Faith and Justice: A Platonic Reading of Pauline Justification

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Abstract

This dissertation is a broad work of philosophical theology that examines the Christian Doctrine of Justification by Faith in light of the Platonic framework for constructing ethics. Prescinding from specific Post-Reformation debates on justification, it seeks to position the philosophic problem of justification in terms of Platonism's preoccupation with human assimilation to the Divine. It sets out the rich background of Platonism in the Christian tradition, including the heavily monotheistic Middle-Platonism. Relying much on the work of Lloyd Gerson, it lays down a schema of how understand Platonic ethics and Platonism more generally; and draws on the work of George Van Kooten in discerning Platonic motifs in Paul.

Through a reading of key Platonic dialogues, especially the *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, and the *Republic*, the work discerns a schema of Platonic ethics as it relates to justification: the end of all human beings is likeness unto/harmonization with God, but this cannot happen without divine aid. Those who receive this divine aid, or 'divine gift' are philosophers, but the philosopher is no mere intellectual, but a lover of God, who lives by a kind of 'faith that works by love' (Gal 5:6). The philosopher is finally reconciled to God by the justification of his soul, which consists in the harmonization of his soul after the pattern of divine justice.

This schema for Platonic ethics is used as a heuristic tool for exegesis of Romans 1-6, and Galatians 2-3, 5. In Romans, the attempt is made to reconcile language in Romans 2, which speaks of every man being rewarded for his works, who 'perseveres in doing good' (2:7), and in Romans 3, which commends justification by faith 'apart from the law' (3:21). Platonic concepts concerning the nature of the just soul are used to help clarify the meaning of Christian justification. Paul's critique of the Law in Galatians is understood against the background of Platonic themes on the inadequacy of written law to provide a complete moral guide. In Galatians, it is understood that Pauline justification is never through faith alone, but specifically by a faith, given by the Spirit, that works by Love (Gal 5-6). The primacy which Platonic ethics gives to divine gift, as the primary author of our love of God, and our striving to see Him, is therefore shown to prefigure the Pauline doctrine of Justification, which, nevertheless, can only be fully understood in light of Christian revelation.

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Introduction

It would certainly be difficult for even the most confident theologian to flatter himself that he has anything new to say about justification when considered from a dogmatic/systematic point of view. If we take the problem of our justification before God to be, as it certainly was for the Reformers and their adversaries at the Council of Trent, one of the foremost theological hinges of reformation in the Western Church, we have the whole theological history of Western Christendom of the last five hundred years as a sourcebook for theological disquisition on this topic. Even if one were to isolate oneself rather artificially within the field of New Testament scholarship or biblical studies, there too one would find the biblical development of much Reformation controversy surrounding Luther's so-called discovery of the forensic meaning of justification in Romans 3. Ever since, the whole field of New Testament scholarship has much occupied itself with Reformation debates on the meeting of justification by faith and on the meaning of righteousness or justice (*dikaiosyne*).

The doctrine of justification by faith is normally seen to have been given its definitive statement in Paul's Epistles, mainly Romans and Galatians. Unsurprisingly, therefore, it remains a common theme in New Testament scholarship. In the past half-century, much of this scholarly community's engagement with the Pauline doctrine has been shaped by the so-called 'New Perspective' of EPA Sanders. Sanders argued that justification by faith was fundamental to the rabbinic theology of Second Temple Judaism and not, as it were, an inexorable dividing line between the Christian religion of faith and the Jewish religion of law. In particular, though Sanders does not deny that much of Tannaitic literature, roughly contemporary with Paul, stresses the familiar outline of a covenant which was pre-eminently *sub legem*, 'where obedience to the law is rewarded, and disobedience punished', the rabbis' theology of the covenant had more in common, according to Sanders, with Pauline notions of a kind of covenant of faith than many scholars had long supposed.[1] Indeed, Sanders thinks it is more or less the rabbis' view that 'as long as [one] maintains

[1] E.P.A. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, (London: SCM Press, 1977), 180.

his desire to stay in the covenant, he has a share in God's covenantal promises, including life in the world to come: "The intention and effort to be obedient constitute the *condition for remaining in the covenant*, but they do not *earn* it."'[2] Sanders' argument appeared to many as a useful counter to the supposed anti-Jewishness of the Lutheran theology of justification by faith. Those like NT Wright who think of *dikaiosyne* in terms of 'covenant-righteousness' seem to wish to marry a very Reformation theology of justification with the newly discovered Jewishness of this theology.[3] In my view, however, the result can tend to evacuate *dikaiosyne* of much of the pregnant ethical and theological meaning which it would have had in the first-century Mediterranean.

Since we have taken justification as our theme, something must be said about the theology of the Reformers who did so much to focus attention on this theme. I do not intend, to be sure, to take the Reformers as a starting point in the sense of working self-consciously within either the Lutheran or Reformed ecclesial tradition in particular, or to assume that these possessed the charism of interpreting Paul's doctrine of justification by faith apart from the textual and theological arguments which they give. My concern is to argue for the coherence of a Pauline theology with the Platonic philosophical tradition, the philosophical tradition *par excellence* in the Mediterranean world in which Paul lived. However, it is undeniable that what gave impetus to this project is in large part the extent to which the Lutheran and Reformed tradition have given focus to theological slogan of 'justification by faith'. My concern therefore is to what extent a Platonic framework might help clarify the meaning of such a doctrine, such as it may be seen truly to exist in Paul. My focus on the early chapters of Romans, is, in a sense, an attempt to deal with a well-established Reformation topic on the Reformers' own ground.

Martin Luther was, of course, particularly animated by the problem of justification: How so manifestly sinful human beings can be fully reconciled with God. Luther's answer is that God's righteousness (justice) is imputed to us through our faith. Article 13 of Luther's Schmalkald Article, '*Wie man vor Gott gerecht wird*' (How one becomes just before God), is a summary of this solution to the problem of justification: how sinful and imperfect man can come to be just to such a degree that he may be reconciled with God. The Lutheran

[2] Ibid.
[3] Tom Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision,* (London: SPCK, 2009), 4.

solution, which becomes a mainstay of Protestant interpretation on this point, is that of *simul iustus et peccator*:

> What I have always taught up to this point, and cannot change, is that, through faith—as Saint Peter says—we obtain a new, different, and changed heart, and that God in Christ wills to consider us just and saved. Although the sins of the flesh are neither dead nor gone, yet He will neither recognize them nor know them; and upon such faith, renewal, and forgiveness of sins then follow good works; and what in them is sinful and deficient should not be reckoned as sinful and deficient, as Christ Himself wills, but rather man ought wholly, according to both his person and his works, be called just and holy, and be so by the full grace and mercy in Christ, for us distributed and extended.[4]

Although man is, even in being justified, still substantially 'sinful and deficient', his unworthiness is overlooked by God: His sins are not fully removed, his soul not fully made just, but this is not held against him. Injustice is still present; he is not fully harmonized—but nevertheless God by his grace and mercy *calls* him just and holy, and so 'by his grace and mercy' makes him actually to *be* just and holy. What we cannot do for ourselves, because of our sinful, fallen nature, God has done for us through His passion and resurrection.

The risk which I think inherent to Luther's solution to the problem of justification is that it should lead us to assume that the justice whereby we act justly and the justice whereby we are reconciled to God are different enough in kind that they may be seen to have almost nothing to do with one another. This would, of course, be to diverge substantially from the Platonic framework that we will outline. For in the Platonic framework *all* justice finds its original in the divine form of Justice. In his early sermon 'On Two Kinds of Justice' (*De Duplici Iustitia*), Luther makes a distinction between God and Christ's Justice, whereby we are justified, and the merely human justice, whereby we preform good works.[5] The first, divine justice is, 'alien and infused from without. This is the justice by which Christ is just and by which He justifies others through faith'.[6] It is this justice in which those who are reconciled with God, through faith, partake:

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[4] Martin Luther, *Die schmalkaldischen Artikel*, (1537), 13. My own translation.
[5] Luther, *De Duplici Justitia*, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 31: Career of the Reformer I, trans. Lowell J. Satre, ed. Jaroslav J. Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), 297–306.
[6] Ibid. 1.

> Through faith in Christ, therefore Christ's justice becomes our righteousness and all that he has, rather, he himself, becomes ours. Therefore, the Apostle calls it 'the righteousness of God' in Rom. 1[:17: For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed...; as it is written, The righteous lives from faith' (16). Finally, in the same epistle, chapter 3[:28], such a faith is called 'the righteousness of God': We hold that a human being is justified through faith. This is an infinite righteousness, and one that swallows up all sins in a moment, for it is impossible that sin should exist in Christ. On the contrary, who trusts in Christ is attached to Christ, is one with Christ, having the same righteousness as he. Thus, it is impossible that sin should remain in that person. This righteousness is primary; it is the basis, the cause, the source of any of one's own actual righteousness. For this is the righteousness given in place of the original righteousness lost in Adam.[7]

This theme of justification through a faith accompanied by a kind of trust and attachment (hope and charity) whereby one becomes united to the divine object of one's faith, by divine dispensation, is a theme which is in fact already prefigured in Plato's outline of the philosopher's ascent to the divine. This theme is maintained in the Middle Platonic monotheistic adaptation of Platonic ideas and, I shall argue, infuses Paul's articulation of the doctrine of justification by faith.

Luther's 'Second Justice' is that whereby we live just and holy lives, and unlike the first 'alien' justice, it is proper to ourselves. However, since this second kind of justice is the product of the first 'alien justice' and moreover 'its fruit and consequence', it is not entirely clear why Luther sees the need to distinguish these two justices[8]

Platonic Ethics and Paul: A Project of Constructive Theology

It seems to me desirable to recalibrate theological and philosophical discussion of justification by faith both within and outside of theological scholarship itself. Although I wish to take New Testament scholarship on Paul into account, I intend to take a view of the subject that builds upon an

[7] Ibid., 3.
[8] Ibid., 7.

examination of Plato and Platonism, and in particular Platonic ethics, as a heuristic tool for reading Paul on justification. Although I shall embark on a further discussion of the philosophical and theological historical milieu in which Paul lived and wrote, with a special focus on Greek philosophy, my primary aim is to engage in a work of constructive theology that makes use of both a careful exegesis of key Pauline texts (Romans 1–6; Galatians 2–3, 5) and an exploration of the moral and metaphysical vision which constitutes Platonic ethics. Thus, this work is purposely interdisciplinary; it straddles the fields of systematic theology, New Testament studies, ancient philosophy, and early patristics. I hope in this way to engage in a work of theology that is firmly rooted in Scripture even as it seeks theological and philosophical context and coherence.

It is perhaps worth asking why one ought to concern oneself with such a classic preoccupation of the Reformers, and their Catholic respondents, as justification. The reason is simply that this theological question is, to a large extent, the crux of the Christian faith: it answers the question of why being a Christian, following Christ, matters. What does it do? What is the point of being the sort of person that Christ wishes me to be and how am I to become that person? If the reason for following Christ is to be with God after this life, preserved from harm under God's protection and living in the eternal bliss of God's kingdom, how is this supposed to come about? These are, to be sure, metaphysical questions of who God is and how he relates to us. But they are, to a much larger extent, at least as philosophers would have understood them in Paul's day, ethical questions.

