

Dr. Heibert you may want to
read the entire chapter together
context of what Aulen is trying to say.
His comments about the devil operating by
the rules of fair play are in the context of
God being Fair.

// CHRISTUS VICTOR //

AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF
THE THREE MAIN TYPES
OF THE IDEA OF
ATONEMENT

by GUSTAF AULÉN



TRANSLATED BY

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IRENÆUS

WE HAVE now to undertake a survey, in broadest outline, of the history of the doctrine of the Atonement. We take for our starting-point the teaching of the Fathers, and begin with a study, in some detail, of Irenæus, the earliest Father to give a thorough treatment of the subject.

This method of procedure may seem surprising; but it has much to commend it. Every interpretation of the Atonement goes back to the New Testament texts, and seeks to base itself upon them; it is difficult, therefore, to read those texts without associating them with some pre-conceived theory. On the other hand, the teaching of Irenæus, a hundred years later, is quite clear and its meaning indisputable; there is, then, an obvious advantage in beginning at this point. The teaching of the early Fathers is bound to throw an important light on the teaching of the Apostolic age itself; and in general it may be remarked that it is often useful to read history backwards, and see how the subsequent development of thought illuminates the preceding stages.

The choice of Irenæus as our starting-point among the Fathers is amply justifiable on general grounds. It is true that we do not find in him the brilliant style of Tertullian, the philosophical erudition of Clement or Origen, or the reli-

gious depth of Augustine. Yet of all the Fathers there is not one who is more thoroughly representative and typical, or who did more to fix the lines on which Christian thought was to move for centuries after his day. His strength lies in the fact that he did not, like the Apologists and the Alexandrians, work along some philosophical line of approach to Christianity, but devoted himself altogether to the simple exposition of the central ideas of the Christian faith itself. Thus Bousset writes of him that he is *the* theologian who sets forth, more clearly than any of his contemporaries or immediate successors, "the future form of things";¹ that he is unexcelled in the richness and manifoldness of the ideas which he gathers up and expresses in simple and adequate formulations; and that in this respect he may be called the Schleiermacher of the second century. Our choice of Irenæus may, then, be justified on the ground of his general theological importance, as well as of the undoubted fact that he is the first patristic writer to provide us with a clear and comprehensive doctrine of the Atonement and redemption. The smaller writings of the Apostolic Fathers treat of this theme in a relatively incidental way, and the same is true of the extant works of the Apologists; though this does not at all imply that the subject itself was in any way of secondary importance for those writers. But with Irenæus it is otherwise. The idea of the Atonement recurs continually in his writings, freshly treated from ever new points of view; his basic idea is in itself thoroughly clear and unmistakable, and also, as we shall see in the next chapter, marks out the track which succeeding generations were to follow. We may, then, feel satisfied that we have found in Irenæus our true starting-point.

¹ "Die künftige Gestaltung der Dinge," *Kyrios Christos*, 3rd edn., p. 334.

I. THE PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION

*Ut quid enim descendebat?*² asks Irenæus. For what purpose did Christ come down from heaven? The answer which he gives to this question will be the key to his whole theology.

Passages from Irenæus are commonly quoted in this sense: Christ became man that we might be made divine; "we could not otherwise attain to incorruption and immortality except we had been united with incorruption and immortality."³ Without doubt these words contain an important side of his teaching; but the matter demands closer investigation.

Irenæus has been commonly interpreted by theologians of the Liberal Protestant school as teaching a 'naturalistic' or 'physical' doctrine of salvation; salvation is the bestowal of 'divinity'—that is, of immortality—on human nature, and the idea of deliverance from sin occupies quite a secondary place.⁴ The gift of immortality is regarded as dependent on the Incarnation as such; by the entrance of the Divine into humanity, human nature is (as it were) automatically endowed with Divine virtue and thereby saved from corruption. This is, then, a theology primarily of the Incarnation, not of the Atonement; the 'work' of Christ holds a secondary place. So Harnack interprets Irenæus: "The work of Christ is contained in the construction of His person as the God-man."⁵ Anglo-Catholic writers have not infrequently accepted and upheld a somewhat similar view of the Incarnation, in conscious opposition to the pietistic-orthodox doctrine of the

² *Adv. Hæreses*, II., 14. 7. For the quotations from Irenæus Harvey's text has been followed.

³ *Adv. Hæres.*, IV., 33. 4. Cf. "Quomodo enim homo transiet in Deum, si non Deus in hominem?" (III., 19. 1).

