

READING GROUP

**IR IRENAEUS OF LYONS, AGAINST THE HERESIES IV, 37–39**

Father John Behr

[ANF translation; modified occasionally]

**37.1.** This expression [of our Lord], “*How often would I have gathered thy children together, and thou wouldst not,*” set forth the ancient law of human liberty, because God made man a free [agent] from the beginning, possessing his own power, even as he does his own soul, to obey the behests of God voluntarily, and not by compulsion of God. For there is no coercion with God, but a good will [towards us] is present with Him continually. And therefore does He give good counsel to all. And in man, as well as in angels, He has placed the power of choice (for angels are rational beings), so that those who had yielded obedience might justly possess what is good, given indeed by God, but preserved by themselves. On the other hand, they who have not obeyed shall, with justice, be not found in possession of the good, and shall receive condign punishment: for God did kindly bestow on them what was good; but they themselves did not diligently keep it, nor deem it something precious, but poured contempt upon His super-eminent goodness. Rejecting therefore the good, and as it were spuing it out, they shall all deservedly incur the just judgment of God, which also the Apostle Paul testifies in his Epistle to the Romans, where he says, “*But dost thou despise the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering, being ignorant that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*” “*But glory and honor,*” he says, “*to every one that doeth good.*” God therefore has given that which is good, as the apostle tells us in this Epistle, and they who work it shall receive glory and honor, because they have done that which is good when they had it in their power not to do it; but those who do it not shall receive the just judgment of God, because they did not work good when they had it in their power so to do.

**37.2.** But if some had been made by nature bad, and others good, these latter would not be deserving of praise for being good, for such were they created; nor would the former be reprehensible, for thus they were made [originally]. But since all men are of the same nature, able both to hold fast and to do what is good; and, on the other hand, having also the power to cast it from them and not to do it, — some do justly receive praise even among men who are under the control of good laws (and much more from God), and obtain deserved testimony of their choice of good in general, and of persevering therein; but the others are blamed, and receive a just

condemnation, because of their rejection of what is fair and good. And therefore the prophets used to exhort men to what was good, to act justly and to work righteousness, as I have so largely demonstrated, because it is in our power so to do, and because by excessive negligence we might become forgetful, and thus stand in need of that good counsel which the good God has given us to know by means of the prophets.

**37.3.** For this reason the Lord also said, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”* And, *“Take heed to yourselves, lest perchance your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and worldly cares.”* And, *“Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye like unto men that wait for their Lord, when He returns from the wedding, that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open to Him. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing.”* And again, *“The servant who knows his Lord’s will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.”* And, *“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”* And again, *“But if the servant say in his heart, The Lord delayeth, and begin to beat his fellow-servants, and to eat, and drink, and to be drunken, his Lord will come in a day on which he does not expect Him, and shall cut him in sunder, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites.”* All such passages demonstrate the independent will of man, and at the same time the counsel which God conveys to him, by which He exhorts us to submit ourselves to Him, and seeks to turn us away from [the sin of] unbelief against Him, without, however, in any way coercing us.

**37.4.** No doubt, if anyone is unwilling to follow the Gospel itself, it is in his power [to reject it], but it is not expedient. For it is in man’s power to disobey God, and to forfeit what is good; but [such conduct] brings no small amount of injury and mischief. And on this account Paul says, *“All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient;”* referring both to the liberty of man, in which respect *“all things are lawful,”* God exercising no compulsion in regard to him; and [by the expression] *“not expedient”* pointing out that we *“should not use our liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, for this is not expedient.”* And again he says, *“Speak ye every man truth with his neighbor.”* And, *“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor scurrility, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks.”* And, *“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk honestly as children of the light, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in anger and jealousy. And such were some of you; but ye have been washed, but ye have been sanctified in the name of our Lord.”* If then it were not in our power to do or not to do these things, what reason had the apostle, and much more the Lord Himself, to give us counsel to do some things, and to abstain from others? But because man is possessed of free will from the beginning, and God is possessed of free will, in whose likeness man was created, advice is always

given to him to keep fast the good, which thing is done by means of obedience to God.