I hope to use the resources of philosophical theology, therefore, not only constructively to respond to questions raised in Pauline scholarship concerning the seeming incompatibility of different things that Paul says about justification, but to address, in a general way, some fundamental questions in moral theology related to justification, as Paul defined it. In so doing, I wish also to move beyond the traditional divide of what Newman called the 'Lutheran' and 'Roman' schemes of justification, by faith alone in the case of the one and through charitable obedience alone in the case of the other.[9]

[9] John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, (1838, Revised 1874), I.i.

Scholars of Plato and ancient philosophy in general have emphasized the educative, mystical, even religious nature of the Platonic School as self-formation (Hadot), and indeed as the culmination of Greek *Paideia* (Jaeger). But Pierre Hadot in particular is dismissive of the extent to which scripture can be read in light of Platonic 'exercices spirituelles'.[10] Josef Pieper, in a work on contemplation in the Christian tradition more generally, agrees that by nature the gratification of this kind of contemplative happiness, like the gratification of hunger and thirst, is expected from something outside the self.[11]

An example of a Christian reading of Plato as the basis for making sense of fundamental Christian texts may be found in Catherine Pickstock's treatment of the vocation of what she calls the 'philosopher/lover' in relation to subsequent Christian liturgy. Pickstock is of a mind with Hadot and others that Platonic ethics hinges fundamentally on the orientation of one's life. Pickstock argues that 'emulation of the good involves steadfastness and commitment, for the vision of the good does not yield a codifiable rule of conduct, but rather forms the soul through an experience of transcendence'.[12] This experience is dependent on an openness to divine inspiration as a 'mode of exteriority', whether this be expressed as coming from the Muses, *daimones*, or the gods themselves, and comes in the form of a 'divine madness' sent as a gift from God, which, according to Pickstock, is then lived out 'doxologically', through liturgy as a way of life. Pickstock engages in a powerful, proto-Christian reading of Plato, mainly of the *Phaedrus*, in *After Writing*. Pickstock's project coincides in some sense with my own in that that it engages with Platonic texts in order to lay out certain philosophic foundations judged fruitful for a reading of a touchstone Christian text (in her case the text of the Roman Rite; in mine, Paul's writing in Romans and Galatians on justification by faith). [13] What I wish to undertake is, however, a more specifically Platonic exegesis of key passages of Paul on justification, that is to say an exegesis of Paul that uses Platonic ethics as a heuristic tool. It can not sufficiently be stressed, however, that it is

[10] Pierre Hadot, *Exercises Spirituelles et Philosophie Antique*, (Paris: Etude Augustiniennes, 1981), 73.
[11] Josef Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*, trans. Richard and Sarah Winston (New York: Pantheon, 1958).
[12] Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, (Oxford: Blackwell 1999), 39.

[13] By the logic of *lex orandi…lex credendi*, the Roman Rite is certainly one of the most fundamental source texts for Christian belief.

not at all my intention to argue for a kind of syncretism between Platonic Ethics and Pauline Christianity. For, as I hope will become clear in Chapter 3, in relation to Platonist Christian converts such as Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Augustin, Platonic Ethics, on its own, is incapable of existing as a cultic religion, with prayer and liturgy, precisely because it lacks the divine revelation of Jesus Christ. But this does not mean the Platonic Ethics did not stand firmly in the intellectual background as the nascent Church attempted to understand the revelations of the Christian faith, and that it is therefore not profitable for readers of Paul's letters today to be aware of the ethical assumptions of Platonic Ethics, which would very much have been in the mind of the philosophically minded and philosophically curious of the First-Century Mediterranean.

It is right and proper that I should orient this project in relation to important scholarship on Platonism and Paul and on Platonism and early Christian doctrine more generally. Most impressive to me, at least in the English-speaking world, has been the work of George Van Kooten, a New Testament scholar with a deep appreciation of the ancient metaphysical system of Paul's day, and whose comprehensive scholarship on how Pauline Christology relates to the cosmological and metaphysical architecture of Hellenistic philosophy is invaluable. The recent work of classicist Teresa Morgan, who has taken a much-needed multidisciplinary approach to an exhaustive study of what *pistis* could have meant for a Hellenized Jew in the first-century Mediterranean, is also instructive. Both scholars have reoriented work on the question of justification so as to supersede disciplinary boundaries of systematic/biblical theology, classical scholarship and ancient philosophy in a way that can only add to our understanding of this subject. It will also prove useful, I think, to survey the particular flavour of the Platonism that one would have encountered in Paul's time, what scholars tend to call *Middle* Platonism, and two of its adherents, whose writings are particularly instructive as to the direction of Christian theology in this period, Philo and Clement.[14] Lloyd Gerson's scholarship will be particularly useful in framing Platonism as a coherent system. This will allow us to try Platonism on for size, as it were, as a useful heuristic tool by which to read Paul's doctrine of justification.

[14] Clement was a Christian and Philo a Jew, but the latter's influence would be felt almost exclusively among Christians. Philo was also a nearly exact contemporary of Paul.

In Chapter 1, I will sketch an overview of Platonist writings on ethics roughly contemporary to Paul. I will include an abstract treatment of Platonism in general, in which I make much use of Lloyd Gerson's outline of Platonism. I will also embark on an outline of Platonic ethics in particular, and Christian and Jewish variants of Platonism current in Paul's time. This will serve to illustrate the philosophical and theological tradition in which I work, namely Christian Platonism. I will begin by summarizing the particular flavour of Platonic ethics among the so-called 'Middle Platonists' roughly contemporaneous with Paul. I will make use of George Van Kooten's arguments about Platonic resonances in Paul's writing. I will draw upon Teresa Morgan's scholarship on the Old Testament background to Paul's treatment of faith, and argue for the *bona fide* Platonist credentials of Philo of Alexandria, working in this tradition. Classic Anti-Platonic/Hellenistic voices in Christian theology, such as those of Harnack and Schweizer, will be entertained. However, the possibility and indeed suitability of Christian Platonism as philosophical preparation for Christian faith will be highlighted in relation to Clement of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo.

In Chapter 2, I will undertake to piece together exactly what I mean by Platonic ethics through a close reading of some of the key Platonic dialogues. I will begin by examining the nature of Plato's ethical paragon, the philosopher, specifically in regard to his status, as presented in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, as a kind of true lover, who receives a divine gift that brings him to God. The inchoate monotheism of Plato's own theology, endorsed quite explicitly by the Middle Platonists, will be drawn upon. Plato's discussion of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* and the *Gorgias* will aid our understanding of *pistis* and *logos* in relation to Christian faith and revelation. An examination of the *Republic* will provide a way of understanding what a just soul is, and how it comes to be made, and also declared, to be just. All of this will facilitate a more precise summary of what I mean by 'Platonic ethics', and how it provides a useful background to understanding the Pauline doctrine of justification.

In Chapter 3, I will treat of some of the more general issues arising in philosophical theology related to justification by faith. Through a discussion of two prominent Christian converts from Platonism, Justin and Augustine, I will attempt to transition from mere Platonic ethics to a Christian theology of justification. I will make use of André-Jean Festugière's Christian reading of

Plato, specifically on contemplation. I will also make use of Hans Urs von Balthasar's aesthetic analogy of faith, and Josef Pieper's writing on contemplation, to facilitate a transition from purely Platonic notions of contemplation and the ascent to God to specifically Christian contemplation and ultimately to Christian faith.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I will apply Platonic ethics as a heuristic tool to read key Pauline passages in which Luther, for one, put great stake: Romans 1–6 (Chapter 4) and Galatians 2–3 and 5. Chapter 4 is an exegesis of Romans 1–6. In reading Romans, one is confronted immediately with the problem of reconciling language in Romans 2 which speaks of every man who 'perseveres in doing good' (2:7) being rewarded for his works with Romans 3, which commends justification by faith 'apart from the law' (3:21). The idea commended in Platonic ethics of faithfully seeking out God in response to a divine gift will be used as a background by which to understand the saving power of Christian faith, specifically a 'faith that works by love' (Gal 5:6). Concepts in Plato about the nature of a just soul, as being harmonized and likened unto divine justice, will be used to attempt to understand the meaning of Christian justification in Paul.

Chapter 5 is an exegesis of Galatians 2–3 and 5. Here, especially, themes in Plato about the inadequacy of written law to provide a complete moral guide will serve to elucidate Paul's understanding of the limitation of the Jewish law and indeed of the ethics of mere written law in general. The exegesis of Galatians 5, in particular, will clarify that Pauline justification is never through faith alone, but specifically by a faith, given by the Spirit, that works by Love (Gal 5–6). The primacy which Platonic ethics gives to the divine gift, as the source of our love of God and our striving to see him, will be seen very much to prefigure this doctrine which, nevertheless, can only be fully understood in light of Christian revelation.

1. Platonism and Paul: Context, Survey and Scholarship

Divine Assimilation and Justification: The Middle Platonists

For the Platonist philosophers who wrote and taught in the first century A.D., the chief question of ethics concerned the task of being made like unto God, deification, and assimilation to a life of perfect human flourishing and happiness in harmony with God.[15] Justification would, I think, have been seen by the philosophers contemporaneous with Paul as merely the juridical expression of this same question of how to become reconciled with God so as to obtain every blessing: how can this happen, how does this happen, and what must I do, what must I believe, and in whom and in what must I trust so that this may happen.[16]

This state of attunement to the divine would have been seen by Platonist philosophers of Paul's day as the realization of justice in the human soul: a truly just person is one who was made like unto God. For the Middle Platonists, as they interpreted Plato himself, justice of the soul was this very attunement and harmony with the divine, the only true state of human flourishing. Alcinous, author of the highly influential Middle Platonist *Handbook on Platonism*, summarizes what he takes to be Plato's ethical vision:

> [Plato] thinks that happiness does not lie in human goods but in those which are divine and blessed. This is why he said that truly philosophical souls are filled with great wonders, and after they are released from this life they dwell with the gods and travel with them in their circuit and see the plain of truth (*Phaedrus* 248b); for this was already something which they strove to know in life and preferred its cultivation to anything else as something which would allow them to cure and restore light to the blinded light of the soul…. It is consistent with these to say that only that which is fine is good, and that virtue is sufficient for happiness. That that which is found in knowledge of the first is also fine, is made clear throughout his [Plato's] writings. Goods are twofold, some are human, others divine, and he [Plato] thinks the virtues are praiseworthy in their own right, something which is obviously a consequence of his view that only the fine is to

[15] George Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy 80 BC to AD 250*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2018), 460.
[16] Ibid.

