

A Trinitarian Apologetic in the Second Century With Special Reference to the Idea of Stages of Human Development According to Irenaeus

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1. Introduction

Christological and Trinitarian reading of Scripture has been gaining increasing momentum recently among evangelicals.¹⁾ Already in the second century, Irenaeus takes up a Trinitarian reading of anthropology as an apologetic for the doctrine of the bodily resurrection in his times. Substantial studies about Irenaeus on the Trinity itself remain sparse since that of Jules Lebreton in 1928.²⁾ Even the more recent monograph by Jackson Lashier addresses different functions in the economy, but not specifically the resurrection.³⁾ Michel Barnes provide helpful reflections on

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- 1) I mention here the most recent publications; e.g., R. B. Jamieson and T. R. Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning, Christological and Trinitarian Rules for exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022); M. N. Pierce, *Divine discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews: the recontextualization of spoken quotations in scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); S. D. Brandon, *The Trinity in the Book of Revelation: seeing Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in John's Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022); R. C. Barcellos, *Trinity and Creation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020); A. Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021).
- 2) J. Lebreton, *Histoire du Dogme de la Trinité des origins au concile de Nicée* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1928).

certain aspects of Irenaeus's Trinitarian theology,⁴⁾ yet none of these studies pay attention to the bishop's Trinitarian theology in relation to the doctrine of the resurrection, which covers particularly the first twenty-four chapters in his final book of *Against Heresies* (AH).⁵⁾ Why is Trinitarian theology critical for Irenaeus in defending the 'resurrection of the flesh' against the gnostic accounts of salvation? I propose in this article that, for Irenaeus, the Son's and the Spirit's acts of embracing the temporary human existence is necessary to justify the Creator's promise to redeem human beings after the fall. For this reason, Irenaeus argues that it is imperative to consider each stage of the Trinitarian operation on human beings in redemptive history, substantiating that the final transformation including the body is what God had intended and promised all along. Thus, for Irenaeus, the creation of Adam, the incarnation, and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, are all to be understood as three progressive stages in human development consummating at the resurrection.

In what follows, I shall describe Irenaeus's Trinitarian events of the economy for the resurrection by close readings of what I call 'key passages' that focus on the idea of union between

3) J. Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity*, Vigiliae Christ. Suppl. (Brill, 2014).

4) M. René Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," *Nova et Vetera* 7:1 (2009), 67-106, treats some 'key passages' to locate their theological significance in the second century. A. Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2018, focuses on Irenaeus's conception of the divine being proper and limits his discussion of the divine economy to the work of Christ.

5) These chapter divisions by M. A. Donovan, *One Right Reading* (Liturgical Press, 1997) is helpful. All English text of *Adversus Haereses* are taken from A. Roberts, and J. Donaldson eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (ANF): *The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325 Volume I—The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (Eerdmans, 1989). Greek and Latin quotations of AH are taken from A. Rousseau et al. eds., *Irenée de Lyon, Contre les Hérésies, Sources chrétiennes* (SC) (Paris, 1965-82). All English text of *Epideixis* (hereafter, *Epid.*) are taken from *On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. J. Behr (St Vladimirs Seminary Press, 1997) unless otherwise noted.

God and humankind, which is essential for human development. It will be shown how the passages are relevant to the resurrection according to the uniquely proper acts of each divine Person addressed. But we shall first observe how this is arguable from the structural design of the text as laid out for us by Irenaeus.

2. The Structural Design of AH 5.1-24

Two important clues are helpful indicators for seeing the overall direction and flow of Irenaeus's argument in AH 5.prff – 5.24. First, the trinitarian structural design is evident and can be confirmed by observing how Irenaeus arranges these chapters into three sections and discusses resurrection according to the roles of the three divine Persons:

The operation of all three Persons of the Godhead (AH 5.prff. – 5.2)

The role of the Father (AH 5.3 – 5.5)

The role of the Spirit (AH 5.6 – 5.13)

The role of the Son (AH 5.14 – 5.24)

