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BIBLIOTHECA SACRA

ARTICLE I.

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.

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THAT the apostle Paul did not consciously construct what is known to-day as a Philosophy of Religion need not be stated. This study, which turns a critical and reflective eye upon the facts of man's religious life, to discover, if possible, its essential nature, its laws, its normal or abnormal developments, its justification — this study had not then been so much as dreamed of. Nevertheless, Paul did contribute great fundamental ideas which any philosophy of religion worthy of the name must incorporate into itself.

Any philosophy of religion must include a philosophy of the subject of religion. This, amongst terrestrial beings, with whom alone we have to do, is man. James Freeman Clarke may try to prove that his cur has conscience; Charles Darwin may think that the growlings of his dog at the motions of a parasol stirred by the breeze, show something of the tendency which appears in savage man to imagine that natural objects are animated by spiritual powers; but, for us, religion is a function of man, and of man only. Then religion is related to some object or objects. It is not a mere reflex action of the man upon himself. Nor is religion a relation of the

subject to some inanimate thing. It assumes the existence of one or more personal beings who are related to man and can be influenced by his feelings and actions. Moreover, the object of religion is distinguished by its superhuman quality. Religion is thus, in short, man's bearing towards what he calls his God or gods, as distinguished from his bearing towards other beings. A complete philosophy of religion, therefore, would include a philosophy of the religious nature of the subject of religion, a philosophy of the object of religion, and a philosophy of the relations between the two. As far as the cosmos conditions and mediates, yea, in large measure, practically shapes, those mutual bearings of the divine and human, it must also have some place in such a discussion.

In considering St. Paul's contribution to the philosophy of religion, we shall draw upon his speeches in the book of Acts and upon all the Epistles that bear his name. We cannot of course take space here to justify all our exegesis. We begin with the object of religion. Modern theistic philosophy begins with the finite and concludes from it to the infinite. It deals much with the various so-called proofs for the existence of God. From these it concludes to one, infinite, personal Being, both immanent and transcendent, the one sufficient Cause, intelligent Designer, Preserver, and moral Governor of the finite. Paul knows that there is such a Deity. Idols are nothing in the world. The gods of the heathen are no gods, though there are many that are called gods. There is to him one God and only one, the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise; the Father, of whom are all things and we in him; the only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light that no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen or can see; who

is over all, through all, in all; in whom we live, move, and have our being; to whom be honor and power everlasting.

To this great conviction Paul had come not so much through abstract reasoning as through life. It was the rich heritage from his ancestral faith. Had he not drunk it in at his mother's knee? Had he not steeped his young soul in the sacred books of his people, books saturated with this high ethical monotheism, Israel's precious gift to the world? Paul would no doubt have agreed with Coleridge, that this truth is precisely the one that of all others least needs to be demonstrated, that to prove God's existence is trying to find the sun by candlelight. It was fundamental in his consciousness, basal in all his thinking. But whatever he would have said as to the necessity or cogency of the proofs for the being of God, he does declare that the God in whom he believes is a self-revealing God: he has not left himself without witness. In this, Paul is a self-consistent theist. It is a striking fact, and an indication of the crudeness of much modern writing on the philosophy of religion, that hardly any work on this subject takes into account at all the part played by the great objective factor in religion, in evoking, shaping, developing, the religious ideas, feelings, and activities of man. Most of them assume that religion is a joint product of the mind within the man and the nature without him. But certainly a real theist must grant that the true story of man's religion is not only the story of man's search after God, but of God's search after him. The true theist will not, with Lucretius, put God far away—

“In the lucid interspace of world and world,
Where never creeps a cloud or moves a wind,
Nor ever falls the least white star of snow,
Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans,
Nor sound of human sorrow mounts to mar
Their sacred, everlasting, calm.”

When a man writes on the philosophy of religion he should convince himself, and frankly let his readers know, whether he believes in a living God or not; and, if he does, whether this God is in any way estopped from revealing himself to man; and, if not, may he be expected to do so; and, if so, what might be the nature of this self-revelation of Deity, what its law, its possible or probable forms, its relation to the receptivity and capacity of the man; what would be its effect upon him; and what would be its perfect form? All religions claim that God or the gods do reveal themselves and exercise an influence upon the religious life of man. They believe in divine signs, dreams, visions, auspices, omens, voices, oracles, inspirations, spiritual possessions, theophanies, incarnations, some mode by which the Divine makes himself or his will known to men. Without faith in some form of divine self-manifestation to man, there would probably be no religion at all; it would be stifled in its birth. But is this faith of humanity in divine revelation anything more than the baseless product of the fancy? Being a self-consistent believer in the God of his fathers, Paul had no doubt that God certainly has revealed himself. Had not Enoch walked with God three hundred years? Had not God spoken to Noah; appeared to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees and in the plain of Mamre; made himself manifest to Jacob at Bethel and Peniel; to Moses in the burning bush and on Sinai's awful crest; to Gideon, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and all the prophets? Had he not shone in the Shekinah over the mercy seat? What were the Holy Scriptures of his people but the story of Jehovah's revelations to Israel, whose whole history had begun in revelation, at every stage had been carried forward by revelation, had been divinely guided and filled with God from beginning to end?

Not only so. Even the heathen have not been left without witness to God. That which may be known of him is manifest in them, for he hath revealed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood from the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. To Paul, God was manifesting himself through the ages, naturally and supernaturally, in nature, in history, in human consciousness.

