The *Demonstration of Intertextuality in Irenaeus of Lyons*  

*Stephen O. Presley*

**Introduction**

Eusebius records Irenaeus' *Epideixis* (*Epid.*), or *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*, among his nonpolemical works.¹ This text, however, remained lost until 1904 when a manuscript was discovered in the library of the Church of the Holy Mother of God in Erivan, Armenia.² The work appears to be catechetical in nature and composed for a disciple named Marcianus, who Drews and Ferguson suggest was actually a catechist commissioned to use this short manual to prepare catechumens for baptism.³ The work is rather concise, containing only a hundred paragraphs, but in spite of its brevity, the *Epideixis* offers an organized summary of the apostolic teaching.⁴ John Behr puts things in perspective when he writes that the *Epideixis* is the “earliest summary of Christian teaching, presented in a nonpolemical or apologetic manner, that we now have.”⁵ Irenaeus' articulation of the apostolic teaching offers a highly involved theological arrangement of interlocking scriptural references, and

² Unless otherwise noted, all English translations are taken from Irenaeus, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. John Behr (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997). In certain instances I have altered the language for the sake of clarity based upon Irenaeus, *Démonstration de la prédication apostolique*, trans. Adelin Rousseau, sc 406 (Paris: Cerf, 1995). From his evaluation of the text, Rousseau suggests that it was translated from a Greek manuscript between the sixth and seventh centuries and the Armenian translator followed the Greek closely. In addition the manuscript was discovered with two copies of *Adversus haereses*, which has strengthened the quality of Rousseau's Latin retroversion. See Rousseau, *Irenaeus*, 20–21.
³ Paul Drews, “Der literarische Charakter der neuentdeckten Schrift des Irenaus ‘Zum Erweise der apostolischen Verkündigung,’” *ZNW* 8 (1907): 226–33. Everett Ferguson, “Irenaeus’ proof of the Apostolic Preaching and Early Catechetical Instruction,” *StPatr* 18 (1989): 119–20. In my view, the purpose of the work is not merely catechetical but hermeneutical; Irenaeus was demonstrating for his disciple the proper reading of Scripture.
⁴ Harnack was the first to divide the work into a hundred paragraphs, and scholars have by and large followed his ordering. Behr, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 37.
the complexity of this scriptural integration defies simplistic classifications. As recent scholarship in patristic hermeneutics has shown, the dominant categories of “allegory” and “typology” are insufficient to delimit the methodological complexity of scriptural interpretation in the ancient world. As a result, scholars have sought new categories and conceptual descriptions of ancient exegesis, and the interest in “intertextuality” has garnered a significant amount of attention. The notion of “intertextuality,” of course, invokes the work of Julia Kristeva and the application of her poststructuralist literary theory. In general, intertextual investigation is not necessarily strictly a question of source criticism or influence but of the “work” a given text and intertext(s) perform on one another. Thus the focus of this kind of study is that of textual relationships and interactions. Through evaluating the intertextuality of Irenaeus, I am investigating, in the words of Stefan Alkier, “the relationships that a text can have with other texts.” There is no doubt that the general concept of intertextuality extends to cultural signs that are supratextual, but this study is limited to the nature of the textual relationships that characterize Irenaeus’ interpretive strategies in the *Epideixis*.

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8 Kristeva, building upon the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, first described intertextuality as “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.” Today the term has taken on a life of its own beyond Kristeva’s original intention (perhaps ironically), because in the hands of biblical scholars the notion of intertextuality has expanded to include a variety of definitions and methodologies. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora and Alice Jardine (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 66. Kristeva now prefers the term “transposition” in order to communicate more clearly the “passages of one signifying system into another.” Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 59–60.


10 I am not applying a postmodern sense of “intertextuality,” but instead focusing on the historical nature of textual integration in Irenaeus and explaining how he harmonizes