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## IRENÆUS ON THE CHURCH.

The topic for consideration leads to ground where every inch has been fought over, and is still contested. The greatest controversies have been actuated by dogmatic interests.<sup>1)</sup> From the time of the *Magdeburg Centuries* and the *Annales Eccle-*

1) The basic argument against the Catholic Church during the Reformation period was not historical, but Scriptural. It is only natural that the historical argument should appear, in fact, quite frequently and quite spontaneously. Hans von der Planitz, writing from the *Reichsregiment* at Nuremberg to his Elector about the discussion on the mass and monastic vows, January, 1522, says: "Dan vor dieser zeit nach der himmelfahrt Christi ezlich hundert jar kein monchsorden vom babst bestetigt gewest, sso hetten auch die prister ezlich hundert jar weiber gehabt. Und were ein lange zeit under beiderlei gestalt das heilige sacrament den leihen und christen gereicht worden." This is a very clear and concise expression of the historical view-point at the very beginning of the actual reorganization according to the Reformation principles. However, in the controversy it remained but a side-issue. With the reformers of every type, as well as with Frederick and the other rulers drawn into the controversy, the decisive criterion was the teaching of Scripture.—The *Magdeburg Centuries* were the first—and ever will remain one of the most massive—attempts to shatter the Catholic system by showing how it grew century after century into its medieval form. The *Annales Ecclesiastici* of Baronio were the Catholic answer to them. With the stimulus of these two exhaustive treatises, representing opposite view-points, one would expect to meet a host of scholars scanning the records of the early centuries. Largely owing to the continuation of that earlier interest in the Bible only, this prospect did not come true. A monumental *Historia Literaria* was published by Cave, which is the first real effort in giving a comprehensive account of Christian authors and their writings. The work has merit to-day only as a curio. The real study of that early period began with the spread of rationalism and higher criticism. Christianity was considered a historical growth,

*siastici* the great differences concerning the original organization of the Church have been again and again fought out. A third party in the strife has been the Anglican Church with its interest in the episcopacy.<sup>2)</sup>

The entrance of the critical spirit into this field did not bring a final solution. The controversy was shifted to impartial historical ground,<sup>3)</sup> but the evidence is so slight, especially in the earlier decades, the problem is so many-sided,

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which came about under the influence of the social, religious, and intellectual forces of the Roman Empire. To analyze the details of this growth, and to determine the component parts, it was necessary to investigate the extant sources. At the same time, the scientific study of secular history under men like Niebuhr was not without its influence on the study of church history. The desire was to determine "how the past really was," strip it of its halo of devotion and romance, and bring it within the compass of reality.

2) It was some time after the edicts of Henry VIII that the Anglican Church arrived at the fully developed episcopal theory. With the opening of Elizabeth's reign the chief warrant for the existence of diocesan episcopacy lay in the preference of the sovereign for that form of church government. Whitgift, archbishop of Canterbury, 1583—1604, did not assert more than that the episcopacy was the most ancient and desirable type of organization. Thomas Bilson, however, later bishop of Worcester, in 1593, plainly held that episcopacy and apostolic succession are of divine origin. With him moved the Anglican party, especially under Laud, archbishop of Canterbury, 1633—1645. As soon as the question of organization became one of doctrine and not of expediency and essential to the episcopal system, the scholars of that confession were obliged to defend it as the original and binding. Hooker, the most voluminous writer, does not go further than to hold it to be the earliest.

3) The writer recently went over the proof-texts on Baptism and the Lord's Supper during the first four centuries. He could not fail but be struck by the paucity of material and by the difficulty and uncertainty of interpreting a great number of passages. A few pages octavo would suffice to publish it all. Equally as meager are the sources for the knowledge of the early church organization. Some few passages, frequently of secondary importance in the context, have been interpreted again and again under the guidance of a variety of historical imagination to recreate the structure of the early Church. It has been said of Harnack, the most prolific and suggestive writer on the teaching and literature of the early Church, that his many retractions would have ruined the average scholar's reputation. Only his inexhaustible fund of new theories saved him.

that there is ample room for disagreement, and that many solutions must remain nothing but theories with more or less probability in their favor.

The problem, in short, is this: How did the Catholic church organization come into being? It deals with the growth of a historic institution, which is perfectly well known as a completed system, but whose growth in detail offers endless pitfalls for rash and sweeping generalizations<sup>4)</sup> of evidence either local, or applicable only to a specific time.

The leaders in the discussion as it has been developed are: Baur, Ritschl, Hatch, Sohm, Harnack,<sup>5)</sup> whose work has

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4) A splendid example of this is given by Heitmueller, a radical of the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule. He aims to prove the interdependence between the mystery religions and Paul's teaching. From an uncertain and discredited inscription he establishes the existence of the Mithras cult in Tarsus. He then points out in detail the picture of that cult. Then he reads into Paul's conception of Baptism and regeneration the massively physical and magical ideas of the mystery religions, and Paul's religion is explained as the descendant and outgrowth of ethnic cults. Clemen rightly stigmatizes this as the work of an intellectual charlatan.

5) It is impossible to trace more than in barest outline the unifying principle which guided scholars successively in interpreting the early church organization. Rothe, a Lutheran theologian, *Die Anfaenge der christlichen Kirche und ihre Verfassung*, 1837, was impressed with the wide spread of the monarchical episcopate at an early date, and held it to be an apostolic, though not a divine, institution. (The rise of the monarchical episcopate constitutes one of the essential questions in setting forth the constitution of the early Church. It is still very much unsettled, and may ever remain so for want of sufficient and clear evidence.) Baur, *Ueber den Ursprung des Episkopats*, 1838, opposed this theory. He held that the monarchical principle was aboriginal in the Church, a single presbyter in each congregation constituting the government. A. Ritschl, *Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche*, 1857, held that the early Church at Jerusalem, under James, had a Jewish type of government analogous to the government of Islam by the family of Mahomet, while the rise of the episcopate was due to Greek ideas and usages. Renan emphasized rather the influence of Greek and Roman institutions. The late Professor Hatch has developed the theory in detail in the Bampton Lectures for 1880, *Organization of the Early Christian Church*. Schuerer, *Geschichte des juedischen Volkes im Zeitalter Christi*, disposes of the tendency to derive the early church organization from the Jewish synagog. — At present the idea is gaining ground that the early church

been ramified and detailed by a host of monographs, mostly by German scholars.

