Romans IX.–XI.

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THIS section of the Epistle to the Romans contains a discussion of the question Why God rejected the Jews, and how this consists with His original choice of them to be His people? Does not this imply a failure of His word, and so a change in the immutable God? Paul sees that it does, if the choice was, as the Jews supposed, a selection of them as a nation, irrespective of other considerations. And, therefore, his first argument is intended to show that the divine choice was not based on considerations of heredity simply. The original promise was to Abraham and to his seed, and yet not to his seed as such, but to a part of it only, making a choice among his children, on some other basis than mere descent, necessary. In contrast with this, he shows that it was not the mere child of Abraham's body, but a child of promise, a child coming to him as the direct and supernatural result of a divine promise, in whose line the chosen people are to be found. Then, even in the children of this child of promise, there is a further discrimination made, — one being taken and the other left. And here Paul takes up another theory of the ground of choice, and shows that it does not apply to this case, and is, therefore, untenable. It had been supposed that the Jews were chosen on account of their good works. But in this case, certainly, in which the promise precedes the birth of the children, it did not originate in their works, but in the God who called them to their several positions. And yet it was not an arbitrary choice, for, as Paul shows by a quotation of Malachi i. 2, 3, it was based on God's love of the one, and His hatred of the other. And love and hatred are not arbitrary or voluntary feelings, but the necessary results of qualities in the object; that is, the love of being as such is indiscriminative, and has its root in the person loving only; but the love that implies choice and corresponding hatred is based on the qualities of the person loved.

But in thus carrying the matter back to God, and not resting it on the desert of the person chosen, is there not involved an imputation on the divine righteousness? Is not God under obligation to give to

every man his deserts? The reply to this is the familiar and fundamental Pauline axiom, that this whole matter is not one of retributive justice, but of mercy; and that mercy is self-moved, or, in any case, is not determined by desert. It is not the will or endeavor of the man that produces it, but the very nature of the merciful God. The example that Paul adduces of this principle is not, as we should expect, from the number of the chosen, but from the enemies of God whom He rejects. "For this reason," God said to Pharaoh, "did I provoke thee, that I may show in thee my power, and that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." Therefore, since God has purposes to be accomplished by the pity shown to one, and by the hardening accomplished in another, both are to be traced originally to God's active volition. Now, this is a very important item in the final determination of the apostle's meaning. For this hardening is what makes operative and manifest the divine rejection, and its exact opposite would be not the mercy itself, but that softening which manifests the divine mercy and choice. And if the one is to be traced to an action of God beyond what appears, and which is compulsory and creative in its nature, as is claimed for the gracious action, then the conjunction of the two in this discussion, so that either can be used as an illustration of the principle of God's spiritual action upon men, would seem to demand that the act of hardening be also the simple result of God's action, and not the complex result of that action, together with the yielding or resistance of the man; that is to say, inasmuch as Paul uses an instance of God's hardening action as an illustration of His gracious action, it follows that there must be an identity of principle in the two; and that if the one is purely a divine act without human co-operation, then the other must be the same. In fact, this case of the hardening of Pharaoh is very helpful in determining the scriptural answer to the question whether God's spiritual action in changing and directing the moral attitude of men is absolute and creative, or only influential, depending for its result on the response of men. At the beginning, Ex. iv. 21, God announces His purpose to harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then, there follows a series of signs wrought by Aaron and Moses, but paralleled by the magicians with their enchantments, in which the hardening that results is natural, and easily accounted for. But after the second plague, Pharaoh relents, and the plague is removed. Then, we are told that when he saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, as Jehovah had said. Here, the hardening results from the withdrawal of the punishment that had

produced his relenting — again a perfectly natural result — and said, expressly in this case, to be Pharaoh's own act. God's part in the matter is simply His providential and miraculous action, intended and adapted to influence the king, and dependent for its result on the response of Pharaoh to it. After the third plague, which the magicians could not produce, and in which they told Pharaoh that he must recognize the hand of God, he was still hardened, — this time, evidently, as a result of that law of spiritual action by which sin tends to repetition and reproduction. Having hardened himself before, it is easier now to do the same. And so on, through a series of judgments and mercies on the part of God, and of alternate repentings and hardenings in Pharaoh, ending in the final sin of the king after he had let the people go. God even warns Pharaoh in the passage from which Paul quotes, Ex. ix. 14 sq., of the result that these judgments and deliverances will have on him. Now, in order to suppose that God works secretly and supernaturally to harden Pharaoh's heart, we have to introduce the supernatural to account for a perfectly natural result; and we have to suppose that God works outwardly to accomplish one thing, and inwardly, another directly opposite to it. For these divine warnings, judgments, and mercies are intended to lead Pharaoh to release God's people, and any direct hardening would be, therefore, self-contradictory in God. And yet, whatever means God uses to accomplish this class of spiritual results in man are pointed out by Paul as employed by Him also in His gracious, spiritual action. For the very thing that he illustrates by this example is the relation of God to human character and destiny; and if that relation is not the same in both cases, then the illustration is irrelevant. But is there no direct action of God in producing this result? The language employed is partly explained by this fact of God's influence upon men by means of motives; and yet, if there is any more immediate operation not excluded by other considerations, the strong language used seems to demand it. A supernatural change does seem to be excluded; but we have already seen that there is a hardening, dulling, or blinding effect produced on the spiritual nature by sin. And this, like every other natural effect, is the operation of a divine law, or more strictly the work of God under law. If I disobey any law of my being, the consequences that I suffer are from God; and this is true of the spiritual deterioration resulting from sin, as of any other self-inflicted injury; only this is not an arbitrary or supernatural effect; it is strictly under law, and, in a certain sense, conditioned by my action.

