THE ESCHATOLOGY OF IRENAEUS

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DR. SKEVINGTON WOOD has, in several publications (including contributions to our QUARTERLY), given proof of his quality as a student of the history of biblical interpretation. We welcome the opportunity of publishing his latest study in this field.

"No early Christian writer has deserved better of the whole Church than Irenaeus".[1] Such was the verdict of Professor H. B. Swete, and more recent patristic scholarship tends to substantiate it. Not only was Irenaeus the most important of all second-century theologians, as Berthold Altaner recognizes, but, according to Zahn, "his actual influence upon the development of the Church was greater than that of perhaps any other teacher of the first three centuries".[2] It was not for nothing that Jerome hailed him as "the apostolic man", and that Theodoret saw in him "the light of the West".[3]

His chief distinction lay in the fact that he was the first broadly organized defender of the faith. Others had already stood guard over this item and that, but in his *magnum opus*, running to five books, Irenaeus presented the most comprehensive apologia thus far. Philip Schaff rightly described *Adversus Haereses* as the "polemic theological masterpiece of the ante-Nicene age".[4] It still remains the major source of information about the doctrinal controversies of the second century.[5]

[1] H. B. Swete in Preface to F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, *Irenaeus of Lugdunum: A Study of His Teaching* (Cambridge, 1914), p. ii. Irenaeus (*c.* A.D. 130-200) was Bishop of Lyons in Gaul from the year 177 until his death.

[2] Berthold Altaner, *Patrologie* (Freiburg, 1958, 5th ed.), p. 118; Theodor Zahn, "Irenaeus" in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. S. M. Jackson (New York, 1910), Vol. VI, p. 31.

[3] Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in Isaiam libri octo et decem*, XVII, in cap. lxiv; Theodoret, *Dialogi*, I, 33B.

[4] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (New York, 1912), Vol. II, p. 753; cf. André Benoit, *Saint Irénée: Introduction a l'étude de sa théologie* (Paris, 1960), pp. 1, 2.

[5] Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Greek Church* (E.T., London, 1963), pp. 18, 19. F. L. Cross agrees that in the last three books of *Adversus Haereses* Irenaeus "elaborates the foundation principles of Christian theology" (*The Early Christian Fathers* [London, 1960], p. 112). Our present investigation is confined to *Adversus Haereses. The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* (Ἐπίδειξις τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ κηρύγματος) only touches occasionally on eschatology: cf. ed. J. Armitage Robinson (London, 1920), cap. 56, 85.

In considering the eschatology of Irenaeus—as indeed his teaching in its entirety—we must begin by taking note of the indisputable fact that he was essentially a biblical theologian.[6] He made no claim to originality. He was content to rely on the Word of God. Throughout his classic treatise (as elsewhere) he referred to the witness of Scripture preserved by the "elders", which he simply sought to hand on and apply. Hans von Campenhausen thinks that "the important thing is the basic attitude which Irenaeus adopts toward the Christian Bible, his declared intention of refusing to go beyond that which was revealed from the beginning, and the conviction that the final and irrevocable *depositum* of apostolic teaching is once and for all sufficient for salvation".[7] With Irenaeus, tradition was not an independent factor: it merely served to confirm the testimony of Scripture. This latter he regarded as "the ground and pillar of our faith".[8]

In terms of this unambiguously biblical approach, Irenaeus regarded Christ as the clue to prophecy. He is the treasure hid in the Scriptures, pointed out by means of types and parables.[9] "If anyone, therefore, reads the Scriptures with attention, he will find in them an account of Christ, and a foreshadowing of the new calling".[10] It is only in the event, however, that prophecy becomes plain. Before its fulfilment it is full of enigmas and ambiguities. "But when the time has arrived, and the prediction has come to pass, then the prophecies have a clear and certain exposition".[11] Each will reach its realization and thus each will receive its elucidation, "for with God there is nothing without purpose or due signification".[12] Irenaeus pressed the argument that, since the prophecies relating to Christ's first advent have been vindicated, those relating to the End will also find their fulfilment, however

[6] It is significant that the title of John Lawson's study is *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus* (London, 1948).

[7] Von Campenhausen, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

[8] *Adversus Haereses*, Book III, Chapter 1, para 1. The system of capitation is that of the Maurist, Renati Massuet, reproduced in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. VII (Paris, 1857). The English translation is by Alexandra Roberts and W. H. Rambaut in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Vol. V (Edinburgh, 1958) and Vol. IX (1869). The original title was *Unmasking and Refutation of the False Gnosis* ("Ελεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως). Only fragments of the Greek text remain, and the Latin translation is used.