What was the motive of this self-revelation of God to men? What motive could move such a God but unselfish love? Paul clearly discerns the truth which Browning makes to break upon the soul of the harper, David, as with yearning tenderness, he gazes into the face of the suffering Saul. The shepherd minstrel sees that human power and knowledge dwindle and shrivel in comparison with the divine; that human forethought is purblind and blank to his infinite care; that human faculties task themselves to the utmost merely to image success; whilst the man with the open eyes sees everywhere in the works of God perfection full fronting him. But when we come to love, shall the parts be reversed, and the creature surpass the Creator? No, no, God's love must surpass highest love of man in the same measure as his power, wisdom, creative skill, surpass ours. Paul's own heart helped teach him that same lesson. That compassionate heart of his, which had so much great heaviness and continual sorrow, which could lead him almost to wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsman's sake according to the flesh, that heart which could pour forth such a glowing eulogy upon love, knew that the motive in all self-revelations of God must be holy love. All the divine dealings with both Jew and Gentile are acts of grace, displays not only of unsearchable riches of wisdom and knowledge, but also of

mercy, of pure ethical love, which could manifest itself in both goodness and severity.

The forms of the divine self-revelation must evidently be determined by two factors: namely, on the one hand, the nature of God; and, on the other, the capacity and responsiveness of those to whom the revelation is given. What a man can see is determined not only by the light but also by the nature of the eye. A Newton and his dog Diamond look at the same phenomenon; but both do not see the same things. Peter Bell did not, like Wordsworth, see in the meanest flower that blows thoughts that do lie too deep for tears. The wife of William Black, the poet painter, who saw visions in the sooty streets of London, could not share his raptures. She said that she looked where her husband did, but somehow she failed to hear or see what he saw and heard. Such was the enthusiasm that John Ruskin felt for God's world, so much of the divine glory did he see in it, that when he approached some distant mountain, beheld the majesty and beauty of the sea, or saw the clouds marching through the sky, a shiver of fear mingled with awe set him a quiver with joy. In presence of the same natural glory, what does the dull clown behold? In the voice that spake to Jesus from the skies some heard only thunder, some the voice of an angel, but Jesus himself heard articulate speech from his heavenly Father. A Kant could not teach his Critiques to kindergarten children. Snorted Johnson, "I am bound to find you in reasons, Sir, but not in brains."

This law as to the forms of divine self-revelation is sun clear to Paul. Again and again he emphasizes it. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. He cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The gospel is hid to

them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not. There are those who receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved, and are therefore given over to strong delusions, so that they believe a lie, because they had pleasure in unrighteousness. The wise, the scribe, the disputer of this world, puffed out with their own pride of knowledge, cannot receive the revelation of God. For this reason the world by its wisdom knew not God. So upon Israel's heart was the veil. The retina of their spiritual eye was irresponsive to the light. When the Jew reads the Old Testament, he therefore cannot see that the glory of the old covenant was a transient glory, as was that upon Moses' face; that in its whole structure and nature it was a preparation for a higher; a type which was to find its fulfillment in the antitype. But when that heart shall turn unto the Lord the veil shall be taken away. So Paul prays that the Ephesians may have the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and that the eyes of their heart may be enlightened. Because the form of the divine self-revelation depends upon the people's capacity and responsiveness, it is and must be progressive. The patriarchal era was one stage, the law another, the Gospel another. The Gentiles had a lower form than any of these, in the external world, and in the law written in their hearts and speaking in their consciences. Even the Jew, under the law, was like an heir during his minority, subject to the control of guardians of his person and stewards of his property, in training for the higher revelation in the fullness of time. Whoever wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, its opening words precisely express Paul's view of progressive revelation: "God who in many parts and in many ways spake in time

past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us in his Son."

This leads us to note Paul's idea of the intensive perfection of God's self-revelation to man. Should such be given, in what form must it come? Through nature? Gazing upon her sublime magnitudes and stupendous forces, listening to her spherul harmonies, do we get the perfect revelation of God? Paul does declare that from the things that are made are clearly seen the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator. But even a Job saw that these are only parts of his ways; what a whisper of a word is heard of him! The thunder of his power who can understand? Not even a human personality—architect, poet, artist, inventor—can put into his work enough of himself to make the most thorough students of his productions intimately acquainted with his personal self. How little of Newton can one know from the "Principia," of Sir Christopher Wren from St. Paul's, of Morse from the electric telegraph! Moreover, how fragmentary at best is our knowledge of nature! As Carlyle says: "To the wisest man, wide as is his vision, nature remains of quite infinite depth, of quite infinite expansion, and all experience thereof limits itself to some few computed centuries and measured square miles . . . To the minnow every cranny and pebble and quality and accident of its little native creek may have become familiar; but does the minnow understand the ocean tides and periodic currents, the trade winds and monsoons and moon's eclipses; by all which the condition of its little creek is regulated. . . . Such a minnow is man; his creek this planet earth; his ocean the immeasurable All; his monsoons and periodic currents the mysterious course of providence through æons of æons." The fact is that personality can be fully revealed only through personality; character, only by a

life in ethical relations. Where is Samuel Johnson best revealed! In his "Rasselas," "Rambler," and "Lives of the Poets," or in Boswell? The man, his figure, his face, his rolling walk, his blinking eye, his thirst for tea, his superstitions, his disputations, his dogmatism, his domestic life, his rugged honesty, his sensitiveness of conscience, his tempestuous outburst, his acute intellect and ready eloquence, his fear of death and ultimate victory over it,—how vividly all stand out in the biography! Ah! if only God upon a plane level to our understanding could live amongst men in ethical relations, externalize for our vision his innermost nature; could a bit of the real biography of his eternal years be made manifest in time, what a revelation that would be! That is to say, the full, intensive, perfect revelation of God to man upon earth must come, if it come at all, through a divine incarnation.

