is somewhat undercut by his recognition (IV.7.4) that God liberated his people from Egypt.

75. Which is directly stated in 2Cor.3:17, a verse, incidentally, which Irenaeus nowhere uses.

76. V.32.1; 33.3; 36.3. In V.32.1 and 36.3 there is a direct reference to Romans 8:21, 'Because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.'

77. Similar affirmations of a divinely ordained co-operation between God and man are found elsewhere. In IV.37.1 it is stated as follows: 'And in man, as well as in angels, He has placed the power of choice (for angels are rational beings), so that those who had yielded obedience might justly possess what is good, given indeed by God, but preserved by themselves'. In V.11.2 a similar ambiguity may be perceived: 'In these members, therefore, in which we were going to destruction by working the works of corruption, in these very members are we made alive by working the works of the Spirit'.

78. Two authors have given particular attention to this question. J.T. Nielsen, Adam and Christ in the Theology of Irenaeus of Lyons, ch.4, identifies the importance of the Adam-Christ typology to Irenaeus, but he fails to elucidate the difference between created and redeemed freedom, autexousia and ἐλευθερία. More profound, if nevertheless somewhat speculative, is L.S. Thornton, Revelation and the Modern World, (London: 1950), especially pp.139-167. Curiously, Thornton's book is one of the few not included in Nielsen's bibliography, although a later article by Thornton, which refers to his book, is included. Thornton's book contains a sustained exposition of Irenaeus along the lines indicated here.

79. Freedom and the divine likeness are explicitly linked in IV.37.4: 'But because man is possessed of free will from the beginning, and God is possessed of free will, in whose likeness man was created, advice is always given to him to keep fast the good, which thing is done by means of obedience to God'. By reference to the modern philosopher John MacMurray, rather than to Irenaeus, this point has been explored by A. Shutte, 'Indwelling, Intersubjectivity and God', S.J.T., 32 (1979) p.203f.: 'That beings with a power of free choice are created poses the paradox inherent in the doctrine of creation at its sharpest... It is precisely because persons participate most fully in the being of God that they are most free of, and to that degree distinct from him. The more a creature is like God, the more he possesses his own being'.

80. These ideas are already present in the tradition, as is illustrated by Ad Diognetum, 7: 'Was He sent, think you, as any man might suppose, to establish a sovereignty, to inspire fear and terror? Not so, but in gentleness and meekness has He sent Him, as a king might send his son who is a king. He sent Him, as sending God; He sent Him, as a man unto men; He sent Him as Saviour, as using persuasion, not force : for force is no attribute of God. He sent Him, as summoning, not as persecuting; He sent Him, as loving, not as judging.

81. The expression 'one and the same' is frequently applied by Irenaeus to God; see, for example, I.10.3; II.25.1; 35.3; III.9.1,2; 10.6; 11.4; 12.11,13,15 etc..

82. For discussion of the ambiguity of the concept of 'cause', compare O.C. Quick, Doctrines of the Creed, (London:1938), pp.35ff., and J.R. Lucas, Freedom and Grace, p.2ff.

83. A link between richness and resourcefulness can be seen, for example, in II.10.3; 29.2.

84. Thus, while there are senses in which it is true to say, with Matthew 5:45, that God 'makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust', there are also senses in which such a statement is misleading, because incomplete.

85. Arguably, this process was sharply reversed at the Enlightenment, where a different combination of Greek and Christian insights produced an opposite result to that which we have identified in Irenaeus. Our response, then, is to welcome the removal at the Enlightenment of the fetters which had long been laid upon the human spirit, and the subsequent respect for freedom of conscience and of intellectual enquiry. In consequence, much cruelty, oppression and ignorance was removed from human society, and the scientific enterprise, which was already underway, received a substantial boost from the associated cultural changes. It has to be admitted that, on the whole, the Church resisted these changes, and our analysis of Irenaeus' theology has shown how, from a very early stage, the Church had failed adequately to grasp the message of liberation enshrined in the Gospel. Yet, because the basic ingredients of the synthesis were the same, the problem with Enlightenment thought, its great stress on 'negative' freedom, the 'Dare to know!' (sapere aude) of Kant, already has its counter-part in Irenaeus. The resolution lies in a proper combination and juxtaposition of the levels of human and divine freedom, as I shall shortly argue. A similar analysis and proposal underlies the recent popular, but profound, book by L. Newbigin, The Other Side of 1984, (Geneva: W.C.C., 1983).

86. Cf. the stimulating recent book by V. Brümmer, What Are We Doing When We Pray?, (London : S.C.M., 1984). Brümmer is one of the few theologians to have perceived the importance of Lucas' work; on p.66ff there is a good discussion of Lucas' 'brilliant essay', 'Freedom and Grace'.

87. This problem of relationship between 'higher' and 'lower' is not specifically concerned with religion. In recent centuries, in one way or another, it has been a key problem of philosophy. In the seventeenth century, in particular, it came to be assumed that two entities of different orders (such as matter and mind) could not easily interact. In order to make sense of such a situation, it was readily assumed that an apparent conjunction of two contrasted entities should be understood rather in terms of one entity with two aspects, that entity being either matter or spirit. Contemporary philosophy is still engaged with these issues, as evidenced by the 1984 Reith Lectures, op.cit.

88. We can identify a tension in Irenaeus' theology concerning the category of the permissive will of God. In II.5.4 a clear rejection is apparent : 'It is not seemly, however, to say to Him who is God over all, since He is free and independent, that He was a slave to necessity, or that anything takes place with His permission, yet against His desire; otherwise they will make necessity greater and more kingly than God...' Yet even in Book Two, and more clearly in later Books, Irenaeus wrestles with the implications of his view that the created nature of the world places (God given) limits upon what God can achieve, or at least upon the pace at which He can achieve it. We will consider this aspect of his doctrine of creation in connection with his theodicy. We should note, however, that by the end of A.H.,

in the eschatological chapters, the existence of Antichrist, and all those who prefigure him, from Noah's contemporaries onwards, is justified precisely by an appeal to the permissive will of God: 'In the previous books I have set forth the causes for which God permitted these things to be made, and have pointed out that all such have been created for the benefit of that human nature which is saved, ripening for immortality that which has its own free will and its own power, and preparing and rendering it more adapted for eternal subjection to God' (V.29.1).

89. These concluding remarks indicate my divergence from the philosophical account of providence supplied by J.R. Lucas, opera cit., much of which I endorse. He is too preoccupied with a rather anthropomorphically conceived ability of God to manoeuvre events, or the aftermath of events, to achieve His ultimate cosmic purpose. His God is, to adopt the critique offered by a colleague, too much akin to a celestial Dale Carnegie, who has an infinite ability to win friends and influence people. God acts not only to respect metaphysical freedom (that is, autexousia), but also to grant existential freedom (that is, ἐλευθερία).

The distinctions appropriate here are illuminated by the current understanding of the progress of evolution. Darwin thought that all change was adaptive, but evolution theory now recognises a vast amount of non-adaptive change, and long periods when change towards the evolution of man was not occurring. The evolutionary map has many dead-ends, and it is yet possible that major extra-terrestrial events will be identified as necessary to punctuate the long periods of apparent equilibrium, or stasis, identified by palaeontologists. The two types or levels of change assumed in the contemporary theory bears an analogous relation to the account of providence rendered above, from which Irenaeus' understanding of providence has been perceived. Finally, from the considerable recent debate over the nature of divine action in the world, I would refer to the interesting discussion of the relation between events in the world and acts of God given by C.M. Wood, 'The Events in Which God Acts', Heythrop Journal, 22 (1981), pp. 278-284. He shows how it is possible to identify, or affirm, a variety of degrees of divine action in the events of creation. Although I have approached the question of divine action in a different way, my account is compatible with that of Wood.

CHAPTER FIVE

DOCTRINE OF CREATION: ANTHROPOLOGY AND EVIL

Introduction

In this chapter we will examine two further aspects of Irenaeus' doctrine of creation: his teaching upon the place and nature of man, and, less extensively, his understanding of evil. The discussion of both subjects will cast further light upon the general theme of the relation between God and the world, for, in their different ways, each provides a sensitive focus for the larger issue. Although to some extent separate, the subjects are related inasmuch as the challenge of the existence of evil is greatest to man as the highest form of created existence. We will begin by examining Irenaeus' understanding of the relation of man to the wider area of creation.

The Place of Man in Creation

One aspect of Irenaeus' polemic in the earlier part of A.H. objects to the sense of superiority claimed by the Gnostics, and in response he emphasises the limited, created nature of man as 'infinitely inferior to God'.¹ But why, the Gnostics would have asked, should the God who, according to Irenaeus, had no need of creation, have made anything and anyone, especially if the crowning part of creation, man, was only 'infinitely inferior to God'? Irenaeus refuses to speculate directly upon such questions, but on occasion he does remark upon the relation of man to the rest of creation, stating that creation was made for man:

.....all things have been created for the benefit of that human nature which is saved, ripening for immortality that

which has its own free will and its own power, and preparing and rendering it more adapted for eternal subjection to God. And therefore the creation is suited to man; for man was not made for its sake, but creation for the sake of man. (V.29.1) ²

His understanding of the place of man also emerges in the often quoted claim:

For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God. (V.20.7)

These two sides to Irenaeus' approach to the place of man, as both infinitely inferior to God yet called to exhibit, or even become, the glory of God, mirror the wider tension in his understanding of the divine motive for creation which we identified earlier, and are reflected in the well-known verses from Psalm 8, which may in part have evoked this latter statement from Irenaeus:

What is man that thou art mindful of him,
and the son of man that thou dost care for him?

Yet thou hast made him little less than God,
and dost crown him with glory and honour.

We will best be able to see the shape of Irenaeus' understanding of the place of man if we probe this tension, inherent in the very idea of creation, from a variety of perspectives.

In the first place, we should note that a basic aspect of Irenaeus' perception of the nature of man is as a physical being of flesh and blood, as described in Genesis 2.³ When Irenaeus refers to flesh, he refers to the earthy reality of man, rather than using flesh as a mere circumlocution for man, thus leaving open the question of his essential nature. This earthiness of man is not contrasted with his mental

or spiritual nature, for it is as life invigorates the body of man that he exhibits - or even becomes - the glory of God.

The earthiness of this anthropology implies that Irenaeus held a close relation between man and the wider sphere of creation, but against this must be set the distinction between them which emerges in the statement that creation is made for man, but not man for creation. It is interesting to note in this connection that, despite the emphasis upon the physical nature of man, Irenaeus generally uses a different verb for the creation of man from those employed for the creation of the world.⁴ Despite all that he has in common with the broad domain of creation, man is given a special place as he emerges from the creative hands of God.

The nature of this distinction is revealed more fully in the Demonstration, where the creation of man is contrasted with the remainder of God's creative work:

But man He fashioned with His own hands, taking of the purest and finest of earth, in measured wise mingling with the earth His own power; for He gave his frame the outline of His own form, that the visible appearance too should be godlike - for it was as an image of God that man was fashioned and set on earth - and that he might come to life, so that the man became like God in inspiration as well as in frame. So he was free and his own master, having been made of God in order to be master of everything on earth. And this world of creation, prepared by God before He fashioned man, was given to man as his domain, with all things whatsoever in it.....(Dem.11)

So, having made the man lord of the earth and everything in it, He made him in secret lord also of the servants (that is, angels) in it. (Dem.12)

There are a number of interesting points here. The creation of man is presented as peculiarly the work of the hands of God, a contrast

being assumed with God's other creative activity.⁵ This is not to suggest that Irenaeus has a non-trinitarian understanding of the wider aspect of divine creativity, but there is an undeniable concentration on the creation of man, such that the actual appearance of man - presumably his erect stance - is to be regarded as 'godlike'.⁶ The self-controlled freedom of man further illustrates and embodies his divine likeness, which grants man lordship over the rest of the earth. This open status of man as lord of creation is even extended to a rather mysterious, secret lordship over the angels appointed by God to exercise the divine governance of the world.⁷

An assessment of this presentation of the place of man in creation must begin by acknowledging both that Irenaeus is, in large measure, guided by the position laid down in the early chapters of Genesis, yet that there are interesting points of divergence. For example, while it is clearly the case that the second creation story is focused primarily upon the earthiness of man, as Irenaeus depicts, and upon man as the centre of creation, the theme of dominion is qualified by the command to 'till and keep' the garden, there being no indication that the garden was created simply for the sake of man. Taken together, Genesis 1 and 2 characterise non-human creation both as adapted to serve man, and in need of man's service, yet also as having a positive goodness of its own. Arguably, the climax of the account in Genesis 1, the divine sabbath on the seventh day, is given insufficient due by Irenaeus. He tends to see the climax of creation as falling primarily on the sixth day, when man was created, even if the summons to participate in the seventh day is already implied in the nature of man as established on the sixth day. Had he given full due to the seventh day, without denying

the place of man as the crown of creation, Irenaeus would have more readily seen that the whole of creation is charged with the glory of God. As it stands, his account leaves open the unfortunate developments which were to occur in later theology, wherein a sharp distinction between man and nature encouraged the exploitation - that is, the domination rather than the dominion - of the non-human world by man.⁸

If this tendency is visible in Irenaeus, it must also be said that central aspects of his theology point in a different direction, not least the inclusive conception of the recapitulation of Adam in Christ, and his realistic millenarianism with its accompanying renewal of the whole of creation.⁹ The solidarity of man with non-human creation, which is undoubtedly implied here, and which from a modern perspective we would want to endorse,¹⁰ received but mute development in Irenaeus, because of a range of factors, some of which we have already touched upon. The close relation of God with the world which he posits, works not only to establish the essential goodness of creation, but also to compromise its fundamental nature as creation. Too easily the goodness of creation becomes equated with its imaging of divine reality, or its necessary expression of a divine plan, Irenaeus' anti-Gnostic theology inadvertently adopting patterns of thought akin to those found in Gnosticism.¹¹ A small instance is provided in the above extract by the comment that the erect stance of man visibly images God, and in the last chapter we discussed the problems associated with the attribution to man of a freedom of choice which images the freedom of God. What is required, however, is not so much a withdrawal of God from the world, as a better understanding of the transcendence of God even - or, rather, precisely - in this immanence in the world; that is to say,

using the modern expression, we need to understand Irenaeus at this point better than he understands himself.¹² In allowing a greater qualitative distinction between God and the world, Irenaeus' theology would thus be modified to recognise a greater solidarity of creatureliness between man and the world, while not relinquishing the special place which is given to man.

Here, as elsewhere, it is instructive to give a brief consideration to the contemporary influences upon his theology, because the question of the place of man in creation was a subject much debated in both the theology and philosophy of the early patristic period. H. Chadwick's comments upon the general provenance of the arguments used by Celsus and Origen illustrate the point:

In truth, the Stoa and the Academy had provided arguments and counter-arguments on a wide range of subjects, with the results that we frequently find that where Celsus shows affinity with the Academy, Origen has only to fall back on the traditional refutation provided by the Stoics, and vice versa...An example of this occurs at the end of the fourth book where Celsus ridicules as naïve the Christian belief that the people of God are the aim and centre of creation and that the world was made for them; Celsus develops here a long attack on the view that the world exists for the sake of man any more than for the irrational animals. His arguments are almost certainly lifted straight out of some tractate deriving from the Academic tradition which contained a polemic against the Stoic doctrine that the animals exist for the sake of mankind. Origen's reply is simply based on the traditional Stoic answer to the Academy.¹³

Clearly, the philosophical debate over the traditional, anthropomorphic Greek cultus lies in the background, the interesting aspect of the situation being the way in which Christian writers were drawn both to accept the high philosophical critique of the traditional mythology, and to affirm, albeit in a different form, the anthropocentricity rejected by the same philosophical tradition. In fact, Origen's speculative theological system is less anthropocentric than others,

and the tension is greater in writers who gave man a more central place in the universe.