Our problem is not so much to follow the different threads of development as to make a cross section with Irenæus and determine where he stood in his doctrine on the Church. For two reasons this is difficult. In the first place, Irenæus is just at a turning-point where new ideas are fluctuating with old.<sup>6)</sup> In the second place, Irenæus does not professedly discuss the doctrine of the Church. That doctrine was not controverted. Indirectly he recurs to it to prove the heretics in error.

I. The first question is the very wide question, What is the Church? On one extreme stand the Catholics, who hold that the official, hierarchical episcopate constitutes the Church. The other extreme is expressed in the *Magdeburg Centuries*,<sup>7)</sup> "that to no place or to no church or episcopate is the Church

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organization arose neither in Greco-Roman nor in Jewish prototypes, but was "a unique and spontaneous creation of the Christian faith." A few of the most important titles may suffice for the present article, besides those already mentioned. J. Ellendorf, *Primat der roemischen Paepste* (Protestant); Rothensee, *Primat* (Catholic); R. A. Lipsius, *Die Zeit des Irenæus von Lyon* (*Historische Zeitschrift*, 1872); idem, *Die Zeit des Irenæus und die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche* (*Hist. Zeitschrift*, 1879); R. Seeberg, *Begriff der christlichen Kirche*, 1885; Cheetham, *History of Christian Church during First Four Centuries*, 1894; F. X. Funk, *Das Primat der roemischen Kirche nach Ignatius und Irenæus* (*Kirchengeschichtliche Abhandlungen und Untersuchungen*), 1897; C. Mueller, *Kirchengeschichte*, 1899; Dunin-Borkowski, *Die neueren Forschungen ueber die Anfaenge des Episkopats*, 1900 (Catholic); R. Knopf, *Nachapostolisches Zeitalter*, 1905; Rainey, *Ancient Catholic Church*, 1912.

6) The Church was just passing through the Gnostic controversy, in which its very existence was threatened. While the Gnostic heresies were directed mainly against the doctrine of God and Christ, they necessitated a clear formulation of the extent and authority of Scripture, as well as of the doctrine of the Church over against the heretics. Both doctrines were clarified and definitely shaped in this period.

7) Per allegoriam eleganter expressit: ecclesiam esse coetum collectum ex Judæis et Gentilibus, qui per Christum coniungatur et regatur; . . . ibi vera fuit ecclesia, ubicunque incorrupte sonabat vox Evangelii et sacramenta secundum Christi institutionem recte administrabantur.—*Magdeburg Cent.*, II, 4.

bound, but the Church consists in the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments."

In between stand more modified theories. Harnack leans over to the Catholic view in holding an official episcopate to be an integral part of the Church. Seeberg does not go so far, and Lindsay holds practically the same view as Seeberg.

Let us group and analyze, first, the evidence for the view that the body of believers constitutes the Church.

Emphasis is laid on the fact that Irenaeus calls the Christians priests. Two passages are adduced, IV, 8, 3, and V, 34, 3. The first one seems to be an inexact translation. A Greek original has: "Every king is a priest." In the connection with David that seems preferable. The whole idea in the passage seems to be to group such as had an official priesthood.—The other passage is V, 34, 3. The context brings the proof that in the flesh the righteous shall receive their reward. He goes on to say: "In a preceding book I have shown that all the disciples of the Lord are Levites and priests." This context clearly shows that Irenaeus held a priesthood of all believers, and if the former passage is meant in the reference, it makes the Greek original rather doubtful.

Another group of passages makes the believers the Church. V, 32, 2 is, perhaps, the clearest in this connection. IV, 36, 2 makes those that received the Spirit the Church; IV, 20, 12, the gathering of the Gentiles sanctified by Christ; III, 6, 1, those who received adoption. Indirectly the passage III, 12, 4 may lend weight to the idea. The Church was called together, all gave consent to the proposed plans; all, then, must have constituted the Church.

It seems to be clear from the passages adduced that Irenaeus did, indeed, make the Church the body of believers.

The other theory is that Irenaeus made the official body of ministers the Church, or, at least, gave them a distinctive position in his system. Part of the proof for this lies in the question whether Irenaeus taught the unbloody sacrifice of the

mass,<sup>8)</sup> which will be taken up later. The other part of the proof is contained in the numerous passages which speak of a succession of officers from the time of the apostles down, through whom the teachings of the apostles were transmitted, and who are then both the witnesses to, and the custodians of, the truth.

What did Irenæus mean with this apostolic succession? On the one hand, it has been interpreted to mean a mere historic fact which was very useful to Irenæus in his controversy with the Gnostics. On the other hand, it is held that Irenæus believed in an official succession, by which these officials were specially endowed, forming a governing class in the Church, to whom was entrusted the transmission of the truth, the maintenance of church unity, and the government of the Church.

Irenæus is interested in the unbroken succession, from the apostles down, to controvert the Gnostics. The Church has the complete teaching of the apostles. Why has it that? Because it can go back in an unbroken line to the source. This way of arguing is strikingly brought out IV, 27, 1: "As I have heard from a certain presbyter, who had heard it from those who had seen the apostles." V, 20, 1 he states that all these heretics are of a later date than the bishops to whom the apostles committed the churches; but the Church possesses the true tradition from the apostles.