Was the Greek feeling after this when he brought his bright Olympians from their lofty homes to the lower earth in the likeness of men? Did the Hindu feel after it when he imagined his incarnations of Vishnu; and the Egyptian when he invented his story of Osiris, the incarnate God, coming to earth for the benefit of men? At any rate Paul declares that God has revealed himself in precisely that manner. He knew One who, though born of a woman, born under the law, was yet the Being through whom the worlds were made. He had beheld the once persecuted Nazarene in more than earthly splendor, and had come to recognize that he whom the Jews had crucified was the Lord of Glory, God's only beloved Son, the very image of God, in whose face is seen the glory of God; made of the seed of David according to the flesh, but designated to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead; God manifest in the flesh.

He wrought even under the old Covenant for he was the divine Being who accompanied Israel in the desert. By him are all things and we by him. Before he came into the world he was in the form of God, yea on an equality with God. In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers, all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things and by him all things consist. According to what we deem to be the best exegesis of Romans ix. 5, he is styled God over all, blessed for ever; and in Titus ii. 13 the great God and Saviour of us, Christ Jesus. Would not Paul, the strict monotheist, have been the first to condemn with horror such expressions had not Christ for him possessed a nature and dignity infinitely above all creaturehood?

This self-revelation of God through incarnation, like all self-revelation of him, must be self-limitation. That must certainly be true of any manifestation of God whatever through created things. Let omnipotence, for example, be fully manifest in a finite world, and would it not be like putting the mighty engines of the ocean liner to drive a row-boat? The moment God creates anything, that moment he voluntarily limits himself. So is the divine incarnation in Christ Jesus a self-limitation of God. Though rich, he became poor, he emptied himself, he took the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. This supreme unveiling of God was also perforce a veiling of him.

We come now to the anthropological part, the philosophy of the subject of religion. The psychology of religion, which blinks none of the facts, discerns in the human soul a two-fold consciousness; namely, that of dependence and obligation

whose normal exercise is reverent self-surrender, and that of personal agency, which prompts to self-assertion. These impulses often conflict. Conscience steps in to pronounce moral judgment upon the difference of ethical quality between them. Thus the conflict is deepened and intensified. Which impulse should prevail? Further, the self-asserting ego finds that it is antagonized and often thwarted by external facts and forces. It perceives that it can realize its own will, achieve its coveted satisfaction, only by the aid of a power greater than its own. Is a reconciliation of these fundamental impulses possible? If so, how? Should the self-asserting will so identify itself in reverent self-surrender with the superior objective Power as at once to satisfy the consciousness of dependence and obligation, and by that very process of self-surrender to realize its highest will and achieve its highest satisfaction, would there not then, and only then, be real, deepest, abiding harmony? But man is constantly trying to find some other way. Conscience therefore pronounces him guilty of moral imperfection and overt disobedience to duty, the essence of which is sinful self-will. It is one of the most conspicuous flaws in the average philosophy of religion today that it has not ethical earnestness enough to look honestly in the face this tremendous fact of sin. But Paul was too passionately moral, his vision too clear, to overlook so evident and awful a fact. Too well he knew it through his own experience. His portrayal of the "Battle of the I's" in Romans vii., a photograph no doubt of his own inner conflicts before his conversion, is perhaps the most vivid portraiture on record of the consciousness of unfulfilled obligation and discord in the soul of man. He saw the same thing in history. His knowledge of the world, combined with his own experience, qualified him to see and describe, as no other

apostle has done, this direful fact of moral evil. The heathen world, having some knowledge of God, has yet an understanding darkened, and this is the result of estrangement of the heart from God. The Gentiles did not render unto him the praise and glory which were his due, they did not even like to retain him in their knowledge, yea, they held down the truth in unrighteousness. They reached the climax of their folly in the most terrible passions and disgusting vices, for sin is chastised by further sin. The immorality, therefore, the natural fruit of ungodliness, is a revelation of the righteous judgment of God. So frightful is man's condition that he not only does the most appalling things, but even takes pleasure in those that do them. What of the Jewish world? Surely the children of Abraham stand upon a higher moral and spiritual plane. No, in spite of his inestimable advantages, the Jew has become similarly guilty, though the perverseness shows itself not so much in sensuality as in pride, self-conceit, harshness, obdurate impenitence, which even despises the riches of God's forbearance and long-suffering. He has sinned, indeed, not only against the law written in his heart, but against positive revelation and supreme privilege. The absolute universality of sin and guilt is for Paul a fact proved by Scripture, by history, and by consciousness.

