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**RECAPITULATION AND CHRIST'S ACTIVE OBEDIENCE
A LUTHERAN RETRIEVAL OF IRENAEUS**

**A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts**

**By
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August 2019**

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Dedicated to my wife Lindsay Bloch, without whose help and support I could not have written this, and to Immanuel Lutheran Church in Seymour, Indiana for her 150th Anniversary.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ACW</i>	<i>Ancient Christian Writers</i>
<i>AH</i>	<i>Against Heresies</i>
<i>ANF</i>	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
<i>ESV</i>	<i>English Standard Version</i>
<i>FC</i>	Formula of Concord
<i>Inst.</i>	<i>Institutio Oratoria</i>
<i>LW</i>	<i>Luther's Works</i> , American ed. 55 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–1986
<i>PPS</i>	Popular Patristics Series
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources Chretiennes</i>
<i>SD</i>	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
<i>WA</i>	Luther, Martin. <i>Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> . 65 vols. Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1993.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In exploring atonement, chiefly active obedience, Irenaeus' understanding of recapitulation can strengthen and refresh the way that Lutherans speak about the active obedience of Christ by allowing them to frame the discussion in rhetorical categories. For the last few centuries, and even more so now, theologians have and continue to debate the nature and role of Christ's active obedience. I will begin by tracing and detailing the roots of active obedience and the role which it plays in the atonement, specifically within the Lutheran tradition.

Following this introduction, Chapter Two briefly defines the active obedience of Christ. I will detail sections of Luther's commentary on Galatians. The commentary sufficiently gives the key points of Luther's justification by faith alone, the two kinds of righteousness distinction, and thoughts on the atonement. Since this thesis seeks to appropriate Irenaeus into the Lutheran tradition, it is good to know what Luther himself thought, so that this can be applied in order to interact with other Lutheran theologians.

Second, after briefly discussing the *Formula of Concord*, I will turn to two other Lutheran theologians. Martin Chemnitz serves as a bridge between Luther and Lutheran Orthodoxy. His insights on the two kinds of righteousness distinction and the obedience of Christ will prove him to be worthy of discussion for the purpose of this thesis. The other theologian who bears import in the discussion of active obedience is Francis Pieper. Via his *Christian Dogmatics*, it is seen that the discussion of the active obedience of Christ has made its way to American Lutheranism. He outlines the history of doctrinal formulations in the Lutheran tradition and has been an important theologian in the LCMS for a number of years.

That will conclude the discussion on theologians and their views of the active obedience

of Christ. Next, we will look back to the Reformation. Georg Karg questions the imputation of Christ's active obedience. Through a historical lens, there could be merit to what Karg argues. This will lead to the problem with which this thesis is concerned: Is the active obedience of Christ necessary? Some of the theologians discussed below suggest that the active obedience of Christ is something that can be discarded from the atonement with no major consequences (or even perhaps that removing it strengthens the theology of justification). If Christ's active obedience is imputed to Christians in justification, then this means that an *active* righteousness is part of justification. This calls into question the entire two kinds of righteousness distinction. Is the active obedience of Christ merely a mis-categorization of the two kinds of righteous, namely, that Christ's active obedience under the Law belongs in the realm *coram mundo*? These questions will be dealt with in the chapters below.

It is for that very reason that I suggest going back to a different time in the history of the Church for an answer to this conundrum. Irenaeus in his category of recapitulation can help to answer the question posed by Karg and other critics of the active obedience of Christ. Instead of arguing that Irenaeus outlines an imputation of Christ's works to the believer, Irenaeus operates in a different metaphor with different categories. Lutheran theologians typically use legal categories and the courtroom metaphor. However, there are different ways of talking about justification and the atonement. For example, one could speak of the conflict between Christ and the demonic powers or the blessed exchange of Christ within in the Lutheran tradition. There is nothing wrong with these metaphors. Perhaps through a different metaphor with different categories, the resolution to this problem is illumined. There is also a history of the active obedience of Christ apparent in the Reformed theological tradition. This thesis will stay focused

on the Lutheran tradition. For more information, see Muller's *Post-Reformation Dogmatics*.¹

Through Irenaeus' use of rhetorical categories to describe the ministry and works of Christ on earth, we can better understand the active obedience of Christ in a different way with a different vocabulary. Since there is already precedent for various ways of speaking about the atonement in the Lutheran tradition, it seems appropriate to appropriate Irenaeus in one of his ways of speaking. This will open the door to soteriology as something other than a courtroom pronouncement, keeping both the two kinds of righteousness distinction and the teaching of the active obedience of Christ intact. For Irenaeus, God is rewriting the story of human history through His Son.

Chapter Three will discuss Irenaeus. Special attention will be given to the idea of recapitulation and the restoration of the image and likeness of God. Both are pivotal points for Irenaeus. Drawing from Irenaeus himself and taking into consideration secondary literature, a definition will be given of recapitulation and how the recreation unto the image and likeness of God plays a role in salvation. Through this familiarization with Irenaeus the following chapter will be easier to understand, and the arguments will hang together better. Unlike the Lutheran theologians who are discussed before Chapter Three, Irenaeus will use rhetorical language and categories. This is strikingly different and somewhat unique although founded on sound biblical interpretation. However, this metaphor will prove a new way to understand the active obedience of Christ in justification without creating problems with the two kinds of righteousness distinction.

Finally, in Chapter Four, three specific passages of Irenaeus dealing with the atonement

¹ Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Dogmatics: the Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003). Volume three has specific information relate to this topic.

of Christ through his obedience on earth without any reference to the cross of Christ are discussed. It can be inferred through the absence of the mention of the cross of Christ that Irenaeus is working within the category of what later Lutherans would call the active obedience of Christ. Allowing Irenaeus to speak on his own terms, it will be shown that if the rhetorical categories are accepted and applied, it will allow us to rethink how we can go about talking about Christ's life being salvific for humanity. In the conclusion, Chapter Five, the appropriation of Irenaeus' understanding of recapitulation will be applied to the Lutheran problem. After this, some suggestions on how this rhetorical metaphor could work within a different set of categories for Lutheran theology will be offered.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ACTIVE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

This chapter will accomplish three goals. First, it will trace a basic history of the active obedience of Christ. Starting with Luther himself, going to Martin Chemnitz, and then to the Formulators of Concord, the active obedience of Christ will be shown. Next, two criticisms against the active obedience of Christ will be levelled. The first criticism is that the active obedience of Christ is a misunderstanding of Luther's view of atonement; this is typified by Gustaf Aulén. This criticism has largely been rebuffed, but it serves our purposes in mentioning it as it is related to the second criticism. The second criticism is that the active obedience of Christ violates the distinction between the two kinds of righteousness. Finally, it will be made apparent that there is still debate around the second criticism, which the subsequent chapters will address.

Luther and Lutherans on the Atonement

Many of the arguments around the active obedience of Christ come from the book of Galatians, specifically chapters three and four as will be seen in the following pages of this chapter. Instead of covering Luther as a whole, I will focus on the purpose of Christ being born "under the Law" according to Luther. His Galatians commentary covers the atonement and the distinction between the two kinds of righteousness, which serves as a framework for the following chapter. This will not be a complete treatment of Luther's thoughts on redemption or the atonement but should suffice for this thesis' purpose. Since his interpreters and theological inheritors¹ will be brought up later, we will briefly discuss Luther and his view of Christ under

¹ Martin Chemnitz specifically cites Luther's third chapter of the Galatians commentary to bolster the support

the law for the salvation of humanity.

Luther's Commentary on Galatians

How does faith justify? For Luther, faith is that which makes God, God. He sees Galatians 3:6, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," as proving this point, and rightly so. It is the faith that Abraham has in God which justifies him; of course, this is true and almost obvious to the seasoned reader of Luther. Faith is not only that which justifies, but Luther stresses the importance of faith in the Creator and Creature distinction. "To attribute glory to God is to believe in Him, to regard Him as truthful, wise, righteous, merciful, and almighty, in short, to acknowledge Him as the Author and Donor of every good."² Luther shows that to have faith in God is simply not to have an historical knowledge of events in the Scriptures. Rather, faith is a confident attitude of the heart towards God; this God loves, this is what justifies man. Later, Luther expands this, saying that "faith justifies because it renders to God what is due Him; whoever does this is righteous."³ It is clear from Luther that this is how faith makes one righteous, it is the right relationship between the Creator and his creatures. In turn, this makes unbelief the great and egregious sin—an unforgivable one.⁴

Now, it must be stressed that this faith is never apart from Christ. We do not justify ourselves through faith by exercising the faculties of our God-given reason. This Luther explicitly rejects. Faith is a trusting in the promise and Christ is the fulfillment of that promise.

for Chemnitz's understanding of the two kinds of righteousness and Law and Gospel considering this distinction. Therefore, it is worthwhile to go directly to Luther's Galatians Commentary, as Chemnitz will be discussed below. Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, trans. J. A. O. Preus, vol. 8, *Chemnitz' Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2008).

² Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians 1–4*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 26, *Luther's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), 227.

³ *LW* 26:227.

⁴ For the biblical references to the unforgivable sin, see Matthew 12, Mark 3, and Luke 12.

Christ is not a mere example for us to follow, but rather he is, “grasped by faith as a gift.”⁵ Apart from the law and works, Christ justifies us through our faith in the promise. This faith is the same as that which Abraham possessed except that Christ has already appeared to be our salvation from sin and death.⁶

How does Christ save from sin and death? What is the purpose of the Incarnation? It is through His sacrifice for our sins on the cross that we are removed from the curse of the law. The law cannot contribute anything to our righteousness after the fall into sin. Christ is the abrogator of the law; he utterly silences the law so that it no longer can terrify Christians.⁷ This thought of Luther is challenging and somewhat paradoxical. How can Christ be the fulfillment of the law if he is the abrogator of the law as well? Does the law end in its destruction?

Luther’s comments on Galatians 4:3–4 clear up the discussion of Christ’s work of salvation and the law. His comments about the law become fierce, and he holds the law as contemptible and claims Paul in defense of these statements. For Luther, it is not that the law is by its nature something to be spoken against, “but because Paul is dealing here with the issue of justification—a discussion of justification is something vastly different from a discussion of the Law—necessity demanded that he speak of the Law as something very contemptible.”⁸ And later, Luther writes, “from this you should learn, therefore, to speak most contemptuously about the Law in the matter of justification following the examples of the apostle.”⁹ However, when speaking about the law outside of justification, once again, like Paul, we ought to treat the law

⁵ *LW* 26:247.

⁶ *LW* 26:246–47.

⁷ *LW* 26:209.

⁸ *LW* 26:364.

⁹ *LW* 26:365.

with the utmost respect and reverence.¹⁰

It is here that Luther takes an interesting turn. Instead of Christ fulfilling the law by keeping it perfectly and thus “pacifying” the law, Christ goes into a duel, a battle, with the law.¹¹ Christ as the Son of God is truly, “holy righteous, and blessed,” and yet, “the Law raged [against Christ] as much as it does against us accursed and condemned sinners, and even more fiercely. It accused Him of blasphemy and sedition; it found Him guilty in the sight of God of all the sins of the entire world.”¹² It is thus that Christ has silenced the law on our behalf. He conquers the law by condemning the law. By living the perfect life and yet assuming our sins he finds the law in a contradiction by suffering at the law’s hands as at a tyrant’s.

Of course, this includes nothing of our will or works but relies solely on Christ who fights the law in our place in perfect obedience.¹³ It is only through Christ that we can say we have conquered the law, not because of anything we have done, but because Christ has paid our punishment and yet was without sin. But the way that Luther conveys this theological truth is somewhat unexpected. Instead of Christ’s obedience fulfilling what the law commanded the law oversteps its bounds and accuses Christ of sin. Therefore, Christ as the Lord of the law enters a duel with the law, a mere creature. Luther writes,

This was truly a remarkable duel, when the law, a creature, came into conflict with the Creator, exceeding its every jurisdiction to vex the Son of God with the same tyranny with which it vexed us, the sons of wrath (Eph. 2:3). Because the Law has sinned so horribly and wickedly against its God, it is summoned to court and accused.¹⁴

¹⁰ *LW 26:365–67.*

¹¹ 1 Cor 15 is an example of the dueling language between Christ and the Law.

¹² *LW 26:370.*

¹³ *LW 26:369–74.*

¹⁴ *LW 26:370.*

Luther continues with a classic hypothetical conversation with Christ, the law, and believers. What should be noted is that although we could categorize this as a “*Christus Victor*” phrase with Christ triumphing over the law, Luther is still working within juridical categories. He is still using the metaphor of a courtroom where the guilty is summoned before the judge. Justice and God’s plan of salvation are centered around the juridical language even in this triumphant passage of Luther.

A final note on this section of the Galatians commentary occurs a little further on in the work. Luther speaks of Christ’s obedience under the law yet does not use the categories that later Lutherans would use. Luther points out that Christ is born “under the law” according to St. Paul. For Luther, these words “indicate that the Son of God, who was born under the Law, did not perform one or another work of the Law or submit to it only in a political way, but that He suffered all the tyranny of the Law.”¹⁵ Luther intensifies this statement by continuing, “Christ acted toward the Law in a passive, not in an active way. Thus He is not a lawgiver and judge in accordance with the Law, but by making Himself a servant of the Law He became our Redeemer from the Law.”¹⁶ Notice that Luther is sure to say that Christ in his passive obedience to the law is passive, meaning he undergoes suffering. As the Son of God, he suffers under the tyranny of the law for us. Once again, Luther also uses juridical language even in both situations. The fact that Christ redeems us from the law by his obedience is still operating within the juridical framework along with the statement that he is not lawgiver or judge. Luther does change the way in which the justification before the judge occurs and what the terms mean. However, even in his transformation of the original metaphor of a courtroom he still operates with these juridical

¹⁵ LW 26:372.

¹⁶ LW 26:372.

categories.

There is one example (I am aware of) in Luther's writing where he seems to be speaking about active obedience. Paul Althaus points to a place in Luther in which Christ is making satisfaction through his keeping the law for humanity and suffering the punishment of sinners. This could be seen as corresponding to the active and passive obedience of Christ.¹⁷ This section is from a sermon given by Luther. Luther distinctly says that Christ's actions of loving God and loving the neighbor are imputed to the believer. This is a longer quotation, but it serves the purpose of showing how Luther is framing the discussion of Christ's works being imputed to the believer. Luther is different from the later theologians to be discussed but this quote shows one example in his preaching where there is a reference to Christ's works being imputed to the believer by faith. Luther describes in detail and colorful language Christ triumphing over the law, the devil, and hell. Right after this he shifts the focus onto the gifts that Christ gives. He writes, "All of His works will be ascribed to me as if they were my own works, when I only believe on Christ. Apart from their being given to me, His works wouldn't help me at all. For these are alien works which make us good before God and save us."¹⁸ Luther makes it quite clear that these works done for us (which includes Christ's obedience to the law) are given to us. These works make us good before God.

¹⁷ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert Schultz (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1966), 202. Althaus cites WA 17II, 291-92.