The passage III, 2, 2 and 3, 1. 2 is interesting. Irenæus says that the Gnostics will not even be convinced by the succession which has handed down tradition from the apostles. Then he bases his argument on the blameless life of those who have been links in the succession, stating even that their falling away would be a dire calamity. It seems as though Irenæus

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8) With the growing influence of the mystery religions on Christian cult the Sacraments became magical ceremonies, the officials hierophants, separated from and above the laity, the distinction which runs through the medieval system, and is summed up in the phrase "character indelebilis" of the Council of Trent. Jerome, Ep. 85, *Ad Evagr.*, puts it very concisely: "Quis patitur, mensarum et viduarum minister, ut supra eos se tumidus efferat, ad quorum preces Christi corpus et sanguis efficitur."

were here directly confronted with an opening to base the truth on the special divine gift of those who hold the teaching function in the Church. But he passes it by, and goes over to "the very ancient Church at Rome" (III, 3, 2), to Polycarp, who had been instructed by apostles, and had conversed with many who saw Christ (III, 3, 4).

This desire to get back to the most ancient Church comes out again. III, 4, 1 he emphasizes it sharply with a comparative slight to the succession. It seems but a link, a happy accident, not an all-important, divinely operative fact.

In fact, Irenæus at times omits the episcopate entirely. III, Preface: The Church has received the life-giving faith, and imparted it to her sons. III, 3, 4, the same way. Polycarp taught the things which the Church handed down. Again in III, 12, 13: The connecting link is omitted; the apostles taught as the Church preaches. III, 12, 7: The Church has its origin firmly from the apostles.

There are a series of passages, however, that speak just as strongly for an official, divinely endowed body of ministers in the Church. The passage V, 20, 2 is the clearest. The presbyters have knowledge because they are religious men, more so than religious men in private station. Their knowledge is based on a special gift of grace. This is clearly expressed IV, 26, 2. The presbyters have received, together with the succession, the certain gift of truth. Nothing can be meant here but a special official grace as a guardian for the truth. But in the next paragraph Irenæus goes over to the character qualification as a guarantee of sound and successful teaching in the Church. The order of the priesthood must display sound speech and blameless conduct. Puffed-up presbyters God will depose. Important it is that he says the Church nourishes them. The Church is thus placed above them. Perhaps, it is going too far to paraphrase the next sentence: "If they are blameless, God's grace rests on them; if not, they ought be deposed by the Church." At any rate, taking in connection III, 3, 2, that idea lives very near at hand.

It seems quite clear that Irenæus did believe in an official episcopate, which is specially gifted by God, and to which is entrusted the transmission as well as the guardianship of the apostolic truth. But it does not constitute a hierarchical order, nor does it supersede the body of believers. To say with Lindsay that it is merely a historical succession neglects the clear statements of Irenæus. Irenæus may not hold that the bishops received, by virtue of their office, the inherent gift of infallibility. The beginning of that idea at least is present, though limited by character qualifications, and still subject to the Christian judgment and knowledge of the body of believers.

To come back to the question what Irenæus considers to be the Church, it may, perhaps, not be far wrong to say that Irenæus did not carry his ideas to their logical conclusion, and then eliminate such as militate against his fundamental principles. The inherited idea he expresses clearly, *viz.*, that the body of believers constitutes the Church. The new idea is in the making, *viz.*, that for the sake of truth and unity the Church has an official, legitimate, divinely instituted, and gifted succession from the days of the apostles down. That he did not develop this latter idea may have been due to the fact that his prime interest in the succession was not one of government, as in Cyprian, but one of testimony. That interest was fully answered by the undeveloped form in which Irenæus presented the doctrine.

Irenæus holds this institution to be exclusive. The clearest proof-text is found III, 24, 1. The Church and the Spirit are commensurate in this world. He who does not partake of the Spirit is outside of salvation. The idea lies clearly in the function which the Church plays in God's plan of salvation. She is the means of spreading knowledge, faith, and the Spirit. She is the only means. To desert her means to fall into the ditch of ignorance. (V, 20, 2.) The more spiritual conception of the Church and the Gospel seems to glide insensibly into the formal conception of outward function and orthodoxy. The idea of exclusiveness was fostered,



no doubt, by drawing the last conclusions against the heretics. It is, therefore, closely connected with the theory of apostolic succession. Irenæus himself brings the argument to this point. The classic text on the succession he concludes: "She [the Church] is the entrance to life; all others are thieves."

The practical consequence is apparent. It is the duty of all to flee into the bosom of the Church (V, 20, 2), to avoid heretics (III, 4, 1).

In that Irenæus emphasizes the test of martyrdom in the life of the Church he seems to imply the mark of sanctity. It is not a mere incident in the Church's life that some of her members will prove faithful during times of persecution. It is necessary. It is necessary because it is the fulfilment of prophecy. It is necessary because thus her members prove their love of God. It is necessary because by it the Church proves the inherent working of the Spirit in her midst that she outweathers the obloquy, attacks, and setbacks of her enemies, and regains immediately her strength. With the heretics this testimony does not exist. The Church believes in it, and has a host of witnesses to point to. (IV, 33, 9; III, 12, 13; V, 34, 3.)

II. We next come to the distinctive marks of the true Church. In the first place, it is apostolic. It is that because it goes back to the apostles, as well as because it teaches and believes as the apostles taught. The main emphasis is, however, that it teaches and believes as the apostles taught. Irenæus brings that out both positively and negatively. The apostles are in this connection the direct link between God and the Church. They have received first-hand the power and the truth of the Gospel to transmit it to the Church. (III, Preface.) Their teaching is the standard by which all right teaching must be measured; *e. g.*, III, 4, 1. In case of dispute, the way to solve it is to refer to the apostles. The teaching of the Church as well has the testimony of the apostles as the apostles the testimony of the Church. True teaching must be in harmony with the apostles (IV, 33, 8);

and the apostles taught as the Church teaches (III, 12, 13). Irenæus's interest in the apostolicity of the Church is always the inner reason of identifying the teaching of the Church with the truth received from the apostles (III, 12, 7; I, 10, 1), over against the heretics, who have left that true foundation.