Overt sins spring from a corrupt inner condition. But whence came that bias to evil? Though he does not directly say so, Paul does probably regard Satan as the instigator of the primal sin of man. But he is concerned not so much with the metaphysical origin of moral evil as with its historical introduction into our world. He contemplates our race as a unity, and declares that sin entered by one man, the progenitor of humanity. From his antithesis of Adam and Christ it is plain that he believed that the first man passed on

to his posterity an actual corruption of nature, a poisoning of the moral and spiritual lifeblood of the race. He believes in the unity of mankind and the solidarity of its constituent members. The human race is not a mere series of detached individuals, as grains in a sand heap, but a great organism. "Science has followed with leaden feet and unquiet eye in the track of faith, but through biology, and language, and history, has discovered the unities which religion has found through its belief in God."

Sin is a tyrant master. He uses the members of the body as so many weapons with which to wage a shameful warfare with God and the good. Under its enslaving power the soul becomes at length utterly sold unto evil; understanding and conscience are defiled; and the man surrenders himself utterly to the service of unrighteousness to work all uncleanness with greediness. But the first man was not created with this evil bias. Paul does speak of him as "earthy" (*χοϊκός*), but this is not the same as "evil."

Sad as is this condition, however, it would be more terrible were men entirely sunk under sin. When Esther Prynne asked Arthur Dimmesdale, in the "Scarlet Letter," whether he had found peace, he exclaimed, "None! nothing but despair. What else could I look for, being what I am and leading such a life as mine? Were I an atheist,—a man devoid of conscience,—a wretch with coarse and brutal instincts,—I might have found peace long ere now. Nay, I should never have lost it. But as matters stand with my soul, whatever of good capacity there originally was in me, all of God's gifts that were the choicest, have become the ministers of spiritual torment." So would Paul say that, because man's original moral and spiritual nature has been only injured, not annihilated, because,—

"Underneath its clouds of sin,
 The heart of man retaineth yet
 Gleams of its holy origin;
 And half quenched stars that never set,
 Dim colors of its faded bow,
 And early beauty linger there,
 And o'er its wasted desert blow
 Faint breathings of its morning air,"—

there arises a discord which kills all peace. The inner battle between the higher and lower ego makes the man an enigma to himself and makes him cry out for some redeeming power to give him strength to break his chains.

To the eye of the apostle even the physical universe reflects this discord in the heart of man. Nature, as it were, cries out to humanity to attain a better state. The whole creation waits with eager longing for the normal self-revelation of man as the spectators strain forward over the ropes to catch the first glimpse of some triumphal procession. Ages ago creation was condemned to have its energies measurably frustrated, not by any act of its own, but by God, who fixed this doom upon it with the purpose that, as it had been enthralled to death and decay by man's fall, it might share in the free and glorious existence of God's emancipated children. That emancipation will come. These throes of the universal frame are birth pangs. That is to say, in spite of man's sinfulness, there is a divine spirit immanent in both nature and humanity, a spirit which from the beginning has travailed for the complete revelation of the sons of God, i.e., for the perfect realization of the divine sonship, which is the proper destiny of man.

In what would consist this ideal realization of the divine sonship of humanity? Certainly such a man would be dominated, like God, by the motive of pure, unselfish love; be marked by utter surrender to the highest will; by gaining

through its self-surrender a progressive emancipation from all enslaving self-limitation; by a growing assimilation to God as new revelations of God are evoked unto him as he becomes fit to receive them. Such a development could evidently reach its highest intensive perfection only in such an interpenetration of the divine and human that the man should become a perfect mirror of God, fully animated by his life, a being, as it were, both human and divine. Paul says that such an one has actually once, and only once, appeared in this world. Jesus Christ was that One. He was both human and divine, the holiest, highest manhood he. The biographical matter which Paul gives of Jesus is meager enough. Except the one transcendent miracle of the resurrection, signs and wonders are conspicuously absent from Paul's words about him. Even the supernatural birth is not mentioned. The whole life of Jesus on earth, as given by Paul, is more remarkable for its humiliation and feebleness than for any majesty or manifest divinity. He is born of a woman, born under the law, of the seed of David. He lives in the form of a servant and is unknown to the princes of this world. He is poor, hated, persecuted, betrayed, crucified. But though thus in the likeness of sinful flesh, he knew no sin. Through his earthly career he condemned sin in the flesh and creates life. His mind, feelings, actions, are the normal example for humanity. He is the typical Son of God. Because of his humiliation and obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, God hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name. In Rom. i. 4 it is said that he was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Paul certainly does not mean here that by the resurrection Jesus became the Son of God, nor simply that by it he was

proclaimed to be such, nor even that he was proved in that way to be such, but rather that he was installed as such. The resurrection did make a difference with Jesus, not to be sure in the transcendental relations of Father and Son, but in the life of the Son incarnate. Jesus required to pass from his state as son of David to that of Son of God, and it was the resurrection which introduced him to this new state. At his resurrection the divine Son, in the humanity he had taken, was reestablished as God-man in the state of Sonship which the Logos had with the Father before the world was. Thus through Christ humanity was exalted to Deity.