**37.5.** And not merely in works, but also in faith, has God preserved the will of man free and under his own control, saying, “*According to thy faith be it unto thee;*” thus showing that there is a faith specially belonging to man, since he has an opinion specially his own. And again, “*All things are possible to him that believeth;*” and, “*Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.*” Now all such expressions demonstrate that man is in his own power with respect to faith. And for this reason, “*he that believeth in Him has eternal life while he who believeth not the Son hath not eternal life, but the wrath of God shall remain upon him.*” In the same manner therefore the Lord, both showing His own goodness, and indicating that man is in his own free will and his own power, said to Jerusalem, “*How often have I wished to gather thy children together, as a hen [gathereth] her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Wherefore your house shall be left unto you desolate.*”

**37.6.** Those, again, who maintain the opposite to these [conclusions], do themselves present the Lord as destitute of power, as if, forsooth, He were unable to accomplish what He willed; or, on the other hand, as being ignorant that they were by nature “material,” as these men express it, and such as cannot receive His immortality. “But He should not,” say they, “have created angels of such a nature that they were capable of transgression, nor men who immediately proved ungrateful towards Him; for they were made rational beings, endowed with the power of examining and judging, and were not [formed] as things irrational or of a [merely] animal nature, which can do nothing of their own will, but are drawn by necessity and compulsion to what is good, in which things there is one mind and one usage, working mechanically in one groove, who are incapable of being anything else except just what they had been created.” But upon this supposition, neither would what is good be grateful to them, nor communion with God be precious, nor would the good be very much to be sought after, which would present itself without their own proper endeavor, care, or study, but would be implanted of its own accord and without their concern. Thus it would come to pass, that their being good would be of no consequence, because they were so by nature rather than by will, and are possessors of good spontaneously, not by choice; and for this reason they would not understand this fact, that good is a comely thing, nor would they take pleasure in it. For how can those who are ignorant of good enjoy it? Or what credit is it to those who have not aimed at it? And what crown is it to those who have not followed in pursuit of it, like those victorious in the contest?

**37.7.** On this account, too, did the Lord assert that the kingdom of heaven was the portion of “the violent;” and He says, “*The violent take it by force;*”

that is, those who by strength and earnest striving are on the watch to snatch it away on the moment. On this account also Paul the Apostle says to the Corinthians, “*Know ye not, that they who run in a racecourse, do all indeed run, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. Every one also who engages in the contest is temperate in all things: now these men [do it] that they may obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. But I so run, not as uncertainty; I fight, not as One beating the air; but I make my body livid, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when preaching to others, I may myself be rendered a castaway.*” This able wrestler, therefore, exhorts us to the struggle for immortality, that we may be crowned, and may deem the crown precious, namely, that which is acquired by our struggle, but which does not encircle us of its own accord. And the harder we strive, so much is it the more valuable; while so much the more valuable it is, so much the more should we esteem it. And indeed those things are not esteemed so highly which come spontaneously, as those which are reached by much anxious care. Since, then, this power has been conferred upon us, both the Lord has taught and the apostle has enjoined us the more to love God, that we may reach this [prize] for ourselves by striving after it. For otherwise, no doubt, this our good would be [virtually] irrational, because not the result of trial. Moreover, the faculty of seeing would not appear to be so desirable, unless we had known what a loss it were to be devoid of sight; and health, too, is rendered all the more estimable by an acquaintance with disease; light, also, by contrasting it with darkness; and life with death. Just in the same way is the heavenly kingdom honorable to those who have known the earthly one. But in proportion as it is more honorable, so much the more do we prize it; and if we have prized it more, we shall be the more glorious in the presence of God. The Lord has therefore endured all these things on our behalf, in order that we, having been instructed by means of them all, may be in all respects circumspect for the time to come, and that, having been rationally taught to love God, we may continue in His perfect love: for God has displayed long-suffering in the case of man’s apostasy; while man has been instructed by means of it, as also the prophet says, “*Thine own apostasy shall heal thee.*” God thus determining all things beforehand for the bringing of man to perfection, for his edification, and for the revelation of His dispensations, that goodness may both be made apparent, and righteousness perfected, and that the Church may be fashioned after the image of His Son, and that man may finally be brought to maturity at some future time, becoming ripe through such privileges to see and comprehend God.