If the Church ever is the apostolic Church, it is plain that it must be unchangeable. She perseveres in one and the same opinion with regard to God and His Son. (III, 12, 7.) She cannot but remain the same, because the Spirit works in her, and continually renews her. It is not a mechanical adherence to inherited forms, but the continued action of the Spirit in and through the Church. (III, 24, 1.) The selfsame agreement at all times is expressed in the recurrent emphasis that the teachings of the Church are the same as the apostles', *e. g.*, III, 12, 13, etc. In fact, that is the gist of the argument against the heretics. The teachings of Marcion, Valentinus, etc., were not before the days of their originators, while the teachings of the Church have ever remained the same.

Closely related is the continuity of the Church. It is illustrated by the example of the pillar of salt, which remains forever. Its fortunes may vary at times, but it continues. (IV, 31, 3.) It has continued down to the time of Irenæus. (IV, 33, 8; III, 24, 1.) In conceiving of the Church as the entrance and synagog of life, as the island on which men find refuge in a turbulent world, it follows that it must continue, until, finally, God shall deem its work complete.

The second mark of the Church is its unity. But this unity is not so much the unity of outward organization, as Cyprian developed, but the unity of faith and confession. The classical proof-text is I, 10, 2. Even though the Church is scattered throughout the world, she is one; one house, one soul, one heart, one mouth, believe or hand down everything. Irenæus mentions the preaching of the rulers as a means or an expression of this unity. However, the dominant idea, recurring again and again, is the unity of the faith. The reason for this unity is that revealed truth can only be one and the

same at all times (V, 20, 1); all receive one and the same God; the way of salvation is one and the same; the wisdom of God entrusted to the Church is one and the same.

Any one, then, who breaks this unity of the Church can do only harm. Even though there were cause for dissatisfaction with the Church, the schism were worse than any reformation it can bring. (IV, 33, 7.) Such conduct is positive wrong. The great and glorious body of Christ is cut asunder. (IV, 33, 7.) It shall be visited by severest punishment. (IV, 26, 2.) This last passage makes the rallying-point for the unity the presbyters, *i. e.*, a local church organization.

In the third place, the Church is universal. In a number of passages Irenæus mentions this. He mentions this as a fact, and does not explicitly state any inherent reason for it; cf. I, 10, 1; III, 11, 8; 12, 7; IV, 33, 8; 36, 2; 19, 1; V, 20, 1. But, on the one hand, the fact that Irenæus dwells on this idea so frequently raises the thought that he considered it more than an accidental fact. On the other hand, he is quite clear in making the Church one and exclusive. It is possible to conclude from that to an inherent universality of the Church. The passage V, 20, 1 seems to be quite clear. The Church is the sole possessor of divine wisdom, and she gives opportunity to all. Then he calls the Church the salt of the earth, the entrance to life, the synagog of life, islands in a turbulent sea that afford shelter and safety to those who desire it. Add to these, expressions that speak of the Church as the guardian of the truth and its transmitter, and it seems warranted to conclude from the passages on universality that Irenæus considers it an inherent mark of the Church.

III. For Irenæus the Church is, first and foremost, a divine institution. That idea recurs again and again. God is the Father of the Church, as well in founding her as in continually adding new members to her. (IV, 31, 2; 20, 12.)

But this work is not alone ascribed to the Father. God worked through Christ. (IV, 20, 12.) Then again Christ is brought out as the Founder of the Church. (IV, 20, 12.)

The real work of maintaining the Church, however, is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The preaching of the Gospel began with the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. (III, 1, 1.) God conferred the Spirit on the Church throughout the world. (III, 17, 3.) In fact, the Church is commensurate with the gift of the Spirit. The two are inseparable. Where the Spirit is, there is the Church; and where the Church, there is also the Spirit. (III, 24, 1.) This passage emphasizes strongly that Irenæus considers the Church a divine institution.

The idea, of course, is mystical. God is directly active through the gifts of grace in maintaining the Church. But Irenæus knows not only this immediate action of God; he emphasizes also the fact that God works through visible means. The apostles were inspired by the Spirit. They, in turn, were thus enabled to teach in all the world, as well as to write down the Gospel, so that the perfect knowledge might thereby be preserved. (III, 1, 1.) In the preface to Book III he calls attention to the institution of the teaching function in connection with Luke 10, 16: "He that hearth you," etc. Again he says that Jesus laid the twelve-pillared foundation of the Church. (IV, 21, 3.) In fact, God worked already through the prophets and patriarchs, who sowed the seed concerning Christ which the Church later reaped. (IV, 25, 3.)

IV. We next come to the function of the Church. Irenæus really groups the business of the Church around the maintenance and spread of the truth. In his direct utterances the mystical and sacramental side recede into the background. He had, of course, a peculiar interest in this side of the Church's function. That is brought out very clearly III, 4, 1. After he has gone out of his way to prove that the Church has the truth, he concludes that she is the entrance to life. In the same passages the example is adduced of a man depositing money in a bank, which gives added weight. Really, the whole passage from III, Preface, to III, 4 aims to prove that the Church is the depository of truth, and that she must impart it to her sons. The same thought occurs III, 12, 13; 24, 1. But passages like IV, 31, 2 and 20, 12 show that Irenæus attrib-

uted more to the Church than the outward transmission of inherited doctrine. Both passages are allegorical, and it is difficult to say exactly how Irenæus pictured to himself the process by which the Church bears living sons to God. The idea seems to be that the Church has received supernatural powers to gain members, so that the presence of the Spirit with her is not only to guard the truth, but to exercise her function. The thought is, perhaps, as the one expressed at another place: The Church has received apostles, teachers, prophets, and all the other gifts of grace.