Justin Martyr, for example, presents the centrality of man along with the view that creation was out of unformed matter:

And we have been taught that He in the beginning did of His goodness, for man's sake, create all things out of unformed matter. (I Apol.10)

Here we see how the belief that non-human creation exists solely, or primarily, for man's sake can readily lead, at least to some extent, to its downgrading.¹⁴

Theophilus of Antioch appears to have a doctrine of creation ex nihilo (Ad Autol. 1.4), but his claim that the world exists for the sake of man exhibits its own problems:

As for the creation of man, his fashioning cannot be expressed by man, yet the divine scripture contains a summary mention of it. When God said, 'Let us make man after our image and likeness', He first reveals the dignity of man. For after making everything else by a word, God considered all this as incidental; he regarded the making of man as the only work worthy of his own hands (i.e. the Word and Wisdom, Son and Holy Spirit). (Ad Autol.II.18)

Athenagoras indicates how the distinction between man and the rest of creation, which was commonplace in second-century theology, was closely related to the concept of individual meritorious judgement, which we considered in the earlier chapter:

But since we are aware that God knows what we think and say both night and day, and that he who is totally light sees also what is in our hearts; and since we are persuaded that when we depart this present life we shall live another life better than that here, a heavenly one, not earthly, so that we may then abide with God and with His help remain changeless and impassible in soul as though we were not body, even if we have one, but heavenly spirit; and, alternatively, since we are convinced that, if we fall with the rest of men, we shall live another life worse than that here in realms of fire (for God did not create us like sheep or beasts of burden,

and it would not be incidental if we were to be destroyed and disappear); since all this is so, it is not likely that we should want to do evil and deliver ourselves up to the great Judge to be punished. (Legatio 31.4)

The relation of Irenaeus' thought to the positions adopted by these writers is interesting, for he accepts some aspects and modifies others. Thus, he largely agrees that creation is made for man, that the special place of man merits the recompensatory judgement of God, and that God is essentially changeless, even if his presentation of each of these subjects is not identical with that provided by Justin, Theophilus and Athenagoras. Furthermore, by contrast with the respective views of these theologians, Irenaeus rejects the idea of creation out of pre-existent matter, the complete restriction of the creative action of the 'hands' of God to the creation of man, and the idea that the resurrection of the flesh was of little consequence. Each of these three divergences indicate the importance to Irenaeus of the earthly, bodily nature of man, and although formally he accepts the position that creation was made simply for man, in practice this is both qualified and in process of modification. The anthropocentrism of Gnostic thought is clearly influential here, stimulating Irenaeus to ponder the importance and value of the created universe.

In the search for the correct theological position to be assigned to man in the God/world/man matrix, the opposite, but related, dangers are, on the one hand, of taking the world for granted, and, on the other hand, of taking God for granted. A theology which sees the sole purpose of creation as providing the appropriate environment to benefit man is likely to exalt him in such a way as to compromise the freedom and holiness of God. Our judgement, then, is that the theology of the second century did not avoid this twin danger, even if Irenaeus

comes closer to doing so than other extant theologians. Yet the danger must not be overstated, for the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds which emerged in the early church formulated creation in terms of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible, without explicit mention of man, even if a certain centrality of the dealings of God with man in history, culminating in the coming of the man Jesus, was assumed in relation to the doctrine of creation. The bedrock for a healthy account of these issues lies in the concept both of the freedom of the relation between God and creation, including man, and of the active, loving presence of God to creation; Irenaeus points us towards such a concept of the relation between God, man and the world, but leaves open scope for significant development in subsequent theology.¹⁵

The Nature of Man

(i) Introduction

We will now investigate the extent to which the contours of Irenaeus' presentation of the place of man in creation are reproduced in his treatment of the nature of man. This aspect of his anthropology has received considerable attention in a modern era which has shown great interest in the doctrine of man, partly because, on the surface at least, Irenaeus is relatively favourably disposed towards the concept of evolution, and partly because of his extensive discussion of the nature of man as in the image and likeness of God. This latter feature of Irenaeus' thought has been claimed as one of the sources of the fundamental medieval distinction between nature and supernature, but considerable dispute surrounds such claims.¹⁶

As elsewhere in the discussion of Irenaeus' theology, writers from rival confessional standpoints have been too concerned to claim early

patristic justification for their own views, for example, in regard to the possible distinction between the image and likeness of God. We cannot enter directly into these historical disputes, but wish, rather, to identify the fundamental shape of Irenaeus' understanding of the nature of man.

Here, again, it is instructive to identify some of the relevant features of Gnosticism: three in particular are of concern to us. We note, firstly, the typical Gnostic distaste for bodily existence and, associated with this, secondly, the view that the essence of man lies in his possession of an inner spiritual dimension or part, which shares the nature of the divine Pleroma.¹⁷ The third significant feature of Gnostic anthropology is the division of men into different ontological classes, closely related to the tripartite division of man into body, from the earth; soul, from the Demiurge; and a pneumatic part, from Achamoth.¹⁸

We should recognise that, on the surface at least, there are certain parallels in the New Testament to each of these features of Gnostic anthropology. Thus, various passages assert that man belongs essentially to a higher, heavenly world, and that there are contrasts between νηπιου and τελειου, ψυχικου and πνευματικου.¹⁹ Arguably there are great differences between the use of these ideas in the New Testament and in Gnostic writings, the partly metaphorical, exhortatory character of the New Testament at this point being pressed in Gnosticism into fundamental ontological distinctions. Yet, as we have noticed elsewhere, there are interesting links here between aspects of Gnosticism and parts of the New Testament, which presented a subtle challenge to Irenaeus not to depart from the New Testament in his attempt to expose and repudiate Gnostic error.

(ii) Man as Earthly

We have already touched upon this theme in our consideration of the place of man in creation, where we interpreted Irenaeus' emphasis on the earthiness of man as counterbalancing his tendency to see man as too detached from creation as a whole. Certainly, from a perspective informed by both the Bible and modern thought, the stress upon the earthy, bodily nature of man lends a refreshing sense of wholeness to Irenaeus' anthropology, given the subsequent theological developments which tended to idealise or spiritualise man. This can be seen with greatest clarity in the Irenaeus doctrine of the image of God in man.

For Irenaeus, it is the totality of man which is made in the image of God, and hence there can be no restriction of the image of God to the soul or equivalent part of man.

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 likeness through the Spirit : hence, this being is imperfect. Thus also, if any one take away the image and set aside the handiwork, he cannot then understand this as being a man, but as either some part of a man....or as something else than a man.
(V.6.1)

The physical dimension to the doctrine of the image of God does not generate an unduly anthropomorphic account of God, partly because Irenaeus is well aware of the limitations inherent in human speech about God, and partly because he has in mind man as bearing - or sharing - the image of the bodily, incarnate Christ, rather than the pure image of God. This is brought out in those passages which describe the Adam-Christ typology, the perfect manifestation of the

divine image being found only in Christ, this awaiting eschatological completion in man at the resurrection:

For in times long past, it was said that man was created after the image of God, but it was not demonstrated; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image man was created. Wherefore also he did easily lose the likeness. 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 means of the visible Word. (V.16.2)

.....God made man in His image; and the image is the Son of God, in whose image man was made. And therefore, He was manifested in the last times, to show the image like unto Himself. (Dem.22)

From this earth, then, while it was still virgin, God took dust and fashioned man, the beginning of humanity. So the Lord, summing up afresh this man, reproduced the scheme of his incarnation, being born of a virgin by the will and wisdom of God, that He too might copy the incarnation of Adam, and man might be made....according to the image and likeness of God. 20 (Dem.32)

Although the precise relationship Irenaeus intends between the incarnation and Adam is not as clear as we might wish, two emphases are apparent. On the one hand, there is a great superiority of Christ over Adam, and the incarnation brings to light the incompleteness, or instability, of the original creation of man. On the other hand, the contrast between the first and the second creations is not allowed to override the complementary truth of the strong relationship which exists between them. These two aspects are held together by the Irenaeian motif of growth: Adam is to grow towards the image in which, imperfectly, he was created, this earthy image reflecting, at least to some extent, the incarnate rather than a disincarnate Christ. For understandable reasons, Athanasius and other Nicene theologians drew a sharp contrast between Christ and creation, but, in the process, could easily lose sight of the relation between creation and incarnation. Despite the pressures of Gnosticism, which were not unlike those from Arianism

at a later date, with Irenaeus we are close to the Pauline teaching that in Christ we see the true nature of man, and that man is destined to participate in this nature by union with Christ. In other words, Irenaeus is maintaining that there is a close link between the doctrine of the incarnation and the doctrine of man, and, correspondingly, that the doctrine of creation is closely involved in the perfection of the image in Christ. The incarnation encloses the reality of creation, the incarnate Christ providing both the archetype for Adam, and the completion of what was begun in Adam.²¹ On occasions Irenaeus can speak almost mystically of Adam, as if he is to be regarded as persisting until he comes to fulfilment in the incarnate Jesus Christ, Adam reflecting pre-eminently the rational, divinely given order which pervades the whole of creation.²²

This circle of ideas is closely related to those considered in our discussion of Irenaeus' account of the relation of Jesus Christ to time, the general imaging of God in the earthy humanity of man being secured by the unique imaging of God in the incarnate Logos. The image of God in the bodily reality of man is thus secured and demonstrated as each man grows into union with the God-man, realising in history the true reality of man, who was created through and after the image of the God-man.²³ Just as the activity of God, in taking dust from the earth and forming, or moulding, man, fashioned him in the divine image, so the restoration, or deepening, of this image involves the whole pattern of divine activity in creation and redemption.²⁴

The import of Irenaeus' general approach to understanding the nature of the image of God in man with its historically orientated inclusion

of the bodily existence of man, lies chiefly in the implication that, through its solidarity with man, the whole of nature is of value to God, and destined for redemption. Arguably this is one of his most important contributions to theology, which contemporary theologians are struggling to rehabilitate after centuries of neglect.²⁵

While we may prefer not to endorse the Augustinian conception of the image of God in man, at the expense of the Irenaeian inclusion of the bodily existence of man, there is a danger inherent in his approach which relates to our basic thesis concerning his doctrine of creation. This is best seen by examining an aspect of Irenaeus' eschatology, the resurrection of the body, which will illustrate an excessive, or perhaps simplistic, emphasis upon the bodily character of man. Significantly, Irenaeus' eschatology is presented in Book Five, in close connection with his most extensive treatment of the nature of man.

Gnostic eschatology combined a belief that, through the gnosis, the spiritual man experienced perfection in - or despite - this life,²⁶ with the promise that, upon death, his purified spirit would enter the Pleroma.²⁷ Irenaeus defends a doctrine of the resurrection of the physical body, as the sequel to a process of growth and judgement, to oppose both sides of Gnostic eschatology.

He starts by acknowledging the weakness and infirmity of created bodily existence, referring to the 'thorn in the flesh' of St. Paul,²⁸ but sets two factors against a Gnostic interpretation : firstly, the educational argument that man could not have learned about immortality had he not experienced mortality,²⁹ and, secondly, that it is inherent in the very idea of God that He be powerful enough to resurrect that

dead flesh which originally He had created from non-existence:

And surely it is much more difficult and incredible, from non-existent bones, and nerves, and veins, and the rest of man's organization, to bring it about that all this should be, and to make man an animated and rational creature, than to re-integrate (redintegrare = ἀποκαταστήσαι, extant) again that which had been created and then afterwards decomposed into earth.....having thus passed into that from which man, who had no previous existence, was formed. (V.3.2)

Irenaeus proceeds to expound the present harmony of the human body, concluding that:

Numbers would fail to express the multiplicity of parts in the human frame, which was made in no other way than by the great wisdom of God. But those things which partake of the skill and wisdom of God, do also partake of His power..... But if the present temporal life, which is of such an inferior nature to eternal life, can nevertheless effect so much as to quicken our mortal members, why should not eternal life, being much more powerful than this, vivify the flesh, which has already held converse with, and been accustomed to sustain, life? (V.3.2f)

Thus, after claiming that the extended lives of the patriarchs, the translation of Elijah and Enoch, and the preservation of Jonah, and of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are clear prophecies of the resurrection of the flesh,³⁰ he draws a direct parallel between the resurrection of Christ 'in the substance of flesh' and the future resurrection of the just.³¹ Earthly life is a preparation for this resurrection, as 'we now receive a certain portion of His Spirit, tending towards perfection, and preparing us for incorruption, being little by little accustomed to receive and bear God',³² this preparation separating Christians from 'carnal' men, as they 'make their way steadily towards the Father and the Son....meditating day and night upon the words of God, that they may be adorned with good works',³³. This emphasis upon the ethical distinctiveness of the Christian life leads Irenaeus to the point from which to launch a detailed refutation of the Gnostic interpretation of 1Corinthians 15:50, 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor does the

perishable inherit the imperishable'. He begins the discussion in V.9 and does not leave it until V.15, after over 4000 words of argument; no other biblical text and no other specific Gnostic argument receives comparable treatment in his extant works. Clearly he was anxious to establish a harmony between this apparently recalcitrant verse and his overall theological scheme, which he claimed to be based, among other authorities, upon the Pauline epistles. In effect, Irenaeus argues that 'flesh and blood' can and will inherit the Kingdom of God, St. Paul's statement to the contrary being referred to 'carnal deeds, which, perverting man to sin, deprive him of life'.³⁴

Assessment of Irenaeus' understanding of the resurrection of the body must acknowledge that he was fundamentally correct in defending the positive place of created bodies in the ultimate purposes of God; yet questions related to those raised earlier in different contexts present themselves, for we are again witnessing the affirmation of a very close relationship between creation and redemption. Is there not a greater discontinuity between created and redeemed bodies disclosed in the New Testament? It is significant that in his long discussion of 1Corinthians 15:50 Irenaeus does not mention the succeeding verses:

Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

In his theology the great change has already come with the incarnation of Christ, and, rather than a sudden possession of immortality, Irenaeus assigns to the hereafter a continuation of the gradual growth experienced in this life.³⁵ Alongside the Irenaeian hope for a rationally purified creation we must set the New Testament hope for a new heaven and a new

earth, and the mysterious transformation of the present heaven and earth, with the first last and the last first, which is entailed therein.³⁶

Similarly, while not denying that a relationship exists between the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the tomb and the future resurrection of the just, it is not clear that the relation is as univocal as Irenaeus assumes, because to conceive it thus would be to underestimate the significance of the ascension.³⁷ Irenaeus thus tends to establish too tight a link between creation and redemption : the Pauline emphasis upon the second Adam is modified into an emphasis upon the second Adam.³⁸ This change is illustrated by the passage from V.3.2 which speaks of the relative ease of reintegrating, as compared to creating from non-existence, the human body. Again we see a certain weakening of the Pauline understanding of the resurrection as a new creation.