And yet again, the statements of the apostle so far have been such

as to exclude the supposition that the originating cause of the divine mercy can be in the man himself. Mercy is undeserved and free; it originates not in the will or endeavor of man, but in the merciful nature of God. God's choice of men, in the apostle's thought, is not of those who have of themselves sought Him out, but of those whom He has sought and drawn by His love to Himself. The first step in the approach of God and man to each other is taken by God. There is a mercy of God that precedes and produces the repentance of man, which is merely the response of man to the merciful God.

These three things, the precedent action of God, the response of man, and the final impress of God on human character, as the resultant of these two, fill out the apostle's thought so far. No one of them can be omitted without doing violence to some part of that thought.

But it is the part of God in this that has been made most prominent, more prominent than it is eventually. The human element has been implied, or hinted at, rather than expressed. And so the apostle meets the objection right here, that this seems to throw the responsibility of human character on God. If God pities whom He will, and hardens whom He pleases, why, He cannot find fault with them; for they are what He makes them; no one has resisted His hidden, inscrutable, irresistible will. His first answer to this is the presumptuousness of the question. Man is clay in the hands of the potter, and the potter has the right to make different vessels, some for honor and some for dishonor, out of the clay. And so God has the right to make out of our common humanity different men for different uses and destinies. But is this a right of mere power and sovereignty? Let us listen closely to the language, and see if it yields us the unwelcome idea that *might makes right*. Suppose that we leave it in this way, retaining all the power that there is in the apostle's statement. *Has not man, any man, the right to fashion clay as he pleases?* This is immensely different from Paul's statement, and yet there is the same power in it. But what gives the potter his right is his skill to fashion the clay. We have to introduce into Paul's question the attributes of God, the divine holiness, justice, and love, by which He, if any, can mould and fashion human spirit to the best advantage, and not simply His sovereign right to do as He pleases, to make Him the potter of this human clay. And then we have to remember what Paul means here by God's forming of us. It is not our creation, but the shaping of our character that is intended, that long spiritual process by which nature becomes character, by which tendencies are moulded into traits, and fluctuating

impulses become steady principles. What we have to remember is what Paul at least never forgets, that this is not clay, but a very different stuff, with which God deals, and that this is the last place into which to introduce arbitrary and absolute action. The apostle's argument is not simply that God has absolute and unquestionable power, since all things are at His disposal, to use His pleasure about them, but that His wisdom and holiness and love are such as to make questioning of Him presumptuous. The spiritual qualities that make Him the skilful and wise fashioner of our spiritual beings are put by Paul into his application of the right of the potter to mould the clay. And this is only to say that God is self-limited: He cannot act contrary to His own attributes.

But in the second part of his answer, Paul reaches really the climax of his thought. The question is, why, since God Himself fashions men and accomplishes in them His own purposes, does He blame men if they turn out badly? The answer is a consideration of the means by which God produces His effects. Supposing, Paul says, that God, wishing to exhibit His wrath and to make known His power, bore in much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, what then? The answer is simply that God employs such means in hardening men's hearts as leave the responsibility entirely with them. If they are rendered hard and unrepentant by God's patience and long-suffering, that is their own fault. For God's action is such as to produce repentance and love, if it is not thwarted by man. And the apostle sees that if God wishes to show His wrath against sin, this is the only way open to Him. For if He acts at all in such a way as to produce hardness, creatively or absolutely, or through man's following instead of fighting Him, then He cannot be angry with man. He can only blame Himself. That is to say, this is Paul's answer to the objection, that God leaves Himself no room to judge men if His action upon them is absolute; viz., that His action is not absolute, but dependent on man's response to it, His action in the case of men whom He hardens, being adapted in itself to produce exactly the opposite result.