> be considered good. He has shown this in most of his works but above all throughout the *Republic*.[17]

This view of ethics is reinforced by Apuleius in his own compendium *On Plato and His Doctrine*: 'He [Plato] made this distinctions among goods: some, which are considered goods *simpliciter* and *per se*, are divine; others are human and not considered the same for all'.[18] Origen attributes to the Middle-Platonist Celsus the view that, 'there is something more than mundane in man, that those in whom this [the soul] is in good condition have an overriding desire for what is cognate to it [he means God] and the yearning ever to hear and be reminded of him'.[19] Alcinous is even more explicit:

> Sometimes he [Plato] says the end is to become like God, but sometimes to follow him, as when he says, 'God, as the ancient account has it, contains the beginning and the end" '.[20] Sometimes he says both, as when he says, 'The soul which follows and imitates God etc…'[21] For the principal of benefit is what is good, and this is dependent on God; so it is a principal from which it follows that the end is likeness to God.[22]

This state of attunement to the divine, likeness to God, was what characterized a just soul. A truly just person was one whose soul flourished to such a degree that it could be likened unto God. This quality of Godliness, or unity with God in the soul, mapped on to the virtue of justice. Only God was supremely just, and one could therefore only become just through partaking in His divine justice. In Alcinous's handbook we learn, more particularly, that justice, as the perfection and flourishing of the soul, consists in the harmony of each of the virtues proper to each of the three parts or types of the Platonic soul (wisdom of

[17] Alcinous, *Handbook of Platonism*, John Dillon trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 27.
[18] Boys-Stones 471 (Apuleius 2.1). For more on the extent to which the end of human life is, for the Middle Platonists, likeness to God, see Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 3.78 (19f): 'The end is likeness to God. Virtue is sufficient for happiness '(Boys-Stones 472). See also Stobaeus's *Anthology* 2.7 (3F): 'Socrates and Plato think the same as Pythagoras: the end is likeness to God. Plato articulates this more clearly when he adds "according to your power". This would be what it is to live virtuously; for to God belongs the creation and the administration of the cosmos while the organization and administration of life belongs to the wise' (Boys-Stones 472).
[19] Boys-Stones 473 (Origen, *Contra Celsum,* 1.8.).
[20] Plato, *Laws*, 715–716a.
[21]Plato, *Phaedrus*, 248a.
[22] Alcinous 38.

the *logos*, temperance of the *epithumia* and courage of the *thymos*).[23] Apuleius also tells us:

> The end of wisdom is to attain the status of a god; and indeed the wise man will be able to achieve this if he proves himself to be just, pious and intelligent. So ought he to follow God not only in theoretical contemplation but also in doing deeds which are proved by him for the supreme God, and he not only attends to all this by rational thought but works through it all, beginning middle and end, knows it intimately, and governs it by the universal reach and stability of his providential government.[24]

The problem of unity, peace, and salvation with God is, for the Middle Platonists—roughly contemporaneous with Paul—essentially the Jewish and Christian problem of justification. For Platonists, as we have seen, this consists in becoming just and so becoming like God. It is worth emphasizing, also, that the Middle-Platonism mindset is very palpably monotheist. If we are to seek a rigorous philosophic framework from Paul's day, in which the problem of justification could and indeed can still be fruitfully examined, Platonism would appear an ideal candidate.

Platonism in Paul According to Van Kooten

George Van Kooten sheds a great deal of light on the philosophical, cultural, and scriptural milieu in which Paul lived and wrote; his tracing of how Platonist conceptions of being 'likened unto God' are squared, by Philo and Clement of Alexandria in particular, with man's having been created, according to the Mosaic creation account, 'after the image and likeness of God' (Gen 1:26). Van Kooten reads Paul as in some sense making use of a Platonic framework of ethics very much accepted in Paul's day. Van Kooten is intrigued, for instance, by Paul's use of the verb μεταμορφόω, to 'transfigure' or 'metamorphosize', in 2 Corinthians: 'with uncovered face, we reflect the image of the Lord, and are *transfigured* into the same' (3:8); and in Romans: 'be not conformed to the world, but be *transfigured* by the renewing of the mind (*nous*)' (12:1-2).

[23] Alcinous 29. See *Republic* 428a for Plato's enumeration of those virtues which, with justice, constitute the traditional cardinal virtues. The virtues are also mutually entailing and when harmonized together constitute the virtue of justice in the soul.
[24] Boys-Stone 471 (Apuleius, *On Plato and His Doctrine*, 28. 3-4).

Indeed, Van Kooten thinks that Paul's use of the 'image of God' *motif* of Gen 1:26 to speak about a moral transformation into a divine image and likeness has many more resonances in pagan Greek philosophy than in ancient Judaism, or even in the contemporary Dead Sea scrolls.[25] Van Kooten holds in particular that Paul has a theology of being transformed into the divine image and 'induced, in this way, to lead a moral life', which is 'best explained against the backdrop of Pagan philosophical ideas about the image of God, and the ethical goal of forming oneself into the likeness of the Divine'.[26] Writing implicitly against Albert Schweitzer, who made a sharp distinction between the sort of mystical deification one reads about in Hellenistic literature whereby one transformed into a 'being in God' and Paul's mystical transformation into a 'being in Christ', Van Kooten remarks that 'In Paul, one could argue, the *homoiosis theoi* develops into a *homoiosis Christoi*. Because of Christ's identity as the image of God, unification with Christ is part of the process of becoming like God'.[27]

Van Kooten notes the 'optimistic view of both Plato and Paul on justification, understood by assimilation to the Divine':

> Paul believes that for those caught up in the process of assuming the same form as the image of Christ 'all things work together for good' (Rom 8:28). Plato, for his part, posits that for 'the just man who will be assimilated to God as far as is possible for a man' (*Republic* 613a-b), 'whether he fall into poverty or disease or any other supposed evil…all these things will finally prove good, both in life and in death' (613a).[28]

As we shall show in relation to the Platonic dialogues themselves, this 'positive view' can be identified as an assertion of the primacy of faith, where the faithful are the very ones who, being called by the spirit of God and given the gift to seek after Him, live out their faith in being assimilated to God, renewed by the Spirit day by day (2 Cor 4:16), to be formed after the pattern of God's justice. Van Kooten also thinks that Paul alludes to the Greek pagan practice of carrying around images of gods to speak metaphorically about the image of God within us to which we are to be conformed (1 Cor 15:49). Because such divine images would, in a Greek pagan context, have been housed in a temple, Paul can refer,

[25] George Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context*, (Tübingen: Mors Siebeck, 2008).
[26] Ibid., 93.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 200.

meaningfully for those acquainted with such practices, to our bodies as 'the temples of the living God (2 Cor 6:14-16).[29]

Van Kooten also thinks that the way in which Paul speaks about our assimilation to Christ, our dying and rising with Christ as members of His body, is very Platonic, and has a distinct resonance with Plato's treatment of our imitation of particular gods in the *Phaedrus* (252c–253c). In particular, Van Kooten has in mind Pauline notions of becoming 'grown together in the likeness of Christ's death…[and]…in the likeness of his resurrection' (Rom 6:5). Of particular import for us, and also of interest to Van Kooten, is the passage in Philippians where Paul speaks of 'finding not my justice (*dikaiosyne*) from the law but from the faith of Christ, the justice of God in faith, to know the power of his resurrection, and the society of his sufferings, being transformed (*symmorpfizomenos* συμμορφιζόμενος) in his death' (Phil 3:10-11). Van Kooten is particularly interested in the recurring *motif* of being transformed and so, in the Platonic sense, being assimilated to God. We should also note, however, the parallel which Paul specifically makes in this passage between faith in Christ and a transformation in him. Transformation in Christ, assimilation to God, becomes Paul's gloss for what justification by faith in Christ is supposed to mean. Also relevant to the *motif* of assimilation to God in Christ is Paul's famous: 'it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me'(Gal 2:19-20).[30] What is especially apparent here, and what Van Kooten does not emphasize, is the extent to which this transfiguration after the image of Christ is activated by the power of Christ himself working in us, God's divine gift by which He brings us towards Himself. This, too, has very clear resonances in Platonic philosophy, as we shall explore in reference to the Platonic dialogues themselves. However, Van Kooten's exhaustive survey of Platonic parallels to Paul's doctrine of the imitation of and the assimilation to Christ should be carefully noted. For it lends further support, I think, to the thesis that when Paul wishes to think out his system of ethics in relation to the revelation of Jesus Christ, he very often thinks Platonically. There is reason to believe, therefore, that in relation to the question of justification, the supreme likening unto God as a result of God's own gift of

[29] Ibid., 202-5.
[30] Ibid., 207-8.

grace, a Platonic framework would also be a useful hermeneutic tool for reading Paul.

Biblical Faith in Paul's World: Teresa Morgan's Scholarship

Teresa Morgan's recent exhaustive study of the linguistic, cultural, and historical notions of faith swirling around the Mediterranean in Paul's day contains a useful study of the Septuagint's use of *pistis*-related words. We have identified Platonism as a fitting philosophical framework in which to examine the theological question of justification in the abstract, not least because we have good reason to suppose Platonism to be a particularly congenial philosophical schema by which to understand Paul in view of its undoubted influence in the Mediterranean world of Paul's day. Yet we must consider a little further whether the Jewish background of Paul's faith in the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob may indeed be seen to cohere within the Platonist picture of human beings' relation to God, which, of course, it must do if it is to be a useful heuristic tool to help us to read Paul on justification coherently. For this, Morgan's work is a useful aid.

Morgan claims that the relationship between *pistis* and *dikaiosyne* is first articulated in the Septuagint where Abraham's faith, 'reckoned to him as justice (*dikaiosyne*) (Gen 15:6)', is best understood in terms of a nexus of trust between God and His chosen people, and indeed between individual members within God's community. Where this nexus of trust is fully operative, it forms the basis of a kind of just *polis* of God's people, just in respect of itself, its institutions and civic relationships, and just also in the various personal relationships within this divinely instituted *polis*, and indeed, perhaps supremely, within the relationship between this *polis* and God Himself:

> *Dikaiosyne* in the Septuagint is traditionally understood as the quality of respectful acknowledgment and obedience towards God which characterizes the human being, and which characterizes the proper relationship with God, and as such is often translated as righteousness rather than justice. At the same time…to the Greek speaker of the late Hellenistic world or early Principate, *dikaiosyne*, and even more the juxtaposition of *dikaiosyne* and *pistis*, have unmistakably political and

> legal overtones. *Pistis* and *dikaiosyne* are terms of social order and social contract or covenant between divine and human spheres, and between human beings. *Dikaiosyne* is the quality and practice, which, in association with trust, enables societies to develop and persist, and laws to be forged, accepted and enforced. When Abram is credited with *dikaiosyne*, he was surely heard by Greek speakers as being credited with more than a personal relationship with God. It is an independent and socially foundational action, enabling a new and creative phase in the divine-human relationship and in human society.[31]

For Morgan, at least, the *dikaiosyne* with which *pistis* is correlated in the Septuagint necessarily has a political resonance. On this line of thought, it would be fatuous to assume that a first-century Greek-speaking reader of the Septuagint would have assigned biblical *dikaiosyne* to a sphere totally unrelated to the *dikaiosyne* about which Platonic philosophy had so much to say. If Plato rests his treatment of *dikaiosyne* upon the concrete analogy of the city-state, it would probably not be amiss, on Morgan's reading, to treat biblical *dikaiosyne* in much the same way.

Abraham's faith is paradigmatic in the Old Testament. It is instructive that Morgan prefers to translate *pistis* as trust: God trusts Abraham to be the father of His chosen people; Abraham returns that trust, forming, jointly, as the product of this act of *pistis* on both sides, the covenant with the Lord. It is this covenant which the Lord made with Abraham. It is this covenant which reifies the act of *pistis* which Abraham and God have made, making formal the hitherto informal relationship of trust between God and Adam and Noah's descents in a way appropriate to the prospective status of Israel. This is part of what Morgan perceives to be an economy of *pistis* in which faith, originating in God's own faith in the people with which He establishes a covenant, is the basis too of the faith of God's people, who in turn make good on this covenant. Thus faith, which has its original in God, cascades down from heaven so as also to infuse God's people with a virtue that is properly God's.[32] In a New Testament context this becomes the flowing font of God's *pistis*, which Christ, possessing in full, can uniquely return to His Father. Christ returns this *pistis* in perfect obedience to His Father, even unto death on the Cross. Paul the Apostle then becomes the recipient of the Father's trust in Christ, and Christ's own trust in

[31] Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 180-181.
[32] Morgan 217.

the Father, through the revelation of the Christ event. Through this revelation, the cascading waters of *pistis* extend to Paul, and to all members of the community of the faithful, who are persuaded by what they have been told, and trust enough in God and what He has taught in Christ Jesus to become one of His faithful followers, following after God though love of Him and love of neighbour.