**38.1.** If, however, any one say, “What then? Could not God have exhibited man as perfect from beginning?” let him know that, inasmuch as God is indeed always the same and unbegotten as respects Himself, all things are possible to Him. But created things must be inferior to Him who created them, from the very fact of their later origin; for it was not possible for things recently created to have been uncreated. But inasmuch as they are not uncreated, for this very reason do they come short of the perfect. Because, as these

things are of later date, so are they infantile; so are they unaccustomed to, and unexercised in, perfect discipline. For as it certainly is in the power of a mother to give strong food to her infant, [but she does not do so], as the child is not yet able to receive more substantial nourishment; so also it was possible for God Himself to have made man perfect from the first, but man could not receive this [perfection], being as yet an infant. And for this cause our Lord in these last times, when He had summed up all things into Himself, came to us, not as He might have come, but as we were capable of beholding Him. He might easily have come to us in His immortal glory, but in that case we could never have endured the greatness of the glory; and therefore it was that He, who was the perfect bread of the Father, offered Himself to us as milk, [because we were] as infants. He did this when He appeared as a man, that we, being nourished, as it were, from the breast of His flesh, and having, by such a course of milk nourishment, become accustomed to eat and drink the Word of God, may be able also to contain in ourselves the Bread of immortality, which is the Spirit of the Father.

**38.2.** And on this account does Paul declare to the Corinthians, “*I have fed you with milk, not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it.*” That is, ye have indeed learned the advent of our Lord as a man; nevertheless, because of your infirmity, the Spirit of the Father has not as yet rested upon you. “*For when envying and strife,*” he says, “*and dissensions are among you, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*” That is, that the Spirit of the Father was not yet with them, on account of their imperfection and shortcomings of their walk in life. As, therefore, the apostle had the power to give them strong meat — for those upon whom the apostles laid hands received the Holy Spirit, who is the food of life [eternal] — but they were not capable of receiving it, because they had the sentient faculties of the soul still feeble and undisciplined in the practice of things pertaining to God; so, in like manner, God had power at the beginning to grant perfection to man; but as the latter was only recently created, he could not possibly have received it, or even if he had received it, could he have contained it, or containing it, could he have retained it. It was for this reason that the Son of God, although He was perfect, passed through the state of infancy in common with the rest of mankind, partaking of it thus not for His own benefit, but for that of the infantile stage of man’s existence, in order that man might be able to receive Him. There was nothing, therefore, impossible to and deficient in God, [implied in the fact] that man was not an uncreated being; but this merely applied to him who was lately created, [namely] man.

**38.3 [Behr].** With God power, wisdom, and goodness are demonstrated simultaneously: power and goodness in that he willingly created and made things previously not existing; wisdom in having made those things that have come into being rhythmical and harmonious and elaborate (εὐρυθμα καὶ ἐμμελῆ καὶ ἐγκατάσκευα), which, through the superabundance of his goodness, receiving growth (αὐξησιν) and continuing for a long period (ἐπι

πλεῖον), obtain the glory of the Uncreated (ἀγενήτου δόξαν ἀποίσεται), of the God who ungrudgingly bestows good. By virtue of being created, they are not uncreated; but by virtue of continuing in being throughout a long course of ages, they shall receive the power of the Uncreated [δύναμιν ἀγένητου προσλήψεται], of the God who freely bestows upon them eternal existence. And thus in all things God has the pre-eminence, alone uncreated and the first of all and the supplier of the existence of all, while all others remain under God's subjection; subjection to God [effects] incorruptibility, and continuance in incorruptibility [is/effects?] the glory of the Uncreated. By this order and such rhythms and such a movement the created and fashioned human becomes in the image and likeness of the uncreated God: the Father planning everything well and commanding, the Son executing and performing, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing, and the human being making progress day by day and ascending towards perfection, that is, approaching the Uncreated One. For the Uncreated is perfect, and this is God. Now, [1] it was first necessary for the human being to be created; [2] and having been created, to increase; [3] and having increased, to become an adult; [4] and having become an adult, to multiply; [5] and having multiplied, to become strong; [6] and having been strengthened, to be glorified; [7] and being glorified, to see his Master; for God is He who is yet to be seen, and the vision of God produces incorruptibility, and “incorruptibility renders one close to God.” (Wisd. 6:19)