So far, the thought seems plain. But what is the relation to this of the clause that follows? If we make the participial clause in v. 22 concessive, as Meyer and others do, then we have to supply mentally an unexpressed purpose of the patience denoted by the verb, with which to connect this additional purpose. For instance, Meyer says that the object of God's bearing with the vessels of wrath is to exhibit his long-suffering, which he finds implied in the phrase

"in much long-suffering." Moreover, the conjunction at the beginning of v. 23, in this case, has to be translated *also*, a meaning that it has, but with which its place is more naturally somewhere else than at the beginning of the clause. Or, if we say with others, Fritzsche included, that this clause denotes the purpose of the participial clause, "fitted unto destruction," the connection of thought becomes exceedingly difficult, as also the grammatical connection of a noun with a preposition and a clause introduced by a telic conjunction, as co-ordinate designations of purpose. Still another device, adopted by Tholuck, Godet, and others, is to make this clause a part of a new sentence, the principal verb of which is the "called" belonging to the relative clause of v. 24. But they fail to explain the peculiar turn or twist of the apostle's thought by which a principal becomes a relative clause. On the other hand, if we make the participial clause in v. 22 causal, as most commentators do, instead of concessive, then there does not seem to be any grammatical difficulty, and very little logical difficulty in making v. 23 co-ordinate with that as a designation of God's purpose in his patience. According to this, God had a twofold purpose in his forbearance. One was to make a place for His wrath against sin, the other was to open the way for His mercy toward those who were led to repentance. But how shall we get rid of the serious difficulty that the object of the verb "bore" is not the general class *men*, but the particular class *vessels of wrath?* If the meaning is that God by His forbearance leads some men to repentance and so to glory, and others to hardness and so to wrath, the exact expression of it would be, *if God wishing to show His wrath, and make known his power upon vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, bore with men; and that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy fitted for glory, what then?* In the first place, it is to be noted in reply, that the expression is inexact as it stands, however it may be explained. In order to express the contrast that seems to be demanded by the contrasted expressions "vessels of wrath" and "vessels of mercy," they should both be made the objects of corresponding verbs, and occupy corresponding places in the two parts of the statement. We are prepared for something less than exactness of contrast by the different positions in the sentence, one in the principal, and the other in a subordinate, clause. In the second place, it is the starting-point in the apostle's view of man that all men are originally vessels of wrath, a condition from which some of them are brought by the grace of God to become vessels of mercy. If all men were looked on by the apostle as having

a good or indifferent start in moral condition, from which they passed into states of morality or immorality, this would demand the exact contrast spoken of. But inasmuch as Paul looks on himself and all men as originally evil, so that all men who are saved now stand in contrast not only with men now lost, but also with a previous lost condition in themselves, the expression can stand as it is, since all that we want is a class including all men after the principal verb. It is certainly in favor of this interpretation, that it corresponds exactly with the actual history of God's dealing with the Jews, which is the special case under consideration, and with the case of Pharaoh, which he has left, to be sure, but only just left.

This resolves God's spiritual action into unity. It is not one action here and another there, opposite means to accomplish opposite results, but one uniform, gracious action, that leaves the responsibility of opposite results with men.

Another thing to be noticed here is the use of the apparently neutral word, "bore," to denote this gracious action. With the ordinary conception of God, this would be absolutely colorless and unsatisfactory. But with the idea of the purely spiritual, luminous, holy Being presented to us in the New Testament, whose nature is light and love, all that we need to be told is that God bears with men, and we are able to fill it out immediately with the thought of this uninterrmitted beating of the divine light and love against the closed and darkened chambers of the human spirit. The normal divine activity is gracious and moving and illuminating, and "bearing" means no merely neutral or negative thing, but the uninterrupted course of this activity.

God's people, then, is a spiritual people. What the apostle has shown negatively is that membership in that people is not determined by birth, nor by righteous works, nor by the will and endeavor of man; it is neither inherited nor merited. Positively he has indicated that this membership is based on God's discriminating love; that the qualities calling forth this love are not self-originated, but divinely produced in men; that it is a matter dependent, not on God's justice, but on his mercy; that God has a right thus to fashion the spirits of men, not absolutely and creatively, but by spiritual processes arising from His divine skill and resources; and finally, that God's action in creating both good and evil character is a gracious action, making the different results dependent on the secondary action of man.

And so he says that this is the people whom God calls, not Jews alone, nor Gentiles as such, but those whom he prepares for glory.

The Jews have been for the most part the only people that He has had. But inasmuch as it is a spiritual and not a hereditary matter, inasmuch as the Jews were chosen not as Jews, but as embodying certain spiritual conditions belonging to the people of God, it may at any time cease to be Jews, and come to be some other people, whom God chooses as His own. The moment that it is understood that God's people are a spiritual people, that moment it becomes impossible to confine the privilege to any nation. This possibility of change of condition in any people, so that those who are not beloved may become the people of God, Paul confirms by a quotation from Hosea ii. 23. It is applied by him to the case of the Gentiles, but as originally used by the prophet himself it had a significance of its own, quite as pertinent and important for Paul's argument. For it represents Israel herself as lapsed from God's favor, and no longer His people. This condition of things they have brought about themselves by their sins and unfaithfulness. But God exhorts them, "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity!" and promises them, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely" (ch. 14). Just as their sins have led to a change in their relation to God, so that the people of God has become Lo ammi, and the objects of His mercy are called Lo ruhamah, so their return to God will cause them to be called Ammi again, and their repentance will restore to them the name Ruhamah.