This 'cascade of *pistis*', as Morgan puts it, is also demonstrated in the story of Moses, who is entrusted by God to lead his people out of captivity, and to be the bearer of God's written commandments. Moses is yet concerned, however, that although God Himself may have entrusted Moses to head a divinely ordained mission to lead Israel out of Egypt, the Jewish people may not believe the commission to be real, they may not trust him. For this reason, God gives Moses the power to produce signs from God, 'that they might believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to you' (Ex 4:5). In the end, of course, Moses is successful and does persuade the Israelites to follow him: they trust in both God and His servant Moses to such a degree that they believe that Moses has in fact been appointed by God as their leader. Their faith is indeed sufficient for them to take the extraordinary course of following Moses out into the desert. They will subsequently follow him even into the midst of the Red Sea because 'they feared the Lord and believed in God and in his servant Moses' (ἐφοβήθη δὲ ὁ λαὸς τὸν κύριον καὶ ἐπίστευσαν τῷ θεῷ καὶ Μωυσῇ τῷ θεράποντι αὐτοῦ) (Ex 31:21). Hence, Morgan is indeed right to point out that the emphasis in the use of πιστεύω is on the positive trust which allows Abraham, and indeed the Israelites in general, to do extraordinary, even seemingly mad, things in the service of, and in response to, the promises of God: Abraham sets off to sacrifice Isaac; Moses follows God's command to liberate his people; the Jewish people follow Moses into the desert.[33]

What I do not think Morgan sufficiently emphasizes is the sense in which this cascading transfer of *pistis*, from God Himself to his prophets and thence to his people, whether of the Old Covenant or the New, is really, at least at the level of human psychology, a matter of persuasion. It is to this theme that we shall devote much of Chapter 2, in relation to the dialogues of Plato. The verb

[33] Morgan 186.

peitho (πείθω), to persuade (the middle peithomai (πείθομαι) means to obey) is closely related to *pistis*. This sense of *pistis* as the object of persuasion or indeed, persuasive rhetoric, the *logos* that persuades and commands acceptance and obedience, is significant because in the act of persuasion, propositional belief and personal trust are necessarily intertwined. It is this persuasion which subsequently comes to define the community which forms the Church of God, the πιστεύοντες, the faithful followers of Christ who trust in the triumph of God's justice in the Kingdom of God.

The book of Job, however, would seem to call into question the permanence and reliability of God's justice. As Morgan sees it, the book's narrative threatens to undermine the entire nexus of faith between God and His people. Job, for his part, feels that he has held up his end of the bargain: he has been pious and just, and lived a life of charity (Job 29:25). So far, he has trusted in God, and yet it seems that God has betrayed that trust (30:20). God has delivered him up to Satan to suffer innumerable privations and hardships. Job has been faithful, and yet God seemingly has not been. But if it is indeed impossible that God should be unfaithful to his people, the fault must lie with Job: though Job may seem to persevere in justice, his justice remains forever incommensurate with God's perfect justice. It will never be possible for Job, apparently the faithful servant of the Lord, to stand guiltless before the throne of God, ever to live in harmony with God, made fully like unto His divine nature (9:1-20 passim). Justification, for Job, would seem impossible.

God's response to the charge that He has abandoned His covenant is that Job's conception of how God makes good on His bond of *pistis* is too narrow. God is bound less by a covenant with certain holy men and women, or even with a certain community of people, than to all of creation.[34] With this He has not abandoned His bond of *pistis*: He provides for the birds and the animals of the fields, and they in term put their trust in Him to provide (39:9-12). One is reminded here of Christ's injunction to save no thought for what we eat or wear, since the birds of the fields do none of this, and yet God provides for them (Mt 6:26).

[34] St Thomas writes that all of creation in some sense praises God (I, II Q 109), whence, I think, we may gain some notion of the theology of God's self-vindication towards the end of the Book of Job.

Job's use of *pistis* in fact allows us to see the cosmic scale of God's bond of trust with creation. God's people may and often do suffer much, and every affliction which even the most faithful servant of God undergoes may not, in the first instance, seem capable of being reconciled with God's justice, manifested and actualized by the bond of trust which He holds with His people. On a cosmic scale, however, all of reality, which God called good in creation, is and will remain subject to His providence, His divine plan, though that plan be not always or even often discernible to us this side of eternity.

The hellenic Wisdom of Solomon is also rich in its use of *pistis*. We hear God who reveals Himself to those who do not disbelieve in Him (μὴ ἀπιστοῦσιν αὐτῷ) (Wisdom 1:2). But, as if to gloss the meaning of *pistis*, or *apistis*, in this case, the writer opens with a command to the princes of this world to 'love justice', for those 'who judge the world' to 'think on the Lord with goodness, and with singleness of heart seek Him' (1:1). In Chapter 3 we have the assurance that 'they will rule the people and judge the nations, and the Lord will preside over them, unto the ages, who have believed in the Lord (οἱ πεποιθότες ἐν αὐτῷ), and those who are faithful in love (οἱ πιστοὶ ἐν ἀγάπῃ) will remain in Him, for grace and mercy are upon His chosen people' (3:8-9). In both passages, 'the faithful' are defined in relation to their love and justice: There is the explicit command to 'love justice'; the implication that those who 'judge the nations are those who have been faithful to the Lord' (1:1-2). Those worthy to dispense justice are those who love justice. For those who believe embody and are indeed defined by a certain ethic, a certain way of living and being. The sort of people who believe are those who love justice, those who, when placed in positions of authority, judge with probity. To be faithful involves loving, and living justly involves seeking the Lord with all one's heart, all one's mind, and all one's strength; and only thus will the wise be able to 'think on the Lord' and 'understand the truth' (3:8). Both passages seem to echo Proverbs, which declares that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (9:10), where *phobos* retains the place which, in the New Testament, *pistis* occupies, to designate the way in which human beings are supposed to relate to God.

There is, to be sure, a certain amount of resonance between Old and New Testaments in this respect: there is Mary's affirmation in Luke, part of the *Magnificat*, 'Blessed are those who fear Him throughout all generations', and,

in Job, where, as we have seen, much of the emphasis is on the state of the bond of *pistis* between God and His apparently just servant; and in the hymn to wisdom in Job 28: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding' (28:28). Significant too is the juxtaposition of *pepoithotes*, those who have believed, with *pistoi*, those who are faithful, having also the sense of those who may be relied upon.[35] As parallels, the two terms are surely meant to complement each other, to fill out the picture of what kind of person has the right orientation to God, and indeed is doing God's work; those who believe, like those who truly fear the Lord, must necessarily be upright and trustworthy.[36] Thus, biblical uses of *pistis*-related words, probably indicating concepts related to the Hebrew *emunah*, and especially where the perfect is used, may be seen to have the sense of an affirmation evoking certainty of the sure foothold, among the vicissitudes of this vale of tears, given without doubting God's place in the cosmos, the triumph of His justice, or His power to save.

What Morgan's work on the Septuagint within *Roman Faith and Christian Faith* does very well, I think, is to capture the spirit of a biblically based *pistis* inextricably linked with *dikaiosyne*. This link, far from being a variance with Greek philosophical notions of the time, could well have formed, for Hellenic Jews especially, an ideal framework within which to integrate them. Notions of faith and justice wrapped up with God's covenant with Israel, far from obliging us to read *pistis* and *dikaiosyne* through a unique biblical hermeneutic of 'Covenant Righteousness' that has nothing to do with the political and divine Justice which Plato spoke about, can and perhaps should be read as part of a philosophical framework in ways that are very congenial to Platonic thought.[37]

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[35] Morgan discusses Paul's use of *apistoi* to denote non-Christians (i.e., pagans/ non-believers) in both of Paul's Letters to the Corinthians, but does not remark upon the parallelism here. Those pagans before whom Christians shamelessly bring their lawsuits are *apistoi* (1 Cor 6:6), as are pagans, who may or may not sacrifice to idols (10:7), and those who become blinded because they do not believe (2 Cor. 4:4).

[36] Also instructive is the use of the perfect participle of *pepoitha*, which we have seen in Wisdom 3, so as to mean 'to be sure, certain', probably capturing the sense of the Hebrew *emunah*, of a firm refuge in time of trouble (Morgan 177).

[37] 'Covenant Righteousness' is N.T Wright's preferred translation of *dikaiosyne* in the Pauline Epistles.

Philo's Abrahamic Platonism

The thought of Philo of Alexandria is instructive because, as a contemporary of Paul, Philo made use of a Platonist framework to treat of questions relating to an Abrahamic faith. It suggests, at the very least, that this was a practice alive and well in the Jewish world of Paul's day. In the case of Philo at least, a firm faith in the revelations of the Abrahamic God was entirely consistent with an explicitly Platonist framework for understanding the nature of that revelation.

The most comprehensive statements of Philo's metaphysics may be found in his treatises on genesis, particularly *On the Creation Given According to Moses* (*De Opificio)* and *Allegorical Interpretations of Genesis.* Of particular note is the central role of God's logos, θεῖος λόγος, in Philo's interpretation of Genesis. His reading leans heavily on Plato's *Timaeus*: As a craftsman, God created the heavenly, incorporeal world to act as a paradigm, the architectural blueprint, if you will, of what was to be made.[38] Seeming to quote the *Timaeus* (29e) almost directly, Philo declares that God created 'because he was good, [and] he grudged not a share in existence which has of itself nothing fair and lovely while it is capable of becoming all things'.[39] In an explicit espousal of the Platonic theory of forms, Philo notes there had to have been just so many intelligible *gene* or types of things in the intelligible sphere as in unintelligible creation, because the former served as paradigm for the creation of latter. As an adherent to an Abrahamic faith, Philo holds that the moral and intellectual *locus* and *arxe*, principle and foundation, of all reality necessarily subsist in the one perfectly good Creator who revealed Himself to the Jewish people.