Underlying Irenaeus here is a misconception about the nature of 'bodies', and in particular an assumption that a body can be defined in terms of its constituent matter, that is, to our modern understanding, its atoms and molecules. While bodies, so far as we know, necessarily contain atoms and molecules, no body can be defined simply in terms of the set of atoms and molecules which it comprises, because a continuous interchange is occurring between the atoms and molecules of a body and the atoms and molecules of the surrounding environment - via breathing, sweating, constant shedding of the top layer of skin, and so forth. A body which is recognisably the same over an extended period, both to the person to whom it 'belongs' and to others, in fact will have exchanged a large proportion of its constituent atoms with the environment. Therefore, to believe in the resurrection of the body does not require a belief that,

upon death, the individual atoms and molecules of a body are divinely labelled for reassembly. Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that a certain proportion of the atoms and molecules which currently comprise a body have been part of other bodies, but this need cause no embarrassment to a belief in the resurrection of the body. Although a material, earthly reality, an individual body is defined primarily in terms of being a person's body, that is, it is fundamentally a personal concept and it is as such that belief in the resurrection is confessed, as an integral part of belief in the redemption of the whole person. Confidence that a redeemed body will be identifiably their body, need not imply that it will comprise a currently identifiable group of atoms and molecules. To use a crude analogy, a vintage car can be restored to its original condition by reconstruction according to a specified design, but the actual atoms and molecules in the reconstructed car will be very substantially different from those originally used. How much more true this may be when it is transformation and not simply restoration which is in prospect?³⁹

Discussion of the balance of restoration and transformation in Irenaeus' understanding of resurrection can be related to the central concept of ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, for there has been a long dispute over whether restoration or transformation is fundamental to it. Arguably the theme of growth, or evolution, unites the elements of restoration and transformation, both of which are present, the lack of a strong vision of a 'golden age' not resulting in an over-emphasis on transformation, but arguably the reverse, because of the emphatic earthiness of the Irenaean concept of man. It is always 'the same man' who is 'recapitulated'.⁴⁰

In assessing Irenaeus' understanding of the resurrection of the body we should recognise that, in contrast to Gnosticism, his position matches a well established emphasis in second-century theology. Thus Justin, Theophilus of Antioch, and Athenagoras all give similar accounts.⁴¹ The particular shape of this belief in the resurrection of the body derives in part from post-Maccabean Judaism, and in part from the ethical teaching of these theologians. If evidence against the providence of God was cited by their opponents, recourse was needed to a system of reward and punishment to inaugurate and characterise a future life. Major difficulties with restricting this to a realm of the soul would be a sense either of injustice that souls were to be held fully responsible for their acts in the flesh, or that soul and body properly belonged together as partners in good and bad acts alike.⁴² Despite such justification, however, these unrefined ideas had little appeal for educated pagans such as Celsus and Plotinus, and it was Origen, above all, who attempted to formulate a more adequate doctrine of the resurrection. If, in reaction to the established teaching of the previous century, Origen erred in a different direction, this is hardly surprising.⁴³

These features of Irenaeus' conception of the resurrection of the body in part derive, and could receive further illustration, from his millenarianism. This was present in the Asiatic traditions to which Irenaeus was heir, and provided a useful contrast with two features of Gnostic eschatology : on the one hand the rejection of the redemption of the flesh and, on the other hand, the belief that upon death Gnostic spirits would immediately rise to the Pleroma.⁴⁴ There has been considerable dispute over both the details of Irenaeus' millenarianism and their significance in his theology. It is not necessary to consider the disputed questions, besides affirming that

he does hold a form of millenarianism,⁴⁵ and observing that, in characteristic fashion, he modifies it to reflect certain of his own emphases, notably by making the thousand years of the millennium a period wherein the righteous will receive continued training for eternal life,⁴⁶ and by attributing to the millennium the fertility of creation which, in The Revelation of John, features in the new creation.⁴⁷

Therefore, we may summarise our discussion of the bodily nature of man by endorsing the comments of R.D. Williams upon Irenaeus: 'The only history to be taken seriously is bodily history; and so the redemption of man must be located in bodily history.....Characteristically, attention is drawn away from words and ideas to the "speech" of historical fact'.⁴⁸ We would only add that there are dangers and tensions inherent in this great emphasis upon the present reality of history and nature, which we will now investigate from another perspective, that of man as soul and spirit, as well as body.

(iii) Man as Body, Soul and Spirit

If the Irenaeian account of the bodily nature of man has received insufficient attention, that has in large measure resulted from the very considerable discussion of another aspect of his anthropology, the relation between the soul and spirit (or Spirit) of man. Later debates between so-called dichotomists and trichotomists, greatly stimulated by, on the one hand, the controversial views of Origen and Apollinaris of Laodicea, and, on the other hand, the anthropological assumptions underlying the Pelagian dispute, with its almost chronic recurrence in different forms, has caused attention to be focused on this aspect of his doctrine of the constitution of man. Given, in addition, Irenaeian

material which is both inherently ambiguous and not expressed in the categories of later thought, even if the language is similar, it is not surprising that, at this point:

Endless discussion has arisen in Irenaeian exegesis.... There are some, for instance, who maintain that Irenaeus has a dichotomous understanding of man, according to which man consists merely of body and soul, while the Spirit is something divine and super-human, and others again who insist that Irenaeus has in fact a trichotomous understanding of man, according to which man, as man, consists of body, soul, and Spirit (sic). If such a contrast is maintained between two interpretations which are both static, we shall make nothing at all of Irenaeus' subject-matter. The Spirit is something which grows together with man, and in proportion as it does, man becomes what he was destined to become, viz. man. This goal has not yet been reached within the Church, but the Spirit strives against the flesh. Sin, the inhuman element still remains. But one day, in the resurrection, the Spirit will wholly penetrate the flesh, drive out sin, and make man man.⁴⁹

We cannot review in detail the relevant and much discussed Irenaeian texts, but with the proviso that, as a Scandinavian Lutheran, he rather over-estimates Irenaeus' perception of warfare in the Church between the flesh and the Spirit, we will endorse Wingren's general judgement on the debate. However, he tends to avoid the tensions in, and problems with, Irenaeus' position. These derive in good measure from the characteristic way in which Irenaeus both adopts and transforms the traditions he has received. This process can be seen most clearly when he presents the nature of man both as a unity and as a composition of separate parts. To a large degree the former emphasis is biblical, and especially Old Testament, in origin, and the latter Platonic.⁵⁰ Yet even in a passage which readily recalls Plato, there is a clear assertion that the flesh is properly intrinsic to man:

....there are three things out of which, as I have shown, the complete man is composed - flesh, soul, and Spirit. One of these does indeed preserve and fashion - this is the Spirit; while as to another it is united and formed - that is the flesh; then that which is between these two - that is the soul, which sometimes indeed, when it follows the Spirit, is

raised up by it, but sometimes it sympathizes with the flesh, and falls into carnal lusts. (V.9.1)

Generally, Irenaeus assumes that the relationship between body, soul and Spirit is ordered in the manner indicated here, a positive and mutually beneficial relation between body and soul enshrining a priority of the soul, the orderliness being guaranteed by the creative presence of the Spirit.⁵¹ Irenaeus' discussion of the nature of man as body, soul and Spirit arises primarily at two junctures in A.H.: towards the end of Book Two, in conjunction with a refutation of the philosophic and Gnostic⁵² idea of the transmigration of souls, and, in Book Five, in his response to the Gnostic challenge that 'Flesh and blood shall not inherit the Kingdom of God'. Both contexts involved a defence of the goodness and importance of the bodily nature of man against Gnostic dualism, and this in part accounts for the close relationship into which Irenaeus brings body, soul and Spirit. Thus, he appeals to the mingling of soul and body when adducing the recollection of dreaming as evidence against the transmigration of souls:

For as, when the body is asleep and at rest, whatever things the soul sees for herself, and does in a vision, recollecting many of these, she also communicates them to the body....For if that which is seen....by the soul alone, through means of a dream is remembered after she has mingled again with the body, and been dispersed through all the members, much more would she remember those things in connection with which she stayed during so long a time, even throughout the whole period of a previous life. (II.33.1)

It is interesting to note that, although the soul is conceived as dispersed throughout the body, it is able to operate quite independently of the body when experiencing dreams. Yet in the normal situation body and soul operate together, occupying the same space as the soul takes the shape of the body.⁵³ Irenaeus uses such pictures to illustrate

and explain his understanding of the constitution of man, but we must always be careful to heed Wingren's warning that such static descriptions need to be interpreted in terms of a dynamic process of bodily and spiritual growth, as God and creation interact. This is frequently presented in ethical terms, and never more so than in the early chapters of Book Five where the response to Gnostic exegesis of 1Cor. 15:50 is an ethical counter-exegesis.⁵⁴ Also in this context, it is noteworthy that similar language to that used of the relation between body, soul and Spirit is used of the eucharist,⁵⁵ the lack of visible change in the elements of bread and wine being paralleled by the literal conception of the salvation of the flesh which we discussed in the last section. Indeed an interesting issue can be raised here, concerning Irenaeus' conception of the eucharist, which may shed light upon a major question facing contemporary theology, namely, the fundamental accuracy of the challenging 'demythologisation' of the various historical concepts of the sacraments offered by Karl Barth.⁵⁶ If Barth's position, which has been largely endorsed by such distinguished successors as Moltmann and Jüngel, is correct, the question which arises is when and how the mistakes were made which fed, in various forms, into later tradition. The inescapable suggestion posed by the present thesis is that Irenaeus, with his 'monistic' over-compensation for Gnostic dualism, provides an interesting source of inquiry. We shall bear this in mind as we assess further aspects of Irenaeus' account of the make-up of man.

Especially relevant in this respect is the relation Irenaeus posits between the Holy Spirit and the essential being of man. As we have commented, he uses his anthropology as a tool in the refutation of

Gnosticism, and, partly as a result of this, references to the constitution of man do not readily slot into a single pattern, but his general position appears clear : whereas body and soul are created parts of a man, without the active presence of the Holy Spirit man would not be alive.

The flesh, therefore, when destitute of the Spirit of God is dead, not having life.....But where the Spirit of the Father is, there is a living man....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....(V.9.3)

For a living person inherits the goods of the deceased; and it is one thing to inherit, another to be inherited... What, therefore, is it that lives? The Spirit of God, doubtless. What, again, are the possessions of the deceased? The various parts of the man, surely, which rot in the earth. But these are inherited by the Spirit when they are translated into the kingdom of heaven... In order that we may not lose life by losing that Spirit which possesses us, the apostle, exhorting us to the communion of the Spirit, has said....'that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God'. (V.9.4)

In order to be alive, man must participate in, which is to be possessed by, the Spirit of God. We notice how Irenaeus' thought moves directly from creation to redemption, and vice versa: the only life known to him is the eternal life of which, at present, we have a partial share.⁵⁷ In thus denying to man the intrinsic possession of a created spirit, Irenaeus is attempting both to maintain the essential difference between created reality and God, and to establish a natural and necessary relation between them. By contrast, Gnosticism claimed that while some men were intrinsically spiritual, this was by detachment from a spiritual realm, which 'naturally' had no relation to created reality. The difficulty inherent in Irenaeus' thought here is the closeness of the relation between God and man : can one deny

to creation its own created life, even if this must be guaranteed by God, who upholds the universe by His word of power?⁵⁸ Applied to Jesus Christ, Irenaeus' anthropology could be regarded as encouraging the docetism and Apollinarianism which were to prove problematic in subsequent patristic theology.⁵⁹ Despite his intentions to the contrary, in Irenaeus' psychology body and soul are conceived as too passive and instrumental before the continuing creative presence of God, reflecting the determinist strand which we have identified elsewhere in his theology.⁶⁰

Yet this determinist aspect must not be over-stated, by reading back into Irenaeus the subject-object dichotomy which has been a prominent feature of Western thought, particularly since the Enlightenment. The Western conception of spirit has been predominantly individual and subjective, striving to influence and dominate the world around it. Applied to the relation with God, this has polarised the dynamics of salvation by making either man the passive recipient of divine love or wrath, or salvation essentially dependent upon man. Irenaeus attempts to balance the determinism inherent in his theology with a strong ethical dimension: 'through faith and chaste conversation (we are) to preserve the Spirit of God'.⁶¹ His basic conception is of a subject-subject model of divine-human interaction, even if in it the human subject is rather encompassed by the presence of the divine Subject, although, again, we must remember that, for Irenaeus, God is to be regarded as gentle and long-suffering in his dealings with man.⁶²

We shall further investigate the implications of this anthropology by considering how Irenaeus conceives of the relation between Christians and non-believers, as this poses a problem for him, given the difficulty

of maintaining that the latter are not alive, a difficulty compounded by the Gnostic and Marcionite background against which he wrote. This surfaces most clearly in his answer to Marcion, in the latter chapters of Book Four, where a central issue was the relation between the old and new covenants. While insisting that 'one and the same God' was responsible for events throughout history, Irenaeus accepts that a variety of 'dispensations' have been involved, their harmony being discernible only to 'the spiritual disciple', as is described at length in chapter thirty-three:

A spiritual disciple, truly receiving the Spirit of God, who was from the beginning, in all the dispensations of God, present with mankind.....(IV.33.1)

.....will interpret by pointing out, in regard to every one of the things which have been spoken (in the prophets), to what special point in the dispensation of the Lord, it referred....acknowledging also at all times the same Spirit of God, although He has been poured out upon us after a new fashion in these last times.....(IV.33.15)

At the conclusion of his argument, in the last chapter of Book Four, he links and distinguishes believers from the rest of mankind by a differentiated concept of sonship:

According to nature, then - that is, according to creation, so to speak - we are all sons of God, because we have all been created by God. But with respect to obedience and doctrine we are not all the sons of God : those only are so who believe in Him and do His will. (IV.31.2) 63

When Irenaeus thus distinguishes, amid their relationship, creation and redemption, he offers an interpretation of his anthropology which avoids, at least to some degree, the dangers inherent in his idea of humanity as constituted by being possessed by the Spirit of God. In other respects, as we have seen, he forges too close a connection between creation and redemption, implicitly denying to the created order a sufficient degree of independent, if nevertheless contingent, freedom.

To insist upon this is not to question that there is an essential relationship between creation and the incarnation, but to suggest that the relationship is not as univocal as Irenaeus assumes. It is true that Irenaeus' intention is to defend the grace and goodness of God in His dealings with the world; our contention is that this is best done not by emphasising that God continuously penetrates and possesses creation, which risks either making the presence of God purely natural to man, or making man supernatural, but by asserting that the gracious freedom of God creates and finds in man a corresponding freedom of response. Admittedly, there is a certain paradox inherent in this conjunction of grace and response, a paradox irreducibly bequeathed to us from the Bible. Up to a point, this paradox is implicit in Irenaeus, but is not properly reflected in his account of the nature of man. The perspective which is lacking is that of Romans 8:15f: 'When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God'. Although he refers to verses from this chapter on a number of occasions, he avoids v.16, with its clear distinction between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit, and when quoting v.15b, 'When we cry Abba! Father!', he always either omits or paraphrases v.16 to avoid mention of a separate human spirit.⁶⁴

Of course, Romans 8:16 speaks of a close, we might say synchronous, relation between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit when a child of God acknowledges his Father, and in such circumstances it might be relatively easy to speak of one Spirit rather than two, in the tenor of Galatians 2:20: 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.' The real difficulty arises in the case of a man who is not in this direct communion with God. Is there not a case for claiming that it is in fallen man, above all,

that we need to speak of a spirit distinct from God?⁶⁵ Does the radical mystery of the incarnation and atonement not assume such a situation? In a curious way, Irenaeus' over-compensation for Gnostic docetism can introduce precisely the error he seeks to excise, by giving insufficient regard to the contingent freedom of creation, as exemplified above all in man.

Assessment of the Irenaeian account of the being of man is rendered difficult both by the ambiguities in his various statements, and by the controversies in this area of modern theology. Therefore we will conclude this section with an attempt to clarify the issues, and to outline a satisfactory resolution of them.