[9] IV.26.1.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] IV.21.3.

puzzling some of them are now.[13]

The return of our Lord was placed by Irenaeus after the appearance of the Anti-Christ, but prior to the Millennium. At the close of the age, Christ "shall come in glory, the Saviour of those who are saved, and the Judge of those who are judged, and sending into eternal fire those who transform the truth, and despise His Father and His advent".[14] He will "come in the same flesh in which He suffered, revealing the glory of the Father".[15] Although Irenaeus did not enter into the details of eschatological chronology, he nevertheless firmly fixed the Parousia as following immediately on the three and a half years during which Anti-Christ will reign. "When this Anti-Christ shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that 'many coming from the east and the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' ".[16]

Irenaeus regarded the resurrection of the righteous as taking place in conjunction with the coming of Christ. After citing some of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the desolation of the earth under the Anti-Christ, he proceeded to adduce Isaiah 6: 12 and 65: 21. These and other passages he claimed "were unquestionably spoken in reference to the resurrection of the just, which takes place after the coming of Anti-Christ, and the destruction of all nations under his rule; in (the times of) which (resurrection) the righteous shall reign in the earth, waxing stronger by the sight of the Lord".[17] This is "the first resurrection" of Revelation 20: 6.

Contrary to the views expressed by some interpreters of Irenaeus, it seems evident, as François Vernet has shown, that he taught a

[13] V.26.2; cf.. IV.33.10,11. See M. Widmann, "Irenäus und seine theologischen Väter," in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche,* 54 (1967), p. 163.

[14] III.4.2; cf; III.16.6, III.19.2, IV.33.1,11,13. Irenaeus here viewed the events associated with the Parousia synoptically.

[15] III.16.8.

[16] V.30.4; Matt. 8: 11.

[17] V.35.1 (translator's brackets); cf. V.36.3,4; V.34.2.

double immortality—that of existence and that of happiness.[18] Each depends on the power of God. It is He who creates the soul, and it is He who preserves it. But whereas all without exception are given immortal existence, only those who are in Christ enjoy immortal happiness.[19] On this basis, Irenaeus distinguished between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked.

In view of Gnostic distortions, he was particularly insistent on the resurrection of the flesh. Matter is capable of salvation, and the ultimate redemption and raising of the body will supply the conclusive proof of this. Irenaeus dismissed as "vain in every respect" the heretical theories of those "who despise the entire dispensation of God, and disallow the salvation of the flesh, and treat with contempt its regeneration, maintaining that it is not capable of incorruption".[20] His answer to such deviationism is radical and positive. "But if this (i.e. flesh) do 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".[21]

Irenaeus maintained that the salvation of man is total, body and soul, and that this will be consummated at the Parousia.[22] The body, formed from the dust of the earth, returns to the dust of the earth at death. But at the resurrection, the divine energy not only revivifies the soul, which is supernaturally immortal, but also the body, which is naturally mortal. Not only is man's salvation at stake here: the very might of God Himself is jeopardized if, as the Gnostics averred, matter cannot be regenerated. "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".[23] For the Christian, however, it is not surprising that God who in the beginning caused man "to have being who as yet was not, just when He pleased, shall much more reinstate again those who had a former existence, when it is His will (that they should inherit) the life granted by Him", and "that flesh shall also be found fit for

[18] II.33.5; cf. François Vernet, "Irénée (Saint), évêque de Lyon," in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, ed. A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, É. Amann (Paris, 1923), Tome VII, col. 2498 (hereafter referred to as *D.T.C.*); Le Nain de Tillement, *Mémoires pour servir a l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles* (Paris, 1695), pp. 626-627.

[19] IV.38.3.

[20] V.2.2.

[21] *Ibid.*; 1 Cor. 10: 16; cf. L. Laguier, "La resurrection de la chair dans Saint Irénée" in *Revue du clergé français*, 43 (1905), pp. 225-236.

[22] V.20.1.