Philo thinks that this intelligible world, the Platonic world of ideas, subsists in the θεῖος λόγος, which is itself 'the power out of which the universe was made, holding as its source nothing less than true Goodness (πηγὴν ἔχουσα τὸ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἀγαθόν)'.[40] So as to further clarify how the Platonic theory of ideas or forms may be squared with his Abrahamic faith, Philo points out that a simpler way of understanding what the realm of ideas might mean is to note that 'the world discerned only by the intellect is nothing else than the Word of God

[38] Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* ('On the Creation'), trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library no.226, 1989), 11.
[39] Ibid., 23.
[40] Ibid., 21. This may be translated literally as 'holding the Good with truth'.

when He was already engaged in the act of creation (θεοῦ λόγον ἤδη κοσμοποιοῦντος)'. For, to use a classic analogy in Plato, 'the city discernible by the intellect alone is nothing other than the reasoning faculty of the intellect in the act of planning to found the city' (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ νοητὴ πόλις ἕτερόν τί ἐστιν ἢ ὁ τοῦ ἀρχιτέκτονος λογισμὸς ἤδη τὴν [νοητὴν] πόλιν κτίζειν διανοουμένου).[41] The creation of human beings after the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26) is understood intellectually; it is in respect of our *nous*, 'the governor of the soul', that we are made after the image and likeness of God.[42]

It may appear that any notion of human beings having been made 'after the likeness of God' would contradict the Platonic emphasis on likeness to God as a human destiny rather than a fact about our primordial souls. Philo, however, points out that the creation described in Genesis 1 is only the creation of man's soul, whereas man as body and soul is created where God breathes His Spirit into clay (Gen 2.7): 'While he who was after the [Divine] image was an object of thought only, incorporeal, neither male nor female, by nature incorruptible… the formation of the individual man, the object of sense, is a composite one, made up of earthly substance and divine breath (πνεύματος θείου)'.[43] 'Divine spirit' may also, of course, be translated here as 'Holy Spirit'. The human soul was created *ex nihilo*, as an invisible substance belonging to the intelligible realm, hence 'after the likeness…the image of God (καθ' ὁμοίωσιν… κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ)' (Gen 1:26-28), the soul was created *ex nihilo* by the 'Father and Ruler of all'. For Philo, therefore, man is 'the borderline between mortal and immortal nature, partaking of each so far as is needful…. [He] created at once mortal and immortal, mortal in respect of the body, but immortal in respect to the mind [*nous*]'.[44] It is difficult not to discern here a kind of rough outline of the Church's subsequent Christology, in which Christ is defined as both fully God (the eternal *Logos*), in respect of which He is fully immortal, and fully man, in respect of the human flesh He has assumed. In Christ's case, of course, the soul is uncreated, and indeed co-eternal with His Father in heaven; fully God.

[41] Ibid., 24.
[42] Ibid., 69.
[43] Ibid., 134.
[44] Ibid., 134.

In *Questions on Genesis* Philo says that it is specifically in relation to God's divine *logos* that man is made after the image and likeness of God:

> For nothing mortal can be made in the likeness of the most high One and Father of the Universe but only in that of the second God, who is his Logos. For it is right that the rational [part] of the human soul should be formed as an impression of the divine Logos, since the pre-Logos God is superior to every rational nature. But he who is above the Logos [and] exists in the best and in a special form—what thing that comes into being can rightfully bear his likeness? Moreover, Scripture wishes also to show that God most justly avenges the virtuous and decent man because they have a certain kinship with His Logos, of which the human mind is a likeness and image.[45]

The Christological resonance of this passage, even though a Christian cannot accept the *Logos* as a second God, remains intriguing. The greater transcendence and inaccessibility of the Father, when compared to the Divine *Logos*, through whom we are made, certainly has Johannine resonances. Dillon and Van Kooten think that Alcinous makes use of such a 'second God' *topos* in an isolated remark in the *Handboo*k: 'The end would be likening oneself to God, by which we mean, obviously, the God outside the heaven, who does not possess virtue, being superior to this'. [46] Yet the monotheism of Chapter 10 of the *Handbook* is so copiously fleshed out—Alcinous' πρότερος θεός is specifically referred to as The Good, the Beautiful and Truth—that this passage seems somewhat of an outlier. It seems to me, rather, that what Alcinous has in mind is a secondary, intermediary divine principle which instantiates the qualities that have their source in the utterly incomprehensible 'Father' of the Godhead, in a way that make it possible for human beings to participate in them, but is not in itself a separate deity, a fully independent Second God. In Philo, the Divine *Logos* would seem to play this role, and one can certainly not deny that Philo, as a Jew, was a monotheist.

Van Kooten thinks that the Johannine resonances of Philo's logos-theology form a useful background to understanding Paul:

> Using the Philonic writings as a sort of 'conversion table' it now becomes possible to see that the way in which John phrases his Christology in terms of Logos and the True is essentially the same in which Paul talks of Christ as the image of God. It is Philo who shows that the image of God is closely related to the true invisible light (*De*

[45] Philo, *Questiones in Genesim*, 2.62.
[46] *Handbook* 28.3. ed. Dillon.

> *Opificio Mundi* 31) and 'equivalent to the Logos by whom the whole universe was framed' (*De Specialibus legibus* 1.81)…. The Cosmic Logos, on which reasoning is based, can either be depicted in a Platonic way, as the soul of the Cosmos (cf. *Timaeus* 30a-c) or, more appropriately, in view of Philo's Jewish predilections, as the divine image.[47]

As Van Kooten points out, Philo's metaphysics seem to leave room for the *logos* as both the world soul of the *Timaeus* and that in whose image we are made: The *logismos* of our soul, the highest element of the tripartite Platonic soul, has splintered off, according to Philo, from the cosmic soul, the Divine *Logos*, and therefore constitutes a 'faithful impress' of the divine image (*De mutatione nominum* 223).[48]

Particularly platonistic is Philo's description in the *De Opificio* of the soul's ascent to the contemplation of heavenly things:

> Again, when on *soaring wing* it has contemplated the atmosphere and all its phases, it is borne yet higher to the ether and the *circuit of heaven*, and is whirled round with the dances of the planets and fixed stars, in accordance with the laws of perfect music, following that *love of wisdom* which guides its steps. And so, carrying its gaze beyond the confines of all substance discernible by sense, it comes to a point at which it reaches out after the intelligible world, and on descrying in that world sights of surpassing loveliness, *even the patterns and originals* of the things of sense which it saw here, it is *seized by a sober intoxication* (*Phaedrus* 244a), like those filled with a corybantic frenzy, and is inspired, possessed by a longing far other than theirs, and a nobler desire. Wafted by this to the topmost arch of the things perceptible to the mind, it seems to be on its way to the Great King Himself; but, amid its longing to see Him, pure and untampered rays of concentrated light stream forth like a torrent, so that by its gleams the eye of the understanding is dazzled.[49]

This description of ascent to God is heavily imbued with *motives* from Plato's *Phaedrus*: a *nous* that is winged (*ptenos* πτηνός) (*Phaedrus* 246b-d, 252c, 256d) ascending the arch of the circuit of heaven (247b-c), propelled onwards by a love of wisdom (248d) and a kind of sober intoxication (244a), so as to see the pattern and originals of sensible things (248a); it has, indeed, the tone and tenor of the ascent of Plato's Philosopher, who is carried upwards by divine frenzy towards the 'real, eternal, absolute' (247d). Philo, at least, an almost exact contemporary of Paul and a fellow Jew, thought very platonistically indeed.

[47] Van Kooten 56.
[48] Ibid.
[49] *De Opificio* 71 (emphases added).

Platonist or Christian God? Harnack's Anti-Hellenism

Such heavily imbued monotheism among pagan Platonists raises the question of which god these authors had in mind, what characteristics they applied to him, and whether their dispositions in moral theology, however compatible in the abstract with the theological problem of justification, has any relevance to the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob of whom Paul wrote and preached. For Philo, as we have seen, a deeply Platonic outlook seemed not at all to militate against an Abrahamic faith, but in fact to be compelled by it. It was Augustine who, centuries after Paul, claimed the Platonic philosophy was the extant philosophical system most congenial to the Christian faith.[50] Closer to Paul's time, Platonist Christian converts such as Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria were Platonist philosophers before they became Christians and, as we shall see, saw their Christian conversion not as an overthrowing but as a perfection of their philosophy. To them, at least, Platonism remained a good, if not the best, philosophical frame to apply to the problems of Christian theology.

Certainly, since Justin the Apostate's short-lived decree against the use of a Hellenic curriculum[51] by Christian teachers, and perhaps even since the Council of Jerusalem,[52] the marked influence of Greek philosophy and culture on the development of Christian doctrine has been a source of controversy.[53] Could a system of thought arising from an essentially pagan culture have corrupted a gospel first propagated by Jews in an essentially Jewish context? Perhaps the scholar who most famously answered this question in the affirmative was the great Church historian Adolph von Harnack who wrote, in his magnum opus *The History of Dogma*: 'The knowledge of Christ crucified, to which he subordinated all other knowledge as only of preparatory value, had nothing in

[50] *City of God* 10.6.
[51] For a good treatment of the extent to which the Church Fathers, educated according to the principles of Greek *paideia*, used Greek learning and philosophy to claim credibility for the Christian doctrine, and to confront the political and theological questions with a pagan culture on its own terms see Susanna Elm*, Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 2012).
[52] Acts 15.
[53] See Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.

common with Greek philosophy, while the idea of justification and the doctrine of the Spirit (Rom. VIII), which together formed the peculiar contents of his Christianity, were irreconcilable with the moralism and the religious ideals of Hellenism'.[54] Among the problems with such a sweeping claim is what exactly Harnack means by Hellenism. Harnack's view is that the dogmatic and doctrinal development of the faith proceeded by means of Greek modes of thought so that Christianity could place itself on firm and lasting ground within the largely Greek-speaking Roman Empire.[55] For Harnack, this Greek influence is chiefly felt in the codification of doctrine and the philosophical formulations of the creeds, as set up against the independent and enthusiastic spirit of 'The Gospel of Jesus Christ according to his testimony concerning himself'.[56]

Yet much of Harnack's own summary of the Gospel is strongly redolent of the psychology of the philosophic life exalted by Greek philosophy beginning with Plato. For Harnack, the Gospel is 'the glad message of the government of the world and of every individual soul by the almighty and holy God, the Father and Judge':[57]

> In receiving this message with steadfast faith and charity: the soul, which is pure and holy in connection with God, and in imitation of the Divine perfection, is eternally preserved with God. This dominion of God imposes on men a law, an old and yet a new law, viz., that of the Divine perfection and therefore of undivided love to God and to our neighbour. In this love, where it sways the inmost feeling, is presented the better righteousness [justice]…which corresponds to the perfection of God.[58]

Why Harnack thinks this so antithetical to Greek philosophy is puzzling. For it would not take a keen reader of Greek philosophy long to find, in this summary, a very acute description of the psychology of Plato's Philosopher who, by seeking the Good, attempts to fashion his soul after a divine pattern, a divine justice, and so be likened unto the same.

I intend to dispute Harnack's thesis by using Plato's conception of the philosopher as a heuristic tool to understand the system of ethics in which Paul

[54] Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan (Boston: Little Brown, 1901), 57.
[55] Ibid., 47.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., 58 (excerpted).

may be working in Romans 1–6 and Galatians 1–3, 5–6. I will argue that Paul's view essentially mirrors the Platonic view that emphasizes the essential and sufficient priority of a kind of faithful seeking out of God in order to be justified with the divine. Yet crucially, in both the Platonic and the Pauline ethical system, such faithful seeking can only be actuated by means of a reception of the divine's own gift.

Schweitzer's Pauline Mysticism: A Non-Hellenic Alternative?

Also influential for those who reject the influence of Greek Philosophy, or Hellenism more broadly, upon Paul and his doctrine of justification is the work of the Alsatian polymath Albert Schweitzer. Schweitzer speaks of Pauline mysticism not along the lines of Platonic or even Stoic contemplative mysticism but as what he sees as a much more Jewish mysticism centring upon a hope of eschatological participation in Christ's being, specifically in His death and resurrection. In this way, or at least in his assertion of an essentially Jewish background to the apparent novelties of Paul's though, Schweitzer is perceived to have, in a sense, anticipated Sanders, and indeed, the 'New Perspectives' movement in New Testament scholarship more broadly.[59]

Schweitzer is, I think, largely correct that any purported Stoic influence on Paul is not especially predominant anywhere other than in the quotation from Aratus, in the speech to the Athenians on the Areopagus.[60] As Schweitzer summarizes:

> the mysticism of being in God is unthinkable where the relationship between God and nature is set out as unmediated. Paul, however, is far removed from

[59] N.T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters*, (London: SPCK, 2015).