⁴ Cf. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, E.T. II., 274.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

Atonement which is characteristic of the Evangelical school, and have justified this rival emphasis on the Incarnation by the appeal to the Fathers.

It is true that such an opposition of the Atonement and the Incarnation would be intelligible enough if the only possible view of the Atonement were that of the Latin type; for, as we shall see later on, the Latin doctrine always involves an opposition, expressed or implied, between the Incarnation and the work of Christ. But the opposition becomes meaningless as soon as the 'classic' idea of the Atonement receives due consideration; for in this type of view the Incarnation and the Atonement always stand in the closest relation to one another. And other passages of Irenæus show that the interpretation to which we refer seriously misrepresents his meaning.

Let us, then, put the question again: For what purpose did Christ come down from heaven? Answer: "That He might destroy sin, overcome death, and give life to man."⁶ By the side of this pregnant saying we will set another, chosen from among many similar passages, which develops the dramatic idea in fuller detail: "Man had been created by God that he might have life. If now, having lost life, and having been harmed by the serpent, he were not to return to life, but were to be wholly abandoned to death, then God would have been defeated, and the malice of the serpent would have overcome God's will. But since God is both invincible and magnanimous, He showed His magnanimity in correcting man, and in proving all men, as we have said; but through the Second Man He bound the strong one, and spoiled his goods, and annihilated death, bringing life to man who had become subject to death. For Adam had become the devil's possession, and the devil held him under his power, by hav-

⁶ "Ut occideret quidem peccatum, evacualet autem mortem, et vivificaret hominem" (*Adv. Hæres.*, III., 18. 7).

ing wrongfully practised deceit upon him, and by the offer of immortality made him subject to death. For by promising that they should be as gods, which did not lie in his power, he worked death in them. Wherefore he who had taken man captive was himself taken captive by God, and man who had been taken captive was set free from the bondage of condemnation."⁷

In the first of these passages Irenæus speaks of sin and death as the enemies of mankind; in the second there emerges by the side of or behind death the figure of the devil. The main idea is clear. The work of Christ is first and foremost a victory over the powers which hold mankind in bondage: sin, death, and the devil. These may be said to be in a measure personified, but in any case they are objective powers; and the victory of Christ creates a new situation, bringing their rule to an end, and setting men free from their dominion.

What, then, is the place of the Incarnation in relation to the work of Christ and to His victory? It is indeed true, and it is of fundamental importance, that the Incarnation is the corner-stone of Irenæus' theology. But it is no more true to say that all depends on the Incarnation apart from the redemptive work than it would be to make all depend on the work apart from the Incarnation. To make an opposition between the two is altogether to miss the point. In Irenæus' thought, the Incarnation is the necessary preliminary to the atoning work, because only God is able to overcome the powers which hold man in bondage, and man is helpless. The work of man's deliverance is accomplished by God Himself, in Christ. This is the nerve of the whole conception. "The Word of God," he says, "was made flesh in order that He might destroy death and bring man to life; for we were

⁷ *Adv. Hær.*, III., 23. 1.

tied and bound in sin, we were born in sin and live under the dominion of death."⁸

Thus the answer which Irenæus gives to the question *Cur Deus homo?* is simple and transparently clear; there is no trace of the cleavage between Incarnation and Atonement which appears in Anselm. Naturally, therefore, we find him avoiding every such form of expression as would tend to make a separation between the Father and the Son, by treating Christ as some sort of intermediary being. So, for instance, the Apologists sometimes speak of Him as *δεύτερος Θεός*, a second God; and a tendency to use such phrases creeps in wherever the doctrine of the Logos is interpreted in the light of contemporary Greek philosophy. But the attitude of Irenæus—who here represents the main line of patristic thought—expresses a determined opposition to this philosophical influence, just because the point of crucial importance with him is that it is God Himself, and not any intermediary, who in Christ accomplishes the work of redemption, and overcomes sin, death, and the devil. When he uses the term Logos, it is in the Johannine sense: "the Word is God Himself";⁹ he never interprets the Logos as a Being separate from God, and he uses the term with a characteristic reserve, preferring as a rule to use the term Son. It is his constant teaching that God Himself has entered into this world of sin and death: "the same hand of God that formed us in the beginning, and forms us in our mother's womb, in these latter days sought us when we were lost, gaining His lost sheep and laying it on His shoulders and bringing it back with joy to the flock of life."¹⁰