[23] V.3.2.

and capable of receiving the power of God, which at the beginning received the skilful touches of God".[24] Moreover, Irenaeus asked in another passage, is it not just that the body which has shared the merits of redemption in Christ should also share its reward?[25]

It was to the testimony of Scripture that Irenaeus turned to support his contentions. Amongst the Old Testament texts to which he appealed were Isaiah 26: 19; 65: 22; 66: 13, and Ezekiel 37: 1-14. In Book V, Chapters 9-10, he took up the argument of the Gnostics drawn from 1 Corinthians 15: 50—"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God". But his most frequent resort was to the assurances of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, and to the miracles and healing and restoration to life which He effected to substantiate them.[26] Above all, Christ's own resurrection is the pledge of ours.[27] He took flesh in order to save it, and the work will not be complete until the believer is raised to life everlasting in the totality of body, soul and spirit.[28]

Irenaeus saw in this scriptural stress on the resurrection of the flesh a guarantee of personal identity in the after-life. "For it is not one thing which dies and another which is quickened, as neither is it one thing which is lost and another which is found, but the Lord came seeking for that same sheep which had been lost".[29] Whilst Irenaeus looked for a general resurrection, when God through Christ will "raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race", it does not appear that he envisaged a simultaneous resurrection.[30] The righteous will be raised first amongst mankind, prior to the earthly reign of our Lord. The wicked will be raised, in their turn, at the close of the Millennium. The purpose of the Parousia is to separate the believing from the unbelieving, and this separation begins at the moment of the first resurrection.[31]

Since Irenaeus, following Scripture, found no room in his doctrine for an immediate entry into heaven for the Christian at the crisis of death, he was compelled to posit an intermediate

[24] *Ibid.*
[25] II.29.1,2; cf. V.32.1.
[26] V.12.5; V.13.1.
[27] IV.2.4,7; V.7.1.
[28] V.14.1,2,4.
[29] V.12.3.
[30] I.10.1; cf. II.5.3, IV.32.2, IV.33.13. Lawson (*op. cit.*, p. 282) takes the view that Irenaeus believed that the good and evil will rise together. LeRoy Edwin Froom disputes this (*The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* [Washington, 1950], Vol. I, p. 252).
[31] V.27.1; cf. V.34.1. That the first resurrection leads to the translation of the saints is clear from V.5.1, with its argument from Enoch and Elijah (cf. IV.16.2).

state to occupy the interval. Christ Himself observed the law of the dead in that, after having expired on the Cross, He did not go straight to heaven. He descended into Hades, and only on the third day did He rise again. Then for the space of forty days He visited the apostles before finally ascending to the Father. In the same manner, the souls of those who trust in Him go at death to an invisible place determined by God and there sojourn whilst they await the resurrection.[32] At the Parousia they are reunited with their bodies and go into the presence of God. The disciple is not greater than his Lord. The delay to which Christ consented is imposed on us.

Amongst those who will share in the first resurrection are the Old Testament saints. The prophets and righteous men of the former dispensation desired to see the true Messiah and to hear His words. This was denied them, but in the Millennium they will actually see and hear Him in the flesh. Only so can the promises be fulfilled. It is not enough to argue that they anticipated Christ's coming by faith, nor that their dream was realized in their descendants. In the earthly reign, Christ will be present "with all those who were from the beginning approved by God".[33] "For it was not merely for those who believed on Him in the time of Tiberius Caesar that Christ came, nor did the Father exercise His providence for the men only who are now alive, but for all men altogether, who from the beginning, according to their capacity, in their generation have both feared and loved God, and practised justice and piety towards their neighbours, and have earnestly desired to see Christ, and to hear His voice. Wherefore He shall, at His second coming, first rouse from their sleep all persons of this description, and shall raise them up, as well as the rest who shall be judged, and give them a place in His kingdom. For it is truly 'one God who' directed the patriarchs towards His dispensations and 'has justified the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith'. For as in the first we were prefigured, so, on the other hand, are they represented in us, that is, in the church, and receive the recompense for those things which they accomplished".[34]

When Irenaeus referred to Christians in the church seeing Christ

[32] V.31.2. The attempt of Vernet to identify this location with purgatory is hardly convincing ("Irénée" in *D.T.C.*, Tome VII, col. 2507). In V.5.1 Irenaeus referred to it as paradise, which "has been prepared for righteous men, such as have the Spirit."

[33] IV.25.3.