**38.4.** Irrational, therefore, in every respect, are they who await not the time of increase, but ascribe to God the infirmity of their nature. Such persons know neither God nor themselves, being insatiable and ungrateful, unwilling to be at the outset what they have also been created — men subject to passions; but go beyond the law of the human race, and before that they become men, they wish to be even now like God their Creator, and they who are more destitute of reason than dumb animals [insist] that there is no distinction between the uncreated God and man, a creature of to-day. For these, [the dumb animals], bring no charge against God for not having made them men; but each one, just as he has been created, gives thanks that he has been created. For we cast blame upon Him, because we have not been made gods from the beginning, but at first merely men, then at length gods; although God has adopted this course out of His pure benevolence, that no one may impute to Him invidiousness or grudgingness. He declares, “*I have said, Ye are gods; and ye are all sons of the Highest.*” But since we could not sustain the power of divinity, He adds, “*But ye shall die like men,*” setting forth both truths — the kindness of His free gift, and our weakness, and also that we were possessed of power over ourselves. For after His great kindness He graciously conferred good [upon us], and made men like to Himself, [that is] in their own power; while at the same time by His prescience He knew the infirmity of human beings, and the consequences which would flow from it; but through [His] love and [His] power, He shall overcome the substance of created nature. For it was necessary, at first, that nature should be exhibited; then, after that, that what was mortal should be conquered and

swallowed up by immortality, and the corruptible by incorruptibility, and that man should be made after the image and likeness of God, having received the knowledge of good and evil.

**39.1.** Man has received the knowledge of good and evil. It is good to obey God, and to believe in Him, and to keep His commandment, and this is the life of man; as not to obey God is evil, and this is his death. Since God, therefore, gave [to man] such mental power [*magnanimitatem*] man knew both the good of obedience and the evil of disobedience, that the eye of the mind, receiving experience of both, may with judgment make choice of the better things; and that he may never become indolent or neglectful of God's command; and learning by experience that it is an evil thing which deprives him of life, that is, disobedience to God, may never attempt it at all, but that, knowing that what preserves his life, namely, obedience to God, is good, he may diligently keep it with all earnestness. Wherefore he has also had a twofold experience, possessing knowledge of both kinds, that with discipline he may make choice of the better things. But how, if he had no knowledge of the contrary, could he have had instruction in that which is good? For there is thus a surer and an undoubted comprehension of matters submitted to us than the mere surmise arising from an opinion regarding them. For just as the tongue receives experience of sweet and bitter by means of tasting, and the eye discriminates between black and white by means of vision, and the ear recognizes the distinctions of sounds by hearing; so also does the mind, receiving through the experience of both the knowledge of what is good, become more tenacious of its preservation, by acting in obedience to God: in the first place, casting away, by means of repentance, disobedience, as being something disagreeable and nauseous; and afterwards coming to understand what it really is, that it is contrary to goodness and sweetness, so that the mind may never even attempt to taste disobedience to God. But if any one do shun the knowledge of both these kinds of things, and the twofold perception of knowledge, he unawares divests himself of the character of a human being.

**39.2 [Behr].** How then will you be a god, when you are not yet made human? How perfect, when only recently begun? How immortal, when in mortal nature you did not obey the Creator? It is necessary for you first to hold the rank of human, and then to participate in the glory of God. For you do not create God, but God creates you. If, then, you are the work of God, await the Hand of God, who does everything at the appropriate time, the appropriate time for you, who are being made. Offer to him your heart, soft and pliable, and retain the shape with which the Fashioner shaped you, having in yourself his Water, lest you turn dry and lose the imprint of his fingers. By guarding this conformation, you will ascend to perfection; the mud in you will be concealed by the art of God. his Hand created your substance; it will gild you, inside and out, with pure gold and silver, and so adorn you that the King himself will desire your beauty. But if, becoming hardened, you reject His art

and being ungrateful towards him, because he made you a human being, ungrateful, that is, towards God, you have lost at once both his art and life. For to create is the characteristic of the goodness of God; to be created is characteristic of the nature of the human. If, therefore, you offer to him what is yours, that is, faith in him and subjection, you will receive his art and become a perfect work of God.