Secondly, the introductory material (AH 5.prff. – 5.1) is clearly helpful. To be sure, he gives painstakingly detailed evidence of various subjects in the remaining chapters, while his mind also moves laterally between events from different dispensations to underscore God's purpose and end for humanity in redemptive history. But this pattern of referencing human destiny according to God's purpose in the main body of his argument has already been laid out in this introductory material. Irenaeus plainly tells us the purpose of his writing the fifth book in its preface: 'I shall endeavor, in this the fifth book of the entire work which treats of the exposure and refutation of knowledge falsely so called, to exhibit proofs [...] casting away their doctrines as filth by means of the celestial faith; but following

the only true and steadfast Teacher, the Word of God, 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*.⁶⁾ With this purpose in mind, the bishop sets out his lengthy exposition on the resurrection of the body. But first, he opens the discourse with a condensed description of the whole divine economy from creation to consummation (AH 5.1.1), perhaps like a prologue that can orient his readers to situate his argument on the resurrection doctrine:

Again, we could have learned in no other way than by seeing our Teacher and hearing His voice with our own ears, that, having become imitators of His works as well as doers of His words, we may have communion with Him, *receiving increase from the perfect One*, and from Him who is prior to all creation. We—who were but lately created by the only best and good Being, by Him also who has the gift of immortality, having been formed after His likeness [...] have received, in the times known beforehand, [the blessings of salvation] according to the ministration of the Word, who is perfect in all things, as the mighty Word, and very man, who, 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, powerful in all things, and not defective with regard to His own justice, 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

6) A similar note was prefaced in the first book: Since ‘certain men [...] draw away the minds of the inexperienced and take them captive, [I have felt constrained, my dear friend, to compose the following treatise in order to expose and counteract their machinations’ (AH 1. Prf. 1). Certainly, Irenaeus reminds his readers here why he has begun this task, but a special significance may also be attached to what he is about to write.

its own, but by means of persuasion, as became a God of counsel, who does not use violent means to obtain what He desires; so that neither should justice be infringed upon, nor the ancient handiwork of God go to destruction. 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 *for the union and communion* (ἔνῳσις καὶ κοινωνία / *adunionem et communionem*) of God and man, imparting indeed God to men by means of the Spirit, and, on the other hand, attaching man to God by His own incarnation, and bestowing upon us at His coming immortality durably and truly, by means of *communion* with God,—all the doctrines of the heretics fall to ruin.⁷⁾

In this abbreviated salvation history, the phrase of particular interest is ‘communion with Him.’ In fact, he states it three times to convey what three things it does: (1) we are ‘receiving increase from the perfect One’; it is (2) ‘imparting God to man by means of the Spirit,’ and (3) ‘attaching man to God by His own incarnation and bestowing upon us [...] immortality.’ Perhaps grounded in that immanent Trinitarian relationship, communion with God is the ultimate end for believers, but in the meantime, this communion was also intended for human development as he later explains what this ‘increase’ entails: ‘To as many as continue in their love towards God, does He grant communion with Him. But communion with God is life and light, and the enjoyment of all the benefits which He has in store.’⁸⁾ Now, the phrase ‘union and communion’ seems to be reserved for two historical events, namely, the incarnation and the Spirit’s indwelling the believers.⁹⁾ As we shall see, these two unions are essential for further communion with God, although both are central to human

7) AH 5.1.1; SC 153: 20-21; italics mine.

8) AH 5.27.2.

9) As Irenaeus says elsewhere of the incarnation, ‘He *united* man with God and wrought a *communion* of God and man’ (*Epid.*, 31; italics mine).

destiny which culminates in the final resurrection to have eternal communion with God. Such assertion regarding communion with God also recurs numerous times throughout the book.¹⁰⁾

With this ultimate destiny in mind, Irenaeus's argument for the resurrection stems from his reflection on human development. Specifically, three divine acts embrace temporal human existence in increasing intensity, according to the respective role of each divine Person: First, God's breath at creation uniting with Adam's body was prophetically signifying the second epochal event of human development, namely the Spirit's union with Christ at his baptism is the model for the Spirit's indwelling of believers from Pentecost. The third and final stage of human development is also modeled by Christ's bodily resurrection as the ultimate destiny of believers for their union and communion with God. To grasp just how Irenaeus makes use of this panoramic redemptive history in these three stages, one can hardly do better than examine the substance of his specific arguments under each stage of human development.