[34] IV.22.2; Rom. 3: 20.

at the End, he was not thinking merely of those first followers of our Lord who saw Him in the flesh, and will see Him so again. Nor was he confining his allusion to Christians in subsequent centuries who, according to his teaching, saw Christ in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, and will at the Parousia behold in human shape the One whom they had sacramentally worshipped. The sweep of his vision was broader still. Irenaeus envisaged the company of those who, before the first advent, had hoped in Christ and had awaited His arrival. As Albert Houssiau has explained, in his penetrating enquiry into the Christological thought of Irenaeus, thanks to the second coming "the manifestation of our Lord will not be limited to believers in Christian times, but will fulfil the desires of the patriarchs who believed in the presence of the Lord amongst men: these will see Christ in His reign as we see Him now in the church".[35]

This brings us to the treatment of the Millennium, which Irenaeus accepted as traditional orthodoxy, so Canon J. N. D. Kelly reminds us.[36] In his insistence on an earthly reign of Christ, Irenaeus was simply handing down what he himself had received. Similar teaching—though less fully developed—is to be found in the *Didache*, in the epistles of Ignatius, Polycarp and Barnabas, in Hermas and in Justin Martyr. At the beginning of the third century, Tertullian followed much the same line. It was, of course, Augustine who, as Shirley Jackson Case graphically put it, laid the ghost of millenarianism so effectively that for many centuries after his time the subject was virtually ignored.[37] But, as Schaff underlined, "the most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism".[38]

According to Irenaeus, the resurrection of the just is not the

[35] Albert Houssiau, *La Christologie de Saint Irénée* (Louvain, 1955), p. 133.

[36] J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London, 1958), p. 469; cf. V.32.1.

[37] Shirley Jackson Case, *The Millennial Hope* (Chicago, 1918), p. 179.

[38] Schaff, *op. cit.*, Vol. 11, p. 614. Frederic W. Farrar claimed that Irenaeus did not actually mention the period of one thousand years (*Lives of the Fathers* [Edinburgh, 1889], Vol. I, p. 100, n.1). In V.30.4, however, he speaks about "the times of the kingdom" as equivalent to "the hallowed seventh day," and elsewhere he has equated one prophetic day with a thousand years (V.28.3; cf. V.33.2). As Auguste Luneau explains, the "elders" had spoken of the millennium, and Barnabas of six thousand years as the duration of the world. Irenaeus achieved a synthesis by inserting the millennium into a history of seven thousand years altogether, to be followed by the eternal kingdom (*L'histoire due salut ches les pères de l'Église* [Paris, 1964], p. 103; cf. pp. 95, 96).

last stage of the last things. The saints are not immediately transferred to heaven. Their earthly reign with Christ intervenes. This is "the commencement of incorruption, by means of which kingdom those who shall be worthy are accustomed gradually to partake of the divine nature".[39] "It behoves the righteous first to receive the promise of the inheritance which God promised to the fathers, and to reign in it, when they rise again to behold God in this creation which is renovated, and that the judgment should take place afterwards".[40] Irenaeus showed how such sayings of Jesus as those recorded in Matthew 26: 27; Luke 14: 12, 13 and Matthew 19: 29 can only be understood in terms of millennial fulfilment.[41] He referred more than once to the promise of God to Abraham, linking the relevant verses in Genesis with the comments of Paul in Galatians.[42] "Now God made promise of the earth to Abraham and his seed; yet neither Abraham nor his seed, that is, those who are justified by faith, do now receive any inheritance in it; but they shall receive it at the resurrection of the just. For God is true and faithful; and on this account He said, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth' ".[43] The divine assurance to Jacob, conveyed through the blessing of his father Isaac, was likewise taken by Irenaeus to anticipate the Millennium.[44]

Irenaeus firmly set aside any attempt to evade the implications of millennial prophecies by resorting to the subterfuge of allegorization. This was a Gnostic strategem. Christians must beware of it. "If, however, any shall endeavour to allegorize (prophecies) of this kind, they shall not be found consistent with themselves in all points, and shall be confuted by the teaching of the very expressions (in question)".[45] Irenaeus instanced a series of passages from Isaiah, and added: "Now all these things, being such as they are, cannot be understood in references to super-celestial matters; 'for God", it is said, 'will show to the whole earth that is under heaven thy glory'. But in the times of the kingdom, the earth has been called again by Christ (to its pristine condition), and

[39] V.32.1.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] V.33.1,2.

[42] V.32.2; Gen. 13: 13, 14, 17; 15: 13; 22: 16ff.; Gal. 3: 6, 7, 16; 4: 28; cf. Acts 7: 5; Heb. 11: 13.

[43] V.32.2; Matt. 5: 5.

[44] V.33.3: "The predicted blessing, therefore, belongs unquestionably to the time of the kingdom, when the righteous shall bear rule upon their rising from the dead."