¹⁸ Martin Luther, *Festival Sermons of Martin Luther: The Church Postils*, trans. Joel Baseley, (Place of Publication: Mark V, 2005), 56. This translation is weak at certain points, but in this passage it preserves the sense of Luther's sermon. One change could be instead of the "alien works" it should be translated as the "external works." The point is that these works come from outside the believer because they are Christ's own. Provided below is the German text from the SD: "...und mag mir zuschreiben alle seine werck, als das weren sie mein eigen, wund als hette ich sie selbs than, wenn ich nu an den Christum glaube, Sunst hulffen mich seine wercke gar nichts, wenn sie mir nicht geschenckt weren. Das seind sie fremden wercke, die uns fromm wund seelig machen vor Gott..."WA: 17ii, 291-92.

The curious phrase “apart from their being given to me” casts some doubt on whether or not this means the same that later Lutheran Orthodox theologians will understand as the active obedience of Christ. Since this thesis is not about whether or not Luther himself understood active obedience in the same way as later theologians, we will leave the discussion here.

Although much more could be said regarding Luther and his view of the atonement, we will now turn to Martin Chemnitz. As a theologian intent on guarding Luther’s legacy and theological contributions, it is interesting how he describes justification, the atonement, and the two kinds of righteousness in slightly different ways. Like Luther, Chemnitz too sees all the above categories as intimately connected. The difference that should be emphasized in this discussion is the new category that begins to appear in his theology, namely, the active and passive obedience of Christ. While one could argue that Luther also operates with this distinction, Chemnitz places a greater emphasis and importance on Christ’s obedience to the law than Luther does.

Formula of Concord¹⁹

Before looking deeper into Chemnitz, the Book of Concord provides some more points about the active obedience of Christ. The theology of the active and passive obedience of Christ is not unique to any one theologian but is a part of the Reformation as will be seen below in the Formula of Concord. The Formula of Concord speaks about Christ’s obedience *in vita et morte*. The obedience *in vita* is the obedience unto the law that actively Christ performs; since He is God, He is completely righteous before the law and this obedience is for us. The obedience *in*

¹⁹ This section is taken from the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord III, 15–16 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 564.

morte emphasizes the death of Christ as a passive action, because he does not save himself but willing submits his life to the Father also for us and our salvation.

Luther does not speak often or consistently in the way mentioned above, so it can be safely assumed that this is an extension of Luther's categories. This does not necessarily mean that Luther and the Formulators are in conflict but that this is a different direction in which to take the theological categories. Luther is much more content to leave the "righteousness which is imputed to believers" as unexplained, yet always related to the life and death of Christ. For Luther, the satisfaction of the law is a kind of paradoxical duel. The law oversteps its bounds and therefore is declared a tyrant and believers in Christ are freed from the tyranny. The Formula of Concord speaks in a twofold way relating the life of Christ to satisfaction of the law and the death and resurrection of Christ to the atonement for sins committed. Where Luther is happy to condemn the law, the Formulators seem to be uncomfortable speaking in such a way. With controversies arising, the need to more clearly articulate the Lutheran teaching on the atonement is necessary. The law is fulfilled for the Formulators when the believer lays hold to the merits of Christ's life.²⁰ Sins are atoned for through the death and resurrection of Christ, who, as the sinless one, is the perfect sacrifice for our sins.²¹

Martin Chemnitz

Considering that Chemnitz is involved in the drafting of the Formula of Concord, it is

²⁰ The German and Latin reads: „*da er fuer uns dem Gesetz gnug gethan*“ and „*quibus ille legi nostra causa satisfecit*“ SD III 6–7, in Irene Dingel, et al., ed., *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche: Vollstaendige Neuedition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 2014), 1392–93. I see as relating to the life of Christ as fulfilling the Law in perfect obedience. What is to be stressed is against Karg as stated below.

²¹ SD III, 7. Immediately following the phrase in the footnote above is, „*und fuer unsere suende bezalet hat*“ or „*et peccata nostra expiavit,*“ *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, 1393, line 7. The death and resurrection of Christ provide the atonement which is necessary for the sins which have been committed by humanity.

unsurprising that he speaks in similar ways regarding the two kinds of righteousness, atonement, and the satisfaction of the law. He should be mentioned because he makes use of the distinction between the two kinds of righteousness with direct reference to the law and gospel distinction. Chemnitz writes, “the benefits of Christ of which the Gospel speaks are nothing else than satisfaction for the guilt and punishment we owe to the Law *and* that completely perfect obedience which the righteousness of the Law demands.”²² There are two things between sinful humanity and the law. First, the law requires that there be a sacrifice for the sins committed by mankind (Romans 6:23). Second, the law demands our complete compliance with regards to every single commandment given by God (James 2:10). For Chemnitz, “these two things which the Law requires and demands are given to believers and imputed in Christ for righteousness.”²³ The righteousness of the gospel is that righteousness of the law imputed through sheer grace.

Chemnitz makes this even clearer further down the page. He writes that, “the righteousness of the Law and of the Gospel is different and it is also the same.”²⁴ In view of sinful humanity, “it is different, cf. Phil. 3:9, ‘a righteousness which is not of the Law.’”²⁵ Of course, since humanity is fallen and is unable to believe or trust in God by nature, we are desperately in need of a Savior. However, Chemnitz points out that when we speak of Christ Incarnate, the two kinds of righteousness distinction begins to break down. He continues, “with respect to Christ it [the righteousness] is the same; for what the Law demands and requires, this Christ supplies and gives.”²⁶ Chemnitz is showing here that the two kinds of righteousness distinction has an

²² Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 838. Emphasis added.

²³ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 838.

²⁴ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 838.

²⁵ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 838.

²⁶ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 838.

appropriate sphere which it operates within. The question that two kinds of righteousness seeks to answer is, what do humans need? This is an important question and one often spoken of in juridical categories. Humanity needs a righteousness given by God.

Chemnitz does not always speak of the two kinds of righteousness in the different way mentioned in the paragraph above. At other times, Chemnitz speaks in a parallel way to Luther as regards this distinction. Robert Kolb in his article, “‘The Chief Controversy between the Papalists and Us’: Grace, Faith, and Human Righteousness in Sixteenth–Century Ecumenical Exchange,” describes Chemnitz’s position as holding that “any human performance, any human merit, conceived of in any way, has no place in justification.”²⁷ Kolb continues saying that, “Chemnitz contended that Paul’s ‘excluding phrases,’ the *particulae exclusivae* – such as ‘without works of the Law’ and ‘by grace alone’ – required defining the trust that God creates as the response to His love for the human creature as that which makes believers righteous in God’s sight.”²⁸ In writings such as the *Examen*, Chemnitz defines the righteousness which saves polemically against the Papalist formulation. This is markedly different from the *Loci* phrases and formulations shown above. What this demonstrates is that Chemnitz recognizes that different types of discourse call for different statements. Are human works, even Christ’s human works, imputed to believers? The answer seems to be yes or no for Chemnitz depending on the situation in which he finds himself. This is not a fault of Chemnitz but a sign of how he once again recognizes different spheres within which different categories are more useful.

However, Chemnitz, in seeing one kind of righteous mentioned in the paragraph above on

²⁷ Robert Kolb, “‘The Chief Controversy between the Papalists and Us’: Grace, Faith, and Human Righteousness in Sixteenth–Century Ecumenical Exchange,” in *2001, A Justification Odyssey: Papers Presented at the Congress on the Lutheran Confessions*, ed. John A. Maxfield (St. Louis, The Luther Academy, 2002), 79.

²⁸ Kolb, *The Chief Controversy*, 79.

Christ's righteousness, does not mix the law and the gospel together, but keeps them distinct. The law and the gospel are related yet should be distinguished even when talking about righteousness. When one seeks to justify himself, he finds nothing either in his nature or his works which can absolve him and satisfy God's righteousness.²⁹ God truly does require that his law be kept for eternal life. As Chemnitz says, in "the case of human judgement...guilt is absolved either because of some preceding merit...or with respect to present righteousness and innocence either of the cause or of the person, or with respect to a satisfaction which the guilty party promises."³⁰ Yet as referenced above, "man can put up nothing in his own defense in order that he might be justified."³¹ Therefore humanity truly is in need of "a righteousness given from outside oneself,"³² one that "not only with payment of penalties but also with perfect obedience to the divine law made satisfaction in such a way that it could be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world."³³

Notice once again how Chemnitz is framing the entire work of salvation and justification. These are all juridical arguments informed by juridical vocabulary. In this way, although differing from Luther, he also follows Luther's lead in using juridical categories. To continue with Chemnitz, Christians are truly in need of the active obedience of Christ to the divine law. It is only through this imputation of righteousness which comes only by faith in Christ Jesus that one may be justified. And more importantly for Chemnitz is the following, that we know with

²⁹ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 885–87.

³⁰ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 890.

³¹ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 890.

³² I have translated the phrase *alienam iustitiam* as "a righteousness given from outside oneself". Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, ed. Polycarp Leyser, (Frankfort & Wittenberg: 1653), 234 contains the Latin text.

³³ Chemnitz, trans. Preus, *Loci Theologici*, 890.

certainty that Christ's obedience to the law is imputed to the believer. This is a great consolation for the soul; God's law is silent. Jesus as the Lord of the law silences it through obedience covering completely and fully mankind's disobedience.

This is not to say that justification is anything other than a juridical undertaking for Chemnitz. He takes great care in preserving the original uses of the words having to do with righteousness in the Scriptures. He shows that through this grammatical and lexical understanding of the word "to justify" it cannot be understood as an infusion of power in order to become righteous.³⁴ As Chemnitz says, "Paul everywhere describes the article of justification as a judicial process wherein the conscience of the sinner, accused before the tribunal of God by the divine law, [is] convicted, and subject to the sentence of eternal damnation."³⁵ Wherever the sinner turns, there is the divine law. She is accused and condemned, a sinner. However, she is also *iusta*. She has been justified before God by a different kind of righteousness. While nothing is found in "the person's nature or works,"³⁶ there must be a different kind of righteousness. God justifies where there is true righteousness.

Chemnitz argues that God does not forgive sins to the detriment of the justice and righteousness of God; God is continually and eternally righteous. But this presents a problem in the relationship between humanity and God because "God cannot retract the sentence of condemnation revealed in the Law, unless it is perfectly satisfied or fulfilled, Matt. 5:18."³⁷ Justification only happens where, "righteousness and satisfaction" are found; these are only

³⁴ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 886–87.

³⁵ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 887.

³⁶ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 889.

³⁷ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 889.

found in Christ, and thus there is need for a righteousness which is *extra nos*. It is only through Christ, who is perfectly righteous in both nature and works that a sinner may be declared righteous. It is through the imputation of Christ's righteousness that the justice of God is satisfied; this is made ours by faith.³⁸

Finally, to end the discussion of Chemnitz's theology regarding the imputation of righteousness in the article of justification, we will show one final formulation in which Chemnitz describes simply,

The grace of God does not impute our sins to us when it applies and imputes to us the righteousness of Christ the Mediator, through faith, and when faith lays hold on Christ the Mediator in the Gospel, in Christ apprehending the grace and mercy of God unto righteousness and eternal salvation. Or, to put it another way, the remission of sins or our acceptance unto life eternal is given freely, by the grace of God, through and for the sake of Christ in the Gospel, and it is apprehended by faith.³⁹

This is how Chemnitz uses the term righteousness and imputation when referring to the article of justification. It can be understood as an imputation of the righteousness of Christ or of an acceptance through faith in Christ of God's mercy.

Much more could be said about Martin Chemnitz and other Lutheran Orthodox writers. But, much of the theology that Chemnitz here states is further developed by later writers to the same effect. The terms "active obedience of Christ" and "passive obedience of Christ" are specifically inserted into the theological vocabulary. The former talks of Christ's positive fulfilment of the law in his earthly life, and the latter speaks about Christ's suffering and death rendered in obedience to the Father. Now, bringing the discussion into a more modern setting, Gustaf Aulén challenges this idea of the atonement, specifically, the active obedience of Christ.

³⁸ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 890.

³⁹ Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, 1035.

Gustaf Aulén and the *Christus Victor* Challenge

Aulén makes some extremely strong statements characterizing Lutheranism after Luther. He is critical of Luther's successors, going so far as to say, "perhaps there is no single point at which the men of that [Luther's] age showed such complete incapacity to grasp his [Luther's] meaning."⁴⁰ The meaning which they had misunderstood was Luther's teaching on the atonement posited by Aulén. The Ludensian scholar sees Luther as resurrecting an ancient way of speaking of the atonement. Aulén calls this the "Classic" view of the atonement set over against the "Latin" view of the atonement. To somewhat oversimplify, the "classic" view of the atonement is a dramatic conflict with Christ as the victor over the forces of the world (*Christus Victor*) embodied (for Aulén) in the theology of Irenaeus. The "Latin" view of the atonement is God requiring satisfaction from man for breaking the law and Christ providing that satisfaction to the justice of God embodied in the theology of Anselm.

In his argument, Aulén attempts to show how the later Lutherans simply did not understand Luther himself. "Obviously, Luther's contemporaries failed to understand his teaching on the subject, and they never grasped his deeper thoughts."⁴¹ After Luther's death they simply lapsed back into the old Latin view typified by Anselm. Thus, with the loss of Luther's idea of the atonement, what is left is the idea of the active obedience of Christ. And, as Aulén says about the active obedience of Christ, "this may be truly called a development of the earlier doctrine; an important addition has been made to it. The life of Christ as a whole is now held to avail for the satisfaction of God's justice."⁴² The active obedience of Christ has now become wholly un-

⁴⁰ Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor*, trans. A. G. Herbert, (SPCK London: 1961), 139.

⁴¹ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 139.

⁴² Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 145.

Lutheran and a typical Latin view of the atonement.

Is such criticism correct? Did Luther's students really miss the point that much? Some scholars disagree. Paul Althaus, in his *The Theology of Martin Luther*, argues directly against Aulén, saying that the claims are unsubstantiated.⁴³ It is true that Luther revives some language similar to the Church Fathers and that he talks often about victory over the demonic powers.⁴⁴ However, Luther also talks about how these powers have their authority from God. Althaus explains that these powers,

have this authority, however, only through God's wrath and only so long as this is not stilled—although they at the same time are, and remain, God's enemies...the satisfaction which God's righteousness demands constitutes the primary and decisive significance of Christ's work and particularly of his death. Everything else depends on this satisfaction, including the destruction of the might and the authority of the demonic powers.⁴⁵

Through this, Althaus shows that the so-called "Latin" and "classic" views of the atonement could be more closely related than Aulén thinks.

Active Obedience in View of Law and Gospel and Two Kinds of Righteousness Distinctions

While the above scholars have challenged Aulén's "motif theology," there is a piece of his argument that still stands considering that criticism. Aulén takes issue with the way that active obedience frames the atonement in terms of "a double necessity: Christ must by His *oboedientia activa* fulfil God's Law to the uttermost, and He must by His death pay the penalty which justice requires for man's transgression of it."⁴⁶ There stands the problem: the law determines salvation,

⁴³ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 218–19.