**39.3** But if you do not believe in him, and flee from his Hands, the cause of imperfection will be in you who did not obey, and not in him who called you. For he sent messengers to call people to the feast; but those who did not obey deprived themselves of his royal banquet. (cf. Matt. 22:3). The skill of God, therefore, is not defective, for He has power of the stones to raise up children to Abraham; but the man who does not obtain it is the cause to himself of his own imperfection. Nor, [in like manner], does the light fail because of those who have blinded themselves; but while it remains the same as ever, those who are [thus] blinded are involved in darkness through their own fault. The light does never enslave any one by necessity; nor, again, does God exercise compulsion upon any one unwilling to accept the exercise of His skill. Those persons, therefore, who have apostatized from the light given by the Father, and transgressed the law of liberty, have done so through their own fault, since they have been created free agents, and possessed of power over themselves.

**39.4.** But God, foreknowing all things, prepared fit habitations for both, kindly conferring that light which they desire on those who seek after the light of incorruption, and resort to it; but for the despisers and mockers who avoid and turn themselves away from this light, and who do, as it were, blind themselves, He has prepared darkness suitable to persons who oppose the light, and He has inflicted an appropriate punishment upon those who try to avoid being subject to Him. Submission to God is eternal rest, so that they who shun the light have a place worthy of their flight; and those who fly from eternal rest, have a habitation in accordance with their fleeing. Now, since all good things are with God, they who by their own determination fly from God, do defraud themselves of all good things; and having been [thus] defrauded of all good things with respect to God, they shall consequently fall under the just judgment of God. For those persons who shun rest shall justly incur punishment, and those who avoid the light shall justly dwell in darkness. For as in the case of this temporal light, those who shun it do deliver themselves over to darkness, so that they do themselves become the cause to themselves that they are destitute of light, and do inhabit darkness; and, as I have already observed, the light is not the cause of such an [unhappy] condition of existence to them; so those who fly from the eternal light of God, which contains in itself all good things, are themselves the cause to themselves of their inhabiting eternal darkness, destitute of all good things, having become to themselves the cause of [their consignment to] an abode of that nature.



**Select Passages from Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 3 and 5  
(transl. Behr)**

***Haer. 3.20.1***

God, therefore, was long-suffering when the human being defaulted, foreseeing that victory which should be granted to him through the Word. For when strength was made perfect in weakness [cf. 2 Cor. 12:9], [the Word] showed the kindness and transcendent power of God. For **just as** he did bear Jonah to be swallowed up by the whale, not that he should be swallowed up and perish altogether, but **so that**, having been cast out again, he might be more subject to God and might glorify him the more who had conferred upon him such an unhoped-for salvation and brought a firm repentance to the Ninevites, that they might convert to the Lord who delivered them from death when they were struck with awe by that sign that had been wrought on Jonah ... **so also**, from the beginning, God did bear the human being to be swallowed up by the great whale, who was the author of the transgression, not that he should perish altogether when so engulfed, but arranging in advance the finding of salvation, which was accomplished by the Word, through the ‘sign of Jonah’ [Matt. 12:39-40], for those who held the same opinion as Jonah regarding the Lord, and who confessed, and said, ‘I am a servant of the Lord, and I worship the Lord God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land’ (Jonah 1.9), **so that** the human being, receiving an unhoped-for salvation from God, might rise from the dead, and glorify God, and repeat, ‘I cried to the Lord my God in my affliction, and he heard me from the belly of hell’ [Jonah 2:2], and that he might always continue glorifying God, and giving thanks without ceasing for that salvation which he had obtained from him, ‘that no flesh should glory in the Lord’s presence’ [1 Cor. 1:29], nor should the human being ever adopt an opposite opinion with regard to God, supposing that the incorruptibility which surrounds him is his own by nature, nor, by not holding the truth, should boast with empty superciliousness, as if he were by nature like to God.

***Haer. 3.20.2***

Such then was the patience of God, that the human being, passing through all things and acquiring knowledge of death, then attaining to the resurrection from the dead, and learning by experience from whence he has been delivered, may thus always give thanks to the Lord, having received from him the gift of incorruptibility, and may love him the more, for ‘he to whom more is forgiven, loves more’ (cf. Luke 7:42-3), and may himself know how mortal and weak he is, but also understand that God is so immortal and powerful as to bestow immortality on the mortal and eternity on the temporal, and that he may also know the other powers of God made manifest in himself, and, being taught by them, may think of God in accordance with the

greatness of God. For the glory of the human being is God, while the vessel of the workings of God, and of all his wisdom and power is the human being.