Though Irenæus makes the outward, visible Church the ark of salvation, one cannot say that he attaches all those magical, irrational qualities to her and her functions which became current later on. His conception and emphasis is spiritual and inward. A spontaneous combination as occurs I, 10, 2: "Believes or hands down anything," shows the basic idea in his mind, especially as it seems to flow naturally from his lips, as shown by the repetition in quick succession: "preaching and faith," "the preaching is the same," "the faith being one and the same."

V. Of the many phases that fall under the question, What is the Church? perhaps, the most interesting would be a knowledge of her organization. It needs little imagination to realize how vivid and complete would be our knowledge of what the Church actually stood for if we could know the various officers, their functions, qualification, relation to each other, the customs observed in carrying on the routine work of the Church, the rules for membership, and the obligations placed on members. Ideas, after all, exist for practical purposes, and in the practical application to every-day, routine needs and conditions one can best understand their intent and extent, their importance, their modification, by apparently contrary ideas.

Practically at no place does Irenæus speak professedly of this topic. A number of hints are scattered through his writings; at other times it is possible to draw inferences. This side of the question must of necessity, then, be incomplete.

Christ is the Head and Ruler of the Church. (III, 16, 6.) The revelation of the truth as the Church has received it is the supreme law. This idea runs through many passages (apostolicity, unity, continuity of the Church). These passages afford no clue, however, as to the practical working of this principle, nor is the specific term "law" applied in this connection as it occurs, for instance, in Wyclif (*lex divina*) and other medieval writers.

The idea seems to be present that all Christians have a certain governing power. For instance, one can argue from the silence in III, 12, 4, where all gave consent to the apostles' propositions, that Irenæus is in full accord. Then, again, he draws the picture of the righteous man, and brings out just those qualities of spiritual independence and supremacy. He shall judge all and be judged by none; he shall judge the false teachers without as well as within the Church. Practically this amounts to governing position, although duties do not necessarily confer permanent rights. — Again, Irenæus makes all believers priests. The passage V, 34, 3 is the most important. The line of thought is this: All believers are sons of Levi; all, therefore, possess the blessings bestowed upon the Church. It is the idea, apparently, which Luther meant to convey in the universal priesthood of all believers. It would be difficult to hold that, and not, at the same time, confer the lordship over those possessions on their owners, if not in practice, at least in principle. — Finally, Irenæus makes the office of bishops and presbyters dependent on their conduct and their teaching. He does that repeatedly, as was brought out before under "apostolic succession." IV, 26, 5 deserves attention. The first phrase is: "Such presbyters does the Church nourish." Taken in connection with the other pertinent passages, one is inclined to say that, in case of false teaching or evil conduct, the Church will not nourish, *i. e.*, it will depose. At any rate, however, it would be going too far to say Irenæus conferred absolute supremacy on the body of believers.

The believer's relation to the Church is indicated in a few passages. He must avoid heretics, and cling to the true Church.

(III, 4, 1.) He shall obey the presbyters. (IV, 26, 2; 32, 1.) He shall diligently read the Scriptures together with the presbyters. (IV, 32, 1.) IV, 33, containing the picture of a real disciple, adds little of interest. It reemphasizes the need of true faith.

Coming now to the officials of the Church, we are at once met by an uncertainty. What is the relation of presbyters and bishops?<sup>9)</sup> Irenæus uses the terms interchangeably.

The bishops have received a special gift of truth with their office. (IV, 26, 5.) They are not only the successors of the apostles, but they are specially endowed. Their business is to teach. (IV, 32, 1; III, 3.) They must teach correctly and live uprightly. (IV, 26.)

In two passages Irenæus mentions "apostles, prophets, and teachers." (IV, 26, 5; III, 24, 1.) In neither does he go into the question of their function in the Church or of their relation to the other officials.

VI. Speaking of the Church, Irenæus applies to her a number of descriptive phrases that are worth noting. IV, 8, 1; V, 32, 2, he calls her Abraham's seed; IV, 31, 3, salt of the earth; IV, 33, 7, the great and glorious body of Christ; III, 6, 1, synagog of life; V, 20, 1, seven-branched candlestick; V, 20, 2, garden, our mother.

#### THE RELATION OF ROME TO THE OTHER CHURCHES.

The controversy turns about the celebrated passage III, 3, 1,<sup>10)</sup> which is, perhaps, the best known portion of Irenæus's writings. The passage seems to make the Roman church the

9) One of the foremost questions in outlining the organization of the early Church is the function and relation of presbyters and bishops. Sohm has made a very interesting suggestion. The presbyters are the unofficial elder persons in the congregation, who, by virtue of greater age and wider experience, enjoy a certain authority, and are called upon to render voluntary service in teaching and administration. The bishops are chosen from the number of elders. Every bishop, then, is an elder, but not every elder a bishop.

10) Sed quoniam valde longum est in hoc tali volumine omnium ecclesiarum enumerare successiones, maximæ et antiquissimæ et omnibus

head of the Church at large. Many have interpreted it thus. They then hold Irenæus to have taught that the Roman church had a legal supremacy. Some of these interpreters are frank to acknowledge a dogmatic predisposition. The testimony of Irenæus assumes for them only the value of additional evidence for an institution which, they are sure, existed. Others believe that Irenæus's words without such presupposition teach a primacy of Rome, regardless of what Christ may have taught on the question.