The Divine victory accomplished in Christ stands in the centre of Irenæus' thought, and forms the central element in the recapitulatio, the restoring and the perfecting of the

⁸ *Epidēixis* 37. ⁹ "Verbum ipse Deus" (*Adv. Hær.*, II., 13).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, V., 15. 2.

creation, which is his most comprehensive theological idea. The Recapitulation does not end with the triumph of Christ over the enemies which had held man in bondage; it continues in the work of the Spirit in the church. At this point Irenæus' language is far from bearing out the imputation that his doctrine is 'naturalistic.' "They that fear God, and believe in the advent of His Son, and by faith establish in their hearts the Spirit of God, such are justly called men, and spiritual, and alive unto God, who have the Spirit of the Father, who cleanses man and exalts him to the life of God."¹¹ But the completeness of the Recapitulation is not realised in this life: Irenæus' outlook is strongly eschatological, and the gift of the Spirit in this life is for him the earnest of future glory. It remains true, however, that in the process of the restoring and perfecting of creation—for both are involved—the central and the crucial point is the victory of Christ over the hostile powers. It is to these that we must next direct our attention.

2. SIN, DEATH, AND THE DEVIL

First, we must ask in what relation the conceptions of sin and death stand to one another in Irenæus. We have already noted the assertion that he, in common with other Eastern theologians, places relatively little emphasis on sin, because he regards salvation as a bestowal of life rather than of forgiveness, and as a victory over mortality rather than over sin.

I shall hope to show that this assertion is quite misleading. To begin with, I should like to quote some words from the admirable little book of the Bulgarian theologian Stephen Zankow on the Eastern Church,¹² words which, though writ-

¹¹ *Adv. Hær.*, V., 9. 2.

¹² *Das orthodoxe Christentum des Ostens*. Quotation from the English translation, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, by Donald A. Lowrie (London, 1929), pp. 49-50.

ten primarily with reference to the Eastern Church in general, are thoroughly applicable to Irenæus:

"Salvation from what? From sin or from death? Western theologians like to put this contrast, and claim that the Orthodox put death in the foreground instead of sin. But this is scarcely true. Orthodoxy is quite inclined, it is true, to conceive of original sin as the result of the first sin, and death as the reward of sins; yet, as has been said, empirically one is not separated from the other; where sin is, there is death also, and *vice versa*. . . . To the Orthodox the question 'Why salvation?' is very clear: in order to be free from sin and death, in order to break down the wall of partition between God and men, to enter into inner and complete communion with God, to be at one with Him."

Zankow mentions the names of Athanasius and Chrysostom, besides a number of more recent theologians; he might equally have mentioned Irenæus, for this close association of sin and death is specially characteristic of him. But if this is so, there can be no essential opposition between the two in his teaching, nor can he have thought of the evil of sin as of secondary importance.

This may be illustrated by a double contrast. First, Irenæus is definitely opposed to a moralistic view, which would have no other meaning for sin than as separate and individual acts of sin; on the contrary, he always regards sin organically. Second, here as elsewhere he is openly at issue with the Gnostic teaching which found the seat of sin in matter and in the body, and thus divided human nature into two parts—a lower self which is full of sin, and a higher, spiritual self. He thinks of sin as affecting the whole man. It is from one point of view an objective power, under which men are in bondage, and are not able to set themselves free; but from another point of view it is something voluntary and wilful, which makes men debtors in relation to God. "They who

have fallen away from the Father's light, and transgressed the law of liberty, have fallen away through their own fault, for they were made free and self-determining. . . . Submission to God is eternal rest; so that they who fly from the light have such a place of flight as they deserve, and they who fly from eternal rest reach such a dwelling-place as befits their flight. But since all good is to be enjoyed in God, they who of their own choice fly from God defraud themselves of all good things."¹³

Mankind is thus guilty in God's sight, and has lost fellowship with God. Men were "by nature sons of God, because they were created by Him, but according to their deeds they are not His sons. For as among men disobedient sons, disowned by their parents, are indeed sons according to nature, but in law have become alienated, since they are no longer the heirs of their natural parents, so with God, they who do not obey Him are disowned by Him and cease to be His sons."¹⁴ There is, then, enmity between mankind and God, an enmity which can only be taken away through an Atonement, a *reconciliatio*.¹⁵ The enmity, which was expressed on God's side in the punishment of corruption which rested upon men, is now abolished by God Himself. He "had pity on men, and flung back on the author of enmities the enmity by which he had purposed to make man an enemy to God; He took away His enmity against men, and flung it back and cast it upon the serpent. So the Scripture says: I will put enmity between thee and the serpent, and between thy seed and the seed of the woman; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt watch for his heel. This enmity the Lord recapitulated in Himself, being made man, born of a woman, and bruising the serpent's head."¹⁶