**Haer. 3.21.10**

And **just as** the first-fashioned Adam had his substance from untilled and yet virgin soil, ‘for God had not yet sent rain, and there was no human being to till the ground’ [Gen. 2:5], and was fashioned by the Hand of God, that is, by the Word of God, for ‘all things were made through him’ [John 1:3], and the Lord took mud from the ground and fashioned the human being [Gen. 2:7], **so also**, when the Word himself, recapitulated Adam in himself, he rightly received from Mary, who was as yet a virgin, that generation which was the recapitulation of Adam. If then the first Adam had a man for his father, and was born from male seed, they would be right to say that the second Adam was begotten of Joseph. But if the former was taken from the mud, and fashioned by the Word of God, so the Word himself, when bringing about the recapitulation of Adam within himself, ought to have the likeness of generation itself. Why then did God not once again take mud, rather than work this fashioning from Mary? So that there should not be another fashioning, nor that it should be another fashioning which would be saved, but that the same thing should be recapitulated, preserving the similitude.

**Haer 3.22.3.**

(Paul could describe Adam as ‘the type of the one to come’ [Rom 5:14]), because the Word, the Fashioner of all things, prefigured in him the future economy relating to the Son of God on behalf of the human race, God having predetermined the first, the animated human that is, so that he should be saved by the spiritual [one]; for, since the Saviour pre-exists, it was necessary that the one to be saved should also exist, so that the Saviour should not be without purpose.

**Haer. 3.22.4**

Consistently, then, also the Virgin Mary was found to be obedient when she said, ‘Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word’ [Luke 1:38]; but Eve was disobedient, for she did not obey when she was yet a virgin. **Just as** she, having a husband yet still being virgin (‘for they were both naked’, in Paradise, ‘and were not ashamed’ [Gen 2:25], because they had recently been made and had no knowledge about generating children; for they had first to grow up and then multiply [cf. Gen 1:28]), was disobedient, and became the cause of death for herself and the entire human race, **so also** did Mary, though having a man destined for her beforehand, and still a virgin, by being obedient became the cause of salvation for herself and the entire human race. And on this account, does the law call her who is espoused to a man, though she is still a virgin, the

wife of him who espoused her, pointing out thereby the recircling [*recirculationem*] from Mary to Eve, because in no other way is that which is tied together loosed, except that the cords of the tying are united in the reverse order, so that the first cords are loosed by [*loosening*] the second; in other words, the second cords release the first. And so it happens that the first cord is untied by the second cord, and the second cord serves as the first's untying. With this in view, the Lord said, the first will be last, and the last first [cf. Matt. 19:30; 20:16]. The prophet, too, pointed out the same thing: 'in place of your fathers, sons were born to you', he said [Ps. 44 (45):17]. For the Lord, who was born 'the firstborn of the dead' [Col. 1:18], receiving the ancient fathers into his bosom regenerated them to the life of God, having become the beginning of those who live, as Adam had become the beginning of those who die.

### **Haer 5.1.3**

... **just as**, from the beginning [*ab initio*] of our formation [*plasmationis*] in Adam, the breath of life from God, having been united [*unita*] to the handiwork [*plasmati*], animated [*animavit*] the human being and showed him to be a rational being, **so also**, at the end [*in fine*], the Word of the Father and the Spirit of God, having become united [*adunitus*] with the ancient substance of the formation [*plasmationis*] of Adam, rendered [*effecit*] the human being living [*viventem*] and perfect, bearing the perfect Father, **in order that just as** in the animated we all die, **so also** in the spiritual we may all be vivified [*vivificemur*]. For never at any time did Adam escape the Hands of God, to whom the Father speaking, said, 'Let us make the human being in our image, after our likeness' [Gen. 1:26]. And for this reason at the end [*fine*], 'not by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man' [John 1:13], but by the good pleasure of the Father, his Hands perfected a living human being [*vivum perfecerunt hominem*], in order that Adam might become in the image and likeness of God.