[45] V.35.1.

Jerusalem rebuilt after the pattern of the Jerusalem above . . And in the Apocalypse John saw this new (Jerusalem) descending upon the new earth . . . Of this Jerusalem the former one is an image—that Jerusalem of the former earth in which the righteous are disciplined beforehand for incorruption and prepared for salvation. And of this tabernacle Moses received the pattern in the mount; and nothing is capable of being allegorized, but all things are stedfast and true, and substantial, having been made by God for righteous men's enjoyment".[46]

As Vernet remarks, we have here a millenarianism which is far from timid.[47] It is thorough-going and, particularly in the fanciful description derived from Papias, "coloured by material views", as Hitchcock quite rightly concludes.[48] When Irenaeus abides by his determination to keep close to Scripture, his arguments carry weight. When, as here, he accepts a tradition parallelled in extra-biblical Jewish apocalyptic but not in the Word of God, he forfeits our regard. It ought also to be borne in mind that the strong emphasis of Irenaeus on the literal fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the Millennium were no doubt conditioned to some degree by the fact that he was contending against the Gnostic heretics, who denied the redeemability of the material.[49] The millennial teaching of Irenaeus must not be isolated from the rest of his theology. It is all of a piece with it, and Irenaeus was the first to formulate (however embryonically) a millennial—indeed pre-millennial—system of interpretation.[50]

At the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, the new Jerusalem will come down from heaven in terms of Revelation 21: 2, and the judgment will begin.[51] The great white throne

[46] V.35.2. Luneau (*op. cit.*, p. 95, n.1) remarks that Irenaeus is careful to distinguish between the earthly reconstruction of Jerusalem during the millennium, and the manifestation of the heavenly Jerusalem after the judgment and the new creation.

[47] Vernet, "Irénée" in *D.T.C.*, Tome VII, col. 2504; cf. Lawson (*op. cit.*, p. 279): "Millenarianism is one of the most robust elements in his thought and piety."

[48] Hitchcock, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

[49] L. Lescoeur, *Le règne temporal de Jésus-Christ. Étude sur le millénarisme* (Paris, 1868), p. 220.

[50] George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids, 1956), p. 25.

[51] V.35.2; cf. V.36.1. Lawson (*op. cit.*, p. 282) contends, however, that in the Irenaean scheme the judgment takes place *before* the Millennium. Although, as we have seen, Irenaeus does not elaborate the *minutiae* of prophetic chronology and at times presents a synoptic view, it would seem clear, nevertheless, that he accepted the sequence already outlined by Justin Martyr (*Dialogus contra Tryphonem*, lxxxi), who handed down the Johan-

will be set up "after the times of the kingdom".[52] It is then that "'the dead, great and small" will be summoned, and the books opened.[53] Until this juncture, apparently, the unbelieving dead have been awaiting the End in a suitable place, devoid of light and blessing.[54] The return of Christ, which is "for the resurrection of believers, and those who do the will of His Father in heaven", is "for the ruin, certainly, of those who do not believe Him, to whom also He has threatened a greater damnation in the judgment day than that of Sodom and Gomorrah".[55]

The fate of the ungodly is not annihilation, but eternal separation from God.[56] Irenaeus was at pains to make it clear that they are self-condemned. Although, through Christ, the Father executes just judgment upon them, they have no excuse or legitimate complaint, since they undoubtedly deserve the punishment which awaits them. This punishment falls on them "because they are destitute of all that is good", Irenaeus explained. "Now, good things are eternal and without end with God, and therefore the loss of these is also eternal and never-ending. It is in this matter just as occurs in the case of a flood of light: those who have blinded themselves, or have been blinded by others, are for ever deprived of the enjoyment of light. It is not (however) that the light has inflicted upon them the penalty of blindness, but it is that the blindness itself has brought calamity upon them".[57] Irenaeus quoted John 3: 18 ("He who does not believe is

nine tradition "that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men should likewise take place" (*Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Vol. 11, trans. M. Dods, G. Reith, B. P. Pratten [Edinburgh, 1867], p. 201). In the same vein Irenaeus wrote, as we have already noted: "It behoves the righteous first to receive the promise of the inheritance which God promised to the fathers, and to reign in it, when they rise again to behold God in this creation which is renovated, and that the judgment should take place afterwards" (V.32.1). It is curious that Lawson regards this as a hint that Irenaeus may have been a Postmillenarian (*ibid.*). Luneau (*op. cit.*, p. 100) sets out the timetable in *Adversus Haereses* succintly, and correctly places the judgment after the Millennium.