⁴⁴ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 220.

⁴⁵ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 220.

⁴⁶ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 146.

not the Gospel. This should shock Lutherans; the gospel becomes a “plan B” to the law. In explaining Lutheran Orthodox theology, Aulén writes, “Law provides now the scheme by which it is necessary to interpret everything, even God’s salvation through Christ.”⁴⁷

Aulén continues to argue that the “motif” has changed from *Christus Victor* with Luther back into a “Latin” satisfaction. There are shortcomings to this line of argumentation since Luther can also talk of satisfaction as mentioned above. To understand better this criticism of the active obedience of Christ as being determined by the law, it is good to start with Georg Karg. He is the first theologian who clearly articulates this idea.

Georg Karg and the Atonement after Luther⁴⁸

The controversy with Georg Karg is often overshadowed by two things. First, the controversy with Osiander often takes center stage in the drafting of the Formula of Concord. For Osiander, what made one righteous before God was “the indwelling of Christ’s divine nature. Justification is literally a ‘making righteous,’ rather than a declaration or imputation.”⁴⁹ However, Melancthon argues against this, saying that Osiander “failed to equate ‘righteousness’ with the ‘forgiveness of sins.’”⁵⁰ The lesser-known controversy over the passive righteousness of a Christian is Georg Karg arguing against “active obedience.”

The case of Karg is also overshadowed by one piece of Karg’s argument. He contends that

⁴⁷ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 143.

⁴⁸ I am indebted in this section to the work of Dr. Erik Herrmann, specifically his article entitled, “Conflicts on Righteousness and Imputation in Early Lutheranism: The Case of Georg Karg (1512–776),” in *From Wittenberg to the World*, ed. Charles P. Arand, Erik H. Herrmann, and Daniel L. Mattson, (Gottingen: V&R, 2018), 93–107.

⁴⁹ Herrmann, “Conflicts on Righteousness and Imputation,” 99.

⁵⁰ Herrmann, “Conflicts on Righteousness and Imputation,” 102.

“Christ did the law for himself,” which, “received the greatest amount of criticism.”⁵¹ Karg is remembered as the one who didn’t think Christ kept the law for us, but for himself as true man. Although he did recant this opinion later, that specific contention stuck with him.⁵² However, Herrmann shows that Karg had a much more complex and nuanced argument than this oversimplification of Karg’s position. Herrmann summarizes,

For Karg, the imputation of Christ’s active obedience had no place in this definition and distorted the doctrine of justification. His objections focused on several points: 1. the imputation of obedience is not found in Scripture; 2. the all-sufficiency of the forgiveness of sins; 3. the logical fallacy of the ‘double debt;’ 4. the impossibility of vicarious obedience; and 5. the danger of Antinomianism.⁵³

Points two, three, and four will be discussed below.

Karg states that it is absurd that God’s law should obligate both obedience and punishment. In fact, it is strictly illogical for the “double debt” to exist. One is either liable to punishment or one has been obedient. Since mankind has been disobedient and therefore God’s law condemns and punishes why should there be a second debt to the law? Is the forgiveness of sins not enough to be justified before God? To sum up Karg’s position, “Since we failed to obey the law, Christ suffered the punishment in our place. In this the law is ‘satisfied.’”⁵⁴

Vocational obedience was another one of Karg’s stressed points. As Herrmann points out, “Karg did not dispute that Christ had a two-fold obedience; he certainly fulfilled the law in a

⁵¹ Herrmann, “Conflicts on Righteousness and Imputation,” 106.

⁵² The footnote Karg receives in Pieper’s *Christian Dogmatics* shows how he was remembered mostly for this one opinion. “Karg (Parsimonius), a Philippist, misapplying the proposition (which indeed lends itself to misapplication) that ‘the Law obligates either to obedience or punishment, not to both at once’ ... held that ‘since Christ suffered the punishment for us, He rendered obedience for Himself.’ The general protest which this assertion aroused shows that the Lutheran Church was fully alive to the truth that the active obedience was a part of the *satisfactio vicaria*. Karg was suspended, brought to see his error by the faculty of Wittenberg, and reinstated.” Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, trans. Theodore Engelder, vol 2 (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1951), 373.

⁵³ Herrmann, “Conflicts on Righteousness and Imputation,” 103.

⁵⁴ Herrmann, “Conflicts on Righteousness and Imputation,” 104–05.

double way: obedience to the law and obedience unto death. This does not mean that both were done *vicariously*, in our place.”⁵⁵ The law demands different things of different people for Karg. This makes sense because not everyone comes from the same place in life. Therefore, it is an impossibility for someone to be obedient in someone else’s stead. Each person has her own place and thus the law demands different obedience in different circumstances, and therefore one person cannot truly live for another.

Notice in these places that Karg is not arguing that Christ was not obedient to the law nor that this obedience is unimportant. The main point is that for Karg, obedience to the law is *not* to be included in our justification. In this way, we give too much to the law; the law oversteps its bounds. The imputation of Christ’s obedience to the believer is what is at issue. This imputation destroyed two great distinctions in Lutheranism, namely, law and gospel, and the two kinds of righteousness. Herrmann concludes that Luther’s thoughts on the two kinds of righteousness was

a fundamental break from the medieval scholastic way of thinking. The two relationships experienced by every individual—*coram Deo* and *coram hominibus*—were of two fundamentally different kinds. Consequently there, were two kinds of righteousness...But among the next generations of Lutherans it appears that the law became a controlling category for the understanding of righteousness. Faith in Christ did not constitute the relationship of the human creature to God; faith was only the means by which the righteousness of the law was achieved. Lutherans certainly agreed that we ourselves could not fulfill the law— it was only Christ’s obedience, not ours. Yet, in the end, the law still seems to get the last word.⁵⁶

It would be an understatement to say that thoughts on the atonement after Luther were imprecise. Whether Karg saw the imputation of the active obedience as violating the two kinds of righteousness distinction is not clear, but certainly the logical conclusion of the argumentation

⁵⁵ Herrmann, “Conflicts on Righteousness and Imputation,” 105.

⁵⁶ Herrmann, “Conflicts on Righteousness and Imputation,” 107.

allows this possibility. Does the law truly have “the final say, that God must somehow account to the law for the liberation of sinners from sin?”⁵⁷

Again, we must stress that Karg too argues within the juridical categories as mentioned above for Luther and Chemnitz. Karg places the active obedience of Christ outside of soteriology. It does seem odd to say that the forgiveness of sins is not enough for salvation, but is it not equally odd to say that Christ’s ministry and life is irrelevant for our justification? After all, if the forgiveness of sins is not all-sufficient but needs something added to it, does this mean that Christ’s life and death is simply not enough? This implies that somehow this great act still needs to be patched up with human works. Yet, if Christ’s life is irrelevant for salvation, how can certain biblical passages be understood? Often Isaiah 53:3–5⁵⁸ is seen as being in reference to Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross. However, Matthew in a narrative about Jesus healing many says that Isaiah 53:4, which he renders as “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases,” is fulfilled in Jesus’ healing. This is not an explicit reference to the cross but to the life of Jesus before his suffering and death. A prophecy about vicarious satisfaction applied to Jesus’ life.

Francis Pieper

To give an American Lutheran argument, Francis Pieper’s *Christian Dogmatics* will be discussed. He is a sufficient representation of American Lutheranism, and his theological work

⁵⁷Robert Kolb, “Not without the Satisfaction of God’s Righteousness’ The Atonement and the Generation Gap between Luther and His Students” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte: Sonderband: Die Reformation in Deutschland und Europa, Interpretation und Debatten*, ed. Hans R. Guggisberg und Gottfried G. Krodel, (Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 1993), 156. This is a helpful source for more information on the difference in understanding on the atonement between Luther and his theological successors.

⁵⁸ “He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.” Isaiah 53:3–5 (ESV).

still has influence today. The main argument that will be focused in on is Pieper's insistence on the importance of the *satisfactio vicaria*, which includes (and he argues, *must include*) the imputation of Christ's active obedience. Since Pieper has a different way of describing the *vicarious satisfaction* than that listed above, we will lay out how he introduces the topic.

It must be stated that Pieper is arguing in his own theological context when speaking of the active obedience of Christ. However, he is still useful for the purposes of this thesis. Pieper is not concerned with the same topics as the earlier sixteenth and seventeenth century disputes but more with the nineteenth century. He is arguing against some kenotic theologians⁵⁹ yet still using terminology related to this thesis. Therefore, Pieper proves useful because he is still concerned about the active obedience of Christ even though he has different opponents in mind.

In volume two of *Christian Dogmatics*, Pieper begins laying the foundations of his argument that active obedience is an important piece of the *vicarious satisfaction*. This begins with the law, "the immutable justice of God demands of men a perfect obedience to His Law (*iustitia legislatoria, normativa*) and pronounces eternal damnation on all transgressors (*iustitia vindicativa, punitiva*)."⁶⁰ The predicament is that no individual can keep but sinning against the law of God, so everyone is liable to the punitive justice of God having transgressed the normative justice. The human race after the fall becomes utterly depraved and original sin runs to the very core. However, this all must be stated for the *vicarious satisfaction* to make sense. This is different because we can see how subsequent centuries of Lutheran theology have set the picture up in a different way, with the same juridical argumentation, but an even more rigid theological system. Pieper explains,

⁵⁹ Some of the opponents for Pieper are Gottfried Thomasius and Franz H. R. Frank.

⁶⁰ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:344.

The term *vicarious satisfaction* brings out the Scriptural truth that God laid upon Christ, and that Christ willingly accepted, the obligation in man's stead both to keep the Law and to bear the punishment the Law exacts of the transgressors. Christ fulfilled the Law in the stead of man.⁶¹

This also includes Christ's assumption of the punishment that God's law demands in the stead of man.

After introducing the concept of the *vicarious satisfaction*, Pieper continues with a discussion specifically on the active obedience of Christ. First, arguing against one of Karg's points he shows that Christ is above the law keeping it for our sakes and not his own. Second, Pieper dismisses as unscriptural the argument that the active obedience of Christ can be understood as Christ willingly accepting the punishment that mankind deserves. In effect, this seeks to get rid of the category of the active obedience of Christ altogether by redefining what exactly the active obedience of Christ is. Pieper argues against this new understanding using the older theologians showing that these arguments are really nothing new but a recycling of the old arguments against active obedience.⁶²

Pieper views the criticism which concerns this thesis in an almost dismissive way not spending much time on this point. The third objection which he lists reads,

Full satisfaction was rendered the divine justice by means of the *obedientia passiva*; God would be demanding too much if He exacted not only the payment, on the part of Christ, of the penalty for transgression of the Law, but also the positive fulfillment of the Law; *lex obligat vel ad obedientiam vel ad poenam* (the Law obligates, either to obedience or to punishment).⁶³

The basic thrust of this argument is like that of Karg discussed earlier. The forgiveness of sins should be sufficient since Christ has paid the price for our sins. Talk of a double debt being

⁶¹ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:345.

⁶² Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:372-76.

⁶³ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:376-77.

illogical also appears in this objection. This kind of thinking raises the criticism from the two kinds of righteousness distinction.

So how does Pieper answer this? By calling it unscriptural and illogical. Interestingly, Pieper himself does not quote or reference any Scripture in answering this objection either. Perhaps since he does not think it necessary, he spends most of his ink writing against the logic of this argument. According to Pieper, this way of thinking does not make sense even in human terms. If someone is doing jail time for a crime, does that mean that once they are done, they have a clean slate, as if they had never committed a crime? To take a more theological turn, Pieper asks, “Are the damned who are suffering the punishment of their transgression of the Law in hell thereby fulfilling the Law of God, the sum of which is to love God with all their heart and the neighbor as oneself?”⁶⁴ An intriguing thought and somewhat persuasive argument as regards human reasoning; but, after finishing this short section one could find it biblically unsatisfying.

In my estimation, Pieper misses the point of the objection raised against the active obedience of Christ here, and there is not a better answer out there. Is the forgiveness of sins sufficient for the salvation of the sinner, or must we also stress the active obedience of Christ to the law as the perfect man? Within the categories of law and gospel and passive and active obedience and active and passive righteousness, trying to balance all of these can be daunting. On the one hand, should we allow the law to be the controlling factor in justification by Christ’s active obedience to the law being imputed to us for righteousness? Or, should we say that the category of Christ’s active obedience to the law in effect is superficial and unnecessary within the atonement? This would render Christ’s life and ministry with virtually no soteriological

⁶⁴ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:377.

significance. Irenaeus will provide an answer for the dilemma we find ourselves in. The way in which Irenaeus speaks about the life of Christ being salvific for his people can provide a new way of speaking about active obedience that does not give the law the last word.

Overall, the main point of this section is to show how there has been a dispute concerning this distinction. It is useful to show and define through many theologians voices the problem that the rest of the thesis will address. Keeping in mind this discussion of Lutheran theology, this thesis shifts to Irenaeus and how his theology is useful in this discussion.

CHAPTER THREE

IRENÆUS AND RECAPTULATION

Irenaeus

Before delving into the theology of Irenaeus some assumptions must be stated. First, “Irenaeus *selbst*” (to use the terminology of Loofs)¹ will be the assumed author of *On the Refutation and Overthrowal of Knowledge so Falsely Called (AH)* and the *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching (Dem.)*, the two surviving works of Irenaeus. This will avoid the pitfalls about arguing what source a particular passage belongs to, as some scholars do. While this work is not, by nature, erroneous or unnecessary, it lies outside the scope of what this thesis seeks to accomplish. Second, as a corollary to the above assumption, to grasp Irenaeus as a theologian, he should be taken at his own words. Even if Irenaeus is not the author of *AH* or the *Dem.*, this is still an important patristic source and therefore helpful for this project. Irenaeus may be the author of other writings, and fragments of his are found, however the two major works will suffice for this thesis’s purpose. These works will mostly be handled in English translation, but when necessary the Greek or Latin text will be referenced or quoted.

Secondary scholarly work on Irenaeus ought not to be avoided. In interpreting Irenaeus, other authors will be cited to help understand this great theologian. Since the task of understanding an ancient theologian is difficult, scholarly writing will be consulted to help launch the discussion on the topic at hand. This will also prove to be useful for agreeing or disagreeing with the scholarly opinions in light of the text of Irenaeus himself provided later on in the chapter. To best understand Irenaeus, his system must be described from different angles.

¹ Loofs uses the source critical method to divide up the corpus of Irenaeus into many different authors. See Friedrich Loofs, *Irenaeus-Handschriften* (Leipzig, 1888).

These angles are the chapter headings with a summary at the end of the chapter.