### **Haer. 5.2.3**

**Just as** the wood of the vine, planted in the earth, bore fruit in its own time, and the grain of wheat, falling into the earth and being decomposed, was raised up manifold by the Spirit of God who sustains all, then, by wisdom, they come to the use of human beings, and receiving the Word of God, become eucharist, which is the Body and Blood of Christ; **so also**, our bodies, nourished by it, having been placed in the earth and decomposing in it, shall rise in their time, when the Word of God bestows on them the resurrection to the glory of God the Father, who secures immortality for the mortal and bountifully bestows incorruptibility on the corruptible [cf. 1 Cor. 15:53], because the power of God is made perfect in weakness [cf. 2 Cor. 12:9], **in order that** we may never become puffed up, as if we had life from

ourselves, nor exalted against God, entertaining ungrateful thoughts, but learning by experience that it is from his excellence, and not from our own nature, that we have eternal continuance, that we should neither undervalue the true glory of God nor be ignorant of our own nature, but should know what God can do and what benefits the human, and that we should never mistake the true understanding of things as they are, that is, of God and the human being.

**Haer. 5.3.2-3**

One cannot enumerate all the harmonious structure of the human being [τῆς κατὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον μελοποιίας], which was not made without the great wisdom of God. Whatever participates in the art and wisdom of God also participates in his power. The flesh, therefore, is not without part in the art, the wisdom and the power of God, but his power, which produces life, is made perfect in weakness, that is, in the flesh.

**Haer. 5.3.3**

If, then, the present temporal life, which is much weaker than that eternal life, is nevertheless able to vivify our mortal members, why should not eternal life, being much more powerful than this, vivify the flesh, already exercised and accustomed to sustain life? For that the flesh is capable of receiving life is shown from the fact of its being alive; for it lives as long as God wants it to live. It is manifest, too, that God has the power to confer life upon it, for when he grants life, we live.

**Haer. 5.6.1** [The words in “{}” are only in the Latin version]

Now the soul and the Spirit can be a part of the human being, but by no means a human being; the complete [*perfectus*] human being is the commingling and the union of the soul receiving the Spirit of the Father and joined to the flesh that was moulded after the image of God. For this reason the Apostle says ‘We speak wisdom among them that are perfect [*perfectos*]’ [1 Cor. 2:6], calling those ‘perfect’ who have received the Spirit of God . . . these the Apostle also calls ‘spiritual’, being spiritual by a participation in the Spirit and not by a deprivation and removal of the flesh {and merely that itself alone}. For if anyone take away the substance {of the flesh, that is} of the handiwork, and merely considers only the Spirit itself, such is no longer what is a spiritual human, but the Spirit of the human being or the Spirit of God. But when this Spirit, commingled with the soul, is united to the handiwork, because of the outpouring of the Spirit the human being is rendered spiritual and complete [*perfectus*], and this is the one who was made in the image and likeness of God. But if the Spirit is lacking from the soul, such a one, remaining indeed animated and fleshly, will be incomplete [*imperfectus*], having the image, certainly, in the handiwork, but not receiving the likeness

through the Spirit. Likewise this one is incomplete, in the same manner again, if someone takes away the image and rejects the handiwork, one can no longer contemplate a human being, but either some part of the human, as we have said, or something other than the human being. For neither is the handiwork of the flesh itself, by itself, a complete human being, but the body of a human and a part of a human being; nor is the soul itself, by itself, a human, but the soul of a human and a part of a human being; nor is the Spirit a human being, for it is called Spirit and not human. But the commingling and union of all of these constitutes the complete human being. And for this reason the Apostle, explaining himself, clarifies [what makes] the complete and spiritual saved human being [*perfectum et spiritalem salutis hominem*], saying, in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, ‘May the God of peace sanctify you completely [*perfectos*], and may your Spirit and soul and body be preserved in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ’ [1 Thess. 5.23].

#### **Haer. 5.8.1**

For now we receive a certain portion of the Spirit towards perfection and preparation for incorruptibility, being slowly accustomed to contain and to bear God, which the Apostle called ‘a pledge’, that is, a part of the honour which God has promised us, saying, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, ‘In him you also, having heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation and believing in him, have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise, which is the pledge of our inheritance’ [Eph. 1:13-14]. This pledge, therefore, thus dwelling in us, renders us spiritual even now, and the mortal is swallowed up by immortality, for he declares, ‘you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you’ [Rom. 8:9], and this is not by a casting away of the flesh, but by the communion of the Spirit, for those to whom he was writing were not without flesh, but those who had received the Spirit of God, ‘in whom we cry Abba, Father’ [Rom. 8:15]. If then now, having the pledge, we cry ‘Abba, Father’, what shall it be when rising again we behold him face to face, when all the members shall burst forth in an exuberant hymn of exultation, glorifying him who raised them from the dead and gave them eternal life? For if the pledge, gathering the human being together into himself, makes him now say ‘Abba, Father’, what shall the full grace of the Spirit, which shall be given to human beings by God, effect? It will render us like unto him, and perfect the will of the Father: for it shall make the human being in the image and likeness of God.