This leads us to consider Paul's philosophy of the interrelations between God and man in religion. Since both God and man are intellect, sensibility, and will, it is evident that the ideally perfect interrelations between the two would be perfect intellectual communion, perfect intercommunion of feeling in absolutely perfect holy love, and absolutely perfect identification of will, all brought about by man's utter self-surrender to God and participation in the divine life. Has such a perfect relation ever existed? From what we have seen, it is evident that Paul would say, "Certainly in Jesus Christ." Since the self-revelation of God culminated in his incarnation in Jesus Christ, and since the ideal self-realization of man culminated in the divine humanity of Jesus, the vital unity of God and man was perfect in him. In life and in death Christ fully realizes and expresses the true law of man's spiritual life that only by self-renunciation can man arise to his true life.

But what were the interrelations of God and man as given in Paul's own experience? If Paul's philosophy of religion so far is correct, the actual experience of the particular human soul must be normal and blessed in exact proportion as

it approximates the divine ideal revealed in Jesus Christ. Paul was himself vividly conscious of the mutual relations between his soul and God. He knew that they had undergone a complete revolution. The inward battle had given place to deep harmony and blessed fellowship. The despairing exclamation, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver?" had been followed by the victorious note of emancipation, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The spirit of bondage and fear has vanished, and in its place is that of blessed fellowship, and sonship. Surrendering himself fully to God in Jesus Christ, with all his might determined to be an organic, yet most personal, part of God's self-revelation in humanity, he finds his personal ideals, aspirations, affections, volitions, coming into complete conformity with that ideal made manifest in Jesus. In fact, he has become a conscious partaker of the very life of Christ himself. The Son of God had been revealed in him. That revelation had taken his heart completely captive. He had become another man. The world was crucified unto him and he unto the world. He is in Christ and Christ in him. "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Thus the deepest source of Paul's philosophy of religion was the revelation of Christ to his heart. All his victories are through Christ. Gazing in faith and love upon him, he is transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord. The love of Christ constrains him. Through him he is more than conqueror. He bears in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life, also, of Jesus may be made manifest in his mortal flesh. All spiritual blessings in heavenly places he secures in Christ. He

can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth him. Christians generally may have all their needs supplied according to the riches of God in glory by Jesus Christ. They are complete in him. The spiritual unity of Christians with Christ through faith makes them dead unto sin. Henceforth they cannot serve it. They live not unto themselves, but unto him. Romans viii. is perhaps the noblest expression ever given of the truth that man's highest normal life must result from the utter surrender of himself to a divine power, namely, that manifest in Jesus Christ, the very revelation of God, and man, apart from which he is nothing but as the organ of which he is reconciled with himself, with God, with all that is without, so that all good is added unto him. His soul is filled with the love of God; he has clear knowledge of the blessing of salvation in the form of thought; and the will rises from the servitude of law to the freedom of grace, so that the will of God becomes the very will of the man himself, and in obedience to this will he finds highest freedom. The spirit of liberty in Christ is also a new law which binds together the members of the divine household with holy bonds of love. Schiller gives a faint echo of Paul's high sentiment in the beautiful lines:—

“But fly the boundary of the senses; live
 The ideal life free thought can give;
 And, lo, the gulf shall vanish, and the chill
 Of the soul's impotent despair be gone!
 And with divinity thou sharest the throne,
 Let but Divinity become thy will!
 Scorn not the Law — permit its iron band to thrall
 The sense, it cannot chain the soul.
 Let man no more the will of God withstand,
 And God the bolt lets fall.”

Now as Paul was thus filled with the spirit of Christ, he was conscious also of a vital, personal, relation with other

members of that spiritual kingdom which, together with their head, constitute, vitally and organically, a new humanity. He speaks of the Christian organism as a temple of living stones, as a family, but his favorite picture is that of a body of which Christ is the head and vitalizing power. The new humanity in Christ is a social organism; the true life of the individual is social, yea racial. Pfeleiderer defines the expression "body of Christ" as expressing exactly the very thought which we are wont to connect with the term "Kingdom of God," namely, "a moral organism of human fellowship in a community in so far as it is animated and ruled by the religious ideal of man as the son of God." It is more than that. It is an organism actually formed, maintained, vitalized, not by an ideal merely, but by the very life of Christ himself, the home of his spirit, the agency by which he accomplishes his will, and shows himself unto men. Now, as Principal A. M. Fairbairn says, this was an idea without any parallel in the history of human belief. "So it has the most manifest right to be called a new idea. No one in any prior philosophy or scheme of thought had been conceived as so affecting the notion and life of humanity, so determining its constitution, so defining its character, so giving value to each separate unit, unity to its whole being, community to its interests and continuity to its history, in other words, as creating by His very being order and coherence in the chaotic and heterogeneous mass of conscious but unconnected atoms which we call mankind."

Omitting all discussion of Paul's view of the relation of Christ's death to this achievement and function of his, since it would take us too far afield, we ask, "What did Paul think of the religions of history?" First, his view of paganism. At Athens as he had walked amongst the marble forms of

great men and deified heroes, amongst temples and statues and altars of the gods, his spirit was stirred within him. He was there as the herald of a new faith. Some had derisively dubbed him babbler or "seedpicker." Others, more curious or more courteous, wished to hear more of his words and in a more formal way. What will he say, then, of the faith they hold? Will he utterly despise and denounce it, give it high commendation, mingle denunciation with praise, or completely ignore it? The last he certainly cannot do. If he has anything better to offer them he must be able to show it. That can be done only by comparison. We listen. Certainly his voice sounds at first like a sympathetic one. He does not at once begin harshly to chide them for the willful errors and vicious practices prevalent in their religion. His spirit was indeed stirred within him; yea, it was no doubt saddened, sickened, by some things which he had seen and heard. But he intimates to them that they were not idolatrous heathen solely through their own fault. There was at least some ignorance in it, for which God made allowances. What if their religion had been one black tissue of error, folly, and sin, without a single golden thread to relieve its somber shade, had they in sheer wickedness woven it all? Was it not a fabric which they had received almost wholly ready-made from their ancestors? In so many words Paul recognizes that they are in Athens by the providence of God. He it is who, though having made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth, hath determined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitation. They were no more to be blamed for opening their eyes in Athens than he was to be praised for being born in Tarsus. For the chronology and geography of their birth they were not responsible.