Earlier we drew attention to the different interpretations which can be given to the concept of a 'body'; the ambiguities here are much greater in relation to the concepts of 'soul' and 'spirit', and it is noteworthy how often this passes without remark. The problematic character of the use in Christian theology of the concept of 'soul' has been exposed, above all, by the progressive discovery of the degree to which man shares a common nature with other members of the animal kingdom, far beyond the mere fact of being constructed from similar material.⁶⁶ The traditional dual description of man as body and soul both militates against a proper appreciation of the essential wholeness of man as a psycho-somatic unity, and provides an inadequate conceptual basis for expressing similarities and dissimilarities between man and other creatures. To add spirit as a third created dimension of man offers more opportunity for drawing necessary distinctions, but at the cost of introducing confusion between soul and spirit as the centre of decision making.⁶⁷

The problems with the traditional categories are such that I would advocate a fresh approach to understanding the constitution and nature of man, using the insights offered by the scientific study of humanity which has helped so much to undermine the traditional views. In my judgement, of greatest relevance and use at this point is the remarkable work of Michael Polanyi, which builds upon a wide spectrum of scientific knowledge a distinctive account of the nature of man.

Our concern here is not so much with Polanyi's relatively well-known epistemology, but with the ontology which he subsequently developed.⁶⁸

In introducing this he usually began from the analysis of a machine, which he then generalised to include successive realms of the animate world. A machine operates under the control of two logically independent sets of principles: on the one hand, the principles of construction and operation, which may be defined, for example, in a patent. Two broad conditions are then required to be satisfied for the successful working of a machine: that it is well designed to achieve its purpose, and that material is available which can be moulded to the required shapes, and withstand operational stresses and strains. An adequate description of the machine, which we may term its ontology, must refer to both sets of principles, while according to the higher level operational principles the meaning of the machine as a whole, the principles of the lower level setting constraints to the successful achievement of this meaning, and to a degree participating in it. As this citation explains, Polanyi's concept of ontological stratification claims wide applicability to the endeavour and structure of the universe alike:

All these relations become clearer in the case of a skill which comprises a number of levels in the form of a hierarchy. The production of a literary composition, for example a speech, includes five levels. The first level, lowest of all, is the production of a voice; the second, the utterance of words; the third, the joining of words to make sentences; the fourth, the working of sentences into a style; the fifth, and highest, the composition of the text.

The principles of each level operate under the control of the next higher level. The voice you produce is shaped into words by a vocabulary; a given vocabulary is shaped into sentences in accordance with a grammar; and the sentences are fitted into a style, which in turn is made to convey the ideas of the composition. Thus each level is subject to dual control; first, by the laws that apply to its elements in themselves, and second, by the laws that control the comprehensive entity formed by them.

Such multiple control is made possible again by the fact that the principles governing the isolated particulars of a lower level leave indeterminate their boundary conditions, to be controlled by a higher principle. Voice production leaves largely open the combination of sounds into words, which is controlled by a vocabulary. Next, a vocabulary leaves largely open the combination of words to form sentences, which is controlled by grammar; and so the sequence goes on. Consequently, the operations of a higher level cannot be accounted for by the laws governing its particulars forming the next lower level. You cannot derive a vocabulary from phonetics; you cannot derive grammar from a vocabulary; a correct use of grammar does not account for good style, and a good style does not supply the content of a piece of prose.

A glance at the functions of living beings assures us that they consist in a whole sequence of levels forming such a hierarchy. The lowest level is controlled by the laws of inanimate nature and the higher levels control throughout the boundary conditions left open by the laws of the inanimate. The lowest functions of life are those called vegetative; these vegetative functions, sustaining life at its lowest level, leave open - in both plants and animals - the higher functions of growth, and leave open in animals also the operations of muscular action; next in turn, the principles governing muscular action in animals leave open the integration of such action to innate patterns of behaviour; and again such patterns are open in their turn to be shaped by intelligence; while the working of intelligence itself can be made to serve in man the still higher principles of a responsible choice.

We have thus a sequence of rising levels, each higher one controlling the boundaries of the one below it and embodying thereby the joint meaning of the particulars situated on the lower level. The meaning of each successive rising level thus becomes richer at each stage and reaches the fullest measure of meaning at the top. 69

This outline of Polanyi's ontology has been presented at some length, for it has a significant bearing upon the issues raised in our discussion of Irenaeus' anthropology. It implies that Irenaeus' basically three level view of man as body, soul and Spirit needs to be replaced by a

multi-level view of man which acknowledges that he shares with the animal kingdom a number of levels of rational existence uppermost being that of intelligent behaviour, upon which, in man alone, is grafted an additional level of moral choice by his ability to respond to the abstract, transcendent values of truth, justice, love, and so forth, which we would wish to identify with the creative presence of God as Word and Holy Spirit.⁷⁰

As a result, it is possible to agree with Irenaeus and Barth that man is constituted distinctively as man by God, and that the man thus constituted is to be understood as a psycho-somatic, if nevertheless multi-levelled, organic unity. But we cannot agree with Irenaeus, or with the Barth of C.D. III.2, that this implies a denial to man of his 'own' spirit, evoked indeed by the creative and transcendent presence of God, yet logically, and ontologically, distinct from the transcendent God. Admittedly, the interplay of the human spirit and God is shrouded in a providential and eschatological mystery of the divine will; furthermore, any meaning or goodness achieved by man must be ascribed to the transcendent 'level' of God, as the New Testament itself indicates, but this does not imply that man is a puppet or passive participator in such achievement. This account certainly draws a clear and radical distinction between divine Spirit and human spirit, but the retention of the same term for both is justified, if not demanded, provided that the ontological distinction between levels is not compromised, for example by the assumption that a master concept of spirit underlies both. Two reasons may be given for retaining the concept of a human spirit. First, man is created in the image of God, Polanyi's account offering a fresh appreciation of the meaning of this scriptural affirmation, and, secondly, there is no satisfactory alternative which does not obscure the essential

relatedness between God and man, established categorically in the incarnation.⁷¹

From the perspective opened up by Polanyi, we have been able to endorse many of the distinguishing features of Irenaeus' account of the nature of man : his earthy, yet historical character; his inherent and all-important relatedness to God; and his organic unity which cannot be described in terms of separate and separable parts. But running through even the very strengths of Irenaeus' doctrine of man we have identified a series of related weaknesses, deriving from his inadequate grasp of the essential createdness of man, with his contingent rationality and freedom of spirit. This conclusion poses a final area for consideration, which we have also approached at other stages of our investigation, namely the Irenaeian understanding of sin and evil.

The Problem of Evil

The problem of evil has long tormented Christian theology, not least in the years since the Holocaust.⁷² As we have already noted, Gnosticism could be regarded as essentially an answer to the problem of evil, offering to the ancient world a more radical explanation along lines which had already been mapped in conventional philosophy. If it is not held that the universe is created, the natural approach to the problem of evil is to single out a particular aspect of the universe as the source and basis of evil. In the philosophical thought of the ancient world this role usually fell, in one form or another, to matter. In one sense Gnosticism advanced a sharper dualism than those philosophies which nourished Middle Platonism, yet, in another sense, the Gnostics were less than strict dualists, as they did not hold that matter was eternal, this latter point illustrating once more the subtle - or not

so subtle! - interaction between Gnosticism and mainstream Christian thought. Our discussion will focus, therefore, upon the role played in Irenaeus' theodicy by his understanding of the nature of created existence. Although this limits the scope of our investigation, it both takes us to the heart of Irenaeus' treatment of the problem of evil, and concentrates upon the area of greatest relevance to this thesis.

Initially, however, we should note certain important aspects of his reflections on the issue of evil, which we cannot consider in any detail. Firstly, we must acknowledge that all Irenaeus has to say about evil is qualified by his insistence that severe limitations are placed upon human thought when confronted with the questions which arise in this context, for the relevant information has not been disclosed to us.⁷³ His reserve here derives in part from the a posteriori approach which is fundamental to his theology, which discourages hypothetical speculation, and in part from the mystery of 'why, while all things were made by God, certain of His creatures sinned and revolted from a state of submission to God'.⁷⁴

This brief quotation leads to our second preliminary observation, that Irenaeus makes use of the belief, common to the Judaeo-Christian world of his day, that the ultimate origin of evil lay in a revolt of angels, which Irenaeus regarded as fundamentally inexplicable.⁷⁵ The use of this motif in his theology is problematic, for the mystery confessed by Irenaeus could be perceived by others as nonsense or contradiction. Indeed, the problem was identified by Irenaeus himself, when, in criticising the Gnostic account of the fall of the Aeon Sophia, he relied on the principle that 'like must produce like', a principle

which arguably was violated in both his doctrine of creation and his avowal of the doctrine of the fall of angels:

If, therefore, this Aeon was produced by the Pleroma of the same substance as the whole of it, she could never have undergone change, since she was consorting with beings similar to and familiar with herself, a spiritual essence among those that were spiritual. For fear, terror, passion, dissolution and such like, may perhaps occur through the struggle of contraries among such beings as we are, who are possessed of bodies; but among spiritual beings, and those that have the light diffused among them, no such calamities can possibly happen. (II.18.5)

Although it could be argued that Irenaeus eases the problem by locating the fall in created angels rather than in the divine Pleroma, to a large extent the problem of the 'creation of evil ex nihilo'⁷⁶ remains, as his apophatic comments elsewhere indicate. The nature of the problem is illustrated by the contrast between Irenaeus and Origen here, for while Irenaeus is emphatic that the divine mercy does not extend to the devil, or to those men who choose to follow the devil rather than God, whereas His long-suffering does mercifully extend to others who are also deserving of punishment, Origen, by contrast, saw that such a position itself verged on Gnostic dualism, his solution being that the devil could indeed be saved in the end.⁷⁷ Neither approach is free of difficulty, the underlying problem being the reliance upon the largely inter-testamental idea of the fall of angels. This is not to say that it has no contribution to make to Christian reflection upon the question of theodicy, especially given its occasional use by the New Testament writers, but it cannot itself bear the full weight which has often been placed upon it. Although the interpretation of evil in terms of freedom is arguably a major contribution to human thought upon the subject, the doctrine of an angelic fall is too anthropomorphic,⁷⁸ and ultimately involves the very confusion between evil and created reality which Gnosticism itself

manifested. The defence that the existence of a possible misuse of freedom does not imply or involve its actual misuse, while not without value, cannot be sustained, because some relation, at least, must obtain between actuality and possibility. In other words, if the so-called free will defence which, to account for the full range of evils, must include something akin to the doctrine of the fall of angels, is logically plausible, which may be conceded, it is not theologically adequate.⁷⁹

A consequence of Irenaeus' espousal of the 'free will defence' theodicy, which extends from the fall of angels to analogous human misuse of freedom and the resultant punishment, as we saw in our earlier considerations of providence and the freedom of the will, is his belief that the devil was a 'creature of God',⁸⁰ and 'one among created things'.⁸¹ The contexts of both these statements include strong affirmations of the absolute sovereignty of God, and from this basis the question naturally arises : does Irenaeus compromise the goodness of creation, the reality of evil, or both?

The blending of Platonism with a metaphysics of freedom certainly could lead towards understanding evil as, strictly speaking, unreal, if nevertheless necessary for the existence of its opposite, created goodness; we see this process occurring in the thought of Clement and Origen.⁸² But, if tempted in this direction, Irenaeus stops well short of such a conclusion, resting with the conviction that the eternal damnation of the devil, his angels, and human disciples, is a mysterious fact with which we simply have to reckon.⁸³

This willingness to bring the devil and his followers under a common rubric, as rebellious creatures of God, would naturally foster a tendency to minimise the radical perversity of sin and evil, but this is restrained precisely by the harshness of the judgement involved in this common classification, Irenaeus finding in Scripture justification for his decision, both from the New Testament teaching on eternal judgement, and scattered Old Testament references to God creating evil:

It is therefore one and the same God the Father who has prepared good things with Himself for those who desire His fellowship, and remain in subjection to Him; and who has prepared the eternal fire for the ringleader of the apostasy, the devil, and those who revolted with him, into which fire the Lord has declared those men shall be sent who have been set apart by themselves on His left hand. And this is what has been spoken by the prophet, 'I am a jealous God, making peace, and creating evil things' (Is.45:7); thus making peace and friendship with those who repent and turn to Him....but preparing for the impenitent, those who shun the light, eternal fire and outer darkness, which are evils indeed to those persons who fall into them. (IV.40.1) ⁸⁴

We do not dispute that the nature of evil is defined by the divine rejection of it, but a difficulty arises from the assigning to evil of a reality defined not in opposition to, but also in terms of, God's good creation, in effect dividing creation into two classes of reality, a procedure uncomfortably reminiscent of Gnosticism itself. The true alternative is not to deny the reality of evil, but rather to see everyone, indeed the whole of creation, as threatened by, and in need of redemption from it. The eschatological transformation promised to us will thus affect all creation, judgement beginning at the house of God (1Peter 4:17). On Irenaeus' view, can we really hold that evil will be destroyed, and not only punished eternally? In Chapter

One we approached this issue from the perspective of Irenaeus' teaching on the relation between the justice and mercy of God, and concluded that the source of the problem of a rationalistic ontology of good and evil lay in his inadequate appreciation of the Jewish categories of the Bible. Later, in Chapter Four, we exhibited the consequences for his conception of the relation between providence and judgement, and we now begin to see a consistent pattern in the area of theodicy. The positing of this connection between freedom and evil leads to these results in Irenaeus' theology, involving a degree of confusion between evil and creation; we shall now demonstrate how these conclusions cohere with another aspect of his theodicy, which has been called, 'the necessary imperfection of creation'.⁸⁵ This tends to act as a premiss which undergirds the freedom motif, as is illustrated by the fact that the clearest development of both themes occurs in the same part of A.H.: Book IV. chs. 37-41.

The refutation of Marcion provides the important background to these chapters. In response to the Marcionite severance between Old and New Testaments, with its associated impugning of the God attested in the former, Irenaeus has stressed the progressive yet harmonious process of revelation and salvation, relying upon a combination of divine foreknowledge and a free will defence to absolve God of responsibility for unfortunate events committed under the old covenant. Chapter 37 emphasises the importance of the 'negative' freedom of the human will, chiefly to explain the existence and punishment of sin, its existence being justified because of the higher value placed upon goodness which was attained voluntarily rather than by coercion or, even less commendably, by nature:

But upon this supposition (that men had been created incapable of transgression), neither would they be grateful for the good they enjoy, nor communion with God be precious, nor would the good be very much to be sought after, which would present itself without their own proper endeavour, care, or study, but would be implanted of its own accord and without their concern. Thus it would come to pass, that their being good would be of no consequence because they were so by nature, rather than by will.....(IV.37.6)

Moreover, the perception and prizing of goodness and virtue is enhanced by knowledge, and perhaps direct experience, of the contrasting qualities:

And indeed those things are not esteemed so highly which come spontaneously, as those which are reached by much anxious care....Moreover, the faculty of seeing would not appear to be so desirable, unless we had known what a loss it were to be devoid of sight; and health, too, is rendered all the more estimable by an acquaintance with disease; light, also, by contrasting it with darkness; and life with death. (IV.37.7)

Irenaeus was doubtless aware of the objection that he was coming close to justifying evil as a necessary accompaniment to goodness, whereas in Book Two of A.H. he had argued at length that good and evil were to be sharply distinguished and not confused. Hence his position demanded that the state of affairs described thus far in Book Four should not be ascribed to the free decision of God, but to some other necessity.⁸⁶

With his strong monotheism excluding a dualistic option, he developed the idea that the decision to create, which was ascribable to the will of God alone, necessarily carried with it the imperfection of that which was created, because of the contrast between God and creation inherent in the very concept of creation.⁸⁷ This precluded the possibility that God could have created a perfect universe:

If, however, anyone say, 'What then? Could not God have made man perfect from the beginning?' Let him know that, inasmuch as God is indeed always the same and unbegotten as respects Himself, all things are possible to Him. But created things must be inferior to Him who created them, from the very fact of their later origin; for it was not possible for things recently created to have been uncreated. But inasmuch as they are not uncreated, for this very reason do they come short of the perfect. Because, as these things are of a later date, so are they infantile; so are they unaccustomed to, and unexercised in, perfect discipline. (IV.38.1)

There are two steps in Irenaeus' argument : created beings must be both less than perfect and, if they are endowed with free will, must be unstable - yet, as we have seen, this instability is also the prerequisite for the attainment of created moral goodness. This imperfection and instability of man, which Irenaeus appears to refer both to Adam and Eve as the first examples of mankind, and also to future generations, is employed to mitigate the culpability of human sin, and to explain the long-suffering and mercy of God:

For this cause also God has banished from His presence him (the apostate angel) who did of his own accord stealthily sow the tares, that is, him who brought about the transgression; but He took compassion on man, who, through want of care no doubt, but still wickedly, became involved in disobedience....(IV.40.3)⁸⁸

Precise analysis of Irenaeus' position is not easy, due to the brevity of his discussion, its lack of complete consistency,⁸⁹ and the partially foreign nature of the later conceptuality which we inevitably bring to bear upon it. The crucial question is : to what extent does Irenaeus anticipate the view of Schleiermacher that experience of sin is necessary for the operation of divine grace?⁹⁰ Some of his statements certainly lead in this direction, as our extracts from these later chapters of Book Four have indicated, yet the view that the spiritual growth of man should be seen as a smooth, one level process, upon which

one finds good and evil, virtue and sin, juxtaposed, has to reckon with the other side to Irenaeus' theology which speaks of the loathsome discontinuity of evil, and its triumphant defeat by God in Christ.⁹¹ For Irenaeus, the life and death of Christ is much more than an example of the making of a soul in the vale of rejection and crucifixion.⁹² Yet the assertion, natural to monotheism, of the control of God over creation could lead to an 'instrumental' view of evil, as necessary and beneficial to creation. The following comments, from the Martyrdom of Polycarp, indicate the ideas which Irenaeus would have imbibed in his youth:

Blessed therefore and noble are all the martyrdoms which have taken place according to the will of God (for it behoves us to be very scrupulous and to assign to God the power over all things). Martyrdom of Polycarp, 2.