We see now how it is that in Irenæus' thought sin and

¹³ *Adv. Hær.*, IV., 39. 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, IV., 41. 2, 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, V., 14. 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, IV., 40. 3.

death are inseparably associated. Sin involves death; but it is also, as Bonwetsch is fully justified in saying, "a component part of death."¹⁷ It is not merely that death is mortality and the loss of immortality; disobedience to God *is* essentially death. "Fellowship with God is life and light, and the fruition of the good things that are with Him. But on those who voluntarily rebel against God, He brings separation from Him; and separation from God is death."¹⁸ It is passages such as this which explain the association of sin and death in Irenæus, and his use of the two terms to some extent interchangeably; when he speaks of salvation from death, his thought includes the idea of salvation from a state of sin. We have also here the explanation of his constant emphasis on salvation as a bestowal of Life. Life means for him primarily fellowship with God, the partaking of the life of God, and therefore also a deliverance from sin.

It is, then, wholly false to assume that in Irenæus the idea of sin is thrown into the background by a naturalistic conception of salvation. The truth is rather that Irenæus' organic view of sin as a state of alienation from God saves him both from a moralistic idea of sin and a moralistic idea of salvation. We may further remind ourselves that in all this he is in no way original; the ideas which we have been considering had already found full and clear expression in the New Testament, particularly in the Pauline and Johannine epistles, where we find the most definite statements that salvation is life, in direct connection with the thought of Christ as victor over sin and over death. In fact, the teaching that salvation is the bestowal of life holds the secret of the note of triumph which is characteristic of Apostolic Christianity.

By the side of Sin and Death Irenæus ranges the devil. But the phrase 'by the side of' scarcely does justice to his

¹⁷ "Ein Bestandtheil des Todes," *Die Theologie des Irenäus*, pp. 80 f.

¹⁸ *Adv. Hær.*, V., 27. 2.

thought; it is rather that, like later Eastern theologians, he passes insensibly from the one to the other. Yet at the same time it is certainly true that he thinks of the devil as having in some sense an objective existence, independent of sin and death. He is the lord of sin and death; he deceived mankind; and as men have followed him, they have fallen under his power, so that they may even be called his sons. "Those who do not believe in God, and do not do His will, are called sons, or angels, of the devil, since they do the works of the devil."¹⁹ From the devil's dominion men cannot escape, except through the victory of Christ; and this victory is specially a triumph over the devil, for the devil is regarded as summing up in himself the power of evil, as he who leads men into sin and has the power of death. In a passage which describes the devil as a rebel and a robber, Irenæus says: "The Word of God, who is the creator of all things, overcame him through man, and branded him as an apostate, and made him subject to man. See, says the Word, I give you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy."²⁰

But though the thought of the victory of Christ over the devil occurs very frequently in Irenæus, it is not so dominant a theme with him as with some of the later Greek Fathers, and it is not elaborated with anything like the same wealth of imagery. In particular, the realistic imagery which became exceedingly common later on is almost absent from Irenæus; there is only a trace in him of the theme of the Deception of the devil, which became to some of the other Fathers a subject of engrossing interest.

There is, however, one point that demands closer attention: the place which Irenæus finds for the element of justice in Christ's victory over the devil. The following is a characteristic passage: "He who is the almighty Word, and true

²⁰ *Ibid.*, V., 24. 4.