[60]. It does not seem to me, however, that Paul's oration on the Areopagus is any more Stoic than Platonic, where the famous 'God in whom we live and move and have our being' is taken in context. For we must not neglect what proceeds it: 'God, from one man, made the whole human race to dwell upon the face of the earth, arranging and fashioning the seasons, and the boundaries of the inhabited world, so that we should seek him, if perhaps we should grope for him, and find him, for he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and breathe and have our being' (Acts 17:24-28). It seems that the ethical vocation to find God through seeking him out, and furthermore, to be explicitly given this vocation by God Himself, works very much within the framework of Platonic ethics as substantiated by the figure of the Philosopher.

> the *Deus Sive Natura* of Stoic thought. His worldview is not of the immanent but of the transcendent God.[61]

On Schweitzer's reading of Paul, we come to partake in God's being, not simply by virtue of our being created by him and dwelling in the created world prepared for us by him, but spiritually, rising to the transcendent and supernatural by our being in Christ.[62] God is present to us in Christ and by the Spirit that raised him, but also distant enough so that the incarnation was required to bring us back to Him. Hence, a philosophy founded on a concept such as Deus Sive Natura cannot withstand a system so eschatologically oriented as Christianity: 'Because of his eschatological worldview he [Paul] assumes that so long as the natural world persists up into the Messianic age, the Angelic/Celestial powers continue to stand between God and man, and a direct relationship between the two [apart from 'being in Christ'] remains impossible'.[63] To be sure, I think Schweitzer over-emphasizes the merely eschatological bent of Paul's thought. For what is consummated at the last day is, at the very least, prefigured within a reality present to us even now, in the presence of Jesus Christ, by His Spirit. Schweitzer's view is, I think, correct, that because Paul assumes a vast chasm between God, in His fullness, and our fallen nature, which requires a supernatural power, played out in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, to unite the two, the stoic *Weltanschauung* of *Deus Sive Natura* is an impossible point of departure for him.

Schweitzer's rejection of any important Greek/Hellenic influence on Paul is, however, deficient. Though Schweitzer perhaps rightly emphasises the limited resonances between Paul's theology and that of Hellenic mystery cults, he neglects to entertain resonances between Pauline thought and not simply a kind of generic Hellenised mysticism but the particular mysticism exemplified by the paragon of the Platonic Philosopher. Schweitzer's dichotomy between a Hellenistic mysticism of Vergottung (deification) and Christian 'Gemeinschaft mit dem gottlichen Wesen' (community with the Divine Being)' that is

[61] Albert Schweitzer, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus*, (Mohr Siebeck: 1981; 1930). The translations of this text are my own.
[62] Ibid., 10-11.
[63] Ibid., 18. Rom. 8:38-39: 'For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, not powers present or future, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'. Schweitzer's emphasis in this phrase would seem to be on its use of the future tense, that the condition described is an eschatological state rather than a present reality.

specifically with and in Jesus Christ is false. The two concepts are in no way mutually exclusive. For it is by participation in Christ, through His Spirit, that we are made like unto God, and so deified.[64] Schweitzer is of course correct that one cannot find a direct parallel with the expression 'with Christ and in Christ' in the Pagan/Hellenistic literature of antiquity, for it does not speak directly of Christ.[65] But participation in the divine virtues, the fruit of a philosophical seeking after God as a result of God's own action in bringing us to Himself, strikes at the very heart of Platonic ethics, as we shall show in Chapter 2.

Schweitzer is, I think, on surer ground when speaking directly of a Pauline mysticism in relation to the theme of justification by faith: he does well to emphasize the impossibility of viewing this doctrine in isolation, as somehow apart from a notion of participation in Christ by means of His Spirit: 'Justice comes to the believer specifically because he, being in possession of the Spirit, shares in Christ's being, and is therefore in the condition of His dying and rising again'.[66] Justification comes about 'auf grund des Glaubens durch das Sein in Christo'.[67] In fact the Pauline 'Body of Christ' is for Schweizer but a drawn-out analogy expressing the idea that salvation comes by the Spirit, and through participation in Christ's death and resurrection.[68]

The way in which Schweitzer understands the forgiveness of sins associated with Christ's death and resurrection is instructive: he consistently gives primacy to Christ's saving us by bringing us into a metaphysical participation in His dying and rising again. On Schweitzer's reading, forgiveness and Christ's propitiation for our sins make no sense if not as a dying to sin, and rising to eternal life: *Sündenvergebung* is understood as *Sündenvernichtung*, the forgiveness of sins as the destruction of sin.[69] Justification by faith is, for Schweizer, but ancillary to the primary notion of dying and rising again in the 'being of Christ':

> That justification by faith has no ethical meaning for Paul is not decisive. For in Paul's mysticism, ethics is naturally connected to the concept of forgiveness of sins and redemption; a Christian way of life simply a

[64] See Gal. 3.27; Rom. 8:2-8; Eph. 5:12.
[65] Schweitzer 16.
[66] Ibid., 208.
[67] Ibid., 202
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 217.

consequence of the mystical reality of dying and rising with Christ; ethics, for the believer, simply a consequence of this spiritual reality'.[70]

Thus, according to Schweitzer, Paul's doctrine of justification by faith is simply a *Nebenlehre* to the principal teaching of participation in the dying and rising of Christ. However, Schweitzer does not, to my mind, sufficiently explore the possibility that the doctrine of justification by faith may have its own ethical content and is not, for Paul, simply a *Nebenlehre*. Indeed, that the Christian faith must, by its very nature, be descriptive of a certain way of living, the overall orientation of one's life towards God, is not sufficiently entertained by Schweizer. The primacy which Schweitzer gives to the concept of participation in Christ's being is instructive, but what this concept is supposed to mean, ethically and indeed metaphysically, does not, alas, seem to be Schweitzer's principle concern. My contention is that the slogan, if you will, of justification by faith, and its gloss, as Schweitzer would have it, as participation in Christ's being, has in fact deep resonances within Platonic ethics, and that an exploration of such resonances would serve to better elucidate the meaning of justification.

Platonist Commitments in the Abstract

In his magisterial account of Platonism, Lloyd Gerson outlined what he calls 'Ur-Platonism', a list of philosophic commitments to which all Platonists adhere even as they can and have differed as to the positive philosophic construction which they propose in relation to the 'first principal of all'.[71] What all these constructions have in common, according to Gerson, is a quest for 'explanatory adequacy' in their philosophical construction. It is, according to Gerson, an animating principal of Plato's own philosophical disquisitions 'that the true explanatory framework will converge on the fewest number of principles'. What Platonists therefore sought in their metaphysics was a unified metaphysical framework with an 'auto-explicable starting point' or *arxe*.[72] Almost inevitably, this involved some incarnation of the un-hypothetical Idea of the Good.

[70] Ibid., 220.
[71] Lloyd Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism*, (Ithaca: Cornell, 2013).
[72] Ibid., 126.

In Plato, Gerson contends, citing *Timaeus* 48c, the Idea of the Good, the source of the forms and of all being, though beyond essence, is nevertheless distinct from the Creator of the cosmos, the Demiurge, who fashions the cosmos on the model of a perfect paradigm, consisting of the forms, which itself is considered to be a living creature, the World Soul. But in later Platonist writing, beginning with Aristotle, the Prime Mover is accorded the explanatory power of the un-hypothetical Idea of the Good.[73] According to Alcinous' *Handbook*, the Idea of the Good from Plato's *Republic* and the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* are one and the same, what he calls 'The One Primary God' (*O Protos Theos*):

> eternal, ineffable, self-sufficient, ever perfect divinity, being truth, measure, and the good. I am not listing these terms as being distinct from one another, but on the assumption that one single thing is being denoted by all of them. He is The Good because he benefits all things according to their capacities, being the cause of all good. He is the beautiful because he is himself of his own nature perfect and commensurable; Truth because he is the origin of all truth as the sun is of all life; He is Father, through being the cause of all things and bestowing order on the heavenly intellect and the soul of the world in accordance with himself and his own thoughts. By his own will he has filled all things with himself and his own thoughts, raising up the soul of the world in accordance with himself, and turning it towards himself, as being the cause of his intellect. It is this latter that, set in order by the Father, itself imposes order on all of nature in this world.[74]

It is this 'Primary God', the Father of the cosmos, the Highest Good and Demiurge, possessed of *nous* (intellect) and *boulesis* (will), that, though he eternally thinks the Platonic Forms, remains the simple, ineffable cause of all things.[75] On Gerson's view, it is this Primary God that becomes the single God of the Platonists in Paul's time.

The Primary God's apparent complexity and multifacetedness would, according to Gerson, not have perturbed most Platonists, because of their

[73] Gerson argued for Aristotle as a dissident Platonists in *Aristotle and Other Platonists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006). He similarly argues, in *From Plato to Platonism*, that Aristotle was an adherent of 'Ur-Platonism' in search of a unified metaphysical framework with an 'auto-explicable' starting point. As such, the idea of the Good, in Aristotle, becomes the Demiurge and the Paradigmatic Form or World Soul all brought together within a simple, unitary First Principle of all, the Prime Mover (Gerson, 110).
[74] Alcinous, *Handbook*, 164.29–165.4. trans. Dillon.
[75] Gerson 196.

necessarily shared commitment to 'anti-nominalism'. According to Gerson, Platonic anti-nominalism rejects the principle that two non-identical things cannot be the same.[76] Nominalism is normally conceived of as the opposite of Realism, the idea that abstract concepts or ideas have not just a hypothetical or nominal existence but really exist in some substantial way. A belief in the Platonic forms, whether as separable entities, as Aristotle claims Plato thought they were, or somehow unified within the intellect (*nous*) of the Demiurge or Prime Mover as the Primary God, as the middle Platonists of Paul's day thought, presupposes a commitment to Realism and hence anti-nominalism.[77] The other consequence of a realist commitment to the forms is the belief that even if two things are non-identical, they can still in some sense both partake of any given single form. This principle of unity within difference, is, according to Gerson, a natural consequence of the realist commitment, and what allows Platonists to bring the myriad forms into the unity of a single Godhead. Gerson writes, 'If sameness in difference is possible or genuine predication is possible, then separate forms must exist where their separation exists in the self-defeating sense only'.[78] Indeed, Gerson concludes, 'there are good grounds for maintaining in the [Platonic] Dialogues that 'although Plato makes form completely independent of the sensible world, he did not ever represent the forms as being completely independent of each other or of a divine intellect or the super-ordinate idea of The Good'.[79] For the primary God, both eternal intellect and unmoved mover could be supposed to intellect 'those principles and causes of intelligible properties of sensible substances, i.e. the forms'.[80] The main point here is that, whether or not Plato himself had a monotheistic theology congenial to Christian speculation on questions such as justification, there is a strong argument to be made that a major assumption of Platonism, realism/antinominalism, at the very least facilitates a monotheistic theology.

[76] Ibid., 13.
[77] Ibid., 109.
[78] Ibid., 104
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.,110.