Indeed, the closing chapters of A.H. reproduce very similar thoughts:

For it is just that in that very creation in which they (i.e. the righteous) toiled or were afflicted, being proved in every way by suffering, they should receive the reward of their suffering; and that in the creation in which they were slain because of their love to God, in that they should be revived again....For God is rich in all things, and all things are His. (V.32.1) ⁹³

We are now in a position to see how Irenaeus is driven to the view that good and evil have correlative roles in creation; the strongly asserted identity between this world and the new creation demands the close control of current events by God. To avoid thus implicating God in the obvious faults our present world contains, these are regarded as both inevitable and educative. The close presence of God to creation enhances the contrast between the created and Uncreated, yet also renders comprehensible the assertion that this contrast will not thwart the ultimate purposes of God.⁹⁴

Once again we see how a strong emphasis upon the intimate presence of God to creation can tend to put in question its proper created goodness, the basic optimism of Irenaeus' approach evoking a counterbalancing pessimism, either in relation to the imperfection of creation which is necessary for the operation of divine grace, or in relation to the equation of the Gnostics, and other unbelievers, with the devil himself. An interesting example of the type of conclusion which was easily drawn within this rather rationalistic theological framework is provided by the anti-typology of Eve and Mary:

But Eve was disobedient....and having become disobedient, was made the cause of death, both to herself and to the entire human race; so also did Mary....by yielding to obedience, become the cause of salvation, both to herself and the whole human race. (III.22.4) ⁹⁵

A theology which brings optimism and pessimism under a common denominator will tend to produce neat categories for each. A further illustration of this is provided by his rather over-optimistic verdict upon the uniformity and veracity of the tradition associated with the succession of bishops of the Church, and the associated rejection of all aspects of Gnosticism.⁹⁶ Finally, we should mention in this connection Irenaeus' description of the process of atonement:

The Word.....redeeming us by His own blood in a manner consonant to reason, gave Himself as a redemption for those who had been led into captivity. And since the apostasy tyrannized over us unjustly, and, though we were by nature the property of the omnipotent God, alienated us contrary to nature, rendering us its own disciples, the Word of God.....did righteously turn against that apostasy, and redeem from it His own property, not by violent means, as the apostasy had obtained dominion over us at the beginning, when it insatiably snatched away what was not its own, but by means of persuasion.....(V.1.1)

Although there is considerable value in the understanding of atonement sketched here, does it do justice to the military metaphors employed in the New Testament, and to the essential mystery of the Cross? Here,

again, we see a consequence of the confusion between evil and creation which results in the devil being regarded as a creature of God.⁹⁷

Although we have concentrated upon the element of rationalism in Irenaeus' account of creation, this should not be overstated. The considerable emphasis he gives to time and history attempts to secure a smooth transition from a world afflicted by sin and evil to a world that is free of such blemishes, and if this leads to a rather rationalistic account of the process of history, it also focuses attention on the world of time and change.⁹⁸ For Gnosticism the time and change which characterised material existence embodied anguish and disaster, and although Irenaeus does not avoid a certain depreciation of time and change as inevitably imperfect, his basic aim is to defend the salvation of the flesh, with an accompanying vision of a redeemed world which still experiences change and progress. This is an advance over the theology of the Apologists, which tended to retain a view of truth as the revelation of the eternal to time rather than in time; we may safely assume that Irenaeus would not have endorsed as readily as Justin Martyr the desire of a Christian to be castrated!⁹⁹ Although Irenaeus is by no means free of Platonic influence - how could this be true of a second-century theologian? - we see in his theology a definite shift towards a more biblical position.¹⁰⁰ Although the harmony of creation is guaranteed by the immediate divine presence, and therefore, as we have seen, is regarded as possessing an intelligibility which is insufficiently contingent, it is nevertheless a harmony of variety and activity which inheres in its material existence. The intrinsically finite and imperfect world does not exist simply in a static inferiority to a 'higher' world, but rather is seen as its potentiality for transformation within the realm of time and

history. Thus, for Irenaeus, redemption always means growth and transformation amid the basic continuities of time and history, his fundamental doctrine of recapitulation enshrining both emphases.

As we noted at the end of Chapter Three, Irenaeus often remarks upon the richness yet harmony of creation, reflecting, and being dependent upon, the richness of God. On several occasions he draws an analogy between the varied harmony of creation and that of music:

But since created things are various and numerous, they are indeed well fitted and adapted to the whole creation; yet, when viewed individually, are mutually opposite and inharmonious, just as the sound of the lyre, which consists of many and opposite notes, gives rise to one unbroken melody.....proving the judgement, goodness and skill in the whole work. Those, too, who listen to the melody, ought to praise and extol the artist, to admire the tension of some notes, to attend to the softness of others, to catch the sound of others between both these extremes, and to consider the special character of others, so as to inquire at what each one aims, and what is the cause of their variety, never failing to apply our rule, neither faulting the artist, nor casting off faith in the one God who formed all things, nor blaspheming our Creator. (II.25.2) 101

As we know today, there is music -- and music! If such analogies are to be used, should we not guard against limiting our reference to the rather urbane type of music which Irenaeus describes? Yet the reference to music is in itself suggestive, and serves to emphasise the goodness of creation precisely amid the change and movement of which it is comprised : the harmony of the music is heard, rather than being discovered by theoretical analysis.¹⁰² The difficulty with drawing an analogy from music is the vagueness thus imported into the discussion, given the wide range of possible music. Can evil be subsumed into creation, if the latter is regarded as a work of art, musical or otherwise? Does the harmony exist despite the marring of creation by evil, or is evil in some fashion to be included in the

harmony of creation? Even if sin is made instrumental to the achievement of good, and pre-eminently so on the cross, can we regard the cross as a work of art?

The chief question inherent in Irenaeus' approach to the issue of theodicy thus returns : how is the tragic element or aspect of creation included in the harmony, without resolving tragedy into the good creation of God? Is the groaning in travail of creation a musical groaning? St. Paul considered the sufferings of this present time 'not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us' (Romans 8:18) : is there not the danger that in Irenaeus the scales are weighed, and the comparisons drawn? The New Testament certainly speaks of God using sin and evil in a purposeful way, as well as opposing it, but the grief and emotion so frequently displayed by Jesus in the face of suffering and evil precludes us from developing a systematic explanation or justification of evil along these lines.¹⁰³ Yet, equally, we cannot simply see sin and evil as irruptions into creation which God could well have done without, given our adherence to monotheism and divine omnipotence, even if we allow a degree of voluntary self-limitation to qualify the latter. With characteristic insight, Austin Farrer has advocated a mediating position:

Let us say that God would never have allowed evils to subsist in his creation, were it not that he might find in them the occasions to produce things unique in kind, and dependent for their unique character on the character of the evils in question.¹⁰⁴

The dependence of which Farrer speaks can only be partial, for the unique quality of the goodness satisfies the asymmetry indicated in Romans 8:18. To what extent can we probe this asymmetry and partial dependence? Farrer wisely warns us that in discussion of such a

subject the law of diminishing returns can readily become a law of negative returns.¹⁰⁵ Elsewhere I have indicated how the stratified ontology outlined earlier in this chapter could provide a useful clue to the relatedness amid unrelatedness of good and evil,¹⁰⁶ but ultimately we cannot fully explain why creation is the way it is, except by reference to the inscrutable if revealed will of God. With Irenaeus we acknowledge that the present world has a temporary, provisional character, its fashion passing away (1Cor. 7:31),¹⁰⁷ and that it is intended to be renewed into a world which is fully conformed to the image of the glorified Christ. But we are less sure than Irenaeus of the extent to which we can lay bare the precise reasons why creation takes its present form. The state of our present knowledge of the mystery of creation and redemption has been well expressed by H. Berkhof:

.....we acknowledge that the world contains a tragic element...There is much suffering which no one can remove. We know that all this is part of God's good creation, yet also that it will be eradicated from the new world as this is re-created in Christ. Therefore, if necessary, we can acquiesce in it, and wherever possible fight against it. What we cannot do is explain it. Why has God (provisionally) wanted something which nevertheless (ultimately) he does not want? The only answer we can give is no answer : apparently it was never God's purpose to call into existence a ready-made and complete world. He evidently wants his creation to go through a history of resistance and struggle, of suffering and dying. If this is the will of him whom we have come to know as holy love, we may believe that some day it will become crystal clear that all the pains of childbirth and growing up of this world in process of being cannot be compared with the glorious outcome.¹⁰⁸

1. II.25.3 It is in the following chapters that Irenaeus expounds the limited knowledge attainable by men who have 'received grace only in part', for to strive to know too much falls foul of St. Paul's instruction, 'Knowledge puffs up but love builds up'.
2. Cf. the very similar statement in IV.7.4, where the context is a defence of the unity of creation and redemption, salvation-history unfolding under the care and control of the Creator, who has disposed and arranged all things for their culmination in Jesus Christ.
3. This has been emphasised by D.E. Jenkins, 'The Make-up of Man according to St. Irenaeus', S.P., 6 (Berlin: 1962), pp. 91-95. It must be agreed that, 'Any interpretation and evaluation of the thought of St. Irenaeus must take into very careful account the extremely literal and physical manner in which he visualises the make-up of man on the basis of Genesis 2.7' (p.95). This account of the creation of man forms the basis for the 'literal and physical' presentation of the resurrection of the flesh, which is Irenaeus' dominant theme in Book Five. How these views relate to the more recent remarks of D.E. Jenkins upon the essential nature of man and on the resurrection, is not immediately clear!
4. J.T. Nielsen, op.cit., p. 16f gives the details: 'Irenaeus uses the verbs κτεζειν (=create), κατασκευαζειν (=fabricare) and ποιειν (=facere) mainly to denote the creation of the world For the creation of man Irenaeus uses the verb πλασσειν (=plasmare) and its derivatives'. The chief exceptions are the quotations of Gen.1.26 'faciamus hominem' in III.23.2; IV. Praef.4; IV.20.1; V.1.3 and V.15.4.
5. There is a similar train of thought in IV.Praef.4 'Now man is a mixed organization of soul and flesh, who was formed after the likeness of God and moulded by His hands, that is, by the Son and Holy Spirit, to whom also He said, "Let us make man".' The references to the hands of God are often in connection with the creation of man, as we noted in Chapter Two.
6. The divine inspiration of man with the 'breath of life' reinforces the point, and should not go unnoticed in this context, although we will return to this subject in more detail later in this chapter.
7. This secrecy is probably to be explained both by the fact that man was not yet able to exercise the lordship which had been promised by God, as the continuation of Dem.11 indicates, and, with less certainty, by the existence of a tradition that the fall of the angels was occasioned by a test consisting in a command to submit to man. See J.P. Smith, op.cit., p.150, n.69, for a fuller discussion.
8. These questions are attracting very considerable attention in contemporary theology, after centuries of neglect. As T.F. Torrance has insisted, 'A theology that is restricted to the relation between man and God is deficient and primitive, for it has not advanced from mythos to logos, from thinking out of a centre in the human subject to thinking out of a centre in objective reality, from thinking projectively in pictures and images to thinking in terms of structured imageless relations.' Reality and Evangelical Theology, (Philadelphia: 1982), p.27. The anthropomorphic understanding of the divine basis

of the appearance and freedom of man which we have just noted from Dem.11 is an indication that the 'projection' of which Torrance speaks is a problem even for the best writers of the patristic period.

9. Cf. L.S. Thornton, op.cit., p.138, 'For this reason St. Irenaeus insists that recapitulation is effected through the salvation of Adam. The whole race of man is to be restored in Christ to that headship over creation which is Adam's prerogative. The tragedy of creation lies in the fact that man by seeking to usurp divine prerogatives ceased to fulfil rightly his priestly service on behalf of the created world. The restoration of creation depends upon the restoration of man'. Characteristically, Thornton both portrays with insight an important aspect of Irenaeus' thought, but also fails to see the tension, and incipient problems, which are simultaneously present.

10. A perspective which has yet to emerge in detail, but which is clearly being worked out by such theologians as J. Moltmann and G.S. Hendry, who have sought to go beyond Barth at this point, in giving a clearer place in the doctrine of creation to the world at large: in principle Barth set up his doctrine of creation in universal terms, but the concentration in the detailed exposition is largely upon man. Hendry has usefully exposed the danger in trying to revitalise the doctrine of creation by reducing its scope unduly to the relation between God and man - see his 'The Eclipse of Creation' and Theology of Nature, to which we have already referred.

11. After the extensive polemic against Gnostic speculation upon the detailed imaging of the Pleroma in creation, it comes as a surprise to the reader to find Irenaeus attempting to prove that there were and only could be four Gospels, and four principal covenants between God and man, 'because there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds' (III.11.8). Such an argument points to the general truth that, 'since God made all things in due proportion and adaptation, it was fit also that the outward aspect of the gospel should be well arranged and harmonized' (III.11.9).

12. A significant contribution to modern theology along these lines has been provided by R.S. Anderson, Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God, (London: Chapman, 1975). Anderson's scattered references to Irenaeus exhibit his relevance to the theme, if the difficulties of patristic theology are somewhat underplayed. A surer touch is exhibited in Anderson's more recent book, On Being Human : Essays in Theological Anthropology, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), which identifies 'the legacy of patristic anthropology' as 'a somewhat static and highly abstract notion of human nature' (p.5). In consequence, Anderson is able to offer, in Chapter Two of the later book, a perceptive account of the relation between human and non-human creation, which respects both the profound solidarity of man with the rest of creation, and the special place assigned to him in the Bible.