Over against them stand those who hold Irenæus's remarks, indeed, a step in the emergence of Rome over the other churches; but he is far from ascribing to Rome a legal supremacy before which other churches must bow. These men are agreed in their fundamental opposition to Roman claims; they are not agreed as to the exact interpretation of the passage in question.

Our question is essentially a question of fact. What did Irenæus teach about the importance of the church at Rome? Incidentally will come up the question why he taught as he taught. But the real problem is historical and not philosophical.

I a. (III, 3, 1.) Irenæus aims to prove that the Church has the true teaching. He therefore emphasizes apostolic succession. The *crux* of his argument is that churches that lead back to the apostles in unbroken succession are therefore trustworthy witnesses of apostolic teaching. Irenæus emphasizes that *all* apostolic churches have this prerogative. This is the basic idea in his argument.

In the next step he limits this to Rome. But he expressly

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cognitæ, a gloriosissimis duobus apostolis Petro et Paulo Romæ fundatæ et constitutæ ecclesiæ, eam, quam habet ab apostolis traditionem et annuntiatam hominibus fidem, per successiones episcoporum pervenientem usque ad nos indicantes, confundimus omnes eos, qui quoquo modo, vel per sibiplacentiam vel vanam gloriam vel per cæcitatem et malam sententiam, præterquam oportet, colligunt. Ad hanc enim ecclesiam propter potentiorem (potiorem) principalitatem necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam, hoc est, eos, qui sunt undique fideles, in qua semper ab his, qui sunt undique, conservata est ea, quæ est ab apostolis traditio.



states that no reason of legal necessity urges him to disregard the others. It would take too long to refer to all. All have the truth, indeed, but Rome must represent all for lack of space.

Why just Rome? Because she is very great, very ancient, universally known, founded by Peter and Paul. Whether these attributes are true or not does not concern us. For Irenæus they were historical facts. These accidental facts make Rome the most representative of apostolic churches, the spokesman, for the moment, of the others. We see, then, that Irenæus chooses Rome not for any inherent infallibility above and beyond that which other apostolic churches can claim. But Rome is so situated by historical accident that its testimony will be much more impressive than that of an obscure church, which also may be apostolic and, therefore, trustworthy. That idea seems very clearly contained in the attribute "universally known." Qualitatively, its testimony is neither better nor worse than that of the others, for the underlying idea is not that Rome testifies, but that a church, any church that can boast of an apostolic succession, testifies. Merely for practical purposes Rome is more suitable.

I b. (III, 3, 2.) So far the interpretation is comparatively simple and on the surface. Now, however, we come to the real heart of the controversy. Irenæus draws a conclusion from this fortunate situation of Rome and says: "For it is a matter of necessity that every church should agree with this church on account of its preeminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolic tradition has been preserved continuously by those who exist everywhere."

Four questions must be answered before we can interpret the passage as a whole. We shall take them not in grammatical order, but in the order as they will best solve the question.

In the first place, what does "convenire ad" mean? Does it mean "come together," "resort to," a translation of "syn-trechein," as Mirbt suggests? Or does it mean "agree with?"

Scholars holding the former view grammatically base their

case on the adverb "undique," "from everywhere."<sup>11</sup>) But Harnack well points out that that interpretation is not at all cogent. Again, in the logical connection the idea that all Christians gather at Rome comes in somewhat foreign. The argument had progressed to the point that Rome was taken to represent the class, *viz.*, apostolic churches. Now it seems a little forced to say that all churches come together there. Rather, it seems logical to substantiate the representative position of Rome by proving that all churches must agree with her. Those who interpret the passage to mean "agree with" have urged that *all* churches cannot come together, and especially not churches as a body. However, it is hardly convincing to press the argument of words any more than to read too much into the "undique." Rather from the context of the whole passage it is preferable to translate "convenire ad" "agree with."

In the second place, what is meant by "potior principalitas"? Other churches must agree with Rome on account of her "potior principalitas."<sup>12</sup>) Here is where Romanists find an expression of legal supremacy. The way to solve it is, of course, to establish from the writings of Irenæus the Greek original for "principalitas." Of the various suggestions made the most satisfactory is "authentia" (Harnack). The term means authority, trustworthiness in teaching.

The attribute applies to all apostolic churches. They are all "authentic." Rome has no first and exclusive right to it.

11) Langen, *Geschichte der roemischen Paepste*, has developed this view in greatest detail. Rome is the center of trade and commerce; all roads lead to Rome; it becomes quite naturally also a gathering-place for Christians from everywhere. Grabe and Neander were among the earliest to hold this view. Ellendorf, *l. c.*, 104: "Die roemische Kirche wurde gleichsam eine Ablagerungsstaette der Traditionen aller Kirchen, die dieselben . . . nach Rom brachten."

12) Tixeront, *History of Dogma* (Catholic), calls this "the doctrinal authority of the Roman Church in particular" (p. 232); Cheetham, *l. c.*, p. 140: "A natural precedence among the churches"; Ellendorf, *l. c.*: "Diese groessere Vorzueglichkeit war nur eine aeussere und zufaellige, nicht eine innere und wesentliche." Cf. also Harnack, *Sitzungsbericht der Preussischen Akademie*, 1893, 939 sqq., and McGiffert, *Apostolic Age*.

But Rome has a more convincing, a "potior," trustworthiness by virtue of those qualities mentioned before: "very great," etc. Rome is, therefore, according to this phrase, not the norm of teaching for the other churches or the Church Universal. All have in themselves the norm of teaching, apostolic succession. But Rome has been historically fortunate, she is very old, known to all, founded by two apostles, and therefore her testimony will carry greater weight.