3. The Stages of Human Development

3.1. God united his breath of life to his handiwork (AH 5.3 – 5.5)¹¹⁾

Why did Irenaeus begin with the creation narrative as he defends the doctrine of the resurrection? Aside from observing

10) AH 5.1.1; 5.1.3; 5.2.2; 5.9.4; 5.11.1; 5.12.2; 5.14.2; 5.14.3; 5.17.3; 5.27.1.
For communion in relation to the Trinity, see *Epid.*, 6.

11) In AH 5.7.1 (SC 153:86), Irenaeus identifies this breath as the soul in man; this is not to say that animals do not have their own immaterial substance, but their 'souls' would be less complex and less richly structured according to their kind.

that his typical Christological reading of the Scriptures is in play here, at least two reasons may be suggested: (1) each of the three members of the Trinity are committed to developing humankind by embracing what is made in God's image and likeness, and (2) his readers can grasp that God's uniting his breath with Adam was only a temporary provision for the natural life, still awaiting for the permanent means to restore fellowship with God.

First, Irenaeus stresses that God is wise and powerful to unite with his creatures in different ways at different times in keeping with his divine economy. He begins his argument against those who already accepted the authority of the Genesis narrative:

Vain also are the Ebionites, who do not receive by faith into their soul *the union of God and man*, but who remain in the old leaven of [the natural] birth, and who do not choose to understand that the Holy Ghost came upon Mary [...] Therefore do these men reject the commixture of the heavenly wine, and wish it to be water of the world only, not receiving God so as to have *union with Him*, but they remain in that Adam who had been conquered and was expelled from Paradise: 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 times of] 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 (*fine*), not by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man, but by the good pleasure of the Father, His hands formed a living man, in order that Adam might be created [again] after the image and likeness of God.¹²⁾

Here, Irenaeus identifies rejection of the union of God and human beings as Ebionites' stumbling block from belief in the bodily resurrection. For this reason, he draws a parallel between the creation of Adam and the incarnation. Although the parallel between the two is not the same at every point, the clause 'as at the beginning [...] so also' indicates (1) that in both cases a divine action brought forth a certain union—God's 'breath of life' united with the first Adam and 'the Word and the Spirit of God' united with the last Adam; (2) that God's purpose in following one after the other is to redeem human beings that 'we may all be made alive' and have communion with God forever;¹³⁾ (3) that God always had this commitment, for 'never at any time did Adam escape the hands of God,' and by citing John 1:12 and pointing to the rebirth of believers, Irenaeus says the incarnation was about restoring what was lost—by remaking creatures in the image and likeness of God. Above all, Irenaeus states in no uncertain terms that the purpose of the Word's uniting with the 'ancient substance of Adam's formation' was 'in order that we may all be made alive.' In saying this he was removing the Ebionites' view that physicality hinders union of God and the human being, not only because the incarnation is a direct refutation, but the Son's union with the same Adamic substance also rendered Christ 'perfect, receptive of the perfect Father.'

Secondly, Irenaeus explains why the character of the natural life needed to be temporary and provisional. In AH 5.3 – 5.5, Irenaeus seems he has the Valentinians in mind who maintained that the creator 'was produced [...] from that defect which had

12) AH 5.1.3; italics mine.

13) Similarly, for Irenaeus the purpose of redemption is eternal communion with God when we receive incorruption: 'He is true man and "Wonderful Counsellor and Mighty God," calling man back again to communion with God, that by this communion with Him we may receive participation in incorruptibility' (*Epid.*, 40).

been expelled beyond the Pleroma.’¹⁴) This would mean that they could inveigh Irenaeus’s God to be a deficient being for introducing death and decay to his creation including Adam.¹⁵) The bishop responds in three ways: First, mortality was a part of divine providence for teaching humility (AH 5.3.1). Secondly, our vulnerability to death and destruction does not negate that our body was still built with capacity to receive restoration and immortality. And thirdly, to create Adam for the first time is more difficult ‘than to re-integrate again that which had been created’ (AH 5.3.2) Thus, if deficiency of God’s power must be ruled out, it was his providential wisdom by which death was introduced.