Then Paul quotes from Isaiah a statement to the effect that of Israel only a remnant would be saved, a very small remainder, the sinful majority being destroyed by the righteous sharp judgments of God, in order that by this purging Jerusalem might once more become a city of righteousness. The Jews' own Scriptures contain statements which show that God is under no positive obligation to continue the whole Jewish people in His favor, nor to exclude the Gentiles from His love. And now the apostle comes to that for which all that he has said has been preparing the way. That which constitutes men the people of God is a state of acknowledged and accepted righteousness. And the strange paradox is that Gentiles who were not in pursuit of that attained it, while the Jews, who were striving to come up to a law of righteousness, did not attain to it. Striving to be the righteous people of God, keeping all the minutiae of a law; how well that represents the condition of Saul himself: and yet not righteous; how he had proved that out of his own experience. And on the other hand here were the morally indifferent Gentiles becoming at a leap, as it were, the acknowledged people of God. It

is because, as he has already shown, this righteousness is not the attainment of man, but the gift of God. And on the part of man therefore it is not the result of endeavor or works, but of faith. Here then is the proper antithesis of the statements that it is not from works, not of him that wills, nor of him that runs. For here we have these same negative statements, but instead of the antithetical statements that it is from Him that calls, and from the pitying God, we have the faith of man given as the antithesis. And the connection between the two is plain. For the righteousness that proceeds from faith is not a product of independent human endeavor, but of divine inspiration, and faith itself, as we shall see later, is regarded by the apostle as awakened and drawn out of us by the truth and the touch of God. God is the source, and faith is the human medium, of this righteousness. And so the apostle's whole view is that God's choice of men depends first, on His own mercy and grace, and secondly, on the faith of men awakened by that grace, and bringing to us the divine fruits of righteousness. But a man who simply receives the law as an objective command, and endeavors independently to build up a righteousness having its sources in himself, without divine inspirations and trust, fails to attain the righteousness of God. The Jews, having their own works, and not faith in God, as the foundation and characteristic of their righteousness, stumbled over the stone of stumbling. Jesus being come to deliver them and all men from sin, and not to glorify and exalt their righteousness over a sinful world, was rejected by them. This is confirmed by a curiously jointed quotation from Is. viii. 14 and xxviii. 16.

The tenth chapter is occupied with a development of this thought, that it is the righteousness of faith, and not of works, that commends men to God. Paul characterizes it as the righteousness of God. And by this he means not that which God calls righteousness, nor a righteousness acceptable to Him, but a righteousness of which God is the author, as contrasted with the man's own righteousness, built up by himself. The whole drift of the argument is to prove this idea of a dependent and inspired righteousness. In opposition to this is the principle of legal righteousness, that life comes from a performance of its commands. But the righteousness of faith does not leave man to bring down a Saviour from heaven, nor to raise him from the dead, but it provides him with a word to be believed. Just as the God of the Jews did not require men to find a law and then to obey it, but brought His law to them, and required of them only obedience, so now he does not leave them to procure for themselves an object of

faith, but provides Himself that which is abundantly able to inspire faith. This is fundamental in the apostle's thought, that God not only requires faith, but inspires it. In looking around for that which men would seek, if they were really in search of that on which their faith might rest, Paul finds it in the incarnate and risen Christ. But that is just what God has provided, and therefore faith, when it arises, has been called forth by Him through the vision of Christ. Two points are worthy of special attention in this statement: first, that not only faith, but confession is required; and second, that the faith is in the risen, and not in the crucified Jesus. The insistence on confession is one form of the familiar New Testament idea, that the inward principles and sentiments which make the basis and spring of its righteousness are properly attested only by the outward acts to which they give rise. There must be an outward acknowledgment and expression of the inward sentiments, or they are dead and ineffective. Under this principle sometimes baptism or an acted confession is required; sometimes a spoken confession; but sometimes, with a deeper insight still, the whole outward life of piety and virtue is demanded as the only true expression of a living faith. The second point, that the faith required is in a risen Christ, is in accordance with the broad range given to faith in the New Testament. In the early preaching of Jesus, it is faith in the good news that the kingdom of God is at hand; in the early preaching of the apostles, it is belief in Jesus as the Messiah; in the first epistle of John, it is belief in Jesus as the Son of God; and here, it is belief in the resurrection, while in the Epistle to the Hebrews the varied faith of the Old Testament saints is described as saving. There is no dogmatic restriction of faith, as if it were the effect of one truth upon God that gave faith its efficacy; but a wide range is given to it, showing that it is the effect of all great truth to renew and regenerate man that gives faith its importance.