¹⁹ *Adv. Hær.*, IV., 41. 2.

man, in redeeming us reasonably (*rationabiliter*) by His blood, gave Himself as the ransom for those who had been carried into captivity. And though the apostasy had gained its dominion over us unjustly, and, when we belonged by nature to almighty God, had snatched us away contrary to nature and made us its own disciples, the Word of God, who is mighty in all things, and in nowise lacking in the justice which is His, behaved with justice even towards the apostasy itself; and He redeemed that which was His own, not by violence (as the apostasy had by violence gained dominion over us at the first, insatiably snatching that which was not its own), but by persuasion (*secundum suadelam*), as it was fitting for God to gain His purpose by persuasion and not by use of violence; that so the ancient creation of God might be saved from perishing, without any infringement of justice."²¹

The statement which is sometimes made, that Irenæus is here propounding a 'juridical' doctrine of the Atonement, shows a complete misconception of his meaning. The real point is rather to be expressed as follows. Irenæus has two different ways of expressing the righteousness of God's act of redemption. According to the first, the devil cannot be allowed to have any rights over men; he is a robber, a rebel, a tyrant, a usurper, unjustly laying hands on that which does not belong to him. Therefore it is no more than justice that he should be defeated and driven out. The constant emphasis of Irenæus on this point is explained by his controversy with Marcion and the Gnostics; in opposition to the doctrine of the creation of the world by the Demiurge, he is jealous to insist that by the fact of his creation man belonged from the beginning to the true God, and that the God of redemption is also the God of creation.

But at the same time Irenæus also exhibits the righteousness of God's redemptive work, by showing that in it He does

²¹ *Adv. Hær.*, V., 1. 1.

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not use mere external compulsion, mere brute force, but acts altogether according to justice. "God deals according to justice even with the apostasy itself." For man after all is guilty; man has sold himself to the devil. Behind the somewhat obscure language about 'persuasion' (*secundum suadellam*) lies the thought that Christ gave Himself as a ransom paid to the devil for man's deliverance. Irenæus shrinks from the assertion which some of the later Fathers are prepared to make, that the devil has gained, in the last resort, certain actual rights over man; he is restrained by his sense of the importance of maintaining, against the Gnostics, that the devil is a robber and a usurper. Yet the underlying idea is present: the "apostasy" of mankind involves guilt, and man deserves to lie under the devil's power. In his reply he goes no further than to say that God acts in the way "that befits God"; even with the devil God deals in an orderly way. To call this a juridical doctrine of the Atonement is nonsense. Irenæus' real meaning would be more truly expressed by saying that God observes "the rules of fair play."

3. THE ATONING WORK

We must next ask how Irenæus sets forth the actual accomplishment of the work of atonement, and what special features he emphasises in his portrayal of Christ. We shall see that he traces a continuous line from the Incarnation, through the entire earthly life of Christ, and His death, to His resurrection and exaltation, and that no one point in this line claims anything like an exclusive emphasis.

We have already dealt with the contention that he lays the whole weight on the bare idea of the Incarnation; we have seen that, on the contrary, the Incarnation is essentially the indispensable basis on which the subsequent work of redemption rests. If he can sometimes speak of salvation as bestowed through the coming of Christ in the flesh, it is

evident that he has no idea of playing off the Incarnation against the redemptive work; he is simply using a *pars pro toto*, including in the Incarnation all that to which it led up. The contention of Bonwetsch²² that the Cross, and with it the Resurrection, holds no central place in Irenæus' thought, would be true enough in the sense that no exclusive emphasis is laid by him on the Cross; but in fact Bonwetsch's meaning seems to be that Irenæus treats the death of Christ as of quite secondary importance. As against this, Brunner is fully justified in claiming, in his excellent study of Irenæus in *Der Mittler*,²³ that the death of Christ has essentially the same significance for Irenæus as for Paul. But he too seems to be guilty of a shortening of the perspective, since the line which he draws stops short at the death. In truth, the emphasis which Irenæus lays on the triumph of Christ through conflict, and his interpretation of salvation as life, leads by an inner necessity to a stress on the Resurrection and Ascension.

Irenæus is altogether free from the tendency, which has shown itself at times in later theology, to emphasise the death of Christ in such a way as to leave almost out of sight the rest of His earthly life. It is remarkable what great weight he attaches to the Obedience of Christ throughout His life on earth. He shows how the disobedience of the one man, which inaugurated the reign of sin, is answered by the One Man who brought life. By His obedience Christ 'recapitulated' and annulled the disobedience.²⁴ The obedience is the means of His triumph: "By His obedience unto death the Word annulled the ancient disobedience committed at the tree."²⁵ This victorious obedience is specially seen in the

²² *Op. cit.*, p. 113.

²³ P. 229. This book contains a vigorous criticism of Harnack, which is for the most part sound, but is not always fully justified.

²⁴ *Adv. Hær.*, III., 21. 10; 22. 4. ²⁵ *Epidexis* 34.