Now we can understand more readily the connection of the relative clause "in qua semper . . . conservata est."<sup>13)</sup> The clause does not belong to Rome as though Rome were a sort of depository into which in an outward, mechanical way Christians from every hand have deposited and redeposited parts of the faith, so that her collection has become most complete. Grammatically, that would be a poor construction. The closer term is "omnis ecclesia." In the whole trend of the argument the grammatically simpler construction is the better. The true tradition is conserved in the Church Universal. Rome is the best exponent of this when quick, convincing testimony is desired. Rome, however, teaches nothing but what the Church Universal teaches. To use Rome as an example is tantamount to adducing the teaching of the whole Church.

When we adhere to this interpretation of the passage, the "necesse est" offers no difficulty.<sup>14)</sup> It does not express a legal necessity. They are all equal in rank and right. But the inherent force of the facts in the situation brings it about that Rome and the other churches must agree. From the nature of the situation it would be just as well stated: Rome must agree with the other churches. Now, however, Rome is singled out. If any one should object and say: But Rome is

13) Thus Langen, Sohm, Ellendorf, Loofs, Tixeront.

14) Ellendorf, *l. c.*: "Mit dieser Kirche muss der Natur der Sache nach jede Kirche, *i. e.*, die Glaubigen aller Orten, uebereinstimmen." Cheetham, *l. c.*: "a natural precedence"; Tixeront, *l. c.*: "must agree"; Sohm: "Darum muss jede Gemeinde sich mit Rom in Uebereinstimmung setzen."

not the Church Universal, what about Smyrna and Antioch? Irenaeus retorts: It cannot be otherwise, they all must agree, they are all apostolic churches; it is outside of the possibility of fact that they should disagree.

To sum up, Irenaeus draws upon apostolic churches in order to prove that the Church has the divine truth. There are many apostolic churches. For the sake of brevity, combined with convincing proof, Rome is the best example. Historical good fortune has in a measure raised her above others. It is not unfair to single her out from among the other apostolic churches, for all apostolic churches agree; to adduce one is to adduce them all.

II. Thus much about the interpretation of the debated passage. It remains to be seen whether the general trend of Irenaeus's thought agrees with it. The question to be answered is: Does Irenaeus make the Church at large the depository of truth, or does he make Rome the fountainhead and norm by which the teaching of all churches must continually be measured?

It is quite clear that Irenaeus throughout holds the former view. Book III, Preface to III, 4, gives a host of passages that make the Church at large the depository of truth received from the apostles. "The Church has received it from the apostles" — "tradition manifested in the whole world" — "we have recourse to the most ancient churches," etc.

III, 3, 4 is illuminating. Irenaeus had expressly stated he will be satisfied with adducing Rome. Then, either spontaneously or advisedly, he goes over to the East. Polycarp was a disciple of the apostles; the churches in Asia testify to his teaching. One could not very well desire a more striking refutation of Roman legal supremacy than this coordination of Smyrna and the churches of Asia with Rome.

It would be useless repetition to adduce passages that bear this out further. They have been treated under "apostolic succession" and "marks of the Church." In no passage is Rome made supreme. The prerogatives which Catholics claim for Rome are granted to the Church Universal.

Two passages must be mentioned. III, 24, 2: "They have not been founded upon the one rock."<sup>15</sup> Later Roman exegesis applied the words of Jesus to Peter, "Upon this rock," to Peter personally, as well as to his successors, and made that one of the corner-stones for the hierarchical system. Irenaeus here apparently applies it to the faith of the Church. On the other hand, he makes Christ the Head of the Church. (III, 16, 6.)

In the second place, III, 24, 1 may allow the argument from silence. Irenaeus sums up in a measure the trend of his arguments against the Gnostics. The whole Church is the carrier of the truth. Its preaching has ever been consistent; the heretics disagree with the faith of the Church at large. If, in the opening of the argument (III, 3), he were trying to establish a supremacy of Rome, then here, in its conclusion, he would naturally recur to it.

#### BAPTISM AND EUCHARIST.<sup>16</sup>

Irenaeus says nothing about the form and customs of Baptism. I, 9, 4 may refer to the confession of faith made at Baptism. If it does, it is very little toward a detailed knowledge of the customs observed at Baptism.

Irenaeus holds that Baptism is necessary. III, 17, 1 he states that Jesus conferred the power of regeneration on His disciples when He said: "Go ye and teach all nations," etc. II, 22, 4 is commonly referred to the regeneration of Baptism conferred on all, infants, children, boys, old men. By elimination that seems admissible. Only those, he states, Jesus came to save. Not only does this point the necessity of Bap-

15) Callistus was the first.

16) Bibliography: H. J. Thiersch, *Zeitschrift fuer lutherische Theologie*, 1841; Thomasius; Seeberg; Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*; Tixeront, *History of Dogma*; G. L. Hahn, *Die Lehre von den Sakramenten in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 1864; F. Probst, *Sakramente und Sakramentalien der drei ersten Jahrhunderte*, 1872; K. G. Goetz, *Die Abendmahlsfrage in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 1904; F. M. Rendtorff, *Die Taufe im Urchristentum*, 1905; A. Anderson, *Das Abendmahl in den ersten Jahrhunderten*, 1906; G. Rauschen, *Eucharistie und Opfer in den ersten sechs Jahrhunderten*.

tism in general, it establishes Infant Baptism. V, 15, 3 is very clear. Man, through Adam's fall, came into corruption; he therefore needs the laver of regeneration. I, 21, 1 brings the necessity of Baptism out negatively. The passage is very clean-cut. To deny Baptism means to deny the whole faith.

Baptism, then, to Irenæus is intimately connected with the plan of salvation. He does not, however, insist upon an absolute necessity of Baptism.

We next come to the effect of Baptism. It is not a mere symbol. It regenerates sin-corrupted man to an incorruptible being. Most clearly that is stated V, 15, 3. More detailed is V, 11, 2: Baptism has washed away the former vain conversation, the carnal action; instead, it has given the image of Him who is from heaven. III, 17, 2 says: Our bodies received unity among themselves by the laver that leads to incorruption. I, 21, 1 and III, 17, 1 call Baptism the means of regeneration.