Further, Paul's heart was sympathetic with their deep religiousness. He began his great discourse by asserting that they were very god-fearing. Their zeal for religion was real zeal in a great cause. In its underlying intent, to effect a harmonious union with the divine, fellowship with the mysterious Power upon whom all things depend, it was good. Paul would have granted, we are sure, that the Athenians, with their numerous deities which were no gods, might be gay, pleasure-loving children of the world, sinful enough, but without their religious faith, they would have been immeasurably worse. He would have allowed, as one has said who in our time has spent many years in trying to win the heathen to a better faith, "Dim and cold as yellow, changeful moons; as twinkling, distant, cloud-obscured stars; as momentary, falling meteors, in the dark, dread night of humanity: yet from the darkness, the gloom, the terror, the despair of no religion, which is the death of the soul, are they farther removed than they are from the crimson and gold of the dawn-ing sky and the splendor of the noonday sun which we behold in Jesus Christ."

Paul also gives frank and hearty recognition to whatever positive truth is contained in the Athenian faith. An inscription from one of their own altars furnishes him the text of his discourse; he reasons from their admitted premises; quotes their own poets; and step by step leads to some conclusions which the keener, more candid philosophers amongst them might see to be logical deductions from their own recognized principles. More than this, he connects the Christian thought of God with their abounding polytheism by a link which they had in common, namely, the truth of the divine immanence. As though he would say to these worshippers of gods many, "You are right, the world is filled

with a divine presence." He goes even further. He asserts a principle a glimpse of whose meaning the foremost thinkers of Christendom are beginning to see. Not only has God made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth, but he has also fixed the bounds of their habitation. For what purpose? That they should seek God if haply they might feel after him and find him. That is, God has himself so assigned and arranged the several nationalities by lineage, language, manners, customs, by mountains, rivers, seas, deserts, so broken up the race into groups, that humanity should be in circumstances to seek and find its Maker, and that all separate and independent inquiries amongst the nations might tend in the long run to the one result of finding him. On a smaller scale we have an illustration of this in the family.

What conceivable arrangement could be more conducive to the ends of religion and virtue than the division of mankind into families? On a smaller scale may there not have been some similar advantage from the separation of men into tribes, nations, races? Paul does not carry out the hint he gives us, but one need not travel far to see that the different types of mankind have naturally developed different aspects of religion, and that in turn religion has been one of the most potent factors in developing the type of race. And what is it that distinguishes one type of man from another, one type of religion from another? What but the emphasis of some property of human nature or of some truth or truths, on the one hand, and, on the other, the complete or partial suppression of some other quality or truth? Thus every great faith has some underlying principles which stamp upon it its peculiar character. It is the elements of truth in them which give them their power. So, had Paul completely unfolded

his thought, he might have said to the Athenians: "Men of Athens, you are right in believing that God is manifest in man; that God and man are akin in nature, for we are his offspring; that the divine nature is essentially beautiful; that in developing yourselves to the uttermost you will please him; right in your sacred mysteries which would lead you to inspiring views of salvation and immortality." In similar vein he told the barbarians of Lystra that God had never left himself without witness, and in the Epistle to the Romans he asserts, as we have seen, that the Gentiles did know God, that their knowledge was a divine gift, that in nature they have a revelation of his eternal power and Godhead, that they have his law written in their heart.

But though doing full justice to the æsthetic worth of heathenism, though acknowledging its religious aspirations and the modicum of truth it really held, Paul did not fall into the snare which entraps so many students of religions. To-day, in some quarters, panegyric upon heathenism has become the fashion. The Vedas and the Avesta are spoken of as though they were spiritual authorities quite equal to Paul, or John, if not, indeed, to Christ. Some seem almost ready to do in modern times what Celsus offered to do, and what Alexander Severus actually did, namely, put Christ in a world pantheon side by side with other of the world's sages and men of religious genius. But such shallow compromises and foolish eclecticism Paul would have repelled with noble scorn. He took care not to leave upon the Athenians the impression that their religion would do about as well for them as his for him. For many of its features he could have nothing but disgust. It ministered to amusement and art, to be sure, but where was its moral power? Where its power to purge away guilt, to give victory over the baser self, to bring the worshiper

into true, blessed fellowship with God? Every word of his discourse was adapted not less to rebuke than to win. How plainly he showed them the insufficiency of temples, however splendid; the needlessness of sacrifices and altars; the folly of representing the invisible, spiritual God by images of man's device, however exquisitely wrought; and led them up to the presence of the Judge to give an account for their reception of the truth which they were hearing on that very day! Why had he traveled thither? What was the whole end and aim of his discourse? To excite or gratify their intellectual curiosity? To flatter them with smooth words about the truth and beauty of their religion? To make upon them a good impression as a broad-minded religious teacher or liberal philosopher? Or to startle, search, pierce the conscience? To lead them to throw away their idols and serve the living God; to break down the whole brilliant, polytheistic system and substitute for it the Gospel of Christ? We must remember, moreover, that this discourse is only a fragment, the exordium only, the magnificent porch to the great cathedral he would have built. What he might have said, had he been allowed to finish, we may guess from what he has elsewhere written. He had reached the point of repentance, judgment, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But who was he? Was not Paul getting ready to tell them of him, to preach to them the great redemptive plan by the incarnation and sacrificial death of the Son of God and salvation through faith in him?