But this is a righteousness also that makes no distinction between Jew and Gentile. For the promise is, that every one that calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Joel ii. 32. And, moreover, God is not the God of the Jews only, no mere national deity like the gods of the heathen, but the universal God, having riches for all that call on Him. To be sure, the prophecy quoted by the apostle is in regard to the Jews, and their deliverance out of the hand of their invaders. But this is a good example of the way in which Paul wrests spiritual meanings out of the narrow historical sense of the Old Testament. For the moment that the promise is made conditional, and the condition spiritual, as here, it is raised above the narrow intent of the

original, and becomes no longer a matter of Jew and Gentile, but of spiritual quality wherever found. If the Jews were called originally, not as Jews, but as those who invoked the name of the Lord, then if at any time they cease to invoke the divine name, their call lapses; and on the other hand, if the Gentiles began to call on that name, just so far the call of God extends to them.

Then the apostle shows by a series of questions that this invocation implies faith, and faith hearing, and hearing preaching, and preaching a message, and that this righteousness is therefore to be traced to God. Faith comes through hearing, and hearing through the word of God. It is God through His gospel who awakens faith in us, and therefore the righteousness of faith is a divine work. The universality of this gospel is proved negatively, by showing that its blessings are limited, not by national distinctions, but by a lack of obedience to it; and positively, by the fact that its messengers have been sent into all the earth. And, moreover, the Jews themselves were informed of this; for both Moses and Isaiah warned them of the possibility that God might turn from them to another people. Paul stretches the meaning of the passage from Isaiah, giving it two meanings and applications instead of one. It is really a series of three parallel statements of God's continued gracious expostulation with His rebellious people Israel, and reads like this: "I gave access to myself to those that asked it not; I was propitious to those that sought me not; I stretched out my hands all the day to a disobedient and resistant people." But this restricted sense of the original really contains by implication the other, since it shows us Israel as a rebellious people, from whom God must eventually turn. For God proceeds to say: "I will not keep silence, but I will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord"; and again, "For the Lord God will slay thee, and will call His servants by another name" (vv. 6, 7, 15).

In the eleventh chapter Paul comes to a new and exceedingly important part of his question. He has shown that God's rejection of the Jews does not necessarily involve unfaithfulness on His part, because His choice of them in the first place was on spiritual, and not on national, grounds. It was therefore conditional on their retaining the spiritual qualities that occasioned the original choice, and would therefore be in the nature of things, what the whole history of the Jews has shown it to be, the choice of a part greater or less, rather than the choice of the whole nation, and moreover would terminate with the failure of the Jews to comply with these spiritual conditions.

And for the same reason that the Jews might be rejected, other nations might come in to take their place, and the kingdom of God become Gentile, rather than Jewish, in its nationality, while still retaining its characteristic spiritual quality. This is what Paul saw taking place under his eyes, and what he says is therefore intensely practical. But he still feels himself confronted by the question, whether this involves a final rejection of God's ancient people, to whom, in spite of all their apostasy, He has always heretofore clung. Does this coming in of the Gentiles mean, as events seem to indicate, a casting off of the Jews? This he, as a Jew, with strong national feelings and antecedents, repudiates. And he does it in language which opens up a new phase of the question. "God did not," Paul says, "reject His people whom He foreknew." This foreknowledge is in the New Testament made the antecedent and ground of God's choice. And here it is put forward as the fact about His people which makes it impossible for Him to reject them. Just as human choice is based on knowledge of the worth or desirableness of the thing chosen, so God's choice is determined by His foreknowledge of the same. And right here is the reason of the permanence of God's choice, and of His choice of the Jews as a nation, instead of a selection of individuals among all the nations. That is the fact which remains to be accounted for, supposing that the choice is not arbitrary, but rational and accountable. Why is it that God still clung to this nation as a nation when they apostatized? And how is it that, after a long period, in which to all appearance God has had a nation for a people, He seems now to be changing to what, on the principles enunciated by the apostle, would have seemed to be the more natural course from the beginning, a culling out of individuals from all nations? The answer to this, hinted at by Paul here, and expressly stated elsewhere, is that God foresaw in the Jews not only the occasional faith or spiritual apprehension that characterized them, but a permanent spiritual faculty, a capacity for faith and holiness peculiar to them. Back of particular acts and shining examples of faith lay this hereditary and national trait, exercised or unexercised, that made them the pre-eminently religious nation. Hence, in periods of national degeneracy and unbelief, together with God's wrath and rejection, which were emphasized even by his knowledge of this spiritual faculty, there was yet a knowledge of this natural adaptability for faith and spiritual achievement that made them still His people, though a lost and degenerate people. This is what makes possible a national choice, over and above the selection

of individuals. The choice of the nation is because of this fitness to receive divine gifts and promises, but the final selection of individuals is because of their actual appropriation of these. This, I think, will be found to be the key to this strange and perplexing chapter.