3.2. The Spirit’s uniting himself with Christ prefigures believers’ life of righteousness (AH 5.6 – 5.13).

As in the prologue, Irenaeus highlights the Son’s agency, that it is Christ who sums up the effects of the fall in Adam, but also situates the Spirit’s indwelling a believer within the connected story of creation to the incarnation:

Now God shall be glorified in His handiwork, fitting it so as to be conformable to, and modeled after (*akolouthon*), His own Son. [...] [W]hen the Spirit here blended with the soul is united to [God’s] handiwork, the man is rendered spiritual and perfect (*teleios*) because of the outpouring of the Spirit,

14) AH 3.12.12.

15) AH 1.5.4; This is somewhat verified by *The Gospel of Philip* 75.2 (Marvin W. Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*): ‘The world came into being through a mistake. The creator wanted to make it incorruptible and immortal, but he failed and did not get what he hoped for.’ The general scholarship consensus follows Bentley Layton in accepting *The Gospel of Philip* as a Valentinian anthology possibly supplemented by other traditions.

and this is he who was made in the image and likeness of God. But if the Spirit be wanting to the soul, he who is such is indeed of an animal nature, and being left carnal, shall be an imperfect (*atelês*) being, possessing indeed the image [of God] in his formation (*in plasmate*), but not receiving the similitude through the Spirit; and thus, is this being imperfect.¹⁶⁾

Adam was not created ‘infantile,’ being unexercised in the use of his faculties (AH 4.38.1-2), but he was also imperfect insofar as still waiting to be indwelt by the Spirit. In saying Christ is the model of the Spirit’s blending with the soul, Irenaeus is indebted to Justin, but goes a step further. Trypho objected that if ‘the root of Jesse’ refers to Christ whom Justin claims already existed as God, why does Isaiah 11:1 say ‘the spirit of God shall rest upon him’ as though he had lacked the gifts of the Holy Spirit? Justin responds, much like Irenaeus, that ‘the gifts of the Holy Spirit were bestowed upon him, not as though he were in need of them.’¹⁷⁾ But while Justin interprets the expression ‘rest upon him’ in the sense of Christ having the last prophetic office, Irenaeus interprets it to have a bigger significance. To be sure, Irenaeus agrees with Justin that ‘the Spirit of God [would] rest upon Him and anoint Him to preach the Gospel to the lowly,’ but further, the Spirit descended upon him at baptism ‘so that we, receiving from the abundance of His unction, might be saved.’¹⁸⁾ In fact, he explicitly says that the Son’s union with human nature through the incarnation, and later anointing at baptism, was in view of helping human nature to be ‘accustomed’ to receive God.¹⁹⁾ Thus, in saying

16) AH 5.6.1 (SC 153.72 – 77).

17) Justin *Dial.* 87.2 (trans. Thomas Falls).

18) AH 3.9.3.

19) AH 3.20.2 reads, ‘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.’ Likewise he also says we do now receive a certain portion of His Spirit, tending towards perfection, and

‘[W]hen the Spirit here blended with the soul is united to [God’s] handiwork, the man is rendered spiritual and perfect (*teleios*) because of the outpouring of the Spirit,’ Irenaeus shows the connection between God’s breath in the first Adam and this anointing with the Spirit upon the last Adam at baptism, and that the latter event was on behalf of the believers whose human nature will become ‘accustomed’ to the communion with the Spirit from the Pentecost thenceforth. It is true, he grants, that we are now given only a small forestate of what is to come when the full measure of the Spirit’s power will manifest in man: ‘For if the earnest, gathering man into itself, does even now cause him to cry, “Abba, Father,” what shall the complete grace of the Spirit effect?’²⁰ Thus, this renewed theological anthropology becomes the bishop’s fundamental presupposition for the rest of this entire section on the role of the Holy Spirit for the promise of the resurrection.

But Irenaeus goes further. To say that this renewed anthropology is ‘modeled after’ its prototype is not merely about a metaphysical ontology. The controverted verse, ‘flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God’ (1 Cor 15.50) is reductively interpreted by the Valentinians merely to assert that the material substance is incapable of salvation.

Irenaeus’s response is more comprehensive because he sees that metaphysical status brings forth ethical outcome. The presence of the Spirit in the human nature produces a life of righteousness.²¹ His opponents err, Irenaeus argues, since they

preparing us for incorruption, being little by little accustomed to receive and bear God (AH 5.8.1).