[52] V.35.2.

[53] *Ibid.*; cf. Rev. 20: 11.

[54] V.31.2; cf. IV.39.4, where it is not altogether certain whether the "fit habitations" prepared both for the good and the evil refer to the intermediate or final state.

[55] V.27.1; Lk. 10: 12; cf. IV.40.2.

[56] V.27.2.

[57] *Ibid.*

condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God") and commented: "that is, he separated himself from God of his own accord".[58]

Irenaeus rejected any hint of universalism. In this he stood with the orthodox writers of his time, and in no way adumbrated the divergencies of Origen and others in the succeeding century.[59] It is the very purpose of the judgment to separate the righteous from the unrighteous, and that separation is final.[60] "If the Father, then, does not exercise judgment (it follows) that judgment does not belong to Him, or that He consents to all those actions which take place; and if He does not judge, all persons will be equal and accounted in the same condition. The advent of Christ will therefore be without an object, yea, absurd, inasmuch as (in that case) He exercises no judicial power".[61] In the days of His flesh, Christ's first coming divided humanity into two classes—the saved and the lost. He will come again at the end of time to finalize that distinction. At the time of the end, He will "order the reapers to collect first the tares together, and bind them in bundles, and burn them with unquenchable fire, but to gather up the wheat into the barn; and to call the lambs into the kingdom prepared for them, but to send the goats into everlasting fire, which has been prepared by His Father for the devil and his angels".[62]

The elect, on the other hand, will live for ever with God. To see Him is the reward of the righteous. In the Old Testament God was seen prophetically through the Spirit, and in the New Testament adoptively through the Son. But He will be seen paternally in the kingdom of heaven, and those who share this vision will also inherit life eternal. The glory of God will vivify them". It is not possible to live apart from life, and the means of life is found in fellowship with God; but fellowship with God is to know God, and to enjoy His goodness".[63] This is the purpose of the entire

[58] *Ibid.*

[59] This is all the more remarkable in that Irenaeus's doctrine of recapitulation in Christ might easily have led him in that direction, as it did others. Instead, it is contrasted with a doctrine of recapitulation in the Anti-Christ, in whom iniquity of every sort is gathered up "in order that all apostate power, flowing into and being shut up in him, may be sent into the furnace of fire" (V.29.2; cf. V.28.2).

[60] V.27.1. Houssiau (*op. cit.*, p. 139) stresses that in the thought of Irenaeus the coming of Christ is judicial and discriminatory, and that this is so both with respect to His advent in the incarnation and in the Parousia.

[61] V.27.1.

[62] *Ibid.*; Matt. 13: 30; V.25.33; cf. V.28.1.

[63] IV.20.5.

redemptive economy. God has determined "all things beforehand for the bringing of man to perfection, for his edification, and for the revelation of His dispensations, that goodness may be both made apparent, and righteousness perfected, and 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".[64]

In Irenaeus we are presented with the "first detailed outline of prophetic events after the New Testament", as George Eldon Ladd maintains.[65] We have only been able to touch and glance on some of its features. The subject calls for a much more comprehensive review than is possible here. But sufficient evidence has surely been produced to indicate that even so early as the second century after Christ, the shape of eschatology was at least recognizable. The very fact that so much of what Irenaeus propounded covers ground which is now familiar to us, bears witness to the antiquity of what is accurately labelled historic premillennialism. Whatever conclusions may be drawn from the testimony of Scripture on this controverted issue, it must be conceded that in the first three centuries the premillennial interpretation predominated. Irenaeus was perhaps its most distinguished and consistent exponent. Bousset declared that it was he who, more clearly than any of his contemporaries or immediate successors, set forth "the future form of things".[66] If that is indeed the case, the eschatology of Irenaeus merits serious reconsideration in our day.

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[64] IV.37.7; cf. IV.38.3.

[65] Ladd, *op. cit.*, p. 26. Benoit (*op. cit.*, p. 221) salutes Irenaeus as the first Christian theologian to present a historical world-view, which included the events of the End. Cf. also J. Daniélou, "Saint Irénée et les origines de la théologie de l'histoire" in *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses*, 24 (1947), pp. 227-231; Widmann, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

[66] Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (Göttingen, 1913). p. 413. There was no eschatological reference in Bousset's statement: he was thinking of Irenaeus's definitive influence on the development of theology.