Regula Fidei

How did Irenaeus understand this, the early Christian term “tradition?” To Irenaeus, as Unger points out, “these terms [the Rule of Truth and the Rule of Faith] are used as Synonyms for Christian Tradition.”² Now, what is this Rule of Truth? Well, in the *AH* Irenaeus defines it as that which is

received by the apostles and their disciples, the faith in one God the Father Almighty, the Creator... the one Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was enfleshed for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets preached the Economies...and His [Jesus Christ's] coming from heaven in the glory of the Father to recapitulate all things³

Later in the *Dem*, Irenaeus calls this by a different name, saying,

And this is the order of our faith, the foundation of the edifice and the support of our conduct: God the Father, uncreated, uncontainable, invisible, one God, the Creator of all: this is the first article of our faith. And the second article: the Word of God, the Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord...by whom all things were made, and who, in the last times, to recapitulate all things, became a man amongst men, visible and palpable, in order to abolish (*destruendam*) death, to demonstrate (*ostendendam*) life, and to effect (*operandam*) communion (*communione-concordiae*) between God and man. And the Third Article: the Holy Spirit...who, in the last times, was poured out in a new fashion upon the human race renewing man, throughout the world, to God.⁴

The *regula fidei* guides Irenaeus in his thought and theology. It is the foundation from which the rest of his theology flows. This is made evident by the use of it at the beginning of both the *AH*

² Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies (Book 1)*, ed. Walter J. Burghardt and Thomas Comerford Lawler et. al., trans. Dominic J. Unger and John J. Dillon, *Ancient Christian Writers* vol. 55, (Mahwah, NJ: Newman, 1992), 184. Hereafter, this citation will be shortened to *AH* with the numbers followed by a parenthetical describing the series, volume, and page number. See footnote three below for an example.

³ *AH* 1.10.1 (*ACW* 55:49).

⁴ Irenaeus, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. John Behr, Popular Patristics Series, vol. 17, (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary, 1997), 41. References to the Latin text are from *SC* no. 406, 92.

and the *Dem*. The rule is apostolic both in source and in content. The *regula fidei* ought to be thought of as the framework within which theology is done. The *regula fidei* is not a certain, fixed creed but a correct set of attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs. This is important because theology for Irenaeus is not in its nature speculative but real. It deals not with things unknown but things known.

There is evidence for this in Irenaeus himself. In the two examples of the *regula fidei* stated above, they are variations on a theme. For Irenaeus, to be inside the tradition is to be a Christian. The heretics start with different attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs. In point of fact, they believe in a different god. The *regula fidei* protects from false belief: “in the same way, anyone who keeps unchangeable in himself the Rule of Truth received through baptism will recognize the names and saying and parables from the Scriptures, but this blasphemous theme of theirs he will not recognize.”⁵ Another way that Irenaeus shows this protection from false belief is the case with certain “barbarians.” He writes,

To this disposition many nations of the barbarians who believe in Christ give assent, having salvation written in their hearts through the Spirit, without paper and ink, and guarding carefully the ancient tradition.⁶

Immediately after, Irenaeus describes, in much the same way as before, the *regula fidei* with slight variations. The interesting part of this example is that the barbarians have no written scriptures; that is why Irenaeus says they have salvation written on their hearts. It would appear that even without the scriptures the *regula fidei* is sufficient for true belief and a genuine Christian life. This protects the barbarians from falling into unbelief through the lies of a heretic.

⁵ AH 1.9.4 (ACW 55:48)

⁶ Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies (Book 3)*, trans. Dominic J. Unger, rev. Irenaeus M. C. Steenberg, *Ancient Christian Writers*, vol. 64, (Mahwah, NJ: Newman, 2012), 35.

The *regula fidei* is not a standardized or institutionalized creed. It is more flexible for Irenaeus. He chooses to emphasize certain parts of the story depending on the kind of situation. The *regula fidei* ought to be understood as an account of the world. That is how Irenaeus can use the *regula fidei* to argue against all different kinds of heretics. The three-article way to understand the Christian story is short and concise, as seen in the discussion below on recapitulation. The focus is the cross of Christ.⁷ It is through Christ that the invisible Father is known visibly through the Son.⁸ When needed, Irenaeus can adapt the teaching to exclude the Valentinian teaching of the Pleroma or the Marcion teaching of a radical distinction between the Old and New Testament God.⁹ It should not be understood, as Unger suggests, as a body of doctrine,¹⁰ but rather a mindset or worldview. Behr calls this the foundational “hypothesis” that Irenaeus assumes.¹¹ “Hypothesis” has a different meaning for us today than it did back then. The “hypothesis” of a play or story would be the basic plot outline or the main points and main characters. I take the “hypothesis” to be the same as the tradition that Unger states. The tradition spoken of can be identified with the “hypothesis” of the story of God and his people. Thus, there is no true difference between the “hypothesis” and the “tradition” that Irenaeus employs but

⁷ It has been argued that Irenaeus and other early or Eastern theologians do not stress the cross but the incarnation over the cross. This may appear to be so on the surface of his writings, but this is simply an overstatement. When Irenaeus references the incarnation sometimes it is understood as the entire life of Christ. The cross is also instrumental in the theology of Irenaeus as shown in Daniel Wanke, *Das Kreuz Christi Bei Irenaeus Von Lyon* (Berlin, New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2000). Here I differ from Aulén when he says that the resurrection is the focal point of Irenaeus’ theology.

⁸ *AH* 4.6.6

⁹ *AH* 1.22.1. Also see John Behr, *Irenaeus*, (Oxford University Press, 2013), 13–46. Behr describes the early Christian communities in Rome and shows that this is far from a monolithic movement. There are diverse groups, however, the heretics will always separate from the orthodox whether consciously or not. Orthodoxy and heresy are defined by their relationship to one another.

¹⁰ *ACW* 54:182.

¹¹ Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 105-12.

merely different words used to describe the same thing.

Briggman notes the importance of the term “hypothesis” in Irenaeus and shows how this, too, is a rhetorical term in the book *God and Christ in Irenaeus*. Briggman identifies the hypothesis of Irenaeus with a statement in *AH* 1.10.¹² He sees Irenaeus as a man well-educated and well-read in the classics. The hypothesis of the entire Christian narrative is drawn from tradition but ultimately the Scriptures themselves.¹³ A hypothesis of this type is the starting narrative of a work. Briggman writes, “Once the bare outline of events has been established the author further particularizes—further hypothesizes—the hypothesis by filling in specific details such as names and then episodes which comprise the circumstances of the story.”¹⁴ This fits very well with what Irenaeus is doing with the *regula fidei* and the function it serves in the *AH*.

Behr in his book *Irenaeus of Lyons* also points out the rhetorical usage of the term *hypothesis*. Irenaeus has a beautiful metaphor for the correct understanding of the story of God and God’s people. He compares it to the image of a king in mosaic form. What the heretics are doing is rearranging the stones the beautiful mosaic of a king into a fox. If someone did not know that the image was supposed to be a king, they could be tricked into thinking the badly shaped fox was the correct image. However, on showing them the truth the image of the king would be seen as the true work of art.¹⁵ Behr points out that, “according to Irenaeus, his

¹² Briggman argues against the view I have taken up above that this is the hypothesis of Irenaeus regarding the Christian faith and not the actual *regula veritatis*. There was not enough evidence provided to convince me that *AH* 1.10.2-3 was significantly different from the other instances of the *regula fidei*. The argument made above is stronger because the hypothesis is identified with the *regula fidei*, therefore making the *regula fidei* adaptable yet still strong and universally known. Cf. Anthony Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, (Oxford: 2019), 14–16.

¹³ Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 10-33. This section thoroughly shows that the rhetorical understanding of Irenaeus’ theology can prove invaluable.

¹⁴ Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 17.

¹⁵ *AH* 1.8.1

opponents have based their exegesis upon their own ‘hypothesis’, rather than upon that foretold by the prophets, taught by Christ and delivered (‘traditioned’) by the apostles.”¹⁶ Behr further shows that, “in a literary context, the term ‘hypothesis’ referred to the plot or outline of a drama or epic (what Aristotle, in the *Poetics*, had termed the ‘mythos’).”¹⁷ When Irenaeus uses the term hypothesis in close connection with the *regula fidei* he means to say that without the outline of the story (the *regula fidei*) one cannot correctly exegete scripture.

Recapitulation

If anyone wishes to write about Irenaeus, he or she must give a definition of *recapitulo* or *ἀνακεφαλαίωσις*. Irenaeus uses this term quite frequently and it is a major part of his understanding of salvation. I follow Behr in his definition and discussion of the term.

Recapitulation is best understood in light of what it meant within the domain of rhetoric in antiquity. “The term ‘recapitulation,’ as other important terms for Irenaeus such as ‘hypothesis’ and ‘economy’, has a well-defined meaning in Hellenistic literary and rhetorical theory.”¹⁸

Recapitulation is a rhetorical device that serves to remind the reader or hearer of the various points of an argument. It is a concise restatement of a position. Quintilian, the Roman teacher, said of recapitulation that it was an enumeration or a restatement of the facts.¹⁹ The apostle Paul

¹⁶ Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 105.

¹⁷ Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 105–6. Behr also provides a footnote showing this information is from Sextus Empiricus *Math.* 3.3–4 which reads in English, “And for the sake of due order, one must premise that the word “hypotheses” is used in a number of different senses; but it will be enough now to mention three: in one sense it means the *peripeteia* (or “argument” or “plot”) of a drama, as we say that there is a tragic or a comic “hypothesis,” and certain “hypotheses” of Dicaearchus of the stories of Euripides and Sophocles meaning by “hypothesis” nothing else than the *peripeteia* of the drama.” Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, trans. by R. G. Bury, (Cambridge: 1935), 225. The Greek is facing the above-mentioned page on 224.

¹⁸ Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 136.

¹⁹ Quintilian, *Inst.*, 3:16–17, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell, 6 vols. LCL, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2002). Also see, Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 136–37, for a discussion on the rhetorical devise of recapitulation.

also uses this in his book of Romans. He writes in the last half of the verse of Romans 13:9, “ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ ἀνακεφαλαιοῦνται ἐν τῷ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν.”²⁰ The summation, in a concise word, of the entire law is the command to love the neighbor as oneself. This word is used similarly by Irenaeus to literally sum up a logical point or position, or figuratively (in the Person of Christ) to “summarize” all of humanity.²¹ When I say summarize, I mean that Christ sums up two main ideas for Irenaeus. First, Christ connects all humankind to himself. By being born in the same flesh as all other humanity he is intimately connected to the entire race. Second, he summarizes the entire story of scripture through his very life and teaching. Not only is this a summary for Irenaeus, but Christ is the key to unlocking all of the Scripture— but we will discuss this more later.

This word “recapitulation” is used to describe Christ’s saving work in the economy of salvation. So, what such definitions have been given? In recent scholarship, there have been many and various answers to the question, what is recapitulation in the theology of Irenaeus? As there is no consensus on the subject, a short discussion of the secondary literature perused will be offered; then, a definition will be given.

Scholarly Opinions on Irenaeus: A Preface to Recapitulation

This is not a full summary of the literature concerning Irenaeus. The works compiled are the most influential for the author of this thesis in gaining an understanding and appreciation of Irenaeus the theologian. Even amongst the scholars mentioned below there are disagreements regarding what Irenaeus taught and wrote. It perhaps speaks to the fact that Irenaeus did not set

²⁰ Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, 28th Edition, with Critical Apparatus, ed. Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, et. al., (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: 2012), 508.

²¹ Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 136–40.

out a clearly defined system of doctrine; but, seeing as he is very early in the history of the church, this is to be expected. This section seeks to provide an answer to the theology of Irenaeus in light of recent scholarship, specifically related to the first main idea of the first section of this paper—namely, recapitulation.

The Swedish School

First, in the Swedish school are Wingren and Aulén. Aulén writes his text (translated into English) entitled *Christus Victor* to address the topic of atonement motifs in the church throughout history. A new type of methodology is employed by Aulén which traces different ways of considering the atonement. He feels that the “classical view” of the atonement has not received as much attention as it deserves and is in fact “misrepresented.”²² To summarize, Aulén thinks of the classic idea of the atonement in a couple ways. The classical view ought to be understood as a dramatic conflict between God and the Devil. These players are certainly, not by any means, on equal footing. However, Christ comes to fight a battle, in which there is an opponent, the Devil. This is the first part of what Aulén will refer to as the dramatic language of the atonement.

The second part is that God is both the reconciler and the reconciled in the classic idea of the atonement. The work of salvation in Christ is “a work of God Himself, a *continuous* Divine work.”²³ This stands in stark contrast to the “Latin view” that Aulén describes also. In the Latin view, “the act of Atonement has indeed its origin in God’s will, but is, in its carrying-out, an offering made to God by Christ as man and on man’s behalf, and may therefore be called a

²² Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 17.

²³ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 21.

discontinuous Divine work.”²⁴ Aulén says this to bring the contrast out that the Latin view holds the atonement as Christ, *necessarily as man*, making an offering to God. This is to satisfy God’s justice thereby avoiding talk of “cheap grace.” Then, Aulén traces through the history of the church where everything “went wrong,” but how the classic view still existed in certain capacities.

Aulén is influential for this thesis because he connects Irenaeus with the classic view of the atonement. Aulén picks up on the “Christus Victor” language in Irenaeus which speaks of Christ’s victories over the evil powers of the world. Christ is also at the same time restoring humanity into a relationship with God by the Spirit. In detail, Aulén defines recapitulation in Irenaeus’ theology as “the restoring and perfecting of the creation.”²⁵ This is not accomplished through Christ’s death on the cross alone but through the entire life of Christ. Aulén writes powerfully,

Assuredly, then, the death of Christ holds a central place in Irenaeus’ thought. But we must add at once, it is not the death in isolation; it is the death seen in connection, on the one hand, with the life-work of Christ as a whole, and on the other with the Resurrection and the Ascension; the death irradiated with the light of Easter and Pentecost...the Word of God, who is God Himself, has entered in under the conditions of sin and death, to take up the conflict with the powers of evil and carry it through to the decisive victory. This has brought to pass a new relation between God and the world; atonement has been made.²⁶

This is true of Irenaeus that Christ has been victorious and named God and humankind “friends” once more.²⁷ We will return to Aulén below to pick up on Irenaeus and his relationship to

²⁴ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 21–22.

²⁵ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 37.

²⁶ Aulén, *Christus Victor*, 48–49.

²⁷ *AH* 3.18.7

Lutheran theology. It is good to note that the *Christus Victor* motif that Aulén identifies in the early church is exemplified for him by Irenaeus.

Wingren is another Swedish scholar that has added much to Irenaean scholarship. The work is, by its English title, *Man and the Incarnation*. He suggestively asserts a duality through which Irenaeus can be understood. This duality is Man and the Incarnation, as Wingren says, “for Irenaeus the central problem of theology is [man and the becoming-man], or [man and the Incarnation].”²⁸ We find in Wingren an interpretation of Irenaeus as one concerned with correct theology. Irenaeus is a theologian who seeks to stay true to what the church catholic has always taught. Wingren writes, “In all his writings, Irenaeus sought only to stamp out these objectionable innovations and forge into a unity with what the Church throughout the world had taught since the days of the Apostles.”²⁹ The understanding of Irenaeus as a theologian comes together beautifully in Wingren and, the once inconsistent and rambling Irenaeus becomes thoughtful and faithful. Through the portrayal of Irenaeus’ thought being centered around this duality, Wingren silences source critics, sometimes attacking them directly in his book. Thus, Wingren shows that Irenaeus can be understood as a theologian without needed to be divided up into several different sources but instead seeing his theological work as a coherent argument and system.