20) AH 5.8.1.

21) Irenaeus also cites 2 Corinthians 5.4 to affirm communication between the material and immaterial substances: ‘If, therefore, in the present time, fleshly hearts are made partakers of the Spirit, what is there astonishing if, in the resurrection, they receive that life which is granted by the Spirit?’ (AH 5.13.4).

do not pay attention to why the Spirit was joined to human beings. They are designed to be ‘complete’ in constitution, but also with respect to their mission to become like their model in holiness:

[The soul] sometimes sympathizes with the flesh, and falls into carnal lusts [...] [but] if it admit[s] the ready inclination of the Spirit to be, as it were, a stimulus to the infirmity of the flesh, it inevitably follows that, [for] what is strong will prevail over the weak, so that the weakness of the flesh will be absorbed by the strength of the Spirit; and that the man in whom this takes place cannot in that case be carnal, but Spiritual, because of the fellowship of the Spirit. [...] [And] where the Spirit of the Father is, there is a living man; [there is] the rational blood preserved by God for the avenging [of those that shed it]; [there is] the flesh possessed by the Spirit, forgetful indeed of what belongs to it, and adopting the *quality* (*qualitatem*; *poioteita*) of the Spirit, *being made conformable to the Word of God*. And on this account, he (the apostle) declares, "As we have borne the image of him who is of the earth, we shall also bear the image of Him who is from heaven." What, therefore, is the earthly? That which was fashioned. And what is the heavenly? The Spirit. As therefore he says, when we were destitute of the celestial Spirit, we walked in former times in the oldness of the flesh, not obeying God; so now let us, receiving the Spirit, walk in newness of life, obeying God.²²⁾

In short, the flesh will prevail in the absence of the Spirit so that falling into lusts is inevitable, but if a person is ‘complete’ by virtue of possessing the Spirit within oneself, obeying God is possible.²³⁾ Of course, it is another polemic against the Valentinians, since Irenaeus is aware of their reasoning that ethical living with their irredeemable bodies was pointless, that ‘the

22) AH 5.9.1 - 5.9.3 (SC 153.108-115); emphasis mine.

23) Similarly, AH 5.9.4: ‘flesh cannot by itself possess the kingdom of God by inheritance; but it can be taken for an inheritance into the kingdom of God.’

“most perfect” among them addict themselves without fear to all those kinds of forbidden deeds of which the Scriptures assure us that “they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” [...] [as they] ‘yield themselves up to the lusts of the flesh with the utmost greediness, maintaining that carnal things should be allowed to the carnal nature.’²⁴⁾

But aside from polemics, why would Irenaeus see the life of righteousness as being central to 1 Corinthians 15.50? Again, he may have learned this insight from Justin.²⁵⁾ But Irenaeus’s innovation can be characterized with a little more specificity. It is not by the sheer power of the will that believers are transformed; instead, he says it comes little by little from ‘adopting the *quality* of the Spirit [so that believers are] made conformable to the Word of God.’ When he later draws the contrast between how Adam and Christ faced temptation (AH 5.21-24), the latter is described as ‘a real and substantial (*verum et firmum; alēthē kai bebaion*) man’ ruled by the Spirit of God.²⁶⁾ Unlike the first Adam, Christ admitted ‘the ready inclination of the Spirit to be, as it were, a stimulus to the infirmity of the flesh.’ Once again, the presence of the Spirit cannot be divorced from how the human nature could overcome temptation. While the breath of God made human nature ‘receptive of the perfect Father’ temporarily, the actual model unhindered by sin or blemish for eternal communion between God and human beings was prefigured by Christ for his followers.

24) AH 1.6.3.

25) As R. Wilken writes, ‘Justin let his readers know that the truth of Christ penetrates the soul by means of our moral as well as our intellectual being.’ *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* (Yale University Press, 2003), 7; See e.g., 2 *Apol.* 12.1.

26) AH 5.22.2 (SC 153.266, 267).