Lloyd Gerson's Criteria for Platonism

Anti-nominalism, as we have outlined it above, is the first of what Gerson calls the Five 'Platonic Antis', or special metaphysical commitments that rule out positions that Gerson believes no Platonist can hold, and together form the basis of what he calls 'Ur-Platonism'. These five commitments are, for Gerson, common to all Platonists, and upon them, he asserts, Platonists construct various (though not therefore contradictory) theories of a unifying 'First Principle of All'. It indeed essential to add, even though I do not feel that Gerson emphasizes this last point sufficiently, that it is very much a *sine qua non* of Platonism that it posits such a unifying 'First Principle of All' that is not only 'auto-explicable' but also purely intelligible, rather than sensible and material. But if Gerson has perhaps not done justice to the whole spirit of Platonism, or indeed to its more mystical and spiritual side, in proposing these five propositions as the foundation of Platonist thought, he is, I feel, nonetheless correct that such commitments seem to have been endorsed by all Platonists. Besides the commitment to 'Anti-Nominalism', already discussed, Gerson's other 'Platonic Antis' are 'Anti-Materialism', 'Anti-Mechanism', 'Anti-Relativism', and 'Anti-Scepticism'. Anti-Materialism, as Gerson sees it, is a commitment to the proposition 'that it is false that the only things that exist are bodies and their properties'.[81] It goes without saying that any belief in a heavenly, invisible reality behind and beyond mere physical reality, of 'powers and principalities and dominions', is incompatible with materialism. [82] Anti-Mechanism Gerson defines as the conviction that materialist explanations are ultimately insufficient. On the mechanistic view, we would, of Aristotle's four causes, be left only with notions of material and efficient cause. Such a view is irreconcilable with a metaphysics that posits both a sensible and intelligible realm, or indeed any notion of reality beyond the visible and the material. Such a view was always unacceptable to those—including, Gerson thinks, all Platonists—who proposed that any given cause (*aitia*) must be a different kind of thing from that which it explains.[83] For instance, the explanation of the movement of a cart cannot be expressed in terms of the physical movement of the cart, for this is exactly what it is trying to explain, but must be an

[81] Ibid., 19.
[82] Eph. 6:12; Col. 2:9.
[83] Gerson 12.

explanation of an entirely different kind: it could be the decision of the person pushing the cart to move the vehicle, for this is an act of will, in view of some good to be procured, and therefore not merely descriptive and physical. As Socrates observed in the Phaedo, the *aitia* of his sitting in a prison cell about to drink the hemlock cannot be those movements of his joints and limbs necessary to bring him there (for that would be merely a description, not a cause or *aitia*), but the decision of the majority of the Athenian jurors judging his case that he was guilty of corrupting the youth, and recognizing and worshipping other gods from those accustomed to be worshipped in the city.[84]

It should be noted that Paul's recurring *motif* of the power of the spirit set against the power of the flesh relies absolutely upon a rejection of both materialism and mechanism. Where God is almighty (*pantokrator*), and indeed the primary cause of all that is, and rather than conforming Himself to a fleshy existence takes on and sanctifies, or indeed, deifies fleshly, mortal man, begetting his son, the Eternal Word, from the Virgin Mary, any purely mechanistic and materialistic picture, even that of the Stoics who relied very heavily on the metaphysics of Plato's *Timaeus*, is untenable. It is will (*boulesis*), sprit (*pneuma*) and intellect that account for matter, not the other way round. For indeed, Paul tells us that thinking primarily of the concerns of the flesh is inimicable to the law of God, 'but so many that are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God…. For you do not have the spirit of sonship for fear; but receive that Spirit of Sonship whereby you cry Abba, Father. The same Spirit testifies to our spirit, that we are sons of God' (Rom 8:16). Paul also says that 'Christ was raised from the dead by the operation of the Spirit and the will of God the Father; and if this same Spirit dwells in us, it too will raise us from the dead at the last day' (Rom 8:11) This Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, non-physical and essentially invisible, exists indeed as a separate kind of reality from the physical body in which it activates, that which it causes, and indeed accounts for the ensoulment of a human in fleshy bodies, and, in a very special case, the conception of the Son of God in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the rising of Christ from the dead, and our rising from the dead at the last day if indeed we are, by the same spirit, sanctified so as to share in the body of Christ.

[84] *Phaedo* 100; *Apology* 14.

Gerson's fifth 'Platonic Anti' is 'Anti-Scepticism', the belief that genuine knowledge is in fact possible, or as Gerson puts it, 'the real can be present to the cognitive'.[85] To be sure, many of the so-called early Socratic dialogues are imbued with a heavy scepticism as to the possibility of true knowledge. In the *Apology*, Socrates himself takes the Oracle's pronouncement that no Athenian is as wise as he to mean that he is wise only in the sense that he knows that he knows nothing. Yet this type of scepticism should be seen, within the larger Platonic corpus, as a sort of apophatic epistemology in which nothing is truly known until its archetype, its form, is known. Such a view is confirmed by the repeated insistence in Plato that knowledge of the forms is possible, if not in this life, then either before or after this life, or both.[86] In the *Republic*, we learn that through the 'habit of the Good' knowledge of the Good is not impossible for the Philosopher.[87] One will recall too the Platonist dictum that no man errs willingly; right action can roughly be equated with right knowledge.[88] If knowledge were impossible within the Platonic system, therefore, right action would also be impossible; yet the adjudication of some actions as just and others as unjust pervades the Platonic corpus.

One might similarly be tempted to read Paul as a Sceptic. But one quickly finds that the limits of Pauline scepticism are more or less those of Platonic or Socratic scepticism, in the sense that knowledge of the invisible realities of God is given pre-eminence over merely mundane impressions that will pass away in the new heaven and the new earth. But Paul clearly makes an exception for the knowledge that God has revealed in entering that world: 'Yet I consider all things as nothing when compared with the superiority of the knowledge of Christ' (Phil 3:8), a foretaste of the knowledge of the heavenly kingdom to come.[89]

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[85] Gerson 12.
[86] See *Phaedrus* 247a for the myth of souls following the gods around the vault of heaven, in view of the forms. The theory of recollection posits the soul's knowledge of the forms from before it was ensouled (*Meno* 85d).
[87] See *Republic* 504–505. The Philosopher's seeking, through a faith in the divine that works by love, will be a particular theme of Chapter 2.
[88] *Protagoras* 345c-e.
[89] See also 1 Cor 2:2: 'For I resolved to know nothing while I was among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified'.

Platonist Christianity and Justification in Clement of Alexandria

Christian writers of the early Church frequently held a view of justification 'in Jesus Christ' understood in terms of the Platonist idea of being transformed into the likeness of God. This is nowhere perhaps more evident than in the work of Clement of Alexandria, the 2nd-century founder of the catechetical school of that city. In Clement, of particular note is the way in which the Platonic ethical goal of 'likeness to God' is shown to be uniquely obtainable through a life of Christian faith.[90] For Clement, faith is 'the beginning of action, being the foundation of rational choice' and 'directly becomes knowledge, reposing on a sure foundation.' [91] Since the first principles of the most important knowledge (i.e. of the principles that stand behind the cosmos, including, of course, the 'First Principle of All') are ultimately unprovable, true knowledge must rely on faith as its hypothetical starting point.[92]

The reason for the centrality that Clement gives to faith in the *Stromateis* is clear enough: Knowledge about God, the highest knowledge possible, remains necessarily imperfect because God, as infinite and atemporal, can never fully be comprehended. Any assertions about God and the supernatural realm must therefore remain in the domain of faith. Yet the assertions of faith have, nevertheless, the character of a certainty of will.[93] Whereas a firm persuasion about things that are seen may take the form of knowledge, firm persuasion about things unseen takes the form of faith. Yet even those activities pertaining merely to the sensible realm must be done with that firm commitment to the Right and True which can only be born of faith.

Clement takes Paul to commend faith as a spiritual virtue worthy of perfection and conducive to a philosophic life leading to salvation. Clement sees this in Paul's observation that 'the justice of God is revealed from faith to faith' (Rom. 1.17):

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[90] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2 trans. William Wilson, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 2.19, 2.22.
[91] Ibid., 2.2.
[92] Ibid., 2.5.
[93] Ibid.

> The apostle, then, manifestly announces a two-fold faith, or rather one which admits of growth and perfection; for the common faith lies beneath as a foundation. To those, therefore, who desire to be healed, and are moved by faith, he added, 'Thy faith hath saved thee.' But that which is excellently built upon is consummated in the believer, and is again perfected by the faith which results from instruction in the word, in order for the performance of the commandments.[94]

In order for faith to save, it has to justify, and to justify it has to be able to form the soul of man in such a way that it becomes like unto the divine soul, and fashioned after the pattern of divine justice:

> For the tripartite soul is saved by obedience, through the spiritual power hidden in it by faith; or because the power of the Word which is given to us, being strong and powerful, draws to itself secretly and invisibly every one who receives it, and keeps it within himself, and brings his whole system into unity.[95]

Thus, for Clement, the divine gift of Faith is the power that harmonizes and unifies the soul so that it may be likened after a divine pattern. In the *Republic*, Plato conceived of the justice of the soul on the analogy of justice as discerned in the city-state: Just as in a just city all the classes perform their characteristic function well enough to ensure the harmonization of the whole; so the three parts of the soul, the *logos* (mind), *thymos* (passion), and *epithumia* (emotion), will be brought into unity and harmony.[96]

Instructive, also, is the extent to which Clement's general pattern of Christian ethics follows Platonist themes, particularly that of 'assimilation to God'. Clement interprets Deuteronomy's injunction to 'Walk after the Lord thy God, and keep my commandments' (13:4) within a framework of the Platonic ethics of divine assimilation: 'For the law calls assimilation following; and such a following to the utmost of its power assimilates.'[97] Clement interprets Paul's ethics along a similar line: The goal of Paul's command to 'become servants to God, have your fruit unto holiness and the end of everlasting life'(Rom. 6:22) is what sets us on the path to 'assimilation as the goal, in so far as it is possible, with right reason (*kata orthon logon*)'.[98] Clement's exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11 is even more overtly Platonic. Here Paul exhorts the Corinthians: 'Be followers

[94]Ibid., 5.1.
[95]Ibid., 5.12.
[96] Plato, *Republic*, 504d.
[97] Clement, 2.19.
[98] Ibid., 2.22.

of me, as also I am of Christ…. If you are of me and I of Christ, then you are imitators of Christ, and Christ of God' (1Cor3). Clement concludes, 'Assimilation to God, then, so that as far as possible man becomes righteous and holy with wisdom, he [Paul] lays down *as the aim of faith*, and the goal to be that restitution of the promise which is effected by faith' (emphasis added).[99] For Van Kooten, this passage is of particular importance because 'the Stoic doctrine of *imitation* of God is now merged with the Platonic notion of *assimilation* to God.'[100]

Clement's Platonic interpretation of Judaeo-Christian ethics is, in a sense, unsurprising, since he, along with Justin Martyr, held that Plato had been himself inspired by Moses to develop his doctrines (a theory later rejected by Augustine on grounds of chronology).[101] Clement even believes Plato to have all but predicted the Christian 'economy of salvation', where Socrates claims in the *Republic* that the truly just man, in order to be proved as such, would have to be bound and scourged and 'having suffered all evils…be impaled' (361e).[102]

Augustine and 'the Platonists'

Given the heavily imbued Platonism of early Hellenic Christian writers, which we have already to some extent sketched, it is not at all surprising to find that the great Western Church Father St Augustine thought he found an almost full-fledged Christian metaphysic in what he calls 'the books of the Platonists'; and, indeed, took John 1:1-12 to be a fair summary of the Platonist theology:

> And therein I read, not indeed in the selfsame words, but to the very same purpose, persuaded by many reasons, and of several kinds, that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made. In that which was made was life, and the life was the light, and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. And that the soul of man, though it gives testimony to the light, is not that light, but the Word. God Himself is that true light that lights every man that cometh into the world; and He

[99] Ibid., 2.22. Quoted in Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context*, 172.
[100] Van Kooten 172.
[101] Clement, *Stromateis*, 5.14.
[102] Ibid.