Temptations. But also His preaching and teaching are expressly regarded in the same light; the teaching by which we "learn to know the Father" forms an element in Christ's victory over the powers of darkness. Need it be added that it is beside the point to make this an excuse for reproaching Irenæus with 'intellectualism'?

But if the earthly life of Christ as a whole is thus regarded as a continuous process of victorious conflict, it is His death that is the final and decisive battle.²⁶ Naturally, Irenæus employs a whole series of biblical images. Here and there he uses the formula that Christ has redeemed us "by His blood"; but he has a special liking for the image of ransom, to which we have already alluded. The ransom is always regarded as paid to the powers of evil, to death, or to the devil; by its means they are overcome, and their power over men is brought to an end. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that when this has been done, atonement has taken place; for a new relation between God and the world is established by the fact that God has delivered mankind from the powers of evil, and reconciled the world to Himself. At this central point, God is both the Reconciler and the Reconciled. It is

²⁶ There is, indeed, in Irenæus no depreciation of the significance of Christ's death; and the remarks of Seeberg (*Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, 2nd edn., I., p. 330) fall into the mistake of reading Irenæus in the light of the Latin doctrine of the Atonement. Seeberg says: "The cross of Christ has not (in Irenæus) the significance which, after Paul, was usual. The death of Christ is indeed regarded as necessary, on account of the recapitulation; but the forgiveness of sins has not its basis in this, but appears as a function exercised by Christ in virtue of His Deity." He refers to *Adv. Hær.*, V., 17. 2, where Irenæus says: "Thus, in forgiving sins, He made men whole, and showed clearly who He was." Seeberg's argument shows a complete incapacity to understand the thought of Irenæus, and the nature of the classic idea of the Atonement. It may be remarked that it has always been something of a problem for the Latin theory how Christ could forgive sins in the days of His ministry. The classic idea finds, of course, no difficulty here; but this does not in the least involve any depreciation of the significance of the death on the cross.

God who, as active, accomplishes the work of salvation; but at the same time He is also, as passive, reconciled, because the bondage of helplessness under the powers of evil, from which He delivers man, is also, from another point of view, an enmity involving man's guilt.

This double-sidedness, of Divine activity and passivity, appears again when Irenæus uses the analogy of sacrifice to interpret the work of Christ. The sacrifice of Christ has relation both to God and to the powers of evil. On the one side "by His passion Christ has reconciled us to God";²⁷ on the other, it is God Himself who makes the sacrifice. "Abraham in faith followed the command of the word of God, and with a ready mind gave up his only-begotten son as a sacrifice to God; that it might also be the good pleasure of God, on behalf of all his seed, to give up His beloved and only-begotten Son as a sacrifice for our redemption."²⁸ Here the thought of sacrifice passes immediately to that of ransom. But the attribution to God alternately of activity and of passivity shows how very far we are in Irenæus from the rational theory of the Atonement which took shape as the Latin doctrine. It corresponds in fact to the double-sidedness of the Pauline formula: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself."²⁹

Assuredly, then, the death of Christ holds a central place in Irenæus' thought. But, we must add at once, it is not the death in isolation; it is the death seen in connection, on the one hand, with the life-work of Christ as a whole, and on the other with the Resurrection and the Ascension; the death irradiated with the light of Easter and Pentecost.³⁰ The

²⁷ "Per passionem reconciliavit nos Deo" (*Adv. Hær.*, III., 16. 9).

²⁸ *Adv. Hær.*, IV., 5. 4. ²⁹ 2 Cor. v. 19.

³⁰ Some words of Zankow (*op. cit.*, p. 55) are as true of Irenæus, and of the later Greek Fathers, as of Eastern Christianity in general: "Christ's Resurrection is inseparably connected with His death on the cross. For the Orthodox Church, as well for its theology as for its popu-

whole order of his thought, his whole emphasis on the victory of life, makes it clear that he cannot rest till he has brought us to the thought of Christ as the Lord of Life. The Resurrection is for him first of all the manifestation of the decisive victory over the powers of evil, which was won on the cross; it is also the starting-point for the new dispensation, for the gift of the Spirit, for the continuation of the work of God in the souls of men "for the unity and communion of God and man."⁸¹ "The passion of Christ brought us courage and power. The Lord through His passion ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men, and gave power to them that believe in Him to tread upon serpents and scorpions and upon all the power of the enemy—that is, the prince of the apostasy. The Lord through His passion destroyed death, brought error to an end, abolished corruption, banished ignorance, manifested life, declared truth, and bestowed incorruption."⁸²