Wingren is helpful in order to understand some basic yet foundational points to Irenaeus’ theology, completing the picture of who God is and what man is destined to become. The first point is, rather simply, that God is the creator and humanity is his creation. Wingren writes, “If it is a characteristic of God to create, it is characteristic of man that he is created, i.e. that he is

²⁸ Gustaf Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1959), ix.

²⁹ Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, xvi.

made, not that he is, but that he becomes or increases.”³⁰ This is how we can reckon man having limitations and boundaries. God is ontologically different than humanity and it will always be so because one is the creator while the other is created. Man, therefore, is created precisely to grow into his likeness to God.³¹ In this way, man can be spoken of as being sinless yet capable of realizing a future potential.

When Irenaeus speaks of man there are two distinctions that ought to be made. First, Irenaeus hardly speaks about individual justification. He prefers to speak about the entire race of mankind and man’s relation to God. The second point is that Irenaeus like some other church fathers speaks of Adam and Eve as childlike in the Garden of Eden. Already implanted in this idea of children at the beginning is one of progress towards a goal a kind of growing into maturity. This is one that began as friendship with man being but a child yet after the fall, Jesus brings man and God back into friendship and communion.³²

To bring the conversation back to recapitulation, Wingren offers a few notes that will be helpful in this thesis. The term is certainly rooted in biblical language and concepts (cf. Ephesians 1:10); but it is also “an attempt by Irenaeus to embody the whole of the Biblical proclamation about the work of Christ into a single word.”³³ While Wingren points out that this concept may have roots in Justin Martyr this truly does make Irenaeus unique. The theology of recapitulation unites all the seemingly disjointed ideas within Irenaeus into a cohesive system. Wingren defines recapitulation in Irenaeus as “the accomplishment of God’s plan of salvation,

³⁰ Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 7.

³¹ Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 7–9.

³² Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 20, 51.

³³ Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 80.

and this accomplishment is within history, in a time-sequence, and is not an episode at one particular point of time. It is a continuous process in which...the *dispositio* of God is manifested in degrees.”³⁴ The Christ-event is the pinnacle of God’s plan of salvation. The man Jesus is also the eternal Word of the Father, here to vanquish humankind’s enemies and lead them to friendship with God. Like, Aulén the two parts of salvation are seen: defeating the Devil and reconciling with God.

Arguing from these two Swedish scholars the term recapitulation should be understood as a dramatic climax of a story. Christ is accomplishing what is lost at the beginning. He is summarizing and fulfilling all of man in himself in his life and death. Through this identification and incarnation Christ defeats the enemies of God bringing God and man back into communion and friendship.

Behr, Lawson, and Osborn

Osborn writes on Irenaeus at length in his book *Irenaeus of Lyons*. Touching on many different facets, Osborn provides a basic sketch and then an in-depth look at the theology of Irenaeus. I found his discussion on recapitulation to be especially helpful. Osborn defines recapitulation as fourfold:

[recapitulation] corrects and perfects mankind; it inaugurates and consummates a new humanity...The work of Christ corrects and perfects being, truth and goodness. The person of Christ as corrector and perfecter is describes as new Adam, divine word, only mediator, son of the father and bearer of the name above all names.³⁵

Osborn dedicates the next forty pages of the text to explorations of the complex and loaded concept recapitulation. One weakness of this approach is that recapitulation is seen as an almost

³⁴ Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 81.

³⁵ Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 97.

impossible to define concept because of the complexity. Osborn acknowledges this, that “the complexity of the concept is formidable. At least eleven ideas...are combined in different permutations.”³⁶ This approach is not as straightforward and understandable as some other scholars’ comments on the idea. Yet, it lends itself to an exploration of Irenaeus in a meditative or speculative disposition by pushing Irenaeus to his limits. But Irenaeus himself is one not lent toward speculation for the sake of speculation but rather a straightforward and understandable exposition of the faith.

Another author who has written about Irenaeus in English is John Lawson. His book is one of the first English works to have a genuine interest in Irenaeus as a theologian and a historical figure. Since this is one of the first texts about Irenaeus and his theology it is kind of a summarization of the scholarship surrounding Irenaeus. The book can turn into a study about the scholarship of Irenaeus and the authenticity or originality of Irenaeus himself. However, this is certainly not the case with the entire work. There will be some of Lawson used but his age shows through with some of the criticisms to be found in his text. What Lawson helpfully does is bring together the scholarship about recapitulation and offer a definition that points towards a more rhetorical understanding. He understands Irenaeus to be a biblical theologian through and through. Everything which Irenaeus does is a reflection of his biblical theology. His view that Irenaeus sees Christ as the champion of mankind was very helpful to me in the understanding of this theological use of a rhetorical word.³⁷ The champion of mankind is yet another way of uniting vicarious language with the life of Christ. Everything he does is on our behalf; it is all for us. In a way, Lawson unites Behr and Osborn to the Swedish understanding

³⁶ Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 98.

³⁷ Lawson, *Biblical Theology of St. Irenaeus*, 145.

which this thesis will explore below.

Finally, we come to John Behr. He has done significant contemporary work on Irenaeus. His dissertation-turned-book *Anthropology and Asceticism* digs into the theology of Irenaeus. He has also translated the *Dem.* into English as part of the Popular Patristics Series. Finally, the text that was extremely helpful for the discussion in this paper is the text entitled (once again), *Irenaeus of Lyons*. Behr, as stated above, focuses in on the literary and rhetorical element of the word recapitulation and contends that we find the true meaning of the term there. Ironically, the Eastern Orthodox theologian's description of recapitulation as the Gospel being a summary of Scripture sounds like the Swedish Lutheran's depiction of recapitulation as a summary of biblical teaching. Irenaeus intends this term to be all-encompassing, yet it appears to be more of a rhetorical move instead of a controlling concept in and of itself in his theology.

Overall, there does not seem to be a clear and concise consensus of recapitulation in Irenaeus studies. But, much of what these scholars say can be added to one another's definitions to come up with yet another definition of recapitulation. Behr understands recapitulation to be the summing up and culmination of God's economy of salvation. Wingren can understand this in the same way. So, while there is not a clear definition of recapitulation agreed with throughout the secondary literature, there is a common thread that recapitulation is more than just summing up a story but has theological significance. To understand recapitulation, it was helpful to read about it in secondary literature; now I will turn to Irenaeus himself to show that he himself speaks in the way that the secondary literature speaks of him.

A Definition of Recapitulation Drawn from Specific Passages of Irenaeus

Some scholars attempt to give a definition of recapitulation after talking about Irenaeus for one-hundred pages or so. It would seem that this is a fruitful exercise since there is much more to

Irenaeus than simply his use of the word recapitulation. However, I would like to start the discussion of Irenaeus' theology with this topic. It is so foundational to the rest of the theological distinctions and expressions that it must be spoken of at the beginning. The method which I will use is to read closely where Irenaeus has used this term and attempt to draw out from the writings of Irenaeus himself a definition for recapitulation.

Recapitulation is an ancient rhetorical device. Irenaeus is not uneducated nor rather dull as some have suggested,³⁸ he understands this term and uses it with a purpose. Behr after quoting Quintilian on the subject offers this definition. He says,

The rhetorical device of 'recapitulation' serves to provide a summary of the whole case or a restatement of the argument in an epitome or resume, bringing together the whole into one conspectus, so that, while the particular details will have made little impact because of their number or apparent insignificance, the picture summarily stated as a whole will be more forceful, giving new significance to each particular detail and bringing them all together into one. In this way, recapitulation provides a resume which, as a succinct synopsis, is clearer and therefore more effective.³⁹

Therefore, for Irenaeus, Christ becomes a physical restatement of the entire history of salvation. The story is summed up in the person of Christ Jesus.

Wingren and Behr are saying similar things as regards recapitulation. If recapitulation is a summary of biblical teachings or a summary of the Scriptures in the Gospel, the real question is not, what does recapitulation mean? Rather, it is, what does Irenaeus think that the biblical teaching is? What is the Gospel for Irenaeus? That is at the heart of every person's attempt to get to the root of the Irenaean problem of the concept recapitulation. It is obviously important, but instead of asking why recapitulation is important, the question that ought to be answered is, what

³⁸ Briggman argues rather convincingly of the fact that Irenaeus knows what he's doing, and is not, "rather stupid, a well-meaning but incompetent theologian. Such depictions must be consigned to the dustbin of historiography." Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 209.

³⁹ Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 137.

is it *in* recapitulation which is important to Irenaeus?

First, consider a quotation from Book III of *AH*. Irenaeus writes,

There is, therefore, as we have shown, one God the Father and one Christ Jesus our Lord, who comes through every economy and recapitulates in Himself all things...So He recapitulated in Himself humanity; the invisible becoming visible; the incomprehensible, comprehensible; the impassible, passible; the Word, man. Thus, He recapitulated in Himself all things, so that just as the Word of God is the sovereign Ruler over supercelestial, spiritual and invisible things; and thus, by taking to Himself the primacy, and constituting Himself the Head of the Church, He might draw all things to Himself at the proper time.⁴⁰

Before going into the theological importance of this passage (which will be in the paragraph below) I will define the term ‘economy.’ Once again Irenaeus is using a rhetorical word ‘economy’ and applying it to the biblical story. Behr explains that “in rhetorical and literary theory it [economy] was used to refer to the arrangement of a poem or the purpose of a particular episode within it.”⁴¹ The economy of God is his plan of salvation. Further on, Behr continues, “Irenaeus...used the term [economy] in a truly universal sense, to bring together all the various aspects of God’s work, creation as well as salvation into one all-embracing and singular divine plan.”⁴² This plan achieves its culmination in the Christ event.

The importance of this passage cannot be understated. In it the confession of God the Father and his one Son, Jesus is at the center of God’s plan of salvation for the human race. We see recapitulation tying two things together in Christ; humanity and God himself. What is the reason for this? So that Jesus might sum up all things in himself. So that, he might be the head of humanity and of especially the church. At the time of the resurrection, the Word in Christ will

⁴⁰ *AH* 3.16.6 (*ACW* 64:82)

⁴¹ Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 124–25.

⁴² Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 125.

then deliver up everything to the Father.⁴³ The recapitulation of everything is the salvation of humanity. Christ becomes the leader of humanity back to the Father. It is only through the visible Word in the man, Jesus Christ that we can come to God the Father.⁴⁴

Another passage speaks of recapitulation once again with the object of this being humanity and the subject being Christ is a couple sections later again in Book III. Irenaeus writes,

For we have shown that the Son of God did not being to exist then, having been always with the Father; but when He became incarnate and was made man, He recapitulated in Himself the long unfolding of humankind, granting salvation by way of compendium, that in Christ Jesus we might receive what we had lost in Adam, namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God.⁴⁵

In this passage, Jesus is summing up the history of humanity. Above, Irenaeus comments that it is through the Word that humanity is once again reminded of the Father and brought into communion with him. This passage is similar but with a different twist. Irenaeus once again shows that the recapitulation is “in Christ” and “for man.” However, the difference in this passage is that it is a restoration of man instead of a bestowal of knowledge and primacy amongst men. What is especially unique is that salvation is “by way of compendium,”⁴⁶ as will be discussed below.

Salvation by way of compendium has a straightforward understanding. Footnote forty-five (see below) is one example of a reader of Irenaeus ascribing a meaning that seems out of place to

⁴³ Once again see 1 Corinthians 15 for a discussion of Christ delivering up everything unto the Father.

⁴⁴ *AH* 3.11.5

⁴⁵ *AH* 3.18.1 (*ACW* 64:87–88)

⁴⁶ Harvey points out in his critical edition of *AH* the different ways that Irenaeus uses the word compendium. I have traced through his footnotes not at every point but in a large section of Book III. Harvey ascribes a sacramental meaning to the word in its connection to Jesus making the water into wine. I disagree with this interpretation because it seems to me that is stretching Irenaeus to say something that he does not clearly say. This will be stated more clearly in the text above after this footnote. For references in Book III pertaining to *compendium*, see W. Wigan Harvey, *Saint Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons' Five Books Against Heresies* (Rochester: St. Irenaeus Press, 2013), 2:43, 45, 88, 95.

Irenaeus. When Christ acts and changes water into wine, this event is a *compendii poculum*.⁴⁷ A cup of compendium? What Irenaeus means here is that Jesus is “packing in” many ideas and thoughts into one event. He reveals the story reminding us of the history between God and God’s people. Jesus is showing that he is the creator and sustainer when he changes water into wine. This is very closely related to recapitulation. The compendium is that by changing water into wine he is really revealing that he is the Word of the Father and thus has creative power and sustains creation. Irenaeus comments that Jesus did not need to change water into wine but could have made wine *ex nihilo*. Jesus chooses not to do this so that he can show the power that he has over creation and that he is the preserver of the universe.

One method that Irenaeus frequently employs is to think deeply about what Jesus does and why he does it. Jesus is not only reminding but showing what he intends to accomplish. He plans to give life and sustenance to his creation and he actively is living his life for our benefit. Irenaeus assumes that everything that Jesus does is packed with meaning including this parable for example. Notice how compendium and recapitulation use rhetorical categories. Compendium and recapitulation both lend itself to a way of speaking about a summary of the Christian faith, the story of God and God’s people. This is a different way of speaking than how we heard the Lutheran theologians speak above. The metaphor is that of an epic poet or storyteller. Jesus is not only telling the story but actively changing it through his life. Instead of only defeat he brings victory and sustenance out of grace to his creation.

This fits very well with what Behr and Wingren have posited above regarding recapitulation. Jesus offers a concise word and sums up both humanity’s condition and

⁴⁷ AH 3.16.7

humanity's salvation from bondage to sin. There are three things that Irenaeus identifies which Jesus teaches us here: he is with the Father the creator from the beginning, and therefore *man is His creation*; in Adam we *lost* the image and likeness of God and are in need of something which we have lost; finally that Jesus *restores* this in his very person by becoming incarnate as a man and restoring the image and likeness of God.

This is what is important to Irenaeus. The salvation by way of compendium is a way of saying that God reminds us who we are and what we are called to be. Jesus shows us the likeness unto God living the perfect human life. This is a life that is lived passively before the Creator. Christ in his humility becomes the perfect example for us. However, he is certainly more than just an example but a summing up of history of the past with real and lasting implications for the future. In his person, Christ reveals, and through his life, *restores* to us the true and good relationship between God and his creatures, humanity.

Above, examples have been shown of the summing up of humanity in Christ. Irenaeus also uses the term recapitulation to “sum up” biblical stories. A way to understand the exegesis of Irenaeus is that he is extraordinarily Christocentric in his interpretation. In Jesus' life, we can understand and see references to *everything* in the Scripture. Jesus is the entire point of the Bible! Irenaeus writes,

The Lord, therefore, recapitulating in Himself this day, underwent His suffering upon the day preceding the Sabbath, that is, the sixth day of the creation, on which day man was created; thus granting him a second creation by means of His passion, which is that [creation] out of death.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, series 1 of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. 1, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 551.