13. Origen, Contra Celsum, ed. H. Chadwick (C.U.P. 1953) p.xf.

14. Cf. the remarks of E.F. Osborn, Justin Martyr, p.51, 'When the Fathers of the second century speak of man as the centre of creation, they are speaking from two impulses, one from the Bible and the other from the Stoics.' These twin sources of inspiration evoked the tension which we are observing.

15. The Copernican and Darwinian revolutions have revitalised theological discussion of this subject. Medieval theology generally held that 'an examination of the universe as a whole certainly must begin with the study of pure intelligences' (E. Gilson, in God's Activity in the World, p.213, reprinted from The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas), but divided over the relative priority of men and of angels. From this perspective alone, stiff if nevertheless futile opposition was voiced to the theories of both Copernicus and Darwin, the nature of this opposition illustrating the problems with the traditional theology of the place of man in creation. Yet recent scientific research has cast new and surprising light on the debate, pointing up the complexity and subtlety of the issues involved. The Copernican revolution, allied to the mechanistic view of the universe which grew from the developing science of astronomy, certainly contributed to that abasement of man which constitutes one stream issuing from the Enlightenment. Remarkably, the present consensus among cosmologists is that, whatever else may be said about it, the universe is 'designed' for man to evolve. To have the time which the universe has had, it needs to be as large as it is: space and time being inextricably linked. Furthermore, had various unique features of the universe been even slightly different, man could not have evolved: for example, in the early stages of cosmic evolution, the ratio of nucleons to photons, electrons and neutrinos must have been closely one to a thousand million. If that ratio had been either slightly larger or slightly smaller there would have been no nuclei heavier than hydrogen, and so no carbon and no possibility of life. For further examples simply explained, see P.E. Hodgson, Science and Creation, (Oxford : Farmington Institute Occasional Paper 17, 1985). Some cosmologists - and by no means only those who are religious - even speak now of 'the anthropic principle', in connection with the specificity of our universe as a home for man. The case with Darwin is hardly less interesting. The establishment of the fact of the process of evolution has established with force the 'solidarity' between man and the world, and in various ways has fostered contemporary interest in the doctrine of creation, although this has been complicated by a widespread confusion between recognition of the fact of the process of evolution and the reductionist mechanism hypothesized by Darwin. The latter has an increasingly beleaguered appearance, thus allowing the former insight its proper influence within a theology which confesses a providential, 'anthropic' purpose informing the process of evolution. These recent developments in physics and biology throw an interesting light upon the account, modified from that of other second-century theologians, which Irenaeus gives of the relation between God, man and the world. Without the advantages afforded by our modern perspective, we may judge him to have been engaged in a genuine struggle with the underlying issues involved.

16. G. Wingren's Man and the Incarnation constitutes a thorough attempt to reject any significant association between Irenaeus and the later conceptual distinction between nature and supernature, and this book lists the numerous publications prior to 1946 devoted to this area of his theology.

17. This Gnostic claim is pilloried in II.30-32, Irenaeus' chief argument being that the Gnostics are unable to demonstrate the possession of divine power which would necessarily accompany their divine nature.

18. Achamoth, from the Hebrew chokmah, wisdom, the hypostatized desire, or intention, of the Sophia once she had fallen by searching for the supreme Father. Irenaeus discusses Valentinian anthropogony in I.5-7. Subsequent research has endorsed Irenaeus' general description - see Jonas, op.cit. pp.183 ff.; Wilson, op.cit. pp.206 ff.; Nielsen, op.cit. pp.28 ff and Rudolph, op.cit. pp. 88 ff.

19. For example, Ephesians 2:6,19; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 11:13, 13:14 I Peter 2:11.

20. As is customary in this thesis, we use the translation of J.P. Smith. He cites in a note (p.168, n.163) a more literal rendering of part of this chapter: 'reproduced the scheme of his incarnation copy the incarnation of Adam': more literally 'took up the same dispensation (οὐνογονία) of incarnation with him show the likeness of incarnation with respect to Adam.'

21. The link between the christology and anthropology of Irenaeus has been discussed recently by R.A. Norris, 'The Problem of Human Identity in Patristic Christological Speculation', S.P., 17 (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), pp.147-159. Norris shows how Irenaeus' discussion proceeds along the lines we have indicated, in contrast to many later patristic authors who saw Adam as fashioned in the image either of the Logos or of the humanity of Jesus, and he also exhibits the tension, which results in a certain inconsistency, in Irenaeus himself - who, as we saw in an earlier chapter, can lapse into drawing rather a sharp distinction between the Logos and the humanity of Christ. For a related treatment, see also, D. Cairns, The Image of God in Man, (revised edn., London: Fontana, 1973), p.82f.

22. See, for example, V.I.3, (The heretics)'.....not considering that as, at the beginning of our formation in Adam, that breath of life which proceeded from God, having been united to what had been fashioned, animated the man, and manifested him as a being endowed with reason; so also, in the end, the Word of the Father and the Spirit of God, having become united with the ancient substance of Adam's formation, rendered man living and perfect, receptive of the perfect Father, in order that as in the natural Adam we all were dead, so in the spiritual we may all be made alive. For never at any time did Adam escape the hands of God, to whom the Father speaking, said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." And for this reason in the last times....His hands formed a living man, in order that Adam might be created after the image of God.'

23. It is this dimension of history, of the bodily life of man, which is missing from the recent criticism of Irenaeus' doctrine of the image of God in man offered by H.D. McDonald, The Christian View of Man (London:M.M.& S., 1981), pp.34ff.

24. 'For Irenaeus....the process by which the image is moulded in history is vital to the significance of the image as actually manifested', L.S. Thornton, op.cit., p.171. This aspect of Irenaeus' teaching forms a central theme of Thornton's book, which, so far as it goes, is most illuminating. Its chief weaknesses are, firstly, that it presents Irenaeus as too systematic and consistent, and, secondly, that it tends to ignore the radical significance of eschatology - a problem which Thornton shares with Irenaeus, as we shall shortly outline.

25. Clement of Alexandria and Origen were influential in developing the view that the image of God in man lay primarily, even exclusively, in the soul, the soul mediating between the spirit and the body much as the disincarnate Logos was the proper mediator between God and humanity. The influence of this close association between the image of God and the soul in man is evident in Athanasius (Contra Gentes 34), even if he eschewed the distinction between the image and likeness of God which had also become embedded in the Origenist tradition (see T.F. Torrance, Theology in Reconciliation (London : G. Chapman, 1975) p.242, referring to C. Kannengiesser). Augustine consolidated this association between the image of God and the soul (or, rather, the mens, the higher part of the soul, even if it be granted that Augustine's thought readily transcends such static distinctions), as J.E. Sullivan's study of Augustine, The Image of God (Iowa : 1963) has demonstrated in detail; cf. G.B. Lander, The Idea of Reform (Massachusetts : 1959) pp. 185ff. Calvin's discussion of the nature of the image of God in man (Institutes I.15.1), sharpened by disagreement with Osiander, adopts, albeit with caution and a certain correction, the Augustinian emphasis upon the soul as the proper seat of the image of God in man. As an illustration of the attempts of modern theology to recover the physical, bodily dimension of the image of God, we may refer to the interesting, if not yet established, thesis of D. Bonhoeffer and K. Barth that the image of God in humanity exists primarily in the relationship of man and woman, as the basic form of human relationship: see C.D., III.1, pp.194ff.

26. For example, II.31.2., 'And so far are they from being able to raise the dead, as the Lord raised them, and the apostles did by means of prayer, and has been frequently done in the brotherhood....that they do not even believe this can possibly be done, for the resurrection from the dead is simply an acquaintance with that truth which they proclaim'. Clearly there is at least an affinity here with the error mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:17f.

27. For example, with particular reference to the Valentinian account, I.7.1, 'The spiritual seed, again, being divested of their animal souls, and becoming intelligent spirits, shall in an irresistible and invisible manner enter in within the Pleroma....'; cf. I.30.14; II.30.5. For a broader account of Gnostic teaching on the 'resurrection', see Resurrection, by P. Perkins (New York : Doubleday, 1984), pp.356-362 .

28. V.3.1. of V.2.3, 'strength of God is made perfect in weakness'.

29. See, especially, V.3.1.

30. See V.5.

31. V.7.1.

32. V.8.1.

33. V.8.3.

34. V.14.4.

35. See, for example, IV.20.7, 10; 28.2; V.32.1.

36. In fairness, it must be said that Irenaeus did envisage a certain transformation in the resurrection, as the comparison he draws in V.10 with the wild and cultivated olive trees indicates: 'But as the engrafted wild olive does not certainly lose the substance of its wood, but changes the quality of its fruit....so also, when man is grafted in by faith and receives the Spirit of God, he certainly does not lose the substance of flesh, but changes the quality of the fruit of his works....showing that he has become changed for the better, being not mere flesh and blood, but a spiritual man....(V.10.2). The point Irenaeus fails to acknowledge is that the transformation he speaks of will possibly or probably include a transformation of the substance of the flesh. Of course, to an age which understands the ambiguity of matter qua matter, the second law of thermodynamics, and the inherent instability of life based upon carbon and oxygen, such a transformation of the substance of matter coheres more easily with the belief in the goodness of creation.

37. Irenaeus' scattered references to the ascension generally speak simply of Jesus' assumption into heaven (e.g. I.10.1; III.12.1, 3,9,13; IV.33.13; 34.3; Dem.83ff.), and tend to miss the mysterious dimension hinted at in the New Testament: that Christ ascended through, or above, the heavens (Hebrews 4:14; 7:26), that He might fill all things (Ephesians 4:10). While it would be true to say that the Gospel of John appears, at least to some degree, to assimilate the ascension to the resurrection, this produces a more mysterious concept of resurrection than we find in Irenaeus. The adoption of too close an analogy between the resurrection of Christ and our resurrection tends to preclude satisfactory consideration of the eternal fate of such people as children who die young, Neanderthal man, etc..

38. Cf. the discussions of this point by J.T. Nielsen, op.cit., p.82 and J. Lawson, op.cit., pp.229ff.

39. C.S. Lewis has made some interesting remarks on this subject. He acknowledges with respect to the resurrection of the body that, 'the old picture of the soul reassuming the corpse - perhaps blown to bits or long since usefully dissipated through nature - is absurd. Nor is it what St. Paul's words imply....We are not, in this doctrine, concerned with matter as such at all: with waves and atoms and all that. What the soul cries out for is the resurrection of the senses. Even in this life matter would be nothing to us if it were not the source of sensations.' (Letters to Malcolm, London: Geoffrey Bles, 1964, p.154f). Lewis continues with the interesting suggestion that our ability, through memory, to allow our present to contain yet

transform our past might provide an imperfect analogy to the continuity yet transformation implied in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. These ideas have received further attention in recent work on 'narrative' theology: for example, see G. Stroup, op.cit.. Very similar thoughts to those of Lewis are expressed by A. Farrer, Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited, (London: Collins, 1962), ch.5, 'Man Redeemed', esp. p.110.

40. V.12.4

41. Justin, I Apol.19; Theophilus, Ad Autol., I.7f; Athenagoras, Legatio 36.3. To Justin and Theophilus it is the apparent miracle of morphogenesis of a body from the seed of human semen which provides the analogy to the resurrection. We would note two things about this argument. Firstly, although superficially resembling that of St. Paul in 1Cor.15, the contrasts of 1Cor. 15:35-54 between the earthly and the spiritual bodies are largely missing. Secondly, the belief that growth is a miracle provides a further illustration of our thesis that orthodox writers in the second century too readily tended to confuse the activity of God with the contingent activity of creation.

42. The justification for regarding the resurrection as embracing, at least as its first stage, reconstitution and resuscitation, is prominent in each of the three writers just mentioned. It is present in Irenaeus (see, for example, V.32), but is less prominent, partly because the theme of growth and development has a clearer place in his theology. Similarly, there is less interest shown in Irenaeus in the resurrection of the wicked to judgement: it is the resurrection of the righteous which is normally under discussion.

43. In expounding St. Paul, Origen made considerable use of 1Cor.15:5f. See, in particular Contra Celsum V.18 ff (ed. H. Chadwick, pp.277 ff), and DePrincipiis II.10.3 (ed. H. de Lubac, Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1973, p.140), where, after refuting 'the heretics', he directs the discussion to 'some of our own people', who either from poverty of intellect or from lack of instruction, introduce an exceedingly low and mean idea of the resurrection of the body'.

44. V.31.1: 'For the heretics, despising the handiwork of God, and not admitting the salvation of their flesh....affirm that immediately upon their death they shall pass above the heavens and the Demiurge, and go to the Mother (Achamoth) or to that Father whom they have feigned'.

45. A certain contrast between Dem.61 where the prophesied renewal of nature appears to be applied, at least in part, to the present time of the Church, and A.H. V.32-35, has encouraged some to doubt Irenaeus' adherence to millenarianism: see the discussion in J.P. Smith, op.cit., p.129, n.107; p.196, n.270, and G. Wingren, op.cit., pp.188ff. But in order to weaken Irenaeus' millenarian doctrine, Wingren, for example, is less than fair to the evidence: on p.190 he claims that, 'there is not a single mention of the words "thousand years" throughout Irenaeus' description of the Kingdom of the Son'; but even if we can agree that Irenaeus' millenarianism is less pedantic than that of some others, Wingren overlooks V.28.3: 'For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded'.

46. V.32.1; 35.2. cf. IV.20.7, where the historical character of revelation is declared fundamental to the relation between God and man, 'lest man should at any time become a despiser of God, and that he should always possess something towards which he might advance', and IV.38.3 where the theme of growth is expounded at length: 'by continuing in being throughout a long course of ages....man makes progress day by day, ascending towards the perfect, that is, approximating to the Uncreated One.'

47. Compare V.33.3 with Revelation 22:2. For a fuller discussion of the setting of Irenaeus' millenarianism amid similar or related conceptions, see J. Daniélou, The Theology of Jewish Christianity, pp.377-404.

48. The Wound of Knowledge, p.26.

49. Wingren, op.cit., p.153f. Wingren provides a selection of references to the literature before 1946. The issue here overlaps with another theological cause célèbre for which Irenaeus has frequently been called to the witness stand, if to testify in different ways, that is, the relation between the image and likeness of God in man.

50. The astonishing range of meanings given in the Old Testament to nephesh, from 'corpse' to 'principle of life', illustrate the predominant Old Testament view that man is a psycho-somatic whole. Modern historico-critical study has shown that Hebrew anthropology began to suffer distortion by the imposition of Greek categories of soul and body when the Septuagint was produced: 'Nephesh occurs 755 times in the Old Testament and on 600 occasions the Septuagint translates it by $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ Today we are coming to the conclusion that it is only in a very few passages that the translation 'soul' corresponds to the meaning of 'nephesh' (H.W. Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament, London : S.C.M., 1974, p.10).

51. For example, II.33.4: 'For the body is not possessed of greater power than the soul, since indeed the former is inspired, and vivified, and increased, and held together by the latter; but the soul possesses and rules over the body....For the body may be compared to an instrument; but the soul is possessed of the reason of an artist'. This passage also illustrates the difficulty of giving a fully satisfactory account of Irenaeus' psychology, for he normally ascribes vivification to the Spirit, seeing the soul as the seat but not the source of human rationality and life. Elsewhere, Irenaeus can speak of salvation coming to the body through the soul: 'But the Word set free the soul, and taught that through it the body should be willingly purified'. (IV.13.2)

52. K. Rudolph, op.cit., p.109, discusses the importance of this idea in Gnosticism.

53. This is stated explicitly in II.19.6: 'Just as water when poured into a vessel takes the form of that vessel....souls themselves possess the figure of the body....' Cf. IV.Praef.4: 'Now man is a mixed organization of soul and flesh, who was formed after the likeness of God, and moulded by His hands.....'