The Epistle to the Romans carries us a step further, but is in entire agreement with this Athenian discourse. The heathen, though knowing God, did not render to him the glory which was his due, did not even like to retain him in their knowledge. This declension of heart became manifest in

self-justifying neglect. Heathenism had become deification of nature, the abuse of the creature for the purposes of idolatry, a theoretical and practical denial of the true God, godlessness in the garb of religion. Not only was it partial, fragmentary, but perverse, poisoned through and through with sin. The corruptions and foul incrustations were so closely bound up with the truths in the religion as to rob it of moral power and of ability to feed the starving souls of men. It must die. The fullness of time had come. The Gospel of Christ must take its place.

But what about the religion of Israel? This high, monotheistic faith was certainly to Paul the fruit of divine revelation, of a persistent, divine purpose manifest in history to establish, maintain, deepen, perfect, the personal fellowship between God and man. Its God was the true and only God. He had allowed the Gentiles, in a sense, to walk in their own ways. He had not conferred upon them any extraordinary revelation such as he had given to Israel. Unto Israel were committed the divine oracles. To her belonged the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. Hers were the fathers, and of her as concerning the flesh Christ came. Israel was the lump consecrated to God as the first cake taken from it for the heave offering was consecrated; the true olive tree whose branches were holy as the root was holy. Nevertheless the Jew, as we have seen, was guilty before God.

Paul has a complete and magnificent philosophy of history as it bears upon religion. History is not to him a chaos. It is the outworking of a divine plan. "The sense for the teleology of history had always been Israel's charisma; the visions of its seers were the first although childlike, stammering philosophy of history." But Paul did not, like the later Jews

with their apocalypses, deal with the changing external fates of the people seen in the light of the Messianic victory over all nations of the world. No, to him the core and inmost meaning of history had to do with the transformation of the religious thought, feeling, life of man. He knew that the Gospel had not come into the world without proper preparation. In truth the New is contained in germ in the Old; is witnessed to by the law which is replaced by it, and by the prophets of whom it is the glorious fulfillment. His philosophical eye penetrates into the pre-Christian period, and sees in it one long age of preparation brought to completion only in the coming of Christ, who came in the fullness of time. He is the end of the law, the goal toward which the old economy tended as the fruit is the end of the bud and the leaf. Under the old covenant even Israel resembled the youth who has not yet come to full age and is therefore under tutors and governors. The Gospel is nothing else but the carrying out in time of that which God had determined within himself from all eternity. Romans ix.-xi. gives us a brief but real and comprehensive philosophy of history from the viewpoint of religious development. The short concluding doxology of the Epistle sums up the thought which underlies the whole argument. There Paul speaks of the mystery which has been kept secret since the beginning of the world but is now revealed, the counsel of the far-seeing God, the Ruler of the ages, in whose periods the mystery kept secret from the ancient times is laid open in the Gospel for the knowledge and faith of all nations. Similarly does he speak in Eph. i. 4-11.

In the history of humanity, excluding the period before the Fall, there are three stages, represented typically by Adam, Moses, and Christ. Of these, the first represents not so

much the state of innocence as of moral immaturity. Until the law, i.e., from Adam to Moses, sin was in the world but not imputed. Why? Because there was no law. This period corresponds to the simple objective life of childhood, and may be represented to us by heathen peoples, that have no objective revelation or specific positive law. They fail to attain the ideal, and so far forth do not please God. But their guilt is comparatively slight. God winked at their ignorance for the time being. They will be judged by the law written in their hearts, and not by any positive standard of which they know nothing. They are not deeply conscious of guilt. What next? The revelation of the law, in the case of the Jewish people the Mosaic law. In itself this is holy, just, and good. In the first place, it has convicted man of sin; shown him the inadequacy of his life and conduct; taught him the clear distinction between right and wrong; and led him to feel a desire for a higher life. It has therefore been a schoolmaster unto Christ. The law also taught men their weakness, and the power of sin over them. It even arouses the desire for the forbidden evil by evoking a reaction against its imperative demands. Thus the law in manifold ways prepares the way for the higher, fuller, revelation in the gospel of grace in Christ Jesus.

These three stages are most clearly and typically represented for us in the history of Israel. Even here, however, there is an element of inexactness in them. There was a knowledge of right and wrong before Moses, there was an increase of knowledge after him. Yet in a general way the stages are correct. Nor are they confined to the Jewish race. They run through all history. There is a stage of comparative moral ignorance, there is progress upward, and the great principle which has accompanied and made possible that progress has

been clearer vision of ethical law. The idea of law in Paul is certainly not exhausted in the Jewish law, though that is the clearest, highest example of it. All people have been under law in some form. It is a great, beneficent power, though one which may become a burden.