3.3. The Son's uniting man's nature with himself reconciled it for the resurrection (AH 5.14 – 5.24).

If the previous section stressed the terse expression in the prologue, the 'imparting [of] God to men by means of the Spirit,' the thrust of this final section has to do with the expression 'attaching man to God by His own incarnation.' Irenaeus treats the role of the Son last because it is '*the very thing the whole story has been about.*'²⁷⁾ As seen in the prologue, no indwelling presence of the Spirit is possible unless 'the Lord has redeemed us through His own blood'²⁸⁾ reconciling those individuals to the Father. And, as seen in our previous section, his opponents' persistent objection that the body cannot be saved is the flipside of the supposition that God cannot become truly incarnate with physical body for the blood redemption. For this, Irenaeus goes directly to the words of Christ:

For if the flesh were not in a position to be saved, the Word of God would in no wise have become flesh. And if the blood of the righteous were not to be inquired after, the Lord would certainly not have had blood [in His composition] [...] *All righteous blood shall be required which is shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias the son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation* (Mt 23.35 – 36; Lk 11.50 – 51). He thus points out the recapitulation that should take place in his own person of the effusion of blood from the beginning, of all the righteous men and of the prophets, and that by means of Himself there should be a requisition of their blood. Now this [blood] could not be required unless it also had the capability of being saved.²⁹⁾

27) C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*, (NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1960), 108.

28) AH 5.1.1.

29) AH 5.14.1 (SC 153.182-184); emphasis mine.

First, the term recapitulation needs some assessment. There is no lack of diverse opinions in modern scholarship on defining this rich term carrying both broad and narrow dimensions.³⁰⁾ Broadly, the term revolves around the Son's activity in the divine economy, but it also conveys a multiple of functions so that narrower aspects emerge according to various topics being addressed. For our purposes, it is important to note that Irenaeus draws this term from Ephesians 1.10 in AH 5.20.2 in the context of his defense on the resurrection.³¹⁾ The fitting sense of the term, then, is well articulated concisely by Dennis Minns: 'The Word needed to become incarnate and undertake the economy of salvation in order to recapitulate all things in himself. From all eternity, the Word of God has a headship over "things in heaven." In order to have a headship over "things on earth," in order to be the head of the Church and draw all things to himself, he must become visible, comprehensible and capable of suffering.'³²⁾

Accordingly, we can now analyze our text that 'He thus points out the recapitulation that should take place in his own person [...] that by means of Himself there should be a requisition of their blood.' Aside from the retributive justice that God shall

30) Scholars attribute both narrow and broad categories of content, but also as hermeneutical principles.

31) Appears twelve times in AH book 5; and his reference to Eph 1.10 carries the most comprehensive sense; see AH 5.20.2.

32) D. Minns, *Irenaeus: An Introduction* (T & T Clark, 2010), 108-109. As Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 97-98, remarks, the term is abundantly rich and complex: 'At least eleven different ideas—unification, repetition, redemption, perfection, inauguration and consummation, totality, the triumph of Christus Victor, ontology, epistemology, and ethics (or being, truth, and goodness)—are combined in different permutations.' With more than a century of scholarship on this term since A. Harnack, J. Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity* (Oxford University Press, 2013): 136-37, n. 22, also adds that it is important to ground 'all this in the relationship between the Scriptures and the Gospel which is that of a literary "recapitulation".'

judge all evil acts of murder in history, Irenaeus perceives why Christ possessed blood in the first place. He infers that the blood of the righteous will not be lost forever. Since a person's blood is eternally valuable in God's sight, Christ's shed blood will eventually restore his followers' blood when he redeems them by recapitulation, that is, he becomes the head of the church by summing up all things. In this way even the material substance, and thereby the entire human being, will be saved by the incarnate Son's redemptive work.