In confirmation of this statement, that God does not cast off His people, whom He chose because He foreknew them, Paul introduces a statement, showing that, even in the time of the great national apostasy preceding the captivity, God left Himself seven thousand men who had not joined the prevalent Baal worship. There was a rejection, not of the whole nation, but of a part, and an election of the remnant to be His people. And this same principle obtained now, there being now as then, a remnant according to the election of grace. Here the apostle brings out the contrast between this divine principle of grace and the human principle of meritorious works. But, as we have seen, this does not include all human conditions of God's choice, but only that of works. There are, in the apostle's thought, two contrasted systems, that of grace and that of justice. Under the system of justice, the human condition of God's favor is works of merit; under that of grace, the condition is faith. The same thought appears in the succeeding statement, in which Israel as a whole is represented as seeking the favor of God and not obtaining it. The implied contrast to this is an election, or a chosen part of the people, which, instead of seeking, was itself sought by God. The remainder, who sought God independently and on the ground of merit, instead of accepting Him and allowing themselves to be found by Him, were hardened.

This, then, is the first part of the apostle's answer to the question, whether God cast off His people. It is only a part that is rejected, and these are rejected because their righteousness has degenerated into self-righteousness, and their religiousness has expended itself in seeking after an unrevealed God, instead of accepting the revealed One. And now he comes to the second part of this inquiry. "Did they stumble in order to fall?" Was this the divine purpose of their stumbling? We have already seen that the process by which moral stumbling leads to falling is in accordance with a divine law, and there can be no doubt that what God does He intends to do. But the question is whether this is the ultimate divine purpose, whether God is contented to stop here, and allow evil under His government to work only evil. Paul rejects this idea with aversion. And, instead of this, he says that the purpose of God is to accomplish by the falling away of the Jews the salvation of the Gentiles, and in turn,

by this, to provoke the Jews to emulation. In the first part of this statement, Paul is simply giving the philosophy of current religious history. Jewish Christianity was tending more and more to narrowness and exclusiveness. It was inevitable that it should be so. The long time in which they had occupied the position of God's people had cultivated in them spiritual pride, and made it impossible for them to see the barriers taken down with any complacency. And so there were two great characteristic features of early Christian history: First, the struggle of Christianity with Judaism; and, second, the conflict between Pauline, or Catholic Christianity, with Judaic Christianity. Judaism tried to crush Christianity because it threatened to swallow up Jewish privilege in a universal religion, and Judaism within the church strove to prevent its becoming a universal religion. The Judaizers were willing that other nations should come in, but only on condition of receiving the distinctive mark of Judaism. They were willing that Christianity should embrace all nations, but unwilling that it should itself be given a corresponding breadth. Just as Christians now are willing to welcome Christian unity, but unwilling to give Christianity the breadth necessary to unity. Now Paul's thought is that this narrowness of Judaic Christianity makes it incompatible with any great work among the Gentiles that the Jews should be converted *en masse*. The present conquest of Judaism by Christianity would be so much in the nature of a compromise between the two, that it would greatly hinder the conquest of the Gentiles, involving, as that did, the universality of the Gospel. And he sees that the very thing that gives Judaic Christianity its narrowness is also preventing any general conversion of the Jews to Christianity, and thus that this type of Christianity is deprived of the dangerous influence that it might otherwise have. The door is open to the Gentiles, as it might not otherwise be. And so evil does not end in evil, but works good as well.

And yet the apostle sees that it is not an unmixed good, for he immediately proceeds to say that if their falling away is the riches of the world, much more will their fulness enrich the world. But if there is a real connection of cause and effect between their loss and the enrichment of the Gentiles, how can the opposite condition of their fulness produce the same effect in a greater degree? In the first place, we have seen that the same thing, the proud exclusiveness of the Jews, has produced both the narrowness of Judaic Christianity and the general failure of the Jews to accept Christianity. Only therefore the destruction of this narrow spirit, and the introduction of

a different disposition among them, in sympathy with the breadth of Christianity, would be compatible with their fulness, that is, their general conversion to Christianity. Their general conversion could take place therefore only in connection with the removal of that which made them a hindrance to the conversion of the Gentiles. And in the second place, that which made their loss the enriching of the Gentiles would make their fulness much more so. Their influence, and the inherited familiarity with religious ideas and aptness for religious things that gave them influence, made their loss or gain no indifferent matter. As long as they remained narrow, it was well for the church that they should remain out of it, since in it they would be sure to stamp it with their own spirit. But if they should lose this narrowness, and with it their great aversion to Christianity, then the general conversion to Christianity that would accompany it would bring to the church a great accession of well-directed spiritual force. This same spiritual influence that made it a gain to the church and to the world for them to be out of it, as they were, would, with the change that would bring them generally into the church, become a great advantage to it.