Sometimes Irenaeus can stretch this distinction a little too far. This can be seen with his understanding of Jesus' age and how he thinks Jesus was in his forties when he was crucified. Irenaeus needed to be assured that Jesus lived into an older age and uses a statement of the Pharisees to prove this, although it is not the most convincing argument.⁴⁹ The point still stands that Irenaeus saw Christ as living vicariously for all people. Not only did Jesus need to die for the sins of all but Jesus needed to live for the lives of all.

Just as Jesus is seen as a summary of everything good in humanity, there is another way that Irenaeus uses the word recapitulation in a similar function to the above quote yet with a different subject. Irenaeus writes concerning the beast in the book of Revelation, "And there is therefore in this beast, when he comes, a recapitulation made of all sorts of iniquity and of every deceit, in order that all apostate power, flowing into and being shut up in him, may be sent into the furnace of fire."⁵⁰ This throws a wrench into many understandings of recapitulation if we understand this term to be a salvific concept. We could explain this as a summary of all evil deeds but that does not quite capture everything that is happening in this passage. The beast is more than just a summary or representation of evil; it is a summing up of everything evil metaphorically yet with implications for reality. Just as everything godly is connected to Christ, so every evil is connected to the beast. Recapitulation could be understood in this way as a champion of mankind versus the champion of apostasy in the end times.⁵¹ The "summing up" is a rhetorical move but with implications in reality. Perhaps we can let Irenaeus speak with this rhetorical move in mind and let him offer us a different way to view the Christian story.

⁴⁹ *AH* 2.22.4-6

⁵⁰ *AH* 5.29.2 (ANF 1:558)

⁵¹ Lawson, *Biblical Theology of Irenaeus*, 143-47.

Humanity being righteous is certainly a part of the story, but what Irenaeus offers is a way to understand Christ's life with salvific meaning. Everything that Jesus does is loaded with meaning waiting to be understood.

Now that we have discussed recapitulation and arrived at an understanding directly from the *AH*, other topics in Irenaeus can be explored and a fuller picture of his theology will emerge. Recapitulation is both the summary of the story of God and God's people in the life of Christ and the description of Christ's ministry for us. After each section of this thesis there will be a brief paragraph emboldened like the one below. This is the recapitulation of the section in accordance with the *regula fidei*. It is the hope that this abstract way of understanding Irenaeus and recapitulating different aspects of the same story will be of use to the reader. We find Irenaeus doing a similar thing in his summaries of the *regula fidei* adapting it as the situation demands it.

God the Father has created humanity from the beginning. Yet from almost the beginning Man has been under bondage to Satan by his own choice. God sent His Only Begotten Son into the world as a reminder of the story of His people. In the person of Jesus Christ Who Is the Eternal Word of the Father, He recapitulates the entire story of mankind. Christ fulfills everything from start to finish and promises to keep us with Him until the form of this world passes away. As the Second Adam, Jesus experiences everything human, yet without sin. God has given us the Spirit as the one who guarantees our salvation. We are brought into communion with God into eternity through His Word and in His Wisdom.

Imago et Similitudo Dei

The image and likeness of God is a common yet important topic in the theology of Irenaeus. Once again, Irenaeus will be looked at in his own words concerning the image and likeness of God to understand how this term functions within his theology. First and foremost,

Irenaeus sees the entire narrative of creation and redemption (as it involves humankind) to hang on one key passage in Genesis 1. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”⁵² Now, what does Irenaeus understand the image and likeness of God to mean and to be?

As implied by the Genesis narrative, the image of God is something which separates humanity from the rest of creation. It is a gracious gift of God given to humanity. This image and likeness, for Irenaeus, is what was lost in the fall and what Christ is re-giving to His own “handiwork.” He writes,

When, however, the Word of God became flesh, He confirmed both these: for He showed forth the image truly, since He became Himself what was His image; and He re-established the similitude after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word.⁵³

The point of the incarnation then is to become the image of God in man, and to re-establish the similitude by a kind of “introducing and assimilating” to the Father through the Son. Notice the importance of who must restore this image of God to man: it is the very image of God himself! Here we see an example of the ontological gap between humanity and the Almighty God; yet God condescends to man, and for man, out of his great goodness.

Wingren offers a few more ways to think about the image and likeness of God in an eschatological sense from the writings of Irenaeus. An especially helpful way to think of this is the category and process of participation in the things of God. Without belaboring the Greek philosophical underpinnings of this word, “participation” can be understood simply as being a part of the Church of Christ here on Earth and there in eternity. Wingren writes, “By

⁵² Genesis 1:27 (ESV)

⁵³ *AH* 5.16.2 (ANF 1:544)

participating in the Body of Christ true humanity is fashioned after the *imago* and *similitudo* of God.”⁵⁴ Notice once again this talk of the creator and his creation or the craftsman and his handiwork. Humanity is always receiving this formation and fashioning from God. Wingren again brings this out saying,

The fact that we live testifies to two things: first, that God the Creator *wills to give us life* (For He gives us what is real), and second, that *we are able to receive life* (for we have in fact life in our bodies). Life comes from the Creator and is within us...In this simple fact of being alive there are two completely different processes involved—*God gives, and man receives.*⁵⁵

We will continue this discussion later once again, but the fact is, that the incarnation is through which and through whom we receive back the image and likeness of God.

I posit that the image and likeness of God play a central role in the story of salvation for Irenaeus. It is in this story about the image and likeness that we understand both creation and redemption. Both of Irenaeus’ major works end with reference to the image and likeness of God showing forth a continuity in his theology. The theological section of the *Dem.* ends (with exception regarding a small conclusion in which Irenaeus demonstrates why he wrote this work) with Irenaeus saying,

‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ he calls the Son of God, who received from the Father dominion over our life, and after receiving [it], He ‘brought [her] down’ to us, to those who are far from her, when ‘He appeared on earth and conversed with men,’ mixing and blending the Spirit of God the Father with the handiwork of God, that man might be according to the image and likeness of God.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 164.

⁵⁵ Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 108.

⁵⁶ *Dem.* 97 (PPS 17:99). See the footnotes in Behr, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 117, for a discussion on the gender of the pronoun. It is because wisdom in both the Greek and Armenian is a feminine noun and instead of “it” the word may be rendered “she.” Behr reminds us that technically the last pronoun, “He appeared on earth,” could also be rendered “she” referring to the “wisdom” of God on earth.

The story comes back to the beginning. Just as God wanted to make man in the image and likeness of God; so, at the end, God grants salvation so that man might be (or become) according to the image and likeness of God.

The *AH* ends in a similar way. Irenaeus writes (lengthily),

For there is the one Son, who accomplished His Father's will; and one human race also in which the mysteries of God are wrought, "which the angels desire to look into:" and they are not able to search out the wisdom of God, by means of which His handiwork, confirmed and incorporated with His Son, is brought to perfection; that His offspring, the First-begotten Word, should descend to the creature, that is, to what had been moulded, and that it should be contained by Him; and on the other hand, the creature should contain the Word and ascend to Him, passing beyond the angels, and be made after the image and likeness of God.⁵⁷

In this single sentence, Irenaeus sums up the entire story of creation and redemption once again.

Notice a few things: man is the instrument which God forms as we said above; the Son is the perfection of his handiwork; the creature is once again made after the image and likeness of God.

God the Father created man at the beginning after His Image and Likeness. Through His Son born of a virgin, we see a Man Who is the Image of God. He restores mankind back into communion with God so that man is able to reflect His kindness and love. Man receives eternal life from the fact that He is and will be fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God. The Spirit molds and shapes us by God's command to be once again made in His Image and after His Likeness.

Bringing it All Together

Above we already came across a passage which connects God created and man being perfected in the image and likeness of God. (It is difficult to find such ideas isolated within the

⁵⁷ *AH* 5.36.3 (ANF 1:567)

corpus of Irenaeus). Now, I wish to bring together both subsections we have had so far: recapitulation and the image and likeness of God. This will be done still through the primary works of Irenaeus himself. It is an understanding of these core concepts which make Irenaeus an intelligible, cohesive, and understandable theologian. They unite his thinking in accordance with the *regula fidei*. To bring this together, some key passages will be cited so that an understanding of Irenaeus and how he sees Christ's redemptive activity with specific attention to the obedience of Christ so that Irenaeus may prove useful to talk about the Lutheran distinction between the *activa* and *passiva* obedience of Christ.

Irenaeus brings together in this passage of Jesus Christ as God coming to his own creation recapitulating man by his passion on the cross. He writes,

For the Creator of the world is truly the Word of God: and this is our Lord, who in the last times was made man, existing in this world, and who in an invisible manner contains all things created, and is inherent in the entire creation, since the Word of God governs and arranges all things; and therefore He came to His own in a visible manner, and was made flesh, and hung upon a tree, that He might sum up all things in Himself.⁵⁸

Notice the Johannine character of this passage and its echoing of the first chapter of the Gospel of John. The emphasis is on the transcendence and omnipresence of God the Word who condescends to his own creation. Jesus does this for the purpose of "summing up all things in Himself," as we hear at the end. The point of Jesus as true God and being the creator flies in the faces of the Gnostics who would never make such a radical claim. The Christian God comes down to his own even though his own know him not.

A second passage illustrating this point again appears in book Five of *AH* Irenaeus states, "For the knowledge of God renews man. And when he says, 'after the image of the Creator,' he

⁵⁸ *AH* 5.18.3 (ANF 1:546-7)

sets forth the recapitulation of the same man, who was at the beginning made after the likeness of God.”⁵⁹ The knowledge of God is not simply a historical knowledge, but the word *agnitio* signifies not only historical knowledge but also acknowledgement and acceptance. Once again, the creation is connected to the creator by the very means of creation. The image and likeness of God is something to be grown into, not possessed fully at the beginning. Wingren shows that for Irenaeus by their very nature man is continually created and progressing towards the creator. God decides to make his creation know again just like he did at the beginning in his image and likeness.⁶⁰ Thus, redemption and creation are linked in the incarnational event. The interesting part of this passage, which receives its own treatment in one of the sections of *AH*, is that the recapitulation of all mankind points back to the first Adam. If he is not saved through this act, then who can say anyone else is? So, Jesus as the Second Adam reminds us of the first Adam, but this time Jesus is the image of God and shows his likeness. Where there was failure at first, there is success in the Second. It is this knowledge and not some secret knowledge that renews man unto God. This salvation and renewal are catholic both before the event of the cross and after.

The final passage to discuss also occurs in Book Five of *AH*. This one will be referred to quite a bit as the thesis moves on because we see a connection with Christ’s obedience unto the Father.

Now, he is the Creator (Demiurge), who according to love is the Father but according to power is the Lord, yet according to wisdom our Maker and Former. And, by transgressing his commandment we were made his enemies. Because of this, in the most recent times, the Lord restored us in friendship through his incarnation, being made Mediator between God and Man, by propitiating to the Father for us (who we sinned against) and consoling, through his obedience, the Father for our

⁵⁹ *AH* 5.12.4 (ANF 1:538)

⁶⁰ Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 7, 26, 32.

disobedience; yet, giving to us the gift which is our association and subjection to the Maker...the Same, who we sinned against in the beginning, gives forgiveness of sins at the end.⁶¹

The problem is that humanity has sinned against the creator thus becoming his enemies. In the last days, Jesus the Word himself has become the Mediator between God and man. He pleases the Father with his own obedience as a man. As a result of this, we come into communion with God once again. This communion points forward to a future of eternal life with God in his creation.

The idea of Christ's obedience propitiating humanity's disobedience is woven throughout Irenaeus' theology. In another passage, Irenaeus points out that Christ recapitulates the old disobedience.⁶² This does not mean that Christ sums up the disobedience in himself but rather reminds us of the disobedience which was wrought through a tree. The idea of salvation by way of compendium works perfectly in this type of recapitulation. Jesus not only reminds us of the past but also gives us a present reality by means of his own obedience to the Father as true man. This is more than just a rhetorical move for Irenaeus. His theological points come forth through his use of the literary terms and categories. Irenaeus writes,

⁶¹ AH 5.17.1 translation is my own. Because this passage is important the Latin text from Harvey, *Saint Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons*, 2:369, is supplied: *Est autem hic Demiurgus, qui secundum dilectionem quidem, Pater est; secundum autem virtutem, Dominus; secundum autem sapientiam, factor et plasmator noster: cujus et praeceptum transgredientes, inimici facti sumus ejus. Et propter hoc in novissimis temporibus, in amicitiam restituit nos Dominus per suam incarnationem, mediator Dei et hominum factus; propitiatus quidem pro nobis Patrem, in quem peccaveramus, et nostram inobedientiam per suam obedientiam consolatus; nobis autem donans eam quae est ad factorem nostrum conversationem et subjectionem... idem ille, in quem peccaveramus in initio, remissionem peccatorum in fine donans.*

There is a lengthy Greek fragment pertaining to this section provided below. This survived through John of Damascus found in, Irenaeus, *Contre Les Heresies*, trans. and ed. Adelin Rousseau, SC no. 153, (Les Editions Du Cerf, Paris: 1969), 220–22. Ἔστι δὲ οὗτος ὁ Δημιουργός, ὁ κατὰ μὲν τὴν ἀγάπην Πατὴρ, κατὰ δὲ τὴν σοφίαν Ποιητής καὶ Πλάστης ἡμῶν, ὃς καὶ τὴν ἐντολὴν παραβάντων ἐχθροποιήθημεν πρὸς αὐτόν. καὶ καρπὸς εἰς φιλίαν ἀποκατέστησεν ἡμᾶς.

⁶² AH 5.19.1

For just as the former [Eve] was laid astray by the word of an angel, so that she fled from God when she had transgressed His word; so did the latter [Mary], by an angelic communication, receive the glad tidings that she should sustain God, being obedient to His Word.⁶³

Even in the form of his birth Jesus turns the narrative upside down. Instead of being deceived by an angel, Mary is given great news that she will be a mother! She responds with faithfulness and obedience being the opposite of Eve. His point is not centered on Eve nor on Mary but on the entire story. Here God is rewriting human history through his Son. That is the point of Irenaeus' discussion here.

The Spirit becomes the gift through which we enter into communion with God. This communion need not be mystically described although it definitely could be, rather we can simply understand this as Irenaeus does: God creates in mankind through his Spirit. Instead of overcomplicating the story Irenaeus gets straight to the point. Communion with God is being in participation with him through his Son in his Spirit. This beautifully trinitarian theology also brings together the different points that we've been discussing. As Irenaeus writes,

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 poured out the Spirit of the Father for the union and communion 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.⁶⁴

⁶³ AH 5.19.1 (ANF 1:547) Some Roman Catholic scholars use this passage to argue for the “co-redemptorist” theology. Having Irenaeus, someone so early in the history of the church, would greatly bolster their theological argumentation. However, this interpretation simply does not work in the passage. The passage is about God in Christ not about Mary being holy and playing a role in the salvation narrative. In interpreting these passages, we must be careful with equating the word “recapitulation” with salvation itself. In this context, I would argue that the compendium idea fits better than co-redemptorist theology. The Roman Catholic interpretation is a reading of later theological development into Irenaeus.