The second point in Paul's philosophy of religious history is that God, in carrying out his historical purpose, works by selection. Accepting the human conditions and the laws of human nature which he has created, he cannot redeem man at a stroke, pour salvation into him as through a funnel, but must use the powers and laws of human nature and the historical conditions which have resulted. Therefore he selected Israel to be his chosen people, to be the depository of the divine truth of revelation, that through them when the fullness of time had come the world might receive the saving truth of the gospel. As we look backward from the vantage ground of nineteen Christian centuries, does not Paul's view stand forth as clearly true? Whence but from the Jews, and from them alone, has come into the world the ethical monotheism which is more and more filling the earth? And since Paul speaks of the fullness of time, is it an unwarrantable stretch of the same thought to believe that he would have said that the purpose of God had shown itself also in selecting other nations for their mission, for excellence in art, poetry, science, commerce, invention, state-craft; that the conquests of Alexander served the purposes of the kingdom of Christ; and that the Roman Empire, under divine Providence, created a sphere in which the gospel message might successfully work? Guided by Paul's example, may we not see how, again and again, events which to contemporaries seemed disasters have really wrought for the Kingdom of Christ? Shall we not everywhere look for traces of that wis-

dom and mercy which, in some cases where we can follow its track, has been so deeply and signally vindicated?

The goal of this process of advance through racial and national selection is the completion of the Messianic Kingdom, and thus the self-revelation of the holy, loving God. In describing the former, Paul employs the phrases of the apocalyptic literature of his people and times; but he interpreted them, at any rate in some measure, in a spiritual way. The Jews will at last come into the Kingdom. Meanwhile the rejection of all but the remnant fulfills the divine plan, and will ultimately exhibit God's holy love and unsearchable wisdom. In that rejection God was neither untrue unto his promises nor unjust. Israel is herself to blame; for she had refused to accept the message, though she had full warning of the consequences. But the rejection is only partial and temporary. After the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, the olive branches shall be reunited to the holy stock and Israel shall be saved. But even the temporary rejection of the chosen people will help fulfill the divine purpose by making way for the fullness of the Gentiles to come in. This is the mystery which has now been revealed, and it shows the greatness of the divine wisdom which is guiding all things to their consummation, though in ways that we can but partially follow. Was not Paul right? Is it not true that the rejection of Israel did facilitate the conversion of the Gentiles? Had the Jewish nation as a whole, with its tenacious grip upon the forms and burdensome legalisms of the day, accepted Christ and come bodily into the Christian church, would the Gentiles have been so easily won? Paul's troubles with the Judaizing Christians who dogged his footsteps and pestered his life hint to us what might have been the consequence. Evidently it was one of the greatest blessings that ever came to

the Christian church that the Jewish nation of the day did not as a body at once swarm into it and overwhelm it with its irksome legalism and traditions of the elders.

How differently had events turned out from what Paul had at first himself expected! There was a day, no doubt still vividly before his mind, when in the Pisidian Antioch, filled with a bitter sense of defeat, he had uttered the memorable words, "We turn to the Gentiles." At that moment it might well have seemed that his work was not being accomplished. But now he can see that the divine purpose was fulfilled in the creation of the great Gentile churches; that the fall of the Jews was the riches of the world and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; that blindness is in part happened unto Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in. Then, if that rejection of God's chosen people has been so overruled by the divine wisdom and mercy that it has become a blessing to the world, what a much greater blessing will it be when the Jews shall themselves turn to Christ, as they will! That will be as life from the dead. Do we not ourselves see how the Jews to-day are playing an important part in relation to Christianity? As sojourners amongst men; the ever-present witness to a remote past, connected through the Gospel with the present day; by their agelong traditions; by the Old Testament which they preserve by an independent line of evidence; by the hopes and aspirations which fill their souls and make them unique amongst all peoples; are they not a living, clear-voiced testimony to the truth which they reject? How will the world be thrilled as with new life when they shall turn in crowds to Christ!

Thus, looking into the future, Paul believes that he sees, in ways that we cannot always trace, God working out his eternal purpose, the reconciliation of the world to himself in Christ

and the full revelation thereby of the divine character of holy love and perfect wisdom. He discerns that within the limited circle of our knowledge things have often unexpectedly and wondrously wrought so as to indicate this divine purpose. Has not this been the experience of the church time and again since Paul's day? Paul's faith in a God of infinite power and wisdom and self-sacrificing, holy love, based on the revelation of himself in the incarnation, life, and death of Jesus Christ, made him sure that, could we see the end, we should adore the unsearchable riches of the divine wisdom guided in its activities by infinite love.

Thus Paul makes the key to universal history to be a once established, then by sin forfeited, then slowly, through historical revelations culminating in Jesus Christ, reestablished personal fellowship between God and man. This broad view he obtained, apart from all question of special inspiration, from three factors: (1) the Old Testament; (2) his own knowledge of the world; (3) his own spiritual experience of the revelation of the personal Christ to him and within him. It is safe to say that though Paul was not consciously working out a philosophy of religion and of religious history, every such philosophy that will command the ultimate assent of thoughtful, earnestly ethical men must be constructed along the lines which he has laid down, and incorporate the great ideas that lived in his mighty brain and glowed in his throbbing heart.