This, then, is the course of the apostle's thought so far in the discussion of this part of the question. First, that God's people are such because God saw and foresaw in them a pre-eminent spiritual quality. Second, that therefore God never rejects them as a people, but graciously, and without any merit on their part, chooses out some for salvation. Third, that this general apostasy now is intended to restrict the influence of Judaism within the church, and so leave the door open for the Gentiles, and ultimately to bring them in, after Christianity has received the stamp of Catholicity. Fourth, that that which makes their influence now dangerous in the church will make it then an inestimable blessing. The general proposition to which all this tends is that the Jews are still God's people under a temporary eclipse. The proof of this is found in two propositions. First, in this, that the holiness of the first fruits involves that of the lump; and, second, in this, that the holiness of the root results in that of the branches. Both of these involve the common principle of heredity, one an heredity of privilege, and the other of nature. Children inherit from their parents in God's view something of the sacredness attaching to their parents, and also the holiness of nature belonging to them. And moreover it is probable from what the apostle has said, that the more important of these, and the cause of the other, is the inheritance of spiritual quality or tendency. This is the reverse

of the doctrine of heredity, underlying that of the fall of man. Just as the apostle shows in ch. 5 that evil is transmitted from father to son, making the first sin universal in its consequences, so here he shows that holiness is alike transmissible, so that the holiness of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob resulted in the holiness of the nation. And yet this is a holiness of nature, not of character; of tendency, not of fixed quality. It leaves individual character to develop itself freely, giving rise to different characters and destinies, and yet insuring a holy seed continually. The choice of Abraham's seed is therefore provisional, and the final choice of individuals depends on the development of the spiritual quality transmitted to them.

Hence, in spite of the holiness of the root, and of the branches as a result, some of the branches may be broken off, and, in spite of the evil of the Gentile root, some of its branches may turn out well. Heredity tends to the production of character, but does not determine it. But it is the way in which Paul states this fact of the connection of the Gentiles with the people of God that gives this part of the discussion its special significance. They are represented as grafted into the holy stock of the original people of God, and becoming partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree. This is a modification of the general New Testament view that all men alike, without any distinction, derive spiritual sustenance from God or from Christ. But it is a development of Christ's statement that salvation is from the Jews. And it is a view of religious history the analysis of which shows a striking conformity with the facts. Individualism, and the growth of the individual by immediate connection with God, is true, but it is only a part of the truth. The race is also an entity, and race continuity and growth are as much truths as that the individual abides through all changes, and grows by what it acquires. Israel, by virtue of this law, has acquired a spiritual growth, and accumulated a stock of spiritual truths and virtues and influences, into the possession and benefit of which the other nations are now entering. Christ himself, though his perfect spiritual quality, is due to an incarnation, by which, after all these natural means had failed, there was injected into our sinful humanity a divine and healing principle; though he was born into, not out, of the race, yet followed this law so far that he came into the line of this spiritual development. He did not make a separate and individual revelation, but culminated and perfected that revelation, which had in turn produced, and been produced through, a spiritual race. And though this accumulated spiritual force had been misdirected and perverted in the time of

Jesus, yet the leaders and instructors of the church had to be taken from the race in which it inhered, though, as a whole, it furnished instead its rejèctors and persecutors. From this, then, it appears that the Jews were to continue to be, by virtue of this inherited spiritual quality, the people of God, and that other nations were to become members of that people only by partaking of the spiritual influences and knowledge that had been stored up for the world in them. Christianity itself is in this view only the development and final form of Judaism. Its Scriptures are rightly incorporated with the Jewish Scriptures, and are themselves probably all written by Jews; its apostles are the continuation of the splèndid line of Jewish prophets, and its Christ is the Messiah of the Jews. The Jews, therefore, are the spiritual progenitors of the Christian church, the holy stock on which the redeemed of the Gentiles are grafted.

Therefore, Paul says, the Gentiles cannot boast over the Jews. There may be now a displacement of the Jews in great part, in order to prevent their narrowness from excluding the Gentiles. But the spiritual force and light, of which they become partakers, is Jewish, and not Gentile. Moreover, the principle of faith, which makes the present difference between them, is inconsistent with boasting, as it glorifies God and not man. And the reversal of their respective present positions is much more likely under similar conditions than the reversal of their original positions. This statement is based, of course, on the fact that the Jews' position among the people of God is a natural one, belonging to them on account of inherited traits, and that faith in them will therefore lead to the manifestation of spiritual aptitudes already in possession. While the Gentiles, in whom the inherited dispositions are rather unspiritual and immoral even, have to overcome these by faith. This doctrine of heredity of spiritual, as of unspiritual, dispositions, making men germinal, but not actual, members of God's people, so that the development of actual unspiritual qualities in them is to fall away from their original, natural place, making the apostle's doctrine of heredity complete, is of very great importance in the vindication of God's ways.