Irenæus' whole line of thought thus stands out in harmonious clearness. The Word of God, who is God Himself, has entered in under the conditions of sin and death, to take up the conflict with the powers of evil and carry it through to the decisive victory. This has brought to pass a new relation between God and the world; atonement has been made. The mercy of God has delivered men from the doom which rested upon them. Thus a clear and simple answer has been given to the question *Ad quid descendebat?* Christ came down from heaven because no power other than that of God Himself was able to accomplish the work that was to be done. Incarnation and atoning work are thus set in the

lar conceptions, salvation is only finally complete in the Resurrection. Sin and death are conquered, and life is bestowed upon men. Only the Resurrection is the real earnest of salvation and of eternal life."

⁸¹ "In adunitionem et communionem Dei et hominis" (*Adv. Hær.*, V., 1. 1). ⁸² *Adv. Hær.*, II., 20. 3.

closest possible relation to one another; both belong to one scheme.

There is yet one point that requires further comment, particularly in view of its importance in the subsequent history of the doctrine of the Atonement. The work of redemption is accomplished by Christ as man; might it not, then, seem that we have in Irenæus the same teaching which is specially characteristic of the Latin doctrine of the Atonement—namely, that Christ as man, from man's side, makes an acceptable offering to God? It might be possible to quote passages such as the following: "If man had not defeated the enemy of man, the enemy would not have been fairly (*juste*) overcome. Again, if God had not bestowed salvation, we should not possess it securely. And if man had not been united with God, he would not have been able to become partaker of immortality. For the mediator between God and man must through His relation to both bring both together into friendship and concord, that He might both present man to God, and that man might learn to know God."⁸³

To read Irenæus in the light of the Latin theory is, however, to miss the essential distinction. He does not think of the Atonement as an offering made to God by Christ from man's side, or as it were from below; for God remains throughout the effective agent in the work of redemption. "The Word of God, who is the creator of all, overcoming him (the devil) through man (*per hominem vincens eum*), and declaring him an apostate, made him subject to man."⁸⁴ The redemptive work is accomplished by the Logos through the Manhood as His instrument; for it could be accomplished by no power but that of God Himself. When Irenæus speaks in this connection 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

⁸³ *Ibid.*, III., 18. 6. ⁸⁴ *Adv. Hær.*, V., 24. 4.

human life of the Word of God, and found perfect expression in His work.

4. CONCLUSION

The teaching of Irenæus is clear and consistent, and forms a thoroughly typical example of that view of the Atonement which we have called the Classic Idea. It will be useful, in conclusion, to sum up briefly its essential features.

First, then, it must be emphasised that the work of atonement is regarded as carried through by God Himself; and this, not merely in the sense that God authorises, sanctions, and initiates the plan of salvation, but that He Himself is the effective agent in the redemptive work, from beginning to end. It is the Word of God incarnate who overcomes the tyrants which hold man in bondage; God Himself enters into the world of sin and death, that He may reconcile the world to Himself. Therefore Incarnation and Atonement stand in no sort of antithesis; rather, they belong inseparably together. It is God's Love, the Divine *agape*, that removes the sentence that rested upon mankind, and creates a new relation between the human race and Himself, a relation which is altogether different from any sort of justification by legal righteousness. The whole dispensation is the work of grace. "Mankind, that had fallen into captivity, is now by God's mercy delivered out of the power of them that held them in bondage. God had mercy upon His creation, and bestowed upon them a new salvation through His Word, that is, Christ, so that men might learn by experience that they cannot attain to incorruption of themselves, but by God's grace only."²⁵

Second, it is to be emphasised that this view of the Atonement has regularly a dualistic background—namely, the reality of forces of evil, which are hostile to the Divine will.

²⁵ *Adv. Hær.*, V., 21. 3.

Consequently, so far as the sphere of these forces extends, there is enmity between God and the world. The work of atonement is therefore depicted in dramatic terms, as a conflict with the powers of evil and a triumph over them. This involves a necessary double-sidedness, in that God is at once the Reconciler and the Reconciled. His enmity is taken away in the very act in which He reconciles the world unto Himself.

In the next chapter we shall pass from Irenæus to the later Fathers. We shall see how repeatedly and how powerfully his central ideas recur in their teaching. We shall be constantly meeting the same general teaching, under various forms of expression, like a series of variations on a theme. But variations have an interest of their own.