

## Reflection Wednesday Week 12 St Irenaeus 2023

Irenaeus was born in Smyrna (130), Asia Minor (now Izmir in Turkey). He emigrated to Lyons, France where he became the bishop. Whether he was martyred or died a natural death is uncertain. Irenaeus played a decisive role in fixing the canon of the New Testament. With his invaluable help the Church agreed, early on, what was scriptural and what was not. As people meditated on the Redemption, dissensions and heresies arose, and reference to scripture was the obvious way of settling what the truth really was. In the absence of an agreed canon of scripture it was too difficult to decide who was right and who was wrong. Going through all the books of the New Testament, as well as the magical pseudo-Gospels and *The Shepherd of Hermas*. Irenaeus gave reasons for and against the canonicity of each book. Irenaeus's canon of scripture is very nearly the modern one (he did not include the three universal epistles). He did, however, start the tradition of biblical scholarship.

Irenaeus fought against the Gnostics, who believed that the world was irredeemably wicked, and against the Valentinians, who claimed to be possessors of a secret tradition that had never been written down but passed from master to disciple through the ages. This pessimism and this arcane elitism remain with us even today, and each generation must renew the fight against them.

### Quotes:

*For even creation reveals Him who formed it, and the very work made suggests Him who made it, and the world manifests Him who ordered it. (II.9.1)*

*For as it was not possible that the man who had once for all been conquered, and who had been destroyed through disobedience, could reform himself, and obtain the prize of victory; and as it was also impossible that he could reach salvation who had fallen under the power of sin — the Son effected both these things, being the Word of God, descending from the Father, becoming incarnate, stooping low, even to death, and consummating the arranged plan of our salvation..." (III.18.2)*