In these passages there seems to be a predominance of the physical cleansing of corruption to incorruption through the laver of Baptism, a miracle wrought in and through the Sacrament. That is quite readily understood from the teachings of the heretics whom Irenæus opposed. They held that our material bodies cannot be saved.

IV, 23, 2 brings forward another idea. The eunuch had already learned to know God. Philip taught him further about Jesus. Only Baptism was wanting. Baptism comes in, then, as the completion of the regeneration that has gone on before. The same thought seems to be expressed V, 11, 2: Ye have been washed, believing in the name of the Lord Jesus, and receiving His Spirit.

Before stating Irenæus's teaching on the Lord's Supper, it is necessary to discuss his ideas on "sacrifices."<sup>17)</sup> Tixeront holds that Irenæus taught the unbloody sacrifice of the

17) *L. c.*, p. 239: "Besides, the Eucharist is not merely a Sacrament, it is also a sacrifice." While Irenæus's conception of the Sacrament as a sacrifice seems fairly innocuous compared with the unbloody sacrifice of the mass as the center of later Catholic worship and organization,

mass for the remission of sins. The classical passage is IV, 17, 5—IV, 18. The first idea that stands out is that the Church offers a peculiar sacrifice, acceptable to God. It does that as an expression of thankfulness for the things God has done. That constitutes the difference between the Old and New Testament sacrifices. The former were brought by bondsmen, the latter by free children of God. The emphasis is, therefore, entirely on the spirit of the giver. Now, this idea is narrowed down to the gifts offered at the Eucharist. (IV, 18, 5.) Are the bread and wine brought by the Christians meant as the sacrifice or the eucharistic elements? The text indicates the latter. But, nevertheless, the idea is not that of an unbloody sacrifice for the atonement of sins, but, as is stated again and again, an offering of thanks brought from a spirit of gratitude toward God.

The next question deals with the elements in the Lord's Supper. Tixeront holds that Irenæus taught transubstantiation.<sup>18)</sup> Seeberg, Muenscher, Baumgarten-Crusius, etc.,<sup>19)</sup> say Irenæus taught the presence of the divine Logos in the bread and wine. Rueckert, Dorner, Thiersch, Thomasius: Irenæus taught the real presence of the body and blood in the bread and wine.

The last mentioned is truest to the words of Irenæus. Of the two passages that underlie the discussion, IV, 18 and V, 2, 2. 3, the latter is clearer. In it Irenæus adduces the

a little consideration will show that the distance between the two is, after all, not so very great, and that it was quite natural, after the idea of sacrifice was introduced, to travel the full length. Justin Martyr already has a trace of it (*Dial.* 117).

18) *L. c.*, p. 238: "As to the Eucharist, it is the body and blood of Jesus Christ, into which the bread and wine are changed."

19) Muenscher, *Dogmengeschichte*: "Der Logos kommt in Verbindung mit dem geheiligten Brote, dieses kommt durch den Genuss in Verbindung mit unserm Koerper, und auf diese Art erhaelt der letztere Ausprueche auf Unsterblichkeit." Baumgarten-Crusius, *Dogmengeschichte*, II, 17. 18: "Voraussetzend also, dass das Abendmahl eine wirkliche Teilnahme und ein Geniessen von Leib und Blut Christi darbiere und ermittle, lassen jene Vaeter die irdische Speise nach ihrem Genusse in den himmlischen Leib Jesu uebergehen."

Eucharist to prove that our flesh shall be saved. His whole argument hinges on the contention that our earthly bodies are nourished to incorruption by the real body and blood of Christ. He calls the cup the communion, *i. e.*, the union of wine and blood, and the bread the communion of bread and body.<sup>20)</sup> Then he emphasizes that it was the real blood and the real body, such as the Word of God was actually made. In the end of the passage he takes up the idea again; "he acknowledges the cup as His own blood and the bread as His own body." In the next paragraph, the "word of God" is not the Logos, but the words of consecration, by which the common bread and wine are made the Eucharist of the body and blood of Christ. He then carries on the argument in detail that our earthly bodies are nourished by the real body and blood of Christ, and thus, in due time, receive incorruption.

IV, 18, 5 is a little more involved. Irenæus has the same object in view, *viz.*, to prove that our flesh shall see incorruption. At the same time he wants to disprove the heretical idea that earthly things are not God's own. In the Eucharist our bodies are nourished with the body and blood of Christ. There is no opposition between the flesh and the spirit, but a fellowship and union, as is clearly shown by the Eucharist. It consists of two realities, the earthly, which is the bread; the heavenly, which is the body and blood of Christ.

Some indications have already been given of the effect of the Lord's Supper. It leads our flesh to incorruption, so that in due time our bodies also shall finally be saved. That is accomplished in that our bodies are nourished with the body and blood of Christ. Our bodies "receive increase" from the body and blood of Christ. It has well been remarked that this, being nourished from the body and blood of Christ, is not really a nourishment to physical strength or to the satisfaction of physical hunger. We are nourished from corruption to incorruption, from earthly to heavenly, from flesh to spirit.

20) ὅποτε οὖν το κεκραμενον ποτηριον και ὁ γεγωνως ἄγιος ἐπιδεχεται τον λογον του θεου (the words of consecration), και γινεται εὐχαριστια αἱματος και σωματος Χριστου.



Finally, attention may be called to the fact that Irenaeus makes mention of the prayer, the word of God, meaning the words of institution, by which the bread and wine become the Eucharist. That is a special gift to the churches. Neither the Old Testament nor the heretics have received this grace. (IV, 18, 5.) Irenaeus speaks of the mingled cup.<sup>21)</sup> He refers to the well-known custom of adding water to the wine.

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