54. For example, V.6.1: 'Those, then, are the perfect who have had the Spirit of God remaining in them, and have preserved their souls and bodies blameless, holding fast the faith of God....and maintaining righteous dealings with respect to their neighbours'.

55. V.2.2f: 'But if the flesh does not attain salvation, then neither did the Lord redeem us with His blood, nor is the cup of the eucharist the communion of His blood, nor the bread which we break the communion of His body....When, therefore, the mingled cup and the manufactured bread receives the Word of God, and the eucharist of the blood and the body of Christ is made, from which things the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they affirm that the flesh is incapable of receiving the gift of God, which is life eternal....' Cf. IV.18.5. Mention should also be made of Irenaeus' interesting, if isolated, remark, that it is blood which forms 'the bond of union between soul and body' (V.3.2).

56. Unfortunately only his alternative account of baptism is available, in Church Dogmatics IV.4. (fragment), although his general views are clear both from this and from the previous part-volumes of Volume IV, where his new understanding of the sacraments is implicit, and, on occasions, explicit - see, for example, C.D. IV.2. p.55f. The expression 'demythologisation' is Barth's own : C.D. IV.4. p.v. . The unwillingness of the Church to face the issues he has raised is perceptively commented upon by Barth himself, in the preface to C.D. IV.4.

57. Cf. V.8.1. 'But we do now receive a certain portion of His Spirit, tending towards perfection....This earnest, therefore, thus dwelling in us, renders us spiritual even now, and the mortal is swallowed up by immortality.'

58. Hebrews 1:3.

59. We recall here Irenaeus' Christology, discussed in Chapter Two, one strand of which drew a sharp distinction between the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, this being balanced by a great emphasis upon the unity of Jesus Christ.

60. An interesting comparison exists here with another notable aspect of the theology of Karl Barth. In C.D. III.2, pp.344-365, he developed the thesis that man is not spirit, except as he has the Spirit of God, or, better, as the Spirit of God has him (p.354f). Much of Barth's exposition recalls Irenaeus, although his name does not feature in the text, and it might shed light upon the lively discussion of his anthropology if its relation with that of Irenaeus was explored. Certainly, the critique of Irenaeus offered here has parallels in those of Barth by G.S. Hendry, The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology, pp.108-117, A.I.C. Heron, The Holy Spirit, pp.140-144, and R.S. Anderson, On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology, pp.210-212. Among these authors only Hendry (op.cit., p.116) relates Barth to Irenaeus, and, interestingly, Heron and Anderson do not remark upon the apparent shift in Barth's position in the posthumously published draft of C.D. IV.4, The Christian Life (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark 1981) p.90, where he speaks of a human spirit as distinct from the Holy Spirit. This change perhaps relates to the

modification in eschatology which occurred during the writing to the Church Dogmatics, as a comparison with the earlier statement indicates: 'We have to see, then, that accurately and seriously understood the concept of conscience (like that of the "spirit" in man corresponding to the Holy Spirit and in contradistinction to body and soul) cannot be classed as an anthropological but only as an eschatological concept' (C.D.II.2, p.667f). Similarly, we have seen how in Irenaeus anthropology and eschatology are closely linked.

61. V.9.3.

62. The impetus for a recovery of these ideas in modern Western theology derives in significant measure from the seminal books by J. Oman, Grace and Personality (London : C.U.P., 1917, 1919 and 1925), and M. Buber, I and Thou (originally translated into English in 1937, now issued in a revised translation by W. Kaufman, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979).

63. With this train of thought we may compare II.33.5, where it is said that the righteous have spirits, but the unrighteous do not, since they have 'stood apart from the grace of God', and Dem.8, where the God who is 'sustainer and nourisher for all alike' grants to the faithful 'the testament of adoption of sons'.

64. III.6.1; IV.9.2; V.8.1.

65. At first sight, Irenaeus' position is at the opposite extreme: 'And therefore, when the number is completed, which He had predetermined in His own counsel, all those who have been enrolled for life shall rise again, having their own bodies, and having also their own souls, and their own spirits, in which they had pleased God. Those, on the other hand, who are worthy of punishment, shall go away into it, they too having their own souls, and their own bodies, in which they stood apart from the grace of God....so that the number of mankind, corresponding to the fore-ordination of God, being completed, may fully realise the scheme formed by the Father' (II.33.5). Caution is necessary, however, because it cannot be assumed that Irenaeus was using the term spirit in the same way as I am.

66. Of course, the philosophical background of the concept of 'soul' has always proved problematic at the level of philosophy and theology; it is the unrelenting force of the scientific challenge which has proved decisive. Nevertheless, the remarkable range of the overlapping terms used in the Old Testament to describe the being of man should have been taken much more seriously than has generally been the case. On these see H. Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament, pp. 7-79.

67. The inevitable introduction of such confusion was the chief reason underlying the rejection of trichotomy at the Fourth Council of Constantinople in 869-870.

68. The passage from epistemology to ontology is charted by Polanyi himself in the introduction to The Tacit Dimension (London: R.K.P., 1967), and explained in detail in ch.2 of The Tacit Dimension, as well as in a number of separately published essays. These are listed in Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society, 23 (1977), p.447.

69. 'On the Modern Mind', in Psychological Issues, 8, no.4 (1974), p.136f., first published in Encounter, 15 May 1965.

70. In Polanyi's view, it is the ability to acquire language which enables God - or the world of transcendent values - to summon human intelligence to responsible choice. This ability to acquire language he believes to be due simply to the higher general intelligence of man, granted to him by the astonishing increase in brain size which mysteriously accompanied his evolution from the apes. Hence we can understand - and readily acknowledge - the limited ability of some animals to reproduce certain features of humanity, in expression of feeling and even, in the case of highly trained apes, the first rudiments of language. What must be regarded as disastrous is the reception into Christian theology of a distinction between man as rational and the rest of the animal kingdom as irrational, a distinction we have seen in Irenaeus, albeit in a qualified form. Indeed, on Polanyi's view, it is man who is both the most rational and most irrational animal, for whereas plants are subject to malformation and disease, and animals to illusion and error, in man, in addition, we see a developed potential for moral evil, each ontological level possessing a distinctive double potential for good and evil. From this perspective we can readily understand a curious feature of human existence, namely, that man is the creature who is both most vulnerable in his physical existence, as illustrated by his total dependence on his parents for a lengthy period, and yet, when adult, the creature who can best cope with physical ailment and disability.

71. This relatedness is not itself destroyed by sin, although a radical change occurs in the nature of the relation. Cf. Hendry, The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology, p.115 '...there can be no immanent principle of a relation to God in sinful man. But, while sin alienates man from God, this does not mean that there is no spirit in man. Man remains a being endowed with creative spirit (for spirit is the distinctive mark of man, and without it he would not be man); but spirit in sinful man becomes the principle of his lost relation to God; for man's relation to God is always a relation in freedom, and spirit is the principle of freedom'. Although fundamentally correct in his insistence that man essentially is spirit, Hendry misses the depth of relation inherent in the nature of man as spirit. Man may reap what he has sown, but the nature of that which he reaps (and sows) is determined by the transcendent level of meaning, which is God. In this sense there is an 'immanent' principle of a relation to God in sinful man, as Barth, in particular, would hold. Two recent publications have made proposals along the lines advocated here, although both fall short of the position I am advocating. R.S. Anderson, On Being Human, pp.207-214, 'Body, Soul, Spirit', recognises the problem with the Barth of C.D. III.2, but allows only a definition of human spirit in a positive relation to the Spirit of God, the problem thus re-emerging. P.W. Newman, 'Humanity with Spirit', S.J.T., 34 (1981), pp. 415-426 recognises (p.425) the need for theology to engage with 'the vast literature of the scientific study of humanity', but does not himself attempt to do so. His suggestion (p.424) that 'personality' replace human spirit lacks definition, as illustrated by his rather despairing claim that 'only humans have personality in the strict sense of the word'. If human beings cannot have spirit because of the essential difference between God and man, how can Newman retain a belief that God is personal, if personality is the essential distinguishing feature of man?

72. One of the few points of agreement between the contributors to the interesting collection of essays and responses, Encountering Evil : Live Options in Theodicy, ed. S.T. Davis (Edinburgh : T. & T. Clark, 1980), concerns the basic importance of the theodicy question, and the paradigmatic character of the Holocaust. The remarkable level of recent interest in the subject of theodicy is illustrated by the review article of M.L. Peterson 'Recent Work on the Problem of Evil', American Philosophical Quarterly, 20, (1983), pp.321-339, which lists more than 150 mostly philosophical books and articles published since 1965. This is apart from the many publications of a more fundamentally theological nature, which have been stimulated by the idea of the suffering of God.

73. Questions concerning the origin and nature of evil figure prominently in the extended discussion, in II.28, of the limitations of human knowledge in general, to which we have already referred.

74. II.28.7. The a posteriori approach to theology is expressed with particularly clarity in I.10.3, one of its aspects, which can only evoke the response, 'Oh!, the depths of the riches both of wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!', being why 'God manifested long-suffering in regard to the apostasy of the angels who transgressed, as also with respect to the disobedience of men.'

75. While it is true that Irenaeus occasionally refers to the envy of the devil (e.g. IV.40.3, V.24.4), and to elements of the myth of the Fall of the Watchers (e.g. IV.36.4, Dem.18), he does not use these ideas systematically to explain the origin of the malice exhibited in the emotion and activity thus described. For a discussion of the relation between Irenaeus and Jewish pseudepigraphical literature, see D.R. Schultz, 'The Origin of Sin in Irenaeus and Jewish Pseudepigraphical Literature', V.C., 32 (1978), pp.161-190. Although illuminating, Schultz overstates one of his major conclusions, that Irenaeus 'borrowed ideas solely from the pseudepigraphical tradition in formulating his theory of recapitulation' (p.190).

76. This is the expression of J. Hick, Evil and the God of Love (London: Fontana, 1968), p.68f, who comments: 'The basic and inevitable criticism is that the idea of an unqualifiedly good creature committing sin is self-contradictory and unintelligible. If the angels are finitely perfect, then even though they are in some important sense free to sin they will never in fact do so. If they do sin we can only infer that they were not flawless - in which case their Maker must share the responsibility for their fall....' This is the fundamental point developed by A.P. Hayman, opera cit., in his account of the Rabbinic response to the Pauline understanding of sin.

77. It has been disputed that Origen did hold such a view, but, although a degree of uncertainty must remain, his theological premisses do lead in this direction, as his disciple Gregory of Nyssa certainly concluded.

78. The anthropomorphism of the conception qualifies the purported mystery of the angelic fall, allowing the whole notion to undergird the attempt of Irenaeus to explain the co-operation of grace and free will, the blame for the fall of man being shared between the devil

and man, with the devil taking the greater share, and the salvation of man being ascribed in different proportions to both God and man. Hence the attraction of similar conceptions to a modern age which wishes to avoid the extremes of 'Pelagianism' and 'Calvinism', as is illustrated by the variation proposed by N.P. Williams (in The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin) of 'a collective fall of the race-soul of humanity at an indefinitely remote past' - see Hick's discussion of this proposal, op.cit., p.287 f. The major difficulty with systematic treatments along these lines is that they attempt to explain too much - a charge which could similarly be laid before A. Plantinga and others who have revived the free will defence.

79. The distinction commonly drawn in recent discussion between the 'logical problem of evil', and the 'emotional problem of evil', with the free will defence applying to the former alone, seems to me to be most unsatisfactory : can human experience be divided in this fashion? For this distinction, see M.L. Petersen op.cit., and the contribution of S.T. Davis to Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy, with the critique by J.H. Hick on p.87. For a recent sustained critique of all attempts to explain and justify the existence of evil, including that of Hick, see K. Surin, 'Impassibility and Evil', S.J.T., 35 (1982), pp.97-115 and 'Theodicy?', H.T.R., 76 (1983), pp.225-47. Surin is concerned that we should not confuse good and evil, the danger endemic in all theodicies.

80. IV.41.1.

81. V.22.2.

82. See the discussion and comparison in E.F. Osborn, The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria, p.77f. The idea of the unreality of evil readily blends with that of the unreality of matter, as we see in those Christian theologians who were especially influenced by Platonism.

83. See the extract from I.10.3, quoted above. Presumably Origen would have regarded Irenaeus' account of the fall of angels, and their ultimate destiny, as Gnostic! Certainly Irenaeus is vulnerable to the charge of inconsistency : if the omnipotent God, who foreknows everything, can arrange to 'untie the knot of disobedience' (III.22.4; cf. V.19.1) of man, could the same not have been arranged in respect of the disobedient angels? Could their 'fall' not also receive some amelioration in the light of their created nature, the defence which, as we shall see, Irenaeus uses for Adam?

84. Cf. The similar train of thought in V.26.2. III.7 is also instructive: Irenaeus attempts to show that 'the God of this world' of 2Cor. 4:5, who has 'blinded the minds of them that do not believe', is God Himself. While there are indeed other Pauline sayings which could support Irenaeus' interpretation, by forcing 2Cor. 4:5 into their mould he misses the depth of the issue which engaged St. Paul. Irenaeus would have found John 12:31, 16:11, difficult verses, with their reference to the judgment of 'the ruler of this world' : he makes no reference to them.

85. R.F. Brown, 'On the Necessary Imperfection of Creation', S.J.T., 28 (1975), pp.17-25. Brown acknowledges that other theologians had earlier drawn attention to this feature of Irenaeus' thought, notably, J.H. Hick, in Evil and The God of Love.

86. Eusebius, Church History, V.20, informs us that Irenaeus also devoted a lost letter to the subject 'Concerning Monarchy', or 'That God is not the Author of Evil'.

87. I would emphasise the word 'developed', for one of the shortcomings evident in discussion of these chapters of A.H. has been the assertion that the arguments they contain are incompatible with much of the rest of the work. Earlier German scholarship readily attributed these chapters to one of the 'sources' of A.H. into which many parts of the book were dissected, but without endorsing speculative literary reconstruction, R.F. Brown, in his recent article, op.cit. p.18, maintains their incompatibility with other parts of Irenaeus' theology : 'In his protracted rebuttal of Gnostic sects, Irenaeus repeatedly emphasises the unqualified goodness of the creation. But in IV.38 he springs upon the reader the surprising contention that Adam, as first created by God, was imperfect'. That there is a tension between different ideas is true, as we shall show, but the theme of the contrast between God and creation, the Changless and change, is present through Irenaeus' writings, as we shall also demonstrate.

88. In III.23.5, Irenaeus presents the circumstances of Adam's fall as even more extenuating : 'For, having been beguiled by another under pretext of immortality, he is immediately seized with terror, and hides himself....feeling unworthy to appear before and to hold converse with God. Now, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" the sense of sin leads to repentance, and God bestows His compassion on those who are penitent....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. Cf. Dem.12,14 where Adam and Eve are spoken of as children who were easily led astray.

89. To choose one obvious example, II.5.4 argues that 'It is not seemly, however, to say of Him who is God over all, since He is free and independent, that He was a slave to necessity, or that anything takes place with His permission, yet against His desire'. The contrast with IV.38 is not the conflict Meijering, op.cit. p.34 asserts, for the Gnostic necessity attacked in Book Two is different from that defended in IV.38, but a tension between the two accounts remains. Later in the same book (p.71) Meijering attacks Irenaeus' position in IV.38 as follows: 'To say that God could have made man perfect in the beginning, but that man could not yet have endured perfection since he had been newly created and was still a child is a nonsensical statement, since it is no answer to the question why man had not been created in such a way that even as a newly created being he could endure perfection'. If somewhat speculative, Irenaeus' argument is hardly nonsensical, especially when it is combined with the associated claim that God desires and wills a free response on the part of man - indeed, on p.34 Meijering has already referred to Irenaeus' discussion as 'profound'. The answer to the question, 'could God have made man perfect?', is surely that it all depends on what God's purpose was. Irenaeus' arguments are an attempt to explore the nature of God's purpose, even if he can speak too confidently in the process.