Speaking emphatically that the 'flesh has been truly made [to consist in] a transmission of that thing molded originally from the dust,'³³⁾ Irenaeus is turning the Valentinian idea totally on its head: far from being useless or obstructive to the spiritual journey, Adam's physical body was designed to be the *necessary* vehicle of redemption:

[T]he Lord, taking dust from the earth, molded man; and it was upon his behalf that all the dispensation of the Lord's advent took place. He had Himself, therefore, flesh and blood, recapitulating in Himself not a certain other, but *that original handiwork of the Father*, seeking out that thing which had perished. And for this cause the apostle, in the Epistle to the Colossians, says, 'And though ye were formerly alienated, and enemies to His knowledge by evil works, yet now ye have been reconciled in the body of His flesh, through His death, to present yourselves holy and chaste, and without fault in His sight.' He says, 'Ye have been reconciled in the body of His flesh' (Col 1.21 - 22), because *the righteous flesh has reconciled that flesh (reconciliati carnis ejus; apokatallagentes tēs sarkos)*, which was being kept under bondage in sin (*quae in peccato detinebatur; tēn en harmartiai katexoumenēn*) and brought it into friendship with God.³⁴⁾

33) AH 5.14.2.

34) AH 5.14.2 (SC 153:186-189); emphasis mine.

The term ‘flesh’ by synecdoche represents the whole human nature as he typically does in reference to the Gospel of John 1.14.³⁵⁾ And quite remarkably, by asserting that the Word was seeking salvation for the entire human person Irenaeus unfolds the all-pervasive scope of the Adamic fall according to the logic of recapitulation. That is, if the Word needed to assume the complete human nature to restore it completely, the effects of the fall on the human nature must have been all-pervasive, because recapitulation involves the restoration of the entire nature. Essentially, the union effected by Christ at the incarnation had healed the human person both the material and immaterial aspects: He avers that the Word was effecting ‘by means of communion with Himself,’ but Irenaeus chooses Colossians 1.22 to unmistakably include the human body, as he comments that Christ’s ‘righteous flesh has reconciled that flesh which was being kept under bondage in sin.’ In other words, Christ’s righteous human nature would replace our sinful nature by means of death and resurrection so that we may be brought back ‘into friendship with God.’³⁶⁾

In this final section, however, we might ask why Irenaeus makes his special appeal to the veracity of Scripture. He has been interpreting both the Old and New Testaments passages so far, but here, there is an explicit exhortation to take Scripture seriously as also to the work of recapitulation by Christ:

35) As in the prologue, ‘the Lord thus has redeemed us through His own blood, giving His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh’ (*AH* 5.1.1). Also, B. Mutschler, *Irenäus als johanneischer Theologe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 256-259, notes that Irenaeus makes use from the Johannine Corpus this way, and that one of his ‘top verses’ is John 1.14.

36) Irenaeus says succinctly in *Epid.* 31(trans., J. A. Robinson): ‘because death reigned over the flesh, it was right that through the flesh it should lose its force and let man go free from its oppression. So *the Word was made flesh*, that, through that very flesh which sin had ruled and dominated, it should lose its force and be no longer in us.’

Eat ye from every Scripture of the Lord; but ye shall not eat with an uplifted mind, nor touch any heretical discord [...] Into this paradise the Lord has introduced those who obey His call, "summing up in Himself all things which are in heaven, and which are on earth;" but the things in heaven are spiritual, while those on earth constitute the dispensation in human nature (*secundum hominem est dispositio*). These things, therefore, He recapitulated in Himself: by uniting man to the Spirit, and causing the Spirit to dwell in man, He is Himself made the head of the Spirit, and gives the Spirit to be the head of man: for through Him (the Spirit) we see, and hear, and speak.³⁷⁾

On the one hand, Irenaeus sees the possibility of reading Scripture with 'an uplifted mind,' unless one keeps in mind the hermeneutic of how Christ recapitulated all things in himself. At the same time, however, these acts of recapitulation by Christ for salvation of humanity can be validated only by the corresponding words of Christ himself (and his apostles). For without it, no vivid testimonies by any human eyewitnesses can afford to give that trustworthy declaration that the Savior's death on the cross has that reconciling effect for our nature's transformation. Thus, towards this concluding section of his defense of the resurrection doctrine, Irenaeus points to the Scripture as the sure guide to the mysteries of the faith that promises the resurrection hope, the eternal destiny of 'friendship with God' achieved through the Son, by the Spirit, and with the Father.

37) AH 5.20.2 (SC 153.258-261).