In accordance with this inherited quality and disposition of the Jews, and with the fact of God's gracious action everywhere, so that even their falling away accomplishes the gracious purpose of God toward the Gentiles, Paul looks forward to the time when all Israel will be saved. When the full number of the Gentiles has been gathered, when Christianity has become a universal religion, then, at last, the emulation of the Jews will be aroused and the whole people

will be redeemed. This he confirms by a quotation from Isa. lix. 20, 21, which, however, is not conformed to either the Septuagint or the original Hebrew in anything except merely the statement that the deliverer is coming. In the original, he is represented as coming to or for Zion, and to or for those that turn from iniquity in Jacob. This common inexactness of the New Testament writers, in quoting from the New Testament, would seem to indicate that they did not depend on reproducing even the sense of the particular passage quoted, but simply on recalling the general spirit or drift of the Old Testament, which they clothed in such familiar Scripture language as came to them.

The summing up of this part of the discussion is that on the basis of the Gospel, which is the present standard of judgment and distinction among men, the Jews are enemies of God, because they do not exercise toward it that faith which is the divine requirement under it. But this enmity is also on account of the Gentiles, who, because of it, find the Gospel open to them. But on the ground of election, in which Paul has shown that the final choice of individuals rests on individual faith, but also that there may be choice of a nation or a family as a provisional matter, — a general or probable selection, based on the hereditary transmission of spiritual dispositions leading to faith, — the Jews are beloved on account of the faith of their fathers. This actual faith in them has produced germinal and possible faith in their descendants, and so God has never been left without an actual people among this nation, who are all his *in posse* if not *in esse*.

The reason that is given for this statement, that, according to election, the Jews are beloved, is that the gifts and the calling of God are unrepented. Having bestowed gifts on a people, and called them to Himself, God does not repent and recall them. As we have seen, He continues the gifts, transmitting them from father to son by the law of heredity; and so, the people that God once calls, remain His. Paul, evidently, makes a distinction here between the call of individuals and that of a nation. He sees in one the proof of sporadic and incidental traits that tend to run out and disappear; and in the other, indications of more essential and deeply seated qualities that remain as permanent national traits. Of course they are subject to the mutations that inhere in moral actions and states as such; but, relatively, they are permanent. One nation has the gift and calling of intellectual greatness, another of superiority in art, another of moral pre-eminence; and these are more enduring than the same things in individuals. And Israel is seen by the apostle to have the permanent national trait of

religiousness that makes it, in spite of partial defections, the beloved people of God. This he proves by rehearsing again the course of God's providential dealing with both Jews and Gentiles, in which the latter are shown to have been disobedient, but to have had the door of mercy finally opened to them through the disobedience of the Jews; and, on the other hand, the Jews, whose disobedience has procured this mercy for the Gentiles, are themselves ultimately to be restored to God's mercy, through the mercy shown to the Gentiles. God's purpose, that is to say, in the present rejection of the Jews, is not that rejection itself, but mercy to the Gentiles, and, ultimately by means of that, mercy to the Jews. The latter's defection and rejection are thus not final nor vindictive, but temporary in their effects, and gracious in their purpose. And this Paul shows to be characteristic of all God's dealing with sin. By His own law of moral continuance and progress by means of natural consequence and heredity, He shuts up sinners to their sin. But this legal and natural effect of sin He supplements by His own gracious action, working under the same law; and so the present consequence of sin in the race always looks forward to a final redemption. God shut up all unto disobedience, in order that He may have mercy on all. And the same laws of moral action, influence, growth, and transmission, which made the universal prevalence of sin necessary, are those which render a final, universal redemption possible.

And so, finally, before this contemplation, — not of God's absolute and unaccountable judgments, but of a wisdom that grows continually in depth and brightness, as we contemplate it, — the apostle exclaims: "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" And, in the same connection, he means, by the unsearchableness of God's judgments, not that they are based on principles unknown or undiscoverable by man, for his whole discussion has been a searching out of the principles and methods of God's dealing with man, but that they are full of a boundless wisdom and knowledge that outreaches all the pursuit and discovery of man. Moreover, the reason given shows another idea contained in the language. God's ways are so based on absolute wisdom and knowledge that man cannot foreknow or determine them. Otherwise, he might know not only the ways, but also the mind of God, and might share His counsels.

But the apostle does show the impossibility of establishing any original claim on God. Everything is from Him and through Him and for Him; all being is from Him and in Him; and all the action of moral beings, while it is free, is yet so preceded and shaped by the divine action,

that it cannot constitute an original claim on the divine judgment, but becomes only an acceptance or rejection of the divine grace. This is the key-note of the apostle's thought ; the immanence of the infinitely gracious and wise God, who does not leave men in individual isolation to work out their own destiny and receive a judicial award, but so binds men together, in each other, and in Him, and makes for them a world of gracious influence and association in which to dwell, and Himself dwells in them a constant source of light and love, that what they are, whether good or evil, receives its character from the free action of men, not in a world made by themselves, but in God's world, where the great tides of the ceaseless, divine activity are the central fact.