90. For expositions of Schleiermacher's position, see J.H. Hick, op.cit. pp.225-241, and K. Barth, C.D. III.3, pp.319-334. Both Hick (p.239) and Barth (p.332f.) acknowledge the crucial importance of our question.

91. Even when giving his strongest defence of an 'instrumental' view of evil, Irenaeus clearly senses the problem, relying upon the statement of Scripture to silence doubts : 'What, therefore? (as some may exclaim:) did the Lord wish, in that case, that His apostle (Paul, in relation to his illness) should thus undergo buffeting, and that he should endure such infirmity? Even so it was; the word says it. For strength is made perfect in weakness...' (V.3.1) If Irenaeus does anticipate the optimism of Leibniz, it is not so systematically expressed. J. Hick (op.cit., p.160) has endorsed K. Barth's statement that, 'at bottom Leibniz hardly had any serious interest (and from the practical standpoint none at all) in the problem of evil' (C.D.III. 1, p.392). Such an accusation could not so readily be levelled against Irenaeus.

92. My basic question to Hick, therefore, concerns his lack of soteriology, or, perhaps, its postponement to an indeterminate, speculative, teleological, eschatology! Is atonement, for Hick, much more than the communication of God's timeless decree that all men shall be saved?

The detailed accuracy of his treatment of Irenaeus cannot be discussed here, except to note that he ignores Irenaeus' use of the idea of an angelic fall, and subsequent free will defence, omissions which are not unrelated to the absence of soteriology in Hick's own theology. In his later writings, in fact, he is more cautious in ascribing his own ideas to Irenaeus, as is illustrated by his comments on p.41 in Encountering Evil : Live Options in Theodicy, although Irenaeus still retains the role of 'patron saint'!

93. Although the theme of martyrdom is only introduced at the end of Book Five, the underlying principle employed here is invoked in relation to general theme of resurrection. Thus V.2.3 and V.3.1 use the 'strength is made perfect in weakness' and 'thorn in the flesh' statements from 2Corinthians 12.

94. The inferiority of creation to the Creator is a particular theme of Book Two of A.H. : see, for example, II.6.1, 17.10; 25.3; 28.2; 34.2. It also recurs in subsequent Books, before its presentation in IV.38 : see, for example, III.8.3; IV.11.2; 20.2.

95. A related anti-typology exists in the parallel Irenaeus draws between the tree in the Garden of Eden, which helped to cause sin, and the cross of wood by which Christ has redeemed us (see V.16.3; 17.3, 4). These parallels have value in relation to the basic idea of ἀνακεφαλαιωσις, the achievement of Christ answering directly the sin of Adam, but we see here in Irenaeus a tendency for the theory to run ahead of the evidence.

96. See especially III.3. In Irenaeus' defence it must be acknowledged that his concept of tradition was more charismatic than that found in some later writers, but the claim to an exclusive monopoly of revealed truth remains. Mutatis mutandis, a similar critique could be applied to his understanding of the uniform witness of Scripture.

97. Some earlier writers drew the conclusion from V.I.1 and other passages that Irenaeus held an early form of the theory of a ransom paid to the Devil. In this connection we can agree with J. Lawson (op.cit. p.197) when he endorses the conclusion, 'that Irenaeus would allow some right to the Devil, as he is to be treated according to the rules of justice, but that he does not fall into the gross error of supposing that the blood of Christ was handed over as a ransom. There is no question of strict legal rights.'

98. An interesting partial contrast exists with Athanasius, who believed that when originally created, Adam and Eve were both more perfect and subsequently more culpable, than Irenaeus' account would suggest. See De Inc. 4f. Athanasius has less interest in the processes of history, with the growth of man to maturity. From our modern perspective we favour Irenaeus' basic outlook at this point. Athanasius' general attitude to creation was undoubtedly influenced by the sharp distinction he drew between the eternal begetting of the Son and the contingent creation of the world. The consequent emphasis upon the superiority of God over creation easily led to a certain denigration of the latter : 'Since the whole Creation had once begun, by the will and pleasure of God, "out of nothing", an ultimate "meonic" tendency was inherent in the very "nature" of all created things..... Their existence was precarious. If there was any order and stability in the Cosmos, they were, as it were, super-imposed upon its own, "nature", and imparted to created things by the Divine Logos', G. Florovsky, 'St. Athanasius' Concept of Creation', p.49.

99. See I Apol. 29. In the background here is the Platonic belief that truth is basically spiritually perceived, this being hindered by the deceptive images of sensible objects. The soul's attention should be fixed, therefore, upon the changeless forms of things, upon beauty which is above the space and time of our direct experience. The influence of this way of thinking upon the Apologists has been well described by H.B. Timothy, The Early Christian Apologists and Greek Philosophy. Associated with this greater valuation placed by Irenaeus upon this world of change and experience is his comparative lack of interest in the existence and activity of demons. By contrast, for the Apologists, 'demonology occupies an important place; and in their treatment of it there are distinct traces of philosophical influence....' (J. Daniélou, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, p.428).

100. G.L. Bray, Holiness and the Will of God (London : M.M. & S., 1979) p.91, is therefore less than fully accurate with his recent criticism of Irenaeus' view of the nature of sin as 'thinly disguised Platonism'.

101. Cf. II.28.3, where 'through the many diversified utterances (of Scripture) shall be heard one harmonious melody', and V.13.3 where is asserted the hymnic unity of body, soul and Spirit. IV.14.2 contains a reference to 'the symphony of salvation', alluding perhaps to the music which greeted the return of the prodigal son (Luke 15:25), this parable being referred to in the same chapter.

102. For further recent reflection upon the significance of musical analogies for understanding issues of theology, see, for example, C.E. Gunton, Yesterday and Today, (London : D.L.T., 1983) pp.115-125, and T.F. Torrance, The Ground and Grammar of Theology, pp. 134 ff. .

103. Irenaeus' exegesis in V.15, of the story of the healing of the man born blind is instructive here. Although the story maintains the opposite, Irenaeus traces the man's blindness to sin, but then identifies the purpose of the man's healing as, 'that he might both know Him who had fashioned him, and that man might learn from Him who has conferred upon him life' (V.15.3). But the story is not so anthropological : its emphasis is not upon the education of the man born blind, but upon his healing at the hand of God. The whole thrust of the miracle stories in the New Testament is that the suffering relieved is not a positive, useful feature of human life.

104. Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited, p.163. An earlier account along similar lines has been given in the rather neglected work of O.C. Quick, The Gospel of the New World, (London : Nisbet, 1944). Quick's careful analysis shows both the relatedness of evil to good, and their sharp differentiation, with a consequent critique of the view that evil is merely defect or privation.

105. Op.cit., p.184.

106. Belief in Science and in Christian Life, pp.119-122. I would suggest, albeit tentatively, that this approach, which sees 'relatedness amid unrelatedness', is an improvement upon the much criticised Barthian doctrine of shadowside and nothingness. The problem with Barth's discussion is the lack of attention to the relation between the shadowside and nothingness, the great advantage being his attempt to hold together both the reality of nothingness and its determination by God. The shadowside of creation is more tragic than Barth allows, and nothingness has a more 'comprehensible' status than he is prepared to admit.

107. Quoted by Irenaeus in this context in V.35.2; 36.1.

108. Christian Faith, p.170.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

H. Chadwick has written of Justin Martyr : 'The division between critics who have found in Justin a great thinker and theologian and those who have dismissed him as a fool, if not a knave, goes back to the sixteenth-century debates'.¹ An analogous division and debate has characterised Irenaeian studies, especially since the nineteenth century. It is the suggestion of the present thesis that neither alternative offers a satisfactory assessment of the worth of Irenaeus' theology.² While accepting the basic accuracy of his critique of Gnosticism, we have also acknowledged a series of related problems and tensions in his theology. Even Irenaeus' most staunch defenders have admitted that he took into his theology opinions which were destined not to last,³ but we would go rather further and suggest that a more fundamental and far-reaching problem concerns the nature of the relation between God and creation which Irenaeus' theology assumes. In part this results from an over-reaction to Gnostic dualism, but, in part, it also reflects the adoption of the framework of thought which was commonplace in second-century philosophy and theology. G.L. Prestige has remarked that:

.....the Apologists were quite prepared to accept the existence of angelic forces whose function was to control and direct the operations of nature, in a manner which presents obvious similarities with Stoic doctrine, though they were careful to reckon such beings among creatures, and declined to confuse them with the transcendent God of the universe. Such a theory combined the advantages of maintaining divine control and yet avoiding any taint of pantheism.⁴

In three related ways we have seen how Irenaeus modifies the theology of the Apologists : he brings these forces into a closer relation with God, develops thereby a less dualistic doctrine of God, and avoids

pantheism by exalting the divine will in such a way as to posit too 'necessary' and close a relation between God and the world.

Although we can warmly endorse Irenaeus' intention to secure the doctrine of the essential goodness of creation, today we are less confident than many of our fore-runners that providence can be proved and demonstrated as unambiguously as once was thought. It was left for Irenaeus' successors to develop a political theology which sanctified the existing social order and even, to some degree, deified kings. For centuries such a conception of providence held sway, but contemporary theology has widely challenged the assumptions upon which a position is built, recalling the prophetic critique of that hallowing of the existing religious and political order which afflicted ancient Israel.

With Irenaeus we are seeing the adoption of certain ideas which were to bear such fruit in the fourth century and beyond. We have suggested that the roots of this development lie partly in the reaction to Gnosticism, partly in the espousal of a framework of thought provided by second-century philosophy, and partly (perhaps) in a waning of the more enthusiastic, eschatological expectation which characterised first-century Christianity.

The process of institutionalisation in the Church of the early centuries is well documented, but adequate studies of the intellectual consequences - or causes - are only now beginning to appear. Irenaeus occupies an interesting intermediate position, which makes him a particularly important, if elusive, subject of study. In his writings we see a blanket appeal to the apostolicity of the historic succession of bishops, with a consequent suppression of the diversity of Scripture

and tradition, and a failure to appreciate the possibility that even good bishops could err in serious ways. However, we also find a certain flexibility of approach to theological and ecclesiastical questions, and an acceptance of a variety of traditions which could be serviceable in the articulation of the central truth of the Gospel. On several occasions Irenaeus refers naturally, and even with warmth, to the continuing charismatic dimension to the church, but prophets were already an endangered species, and they play no important role in his overall theological and ecclesiastical scheme.

Yet the very receptivity of Christian thinkers to Greek philosophical ideas should not conceal from us the fact that they were often trying to articulate novel conclusions. The novelty derived from the particular conception of the nature of God which lay at the heart of early Christian experience, and especially from the doctrine of creation, which encouraged Christian thinkers to employ, in suitably adapted form, philosophical ideas in the service of the Gospel. For two related reasons, both of which are well exhibited by Irenaeus, this process of the articulation of Christian theology was inevitably slow: the faith of the Church was corporate and essentially implicit.

The corporate nature of the Christian faith, as this found expression in the first centuries of our era, is well illustrated from the New Testament itself, where modern scholarship has laid bare the literary inter-dependence of documents, and the probable existence of a Pauline 'school' responsible for some epistles, which had erstwhile been attributed simply to the hand of St. Paul. In a similar way, Irenaeus clearly felt no awkwardness in using thoughts and ideas, transmitted in either oral or written form (or both), provided by

earlier writers. Older German scholars were led to disparage Irenaeus as a lesser theologian for his 'plagiarism', but, unless we are willing similarly to disparage St. Luke and St. Matthew, the charge derives from a misunderstanding of the nature of theology in the first and second centuries.

Naturally, if often unconsciously, we read the New Testament in the light of subsequent dogmatic developments, using these as signposts to guide our thinking. Christians of the earliest period did not have these advantages (even if, in some respects, they are a mixed blessing). Instead, they were rather like settlers of a new and exciting country, in full possession of it, but as yet but partially aware of the implications of the new life they were leading. The immediate task was to colonise the habitable regions of the area, this process having its own dynamic, with many problems being faced and answered in a somewhat ad hoc fashion along the way.⁵ Subsequently, the need arises for a certain constitutional uniformity, and with the Church the analogous need arose, above all, as a consequence of the Gnostic crisis. With Irenaeus, we see the Church changing into a theological gear which previously had been left comparatively unexplored.

In assessing the adequacy of Irenaeus' theology of God and creation, we were perhaps more impressed with his treatment of the doctrine of God. At various points in his doctrine of creation, we were forced to ask just how seriously he appreciated the essential paradox, or mystery, which the notions of creation and redemption enshrine. Yet, it might be argued that this problem is derivative from an underlying inability of Irenaeus to break out of the philosophical idea of the changelessness of God, bequeathed to him from contemporary

philosophical theology. Whichever way the problem is viewed, we have been impressed by the difficulty experienced by the early Church in giving adequate expression and attention to the theology of creation. The nature of the prevailing philosophical climate has to be taken into account here, for it is interesting to observe the inverse difficulty experienced by twentieth-century theology, in maintaining and expressing an adequate doctrine of God. As with Irenaeus, the doctrines of God and creation are closely linked, and, despite the concentration upon man and created reality since the enlightenment, we have also seen a great struggle in modern theology to cultivate a satisfactory doctrine of creation.

For all their differences, then, we can observe certain parallels between the situation confronting theology in the second and twentieth centuries. Philosophical syncretism in the aftermath of a break up of established Greek philosophy; a certain stress upon this world, and therefore upon the humanity of Jesus Christ; an emphasis upon the soteriology inevitably posing, and yet also threatening, the question of creation; an age of anxiety, despite much comparative material wellbeing; a widespread tendency to conceive the relation between God and creation as dualistic; the ready development of myth to challenge historic Christianity; in these and other ways our era shares much in common with the time of Irenaeus. A proper appreciation of the tasks, achievements, and pitfalls of theology in the second century, especially at the hand of probably its greatest exponent, has much to teach us today.

1. 'Justin Martyr's Defence of Christianity', p.276.
2. A good example of the vigorous debate which has occurred over Irenaeus is provided by E. Brunner, The Mediator, E.T., Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947, pp.249-264, where Brunner attempts to demolish Harnack's account of Irenaeus.
3. For example, see E. Brunner, op.cit., p.263, and L.S. Thornton, Revelation in the Modern World, p.287.
4. God in Patristic Thought, p.27f..
5. The character of the doctrinal exploration of the first Christians is well illustrated by St. Paul's grappling with the Christian attitude to the Law, a major problem posed for the leaders of the Gentile mission. C.E.B. Cranfield has commented perceptively upon the nature of the problem: '....it will be well to bear in mind the fact (which, so far as I know, has not received attention) that the Greek language used by Paul had no word-group to denote "legalist", and "legalistic". This means not just that he did not have a convenient terminology to express a key idea, but that he had no definite, ready-made concept of legalism with which to work in his own mind. And this means, surely, that he was at a very considerable disadvantage compared with the modern theologian, when he had to attempt to clarify the Christian position with regard to the law. In view of this, we should, I think, be ready to reckon with the possibility that sometimes, when he appears to be disparaging the law, what he really has in mind may be not the law itself but the misunderstanding and misuse of it for which we have a convenient term. It should also be borne in mind that in this very difficult terrain Paul was to a large extent pioneering. If we make due allowance for this fact, we shall not be so easily baffled or misled by a certain impreciseness of statement which we shall encounter'. ('St. Paul and the Law', S.J.T., 17(1964), p.55.)

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