⁶⁴ AH 5.1.1 (ANF 1:527)

Irenaeus opens the fifth book of *AH* with the above statement. Through a beautiful trinitarian theology of redemption he shows that, through this, all the doctrines of the heretics may be disproven. Keep to the *regula fidei* and that will be your defense against heresy.

Final Thoughts on Summation of Recapitulation and the Theology of Irenaeus

Having summarized Irenaeus' theology above and given us a framework within which to theologize with Irenaeus we will now move on to specific passages in the next chapter in which Irenaeus speaks about certain salvific themes. This helps us to understand what *exactly* he is saying so as not to misrepresent him or misinterpret his theology.

One statement that accurately portrays Irenaeus' theological use of the category of recapitulation follows: "Now the Lord would not have recapitulated in Himself the ancient and primary enmity against the serpent, fulfilling the promise of the Creator, and performing His command, if He had come from another Father."⁶⁵ Notice the Christus Victor element in this phrase. The enmity of the serpent is destroyed by obedience to the Father. This is a proof, as well, against Marcion that the same Father namely of the Old Testament is the Father of the Word from eternity. It is by the performing of the command that the fulfillment of the promise is wrought. The Gospel could be understood here as the Son's obedience to the Father's promise to mankind. However, the type of the obedience (whether in Lutheran categories this would be considered the *activa* or *passiva* obedience) is still unclear at this point.

Now the brief summary of Irenaeus is complete. Up until this point I have mainly dealt with Irenaeus in a general sense. His theology must be understood and now we can move on to applying recapitulation to the problem discussed up above in Chapter 2. I have demonstrated that

⁶⁵ *AH* 5.21.2 (ANF 1:549)

Irenaeus uses rhetorical categories (although not exclusively) when talking about salvation and justification of the entire race of humanity. This is in contrast to the juridical categories used by the Lutheran theologians seen in chapter two above.

To summarize, we see our two Irenaeian sections as discussed above: recapitulation, and the image and likeness of God. God, who made his handiwork, men, in the beginning now comes again to restore the image of God to mankind. This image was lost when mankind fell into the bondage of sin; Christ now recapitulates the history of mankind and restores the image.

CHAPTER FOUR

KEY PASSAGES OF IRENAEUS IN DEPTH

In the application of Irenaeus to follow, key passages are selected having to do with recapitulation and obedience and show how Irenaeus gives salvific meaning to passages dealing with the obedience in Christ's life. It must be kept in mind that Irenaeus speaks differently about salvation than the Lutheran reformers and later theologians.¹ However, on the atonement Irenaeus can prove useful. It is quite clear from the above discussion that Irenaeus sees the atonement as something both done by God for humanity and done by God in a particular man.

What if we allow ourselves to take a different approach? Perhaps if Irenaeus can shed some light on how the life of Christ is meaningful and salvific for the whole of humanity he can prove useful in preaching about the benefits of Christ's work for the human race. This will apply to the Lutheran problem spoken of above and refresh the way we theologize and preach about the Life of Christ being for us. To do this, important passages will be gone through in detail to sift out theological meaning helpful for the project of this thesis.

Finally, it is worth mentioning once again that Irenaeus is different in his view of justification. This thesis does *not* seek to show that Irenaeus is in actually, anachronistically Lutheran. Wingren points out that for Irenaeus individual justification is not the issue. What is strong is that, "all this (the salvific act) is accomplished in Christ who keeps nothing for Himself, but lives for others – for us and for all men."² Already excluded is Karg's thought that Christ is obeying the law for himself. Irenaeus sees salvation as encompassing the entire history of

¹ *AH* 4.16–4.19. All these sections deal heavily with the concept found in Irenaeus that to believe in Jesus is to do his will. Thus, he equates works with a faithful relationship to Christ. Instead of getting into the weeds of how Irenaeus sees individual justification we will look at passages where Christ is redeeming humanity.

² Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 110.

humanity. Therefore, as Wingren says, we can view recapitulation in the following way (as demonstrated by the above chapter),

Christ recapitulates the history of Adam in the opposite direction and with the opposite result: Adam yielded to temptation, and because he did so he fell from life to death; while Christ resisted temptation and because He did so rose again from the dead. Through Him salvation has been won.³

Here, I think that Irenaeus is not saying that Christ earned the resurrection rightly because of resistance to temptation as though he were mere man. Irenaeus is using a similar way of speaking akin to Philippians 2. The point is not on the story being exactly the same but being mirror images. Another important point to keep in mind is that we will be viewing the overarching story of humanity and how Christ is the culmination and in a way a compendium of that story. Recapitulation deals with the entire race of humanity and therefore is slightly to the side of individual justification.

Book III Chapter Eighteen

In Book III, Irenaeus has been refuting those with impious opinions about the Father and his Son. At chapter eighteen, Irenaeus takes a turn in his work. Instead of focusing on the “what” he zeroes in on the “why.” The title of chapter eighteen in English reads, “What was the Reason for the Word of God to Become Man?”⁴ And this question Irenaeus answers in his own way. Beginning he summarizes everything that has been said previously in his work saying,

For we have shown that the Son of God did not begin to exist then, having been always with the Father; but when He became incarnate and was made man, He recapitulated in Himself the long unfolding of humankind, granting salvation by way

³ Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 46–47.

⁴ AH 3.18 (ACW 64:87)

of compendium, that in Christ Jesus we might receive what we had lost in Adam, namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God.⁵

Following this section, Irenaeus will explain several parts of this “salvation by way of compendium.” Irenaeus does not attempt to explain through logical formulations the atonement as those after Anselm tend to do. He is concerned most of all with the story of salvation history. For him, theology is a literary task. The rhetorical moves that he makes impact the theological conclusions he arrives at.

First, the question is, why did humanity need the Word of God to become man? Irenaeus answers, “it was not possible for humankind who had once been conquered and had been dashed to pieces by its disobedience, to refashion itself and obtain the prize of victory.”⁶ The fall in the Garden of Eden is not simply one bad action by one human being. This action destroys and defeats humanity. They have chosen to be enslaved to their own desires and to Satan instead of worshiping their God and Creator. Their situation is so corrupt and dire that they need a Savior. Humanity needs someone strong, to refashion the entire race and be given victory. The next sentence Irenaeus stresses this loss of original righteousness. “Again, it was not possible for the human race, which had fallen under sin, to receive salvation.”⁷ Not only can they not refashion themselves, but in this state they cannot and will not receive salvation. There is no way for sinful humanity to *receive* let alone *refashion* itself.

This is particularly telling when thought about considering the two kinds of righteousness distinction. The double debt that Karg claims is illogical finds a different expression in Irenaeus. Perhaps instead of thinking of a “double debt” there is both defeat and a need. Humanity,

⁵ AH 3.18.1 (ACW 64:87–88)

⁶ AH 3.18.2 (ACW 64:88)

⁷ AH 3.18.2 (ACW 64:88)

because of man's sin does not deserve the kindness of God. They are defeated and participation with God has been forfeited. Humanity needs to be remade. God does this by sending his Son as the man. There is a need on the side of humanity to "be given to God." It is only through the God-Man Jesus Christ that humanity can come to God. Jesus does this by refashioning man as the man. Every person can find the true expression of their redeemed self in the man, Jesus Christ. Before the reception can occur, the relationship needs to be repaired and humanity must be made anew.

As said above, God does not leave humanity in this terrible situation. Irenaeus continues, "And so the Son, Word of God that He is, accomplished both, by coming down from the Father and becoming incarnate, and descending even to death, and bringing the economy of our salvation to completion."⁸ Following this statement, Irenaeus takes the next couple sections to tie together Paul's writings stressing the crucifixion of Christ for our salvation. To Irenaeus, believing that Christ really suffered and died and rose again is vital for salvation. If Christ did not actually do this but only appeared to do so then our salvation is not certain.⁹

Irenaeus after stressing the true suffering and death of Christ once again describes Christ as a champion, the recapitulator. He writes,

He fought indeed and conquered; for He was a man fighting for the fathers, and by obedience he destroyed disobedience, because He bound the strong one and loosed the weak ones and gave salvation to the handiwork by destroying sin. For the Lord is most kind and merciful and loves humankind.¹⁰

Here, we see creation and redemption, the close connection between them. The creation and handiwork of God has become corrupt. Instead of "starting over" with a new kind of man the

⁸ AH 3.18.2 (ACW 64:88)

⁹ AH 3.18.3-5

¹⁰ AH 3.18.6 (ACW 64:91)

Lord is kind and merciful. He loves mankind so much that he will fight on their behalf. He will be the One to release humanity from the bondage of sin and the Devil. The Devil becomes the one bound and destroyed so that sin no longer rules in man. Christ is the One who gives salvation to humanity. Irenaeus here is seeing salvation as God re-writing the *human* story; therefore, it makes sense that the Savior in Christ is *human*.

But what do we make of the prize of victory mentioned above? Is conquering over sin as Man a way to merit salvation then imputed to believers? I think that Irenaeus would disagree. Man by his very nature is dependent on God. They are nothing without Him (quite literally); yet, God seeks to be in communion and participation with them. Irenaeus continues, “He [Jesus] caused humanity to adhere to and be united with God.”¹¹ Humanity by nature of being a creature and not the Creator must be reunited with God, they cannot reunite themselves in their sinful condition. Thus, “unless God had given salvation, we would not possess it securely; and unless the human race had been united with God, it would not be a partaker of imperishability.”¹² Notice that man is the object of the sentence while God is always understood as the subject. This would show that the salvation received is a type of righteousness which is given out of grace. God has worked this way from the beginning and is continuing to create his creature in this way. It is not that Christ as man has somehow through a careful following of the law won salvation and chooses to give it to the rest of mankind. Rather, Christ as man has conquered and won *as a man*. This is extremely important because God redeems humanity which he made in the

¹¹ *AH* 3.18.7 (*ACW* 64:91) The sentence between this quote and the next quote has been omitted to avoid a digression which would take us away from the matter at hand. The quote reads, “For if humankind had not overcome the enemy of humankind, the enemy would not justly have been overcome.” *AH* 3.18.7. This could be misconstrued to mean that God somehow owes the Devil justice. This is not what Irenaeus thought and is a misunderstanding of the word “justly” above. For more information and a correct interpretation of this see note 42 in Chapter 18 of *AH ACW* vol 64, 173–75.

¹² *AH* 3.18.7 (*ACW* 64:92)

beginning not through creating a new race of man but by redeeming the same man from the start.

Next, Irenaeus in explaining why God saved humanity then paints a picture of the relationship between man and God. He writes,

For it behooved *the Mediator of God and humanity*, by His kinship to both, to lead them back to friendship and concord, and to bring about that God would take humankind to Himself, and that humankind would give itself to God. Really, in what way could we be partakers of filial adoption, unless we had received through the Son participation in Himself; unless His Word, having become flesh, had granted us communion in God? For that reason, He also came through every age, restoring to all the participation in God.¹³

The bold-faced lines above show the correct type of the human-God relationship. It is one where we remain passive, receiving righteousness from God. God is the one who loves us. He restores us to himself even when we are dead in our sins. It is nothing active that we have done, but all that Jesus has done for us.

Why the need for the Gospel if the law is the exposers of sin? Irenaeus answers,

On the other hand, it put a burden on humankind, which had sin in itself, and showed humans to be deserving of death. For since the law was spiritual, it merely manifested sin, but it did not get it out of the way; for sin did not have dominion over the Spirit, only over humanity.¹⁴

The law shows us our sin; but, while it is holy and good, it cannot remove this sin from us by its very nature. It is the exposers not the giver. It exposes sin; Christ gives salvation by completing, ending, and silencing the law. Irenaeus continues,

Certainly, it behooved him who could put sin to death and redeem humanity who was liable to death, to become what [this latter] was, namely, humanity – humanity which had been drawn into slavery by sin, but was held bound by death. The result

¹³AH 3.18.7, emphasis added. (ACW 64:91–92) Whether or not this shows that Irenaeus works within a Neo-Platonic system is hard to say. Irenaeus is nowhere near as pronounced in philosophical talk as Gregory of Nyssa or later church fathers. There are some arguments for different types of philosophical beliefs but what is clear is that Irenaeus is familiar with the classics and a learned man. If he does appropriate the Neo-Platonic system of participation it does not overshadow his theological vision.

¹⁴AH 3.18.7 (ACW 64:92)

would be that sin would be put to death by humanity, and humanity would escape from death.¹⁵

Jesus is the one. He can put sin to death. Through his perfect life and obedience to the Father sin is utterly destroyed by one who dies. When he rises again, he shows that, in him, humanity is no longer bound to the slavery of sin and death. Sin is utterly destroyed by death itself. The law is silenced.

Being a human being, Christ is the only one who can destroy death. He chooses the good over the evil as Irenaeus will say. This is something that only God can do. The paradox is that only God can destroy death but a man must destroy death. This is as close as Irenaeus gets to explaining a necessity for the Incarnation. But even here, he does not operate within logical syllogisms and other methods; once again, he uses rhetorical categories to shape his theological views. Therefore, humanity needs Christ to save it from sin, death and bondage to the Devil. Through the recapitulation lens we can see that Christ being fully human is extremely important not only so that he can die but so that all might live as he did. It is only through Christ that humanity is given to God. This passage cannot be seen as active obedience by itself as passive obedience is definitely a part of the story. This section is quoted here so that we can understand what Irenaeus sees as the important points of the redemption narrative.

Book IV Chapter Twenty

Another section that should be listed in depth is *AH* 4.20.7. Although not as large as the above section from Book III, Book IV contains an important saying about what Christ does for humanity as man. Irenaeus writes, “And for this reason did the Word become the dispenser of the

¹⁵*AH* 3.18.7 emphasis added. (*ACW* 64:92)

paternal grace for the benefit of men, for whom He made such great dispensations, revealing God indeed to men, but presenting man to God..."¹⁶ So Irenaeus shows that the Word of God dispenses paternal grace for humanity. This fits in with the different dispensations that God has done throughout human history. The last dispensation of God's Son is different. This time instead of only revealing God to humanity, he becomes a man. Through this life on earth, Jesus presents a man to God in whom God can delight. This is the kind of man meant from the very beginning of time. If Adam and Eve are children and their decedents are wounded by the serpent then Jesus has conquered and healed all humanity. He presents himself to God as what God intended man to be. The relationship is restored, and this is through a kind of recapitulation and reversal of the story. Where Adam fell Christ conquered.

Christ does this by presenting a man obedient unto God. Christ has reversed the story. God once again loves his creation and the right relationship has been restored. Instead of seeing God on the judgement seat instead God is an artist or a master poet; a thoughtful and wise, in fact all-knowing God and a master of language. This presentation of man unto God is more than simply an acknowledgement of the innocence in a legal sense unto God. This should be understood as Jesus, in the same way he presents the Father to humanity, presents humanity to the Father. Perhaps imagine a type of appraisal of an antique badly damaged but able to be repaired. It is not as though God the Father is ignorant of humanity or uninformed but what if his Son gives him humanity restored to its rightful state in the Son's very being? Humanity fixed and recreated, one that listens to his heavenly Father and honors him with the honor he is due. A precious creation of the original artist.