4. Conclusion

In this trinitarian reading of his defense of the resurrection, Irenaeus concentrates on the big picture by telling the overarching narrative of the divine economy. This allows him to suggest a perspective that helps the church in the second century to think about the divine purpose revealed from the beginning of history as being foundational for considering the resurrection possibility. The Son and the Spirit work together inseparably as the Father's two hands, yet he structures the discussion according to the distinct roles and contributions of each member of the Godhead to draw out an effective administration of the divine economy. These distinct roles also reveal the divine purpose that human development should occur in progressive stages. The Father's breath infused into Adam anticipated the last Adam uniting with the Spirit, which union thereby became the model for human beings indwelt by the Spirit.

Conceiving human development in this way, Irenaeus suggests that the three divine acts of union brought forth distinct purposes by each Person, but they were all about achieving humanity's friendship with God, even as such union and communion is exemplified and embodied by the Trinity. And most importantly, Irenaeus insists that the incarnation is not just one of the three events, as it were, but it is crucial not only because Christ recapitulates the broken *imago Dei* by assuming the created nature, but because he becomes the pivotal agent especially for 'imparting God to men' by uniting himself with the Spirit. The goodness and power of God, the sacrificial blood redemption of the Son, and 'the complete grace of the Spirit' have a purpose for human destiny that cannot be defeated, and this trinitarian consideration of the divine economy answers to a coherent story that God always intended the renovation

of the entire *imago Dei* including the body.

<Keywords>

Apologetics, second-century, Trinitarian, Irenaeus, resurrection,
Stages of Human Development

<주요어>

변증, 2세기, 삼위일체적, 이레네우스, 부활, Stages of Human
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<Abstract>

**A Trinitarian Apologetic in the Second Century
With Special Reference to the Idea of
Stages of Human Development According to Irenaeus**

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Long before the first council met in Nicea, an apologist of the second century was employing a Trinitarian reading of Scripture to defend the doctrine of the resurrection. But why was it necessary for Irenaeus to defend the credibility of this doctrine from a trinitarian reading of Scripture? Against the Hellenistic Valentinians' and the Judaizing Ebionites' claim to defend their respective worldviews drawn from their own distinctive readings of the Genesis creation account, Irenaeus turns to Trinitarian analysis of human development in the overarching divine economy. The incarnation of the Son has prefigured human nature's capacity to receive the divine reality, and after the Son's work of blood redemption, the Spirit's presence in the believers further demonstrated a restoration of their life of righteousness, preparing for that ultimate bestowal of immortality in the age to come. But both activities of the Son and the Spirit were unfolding fulfilments of the Father's proleptic activity of uniting his breath of life with Adam, showing his divine prescience and commitment to restore Adam from the effects of sin and death.

<초록>

2세기의 삼위일체적 변증:

이레네우스의 신학적 인간론을 중심으로

최진

(햇볼트리니티대학원대학교)

제1차 공의회가 니케아에서 열리기 오래 전에 2세기의 대표적인 변증가 이레네우스는 부활 교리를 옹호하기 위해 삼위일체적 성경 해석을 사용했다. 그러나 왜 이레네우스는 성경의 삼위일체적 해석을 도입해서 이 교리의 신뢰성을 변호할 필요가 있었을까? 한편에서는 창세기 창조 내러티브를 독특하게 해석함으로 헬레니즘적인 세계관을 주장하는 발렌티누스(Valentinus)파와 맞서고, 또 다른 편에서는 같은 본문을 유대교적인 해석을 토대로 한 에비온(Ebion)파에 맞서 이레네우스는 몸의 부활 교리의 신뢰성을 옹호하기 위해 구속사속의 총체적인 신학적 인간론을 삼위일체적으로 분석한다. 이들의 성육신은 신의 실재를 받아들일 수 있는 회복된 인간 본성의 기능을 예표한 다음, 마침내 십자가 구속을 이룬 다음에는 성도들 안에 성령의 임재는 의로운 삶의 회복을 드러내며, 장차 올 시대에 궁극적인 불멸의 기능까지 준비시키기 위해서였다. 그러나 아들과 성령의 그와 같은 두 가지 활동은 생기를 아담속에 처음부터 넣어놓으시는 아버지의 예언적 활동의 성취를 드러냈이었으며, 죄와 죽음의 결과에서 아담을 회복시키려는 그의 거룩한 예지와 헌신을 보여주심이었다.