#### **Haer. 5.9.2**

For it is testified by the Lord that as ‘the flesh is weak’, so ‘the Spirit is ready’ [Matt. 26:41], that is, is able to accomplish what it wills. If, therefore, anyone mixes the readiness of the Spirit as a stimulus to the weakness of the flesh, it necessarily follows that what is strong will prevail over what is weak, so

that the weakness of the flesh will be absorbed by the strength of the Spirit, and such a one will no longer be carnal but spiritual because of the communion of the Spirit. In this way, therefore, the martyrs bear witness and despise death: not after the weakness of the flesh, but by the readiness of the Spirit. For when the weakness of the flesh is absorbed, it manifests the Spirit as powerful; and again, when the Spirit absorbs the weakness, it inherits the flesh for itself, and from both of these is made a living human being: living, indeed, because of the participation of the Spirit; and human, because of the substance of the flesh.

**Haer. 5.16.2**

For in times long past it was said the human being was made in the image of God, but it was not shown [to be so]; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image the human was created; and because of this he easily lost the likeness. When, however, the Word of God became flesh, he confirmed both of these: for he both showed forth the image truly, himself becoming that which was his image, and he re-established the likeness in a sure manner, by co-assimilating [συνεξομοιώσας] the human being to the invisible Father through the Word become visible.

**Haer. 5.28.4**

And therefore throughout all time, the human being, formed at the beginning by the Hands of God, that is, by the Son and the Spirit, becomes after the image and likeness of God: the chaff, that is, the apostasy, being cast away, while the wheat, that is, those who bear as fruit faith in God, being gathered into the granary. And therefore tribulation is necessary for those who are being saved, that, in a certain way, having been threshed and kneaded together, through endurance, with the Word of God, and baked in the fire, they may be suitable for the banquet of the King, as one of ours said, when condemned to the wild beasts because of his testimony [μαρτυρία] to God: ‘I am the wheat of Christ, and I am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found [to be] pure bread of God’.

**Haer. 5.36.3**

And in all these things, and by them all, one and the same God the Father is shown, fashioning the human being and promising the inheritance of the earth to the fathers, giving it<sup>1</sup> in the resurrection of the just and fulfilling the promises in the kingdom of his Son, then bestowing paternally those things which neither the eye has seen, nor the ear has heard, nor has [the thought]

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<sup>1</sup> Following the Armenian, with Rousseau, rather than the Latin *eduxit illam*.

arisen within the heart of the human being.<sup>2</sup> And there is one Son, who accomplished the Father’s will, and there is one human race, in which the mysteries of God are wrought, ‘which the angels desire to see’ [1 Pet. 1:12], not being able to search out the wisdom of God, through which his handiwork, conformed and incorporated with the Son, is perfected—that his Offspring, the First-begotten Word, should descend to the creature, that is, to the handiwork, and be borne by it, and, again, [that] the creature should bear the Word and ascend to him, passing beyond the angels and becoming in the image and likeness of God.

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 2:9. As to what is bestowed ‘paternally’ at this point, Irenaeus does not speculate. Undaunted, Orbe (*Teología*, 3, 628-33, 646-51) analyzes this statement in terms of the vision of God with corporeal eyes. *haer.* 4.20.5, with its threefold modes of seeing God (*propheticæ, adoptivæ, paternaliter*), might suggest that there is a vision of God directly, but it is also qualified by Irenaeus’ assertion that God has manifested himself in (and only in) Christ, who preserves the visibility of the Father so that we might always have something towards which we can advance, and it is ‘incorruption for eternal life that comes to us from seeing God’. Likewise in *haer.* 5.36, he does not speak so much of seeing God directly, but rather of flourishing in incorruptibility and holding ever-new converse with God.