¹⁶ *AH* 4.20.7 (ANF 1:489)

Irenaeus continues his discussion which we quoted above by saying,

And preserving at the same time the invisibility of the Father, lest man should at any time become a despiser of God, and that he should always possess something towards which he might advance; but on the other hand, revealing God to men through many dispensations, lest man, falling away from God altogether, should cease to exist.¹⁷

This brings us back to Irenaeus seeing humanity as a “work-in-progress.” By humanity’s very nature of being created they are contingent on God for existence. Since God is by nature perfection and humanity cannot be this way the goal of humanity is to increase in the image and likeness of God. In this way, humanity always has somewhere to advance they are never equal to God and it must be, and is so, ontologically. However, humanity left to its own devices will perish eternally thinking himself to be better than God. Therefore, Jesus reveals the Father to us in his very person summarizing what God has done throughout all time. On the side of man, he has given us purpose and meaning by connecting us back to the Father through himself.

Thus, Irenaeus continues,

For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God. For if the manifestation of God which is made by means of the creation, affords life to all living in the earth, much more does that revelation of the Father which comes through the Word, give life to those who see God.¹⁸

Notice the connection between God and humanity. A living man (perhaps a person in life in the Spirit) is the glory of God. The only way humanity lives is in beholding God. The manifestation of God or providence of God over the earth gives life to all living things. As part of *creatio continua*, creation is reminded of God the Father. But the Word in Christ gives us a different kind of recapitulation. He gives us what it means to be human and the disposition of the Father towards humanity. Through him, we receive the gift of life which is to behold God in Christ.

¹⁷ AH 4.20.7 (ANF 1:489–90)

¹⁸ AH 4.20.7 (ANF 1:490)

Christ presenting man to the Father is without a reference to the cross. Because of this I take Christ's perfect life as being on behalf of mankind and to present a perfect man to the Father. In this way, Christ has revealed God to man and yet man is presented to God. Jesus is the climax of the story. There is a movement from God to man and from the man, Christ, to God. We cannot ascend to God on our own but can only be presented to God through Christ. This shows that Christ's perfect life on earth has soteriological significance.

Once again, Irenaeus is not answering the questions posed by post-Anselmian theologians. He is using a rhetorical context and categories to answer a systematic question. While not answering the "how" of Christ's redeeming man through his life, Irenaeus does answer the "from what" question. Sin is the disobedience of humanity and human beings against God. Everywhere that Adam or another Old Testament figure disobeys and sins, Christ does the opposite. He obeys and does the will of God following the law perfectly. Christ, as God in man, is by nature incorruptible. Therefore, for Irenaeus, being connected to the incorruptible Christ is the way in which sinful, corruptible people can be made incorruptible by the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. The fact that Irenaeus mentions the obedience in life (and of course later in death on the cross) of Christ shows that Christ's life is soteriologically significant.

Book V Chapter Twenty-One

The final section of Irenaeus we will address in this section is Book V Chapter 21 of *AH*. Lawson cites this chapter when he says that Christ, "made Himself one with man to the extent of laying Himself open to real temptation, so the moral conflict on behalf of man might take place under genuine human conditions."¹⁹ It is important that Christ do this as true man so that

¹⁹ Lawson, *Biblical Theology of St. Irenaeus*, 148–49.

humanity is the one vanquishing Satan. Lawson continues, “In spite of all the temptations of the Devil, and under these conditions, Christ kept the commandments of the Law perfectly.”²⁰ These two sentences are a great summary of the obedience which Christ performs and then offers to all mankind.

It is unsurprising that one of the strongest passages of the obedience of Christ to the law is the temptation by Satan. This is a struggle between God in man and Satan himself. Christ does not do this for himself alone but fights for the sake of the entire human race. In what follows, I will bring out the different ways that Irenaeus speaks of Christ’s obedience in the account of the temptation. In doing this, we will be able to see what significance the obedience of Christ under the Law has for all humanity.

Irenaeus begins chapter twenty-one by connecting this account to the rest of recapitulation. He writes concerning Christ, “He has therefore, in His work of recapitulation, summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who had at the beginning led us away captives in Adam, and trampling upon his head...”²¹ Irenaeus concludes this section recalling the original promise in the Garden of Eden. The crushing of Satan is part of the recapitulation. Christ sums up in this event the beginning where Satan defeats Adam but now the inverse will happen. It is also a foreshadowing of the final victory over Satan.

Later, Irenaeus continues,

In the same way that our kind descended into death through man being conquered; likewise again, through man being victorious we ascend into life. Also, in the same way that death received the palm (of victory) against us through man; likewise, again, through man we receive the palm against death.²²

²⁰ Lawson, *Biblical Theology of St. Irenaeus*, 149.

²¹ AH 5.21.1 (ANF 1:548)

²² AH 5.21.1 The translation is my own; the Latin from Harvey, *Saint Irenaeus*, 2:381, reads: *Uti*

Irenaeus does not shy away from the fact that through a man humanity will be victorious over death. God conquers over death by sending Christ in the form of a servant. The irony of the situation is that only God can destroy death, but the man Christ saves us from death. God is once again rewriting human history. He chooses to rewrite the history by another parallel situation with the opposite result. The fact that God does this in a man means that this conquering over death is applied to those who are connected to Christ. God chooses to work through the man Jesus Christ to bring back the palm of victory to the human race. It is through the same creation in order to save that same creation that the Son of man allowed himself to be tempted.

Irenaeus spends the next section arguing that the same Father of the Old Testament sent his Son in the last days. This section is colored to be against Marcion but still includes some important statements regarding recapitulation and the Adam to Christ typology. Irenaeus writes, "Now the Lord would not have recapitulated in Himself that ancient and primary enmity against the serpent, fulfilling the promise of the Creator (*Demiurgi*), and performing His command, if He had come from another Father."²³ Once again, just as it is the same race of human beings being saved so also the same God is working salvation. The stress in this section is conquering over the Devil but also has the result that Christ conquers death in this struggle as well.

The discussion continues with Irenaeus saying,

But as He is one and the same, who formed us at the beginning, and sent His Son at the end, the Lord did perform His command, being made of a woman, by both destroying our adversary and perfecting man after the image and likeness of God.²⁴

quemadmodum per hominem victum descendit in mortem genus nostrum, sic iterum per hominem victorem ascendamus in vitam. Et quemadmodum accepit palmam mors per hominem adversus nos, sic iterum nos adversus mortem per hominem accipiamus palmam.

²³ AH 5.21.2 (ANF 1:549)

²⁴ AH 5.21.2 (ANF 1:549) I would suggest the words "carries out" in place of "performs". Jesus is not performing in the context of a dramatic performance but carrying out or keeping God's commands. The rest of the translation is sufficient. Harvey, *Five Books Against Heresies*, vol 2, 381, has the Latin text as: *Sed quoniam unus et*

When Irenaeus speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ keeping or carrying out the command of his Father, he speaks of Christ being made of a woman. This is extremely important because since he is the creator of man, he will also become the perfecter of man through this work on earth. In this biblical story, Jesus carries out the command of God, he does this first by destroying the Devil at his own game. Jesus allows himself to be tempted and this temptation is frighteningly real. Irenaeus has some of his most dramatic moments of the text in this section. But, the other part that Irenaeus speaks of is that one part of the command is destroying our adversary but the other is perfecting man after the image and likeness of God. In this way, Irenaeus shows that Jesus is the one man who perfects humanity back towards God. This is not simply because he allows man to become perfect but actively creates humanity through his own life. The obedience rendered to the Father destroys the Devil and perfects humanity unto the image and likeness of God.

Yes, this could be in reference to only Christ's death on the cross, the ultimate climax of the dramatic story. Irenaeus certainly does talk this way in other parts of the work. What is important in this section is that Irenaeus is using a biblical story about Christ's life on earth rather early in his ministry. The section is also not immediately connected to talk about the cross of Christ (although once again the cross is crucially important to Irenaeus). What should be noted is that Irenaeus finds a salvific meaning to Jesus' work against the Devil in the temptation narrative. This opens the door for Irenaeus to talk about the life of Christ as being of soteriological importance.

idem est, qui ab initio plasmavit nos, et in fine Filium suum misit, praeceptum ejus perfecit Dominus, factus ex muliere, et destruens adversarium nostrum, et perficiens hominem secundum imaginem et similitudinem Dei.

Looking even closer, Irenaeus describes the temptation of Christ and gives theological significance to the details of the story. Irenaeus speaks about how Christ hungers connecting his story back to the story of our original parents Adam and Eve. Similarly, they were also tempted by a physical hunger in the Garden of Eden. Irenaeus writes, “The corruption of man, therefore, which occurred in paradise by both [of our first parents] eating, was done away with by [the Lord’s] want of food in this world.”²⁵ Jesus by his hunger ends the corruption of humanity. What a powerful way to preach the temptation of Christ with significance to the story. Christ saves us through what he accomplishes as God in man. The point here is not to undercut the salvific nature of the cross but show that Christ’s whole life is for us. Not only his suffering there but his suffering throughout his entire life is for us. In his victories over demons and diseases and in his teaching others the light of God, everything is for our salvation. There is more than one moment of soteriological significance even if the cross is the climax of that story of salvation.

In the first temptation involving food, Christ chooses to serve his Father by not partaking of that which gives humanity life. This shows a faith and trust in his Father to provide for him everything that he needs. And, the act of refusing to exercise his divine authority but instead yielding to God ends the corruption of humanity. The second temptation involves a crafty argument made by the Devil to trick Jesus into tempting or testing his God. Jesus refutes him in a similar way out of the words of the Old Testament. Irenaeus says that, “The pride of reason, therefore, which was in the serpent, was put to nought by the humility found in the man [Christ]; and now twice was the devil conquered from Scripture...”²⁶ The pride of reason that seeks to beat God through rational argumentation is brought to nothing in Christ. Instead of tempting God and

²⁵ *AH 5.21.2* (ANF 1:549), this section is flagged by ANF as having obscure Latin.

²⁶ *AH 5.21.2* (ANF 1:549)

seeking to bend his Father to his own will, Jesus chooses to trust unwaveringly in a humble state thereby conquering over humanity's pride in their own reasonings. This is not a dogmatic formulation, but a rhetorical move so does it really have value for the dogmatic issue of Christ's active obedience? While not a dogmatic formulation such as later theologians would use, this rhetorical move *is* the point that Irenaeus makes. He is showing that Christ's life is for the salvation of all men and by his perfect human life we are invited to become like him by being connected to Christ.

The final temptation involves power of an earthly kind. Satan twists the truth into a lie saying that he has power over the whole world to do with what he pleases. Jesus once again refutes him. This time Irenaeus does not have a specific example of an obedient act but obedience in general that is linked to the final temptation of Christ in the wilderness. He writes, "and there was done away with that infringement of God's commandment which had occurred in Adam, by means of the precept of the law, which the Son of man observed, who did not transgress the commandment of God."²⁷ Christ through obedience has done away with humanity's disobedience.

Irenaeus finally summarizes this story by showing that it is through this obedient keeping of the law that Christ has vanquished the enemy and healed mankind. Once again, this story will climax upon the cross but that is not to say that other parts of the story are irrelevant for us today. Irenaeus concludes concerning Christ's victory over the Devil,

And justly indeed is he led captive, who had led men unjustly into bondage; while man, who had been led captive in times past, was rescued from the grasp of his possessor, according to the tender mercy of God the Father, who had compassion on His own handiwork, and gave to it salvation, restoring it by means of the Word – that

²⁷ AH 5.21.2 (ANF 1:549)

is by Christ – in order that men might learn by actual proof that he receives incorruptibility not of himself, but by the free gift of God.²⁸

Salvation is freely a gift of God through Christ alone.

²⁸ *AH* 5.21.3 (ANF 1:550)

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, if we apply the category of the two kinds of righteousness to the active obedience of Christ, there will be a problem, as pointed out above. The two kinds of righteousness is a type of anthropology (and, as Luther would argue, a biblical anthropology) that breaks free of a view of humanity seen as needing to please or appease God with earthly works. These works have a place before our fellow man but not before our God. Before him we need only faith and Christ's forgiveness of sins through his passion, death, and resurrection. There is nothing that we bring before God or makes us righteous except by faith alone. The active obedience of Christ is the thought that all of Christ's life, including his keeping of the law, is for our sake. If Christ's active obedience is included in the atonement for sins, it would seem that active righteousness saves us. Even though this is Christ's righteousness that would still be giving the law the last word in the discussion of the atonement. This is with distinction from his passive obedience, which is his willful suffering on the cross.

There is no reason that these two theological points need to be at odds with one another. Rather than seeing the active obedience within the two kinds or righteousness distinction, I will show that it is better to view the active obedience of Christ in connection with a way of describing the atonement that utilizes rhetorical categories.

The solution proposed by this thesis is to change the metaphor and the type of discourse used to describe the atonement. Now, instead of using the courtroom metaphor, I will use the metaphor of a story or history. It is only through Christ that human history is rewritten. Every place that humanity has gone astray, Christ fixes. He does not fix by mere example alone but chooses to become enfleshed, living the perfect life for the sake of humanity. Where Adam was

tempted and fell, Christ was tempted and overcame. It is through a typological theology that the story can be retold countless times. Christ is the man on who the Spirit can dwell once again. It is our being connected to Christ and his story that we are made righteous *coram Deo*. He recapitulates our history and yet acts in a redemptive manner throughout his *entire* life. The narrative of Christ tells the reversal of the narrative of humanity.

Considering there is already precedent in the Lutheran tradition to speak of the atonement in different ways (e.g., blessed exchange, duel, imputation), the idea of adding another metaphor within a different sphere should be allowed. Since it does not rely on the category of righteousness, to object from the view of the two kinds of righteousness would be a category mistake. Finally, rhetorical categories deal with a discourse about the human race as a whole. Therefore, we can speak about Christ's life being for us without the need of explanation regarding the imputation of Christ's obedience to the individual.

This points to a limitation in how Lutherans should use recapitulation. Recapitulation does *not* address the question of how individuals receive the benefits of Christ's cross. Therefore, it is not a substitute for justification language and should not be used as such. What is helpful through recapitulation is a discussion of what Christ did to save the human race. Although this is a limitation of recapitulation language there are other advantages that make up for this.

Recapitulation can greatly help preaching. Instead of focusing in on a courtroom case with every pericope, a pastor can instead tell the story of humanity framed within the story of Christ. In this way rhetorical categories are theologically useful. The strength of these is that they are can be adapted to various situations and pericope. Instead of speaking about Jesus' overcoming of the Devil's temptations to prepare for the cross, we can instead speak of how Jesus through his very life is undoing what Adam did. A story is *not* a courtroom transcription.

God rewrites our story in his Son, Jesus Christ, through his life and death, so that we are once again being made in the image and likeness of God.

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