> was in the world, and that world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.[103]

In the same chapter Augustine goes on to say that he found something of the theology of the *logos* in 'the Platonists':

> Again, I read there that the word [*verbum]* was not born of flesh and blood, not by the will of any man, but of God.... That before and outside of [*super*] Your Only-Begotten remained unchanging, coeternal with You, and that souls partook of His fullness in order to become blessed, and that they, by participation in his immanent wisdom, become wise….[104] Afterwards, when I was admonished by the books of the Platonists to seek incorporeal truth, I looked upon Your invisible essence [*invisibilia tua*] which is understood through those things that are made; taken aback, I sensed that, though I was hindered from contemplation by the shadows of my soul, I was sure that You were infinite, yet not thoroughly diffused through both the finite and infinite, that You are truly always the same, and in no way, and by no power, can You be different or otherwise, and all other things may be shown by this sure proof; that they are.[105]

These words, even taken with the qualifications which we will set out shortly, are astonishing in their specificity and scope: The notion seems not merely that the doctrine espoused by the Platonists was amenable to the more developed theology of the Christian Church, which lived with the insights and benefits to be procured from the Christ Event, but that the theology of the Platonists and that of the Church are nearly identical.

In Chapter 17 of the same book of the *Confessions* we get a first-hand description of a kind of Platonic assent to God. Yet this, like all Augustine's adapting of a *merely* Platonic mind-set, proves unsatisfactory in the end. The reason seems to be, again and again, that the ethic of humility, which is showcased and embodied in the life and death of Him who is both God and man, is not sufficiently stressed. There is something a tad elitist, it seems, in the mystical assent to know God, which does not sufficiently stress the obedience to a God who is, in his full glory, beyond comprehension. The basic revelation of Christ, for Augustine, is that God *has* made Himself known to us, in the form of

[103]Augustine, *Confessions*, 7.9. Translations of Augustine, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.
[104] Ibid., 7.10.
[105] Ibid., 7.20.

a servant, the God-Man, our mediator; through faith in Him we will one day be led to see Him in all His glory, face to face.[106].

But the example of the one who is true God and true man shows that becoming like God is not a mere spiritual exercise, as certain readings of Plato might suggest, but concerns the whole manner of life lived, and indeed, the whole man, both body and soul subsisting together, rather than the total dictatorship of the incorporeal intellect. It is not the notion of God's Son, His wisdom, a divine *logos* representing (i.e. speaking for) and also embodying God's whole essence, that, for Augustine, is absent from the Platonic picture, but the man Jesus Christ Himself. This may seem entirely obvious: If we are dealing with Plato himself, he would never have had the benefit of being a witness, either first- or second-hand, to Christ. That the Christ Event might be philosophically coherent is apparent to Augustine, who insists, as he rebukes the Neoplatonist Porphyry, that believing in the possibility that a human soul might be completely likened unto to God, even so as to be one with God the Father, implies we must also believe it possible that the perfected soul of and with God, designed by nature to animate a body, could unite with human flesh so as to be called very God and very man.[107] Hence, after a nearly word-for-word reproduction of the John 1:1-10, presented as a summary of Platonist metaphysics, Augustine adds that '[the word] came unto his own, and they did not receive him, but to so many as received him, to them he gave the power to be sons of God, those who were believers, in his name, this I did not read' (7.9).

In *City of God*, Augustine allows for a doctrine of grace within Platonist philosophy: For the Platonists' God's favour is conceded (*concessum*) to mankind, rather than merely obtained (10.28). Yet Augustine insists that 'The grace of God could not have been more graciously commended to us than thus, that the son of God, remaining unchangeable in himself, should assume humanity',[108] and thereby asserts the possibility of mediation between God's fullness and sinful mankind. But Augustine warns (and this is directly before he insists of the natural fitness of a soul perfectly one with God having the capacity to join with a mortal body) that humility is required to take advantage of this mediator (10.28), a humility not stressed, as he sees it, by the Platonic system.

[106] Augustine, *City of God*, 11.3. trans. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871).
[107] Ibid., 10.28.
[108] Ibid.

The trouble with this way of distinguishing the Platonist and Christian outlook is that it is by no means true that the Platonic corpus tends to ignore the virtue of humility. For the Philosopher, the archetype of human flourishing in Plato, perhaps not yet fully blessed but on his way to unity with God, is described as possessing that element of humility that is necessary, on Augustine's view, to die to the self and live to God.[109]

To understand the Philosopher's affinity to this model it is necessary to understand the sense in which humility is a Christian virtue. For it would be almost absurd to advance humility as a virtue in itself: That debasement and lowliness are goods in themselves will scarcely be admitted. But to debase those inclinations which distract from our task of likening ourselves to God, such as worldly honour and power (Mt 8:23-27), is a virtue. Thus it is with the seed of wheat that falls to the ground and dies all the more to bring forth good fruit (Jn 12:24). This is a metaphor given in order to presage Christ's passion and resurrection, but it is also directly preceded by Jesus' 'triumphal' entry into Jerusalem on the back of an ass. In the same scene Jesus warns His disciples, 'He who loves his life (*psyche*) shall loose it, and he who hates his life *in this world* will keep it for eternal life' (12:24). As we shall further explore in Part 2, in relation to Christian justification and Christ's sacrifice as explained in letter to the Romans, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God-made-man perfectly assimilating Himself to the Father to an extent only possible for the Son, presupposes a quite literal dying to the world in order to live to God. Those who in a mystical sense form Christ's body relive and act upon Christ's sacrifice. For to overcome the vast chasm of sin which divides the immortal from the mortal is to prioritize the spiritual (κατὰ πνεῦμα) over the corporeal (κατὰ σάρκα), and is to sacrifice the corporeal in order to allow the whole self, the flesh in conformity with the spirit, the invisible with the visible, to serve God. Sacrifice has a sense of giving something up, but only as a necessary precondition for putting something on (Rom 13:14) for God's holy service. To say that God sacrificed Himself, in the form of man, as a propitiation for our sins (Rom 3:24), is therefore to say that God commended mankind, united with Him in His mystical body, to Himself, one day to be united with Him in all His glory.

[109] See especially Matt. 8:23-27.

God redeemed flesh, for He Himself became flesh; He redeems the material, for He himself became material; and this is only natural because, as we have seen in Augustine, all of existence, created by God, is essentially good, being worthy of its Creator, and must therefore be destined for redemption and perfection. Where God redeems the material, He also redeems His own creation of the material as part of His own design for the world (*Timaeus* 34), and redeems sinful mankind as part of His 'mystical body' of followers, one day to be fully united in glory with Himself. This sacrifice, therefore, involves both a commendation to God and a giving up of the sinful flesh. This is not to say that the thing sacrificed is bad in itself (the animals offered according to Mosaic injunctions were not evil but were, rather, gifts deemed worthy of God), but its vocation is to be subject to the power of God, the spiritual, rather than the merely physical. We share in this sacrifice by subjecting our worldly outlook, which is essentially mortal and physical, to one that is godly, and so subjected to the invisible and the eternal. This is only fitting: We are not yet worthy to stand with God in heaven (though we can and do stand before God in the flesh, however unworthily);[110] because of the finitude of our mortal existence we cannot possibly know God fully and comprehensively. Again, in order do so we have to both gain something, the 'the breastplate of justice' (Ep 6:14), and loose something, our 'sinful flesh': 'For though it is an impossibility of the law, being weak because of the flesh, God, having sent his son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom 8:3). We participate in this condemnation of sin by living our own lives of sacrifice, in order to live for God in all his glory.

It is indeed a necessary consequence of our mortality that we must do so: 'For who has known the mind of the Lord?', says Paul, quoting Isaiah 40:13. This is a suitable prelude to what comes only a few lines later: 'I beseech you, by the mercies of Christ, that you present yourself as a living sacrifice to God, your service [to him], and be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, that you may prove what is good, and acceptable to the will of God' (12:3). A life lived as a sacrifice of the mortal in

[110] This does necessarily rely on a 'high' Eucharistic theology, for it remains a fact of history that sinful human beings did stand before God made flesh. Augustine's view is that it is the Son, not the Father, who will judge the quick and the dead, because he is fully human, and, unlike the Father in heaven, can be apprehended even by the sinful (*De Trinitate* 2).

service of the immortal, the visible in service of the invisible, is what characterizes humble life in the service of God. Far from being anti-intellectual, Paul thinks that the intellect (*nous*, Paul's word for 'mind') is what is prioritized in a life of sacrifice acceptable to the will of God.

We shall explore this with greater precision in our more in-depth reading of Romans in Chapter 4. It will be our intention in Chapter 2, however, to claim that the inherent connection between this renewing of the mind and service to God is essentially Platonic, that is to say that the philosophical basis for it may be found in Plato, where moral and intellectual excellence, formed in faithful pursuit of God, are merged in the person of the Philosopher, the lover of wisdom and lover of God. For the Philosopher, renewing of the mind is also essentially the sanctification of the whole person, the whole self in conformity with the dictates of the higher element of the soul. Indeed, Plato's philosopher will, in the end, be shown to be a kind of prototype of the Christian *faithfully* seeking after God.

Humility as a Virtue in Plato: Assessing Augustine's Claim

The most straightforward way to confront Augustine's charge that Plato's philosophy does not endorse an injunction towards humble obedience to God, as exemplified in the person of Jesus Christ, is to look towards the fullest portrait of anything that might reasonably be called a holy man in Plato, the Philosopher. Plato's erotic dialogues, the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium,* portray the Philosopher as a kind of true lover, the Lover of the Divine, the Lover of God.

It is first of all striking that in the *Symposium*, the Prophetess Diotima's portrait of the god Love, the person who encapsulates most perfectly love's qualities and virtues, is characterized by humility and insufficiency.[111] In order to discern the nature of love, the Platonic argument runs, we must discern what it is in its truest form. Since all men desire what they perceive to be good, the

[111] Diotima's contention is of course that the 'god' love is not a god in the sense that he possesses all perfections and is perfectly blessed and self-sufficient (*Symposium* 202c).

true lover desires the good in itself (205e), that sovereign Good which, we are told in the *Republic*, is the author of all being and essence.[112] But if he already possessed the Good, and were therefore blessing and happy, he would not be a lover of the Good, because he would already possess it: Such is the state of the gods.[113] The mythical genealogy, which Diotima paints, makes Love out to be the child of Resource (*Poros*) and Poverty (*Penia*); on the one hand love has the faith and direction and zeal to seek after the Good, but, on the other hand, Love cannot be a god in the sense of possessing the godly perfections, because it is in the very nature of the act of loving to want something, that is to say to lack something, and therefore to seek after it in hopes of possessing and enjoying what it is. If a god is without some good thing that he wants, he cannot be a god.[114] Love, as described mythologically and anthropomorphically, is something, or rather someone, rather lowly. He is 'ever poor, far from beautiful as most suppose him, rather is he hard and parched, far from tender or beautiful…shoeless and homeless; on the bare ground he lies with no bedding, and takes his rest on doorsteps and waysides in the open air' (203d). Love's humility, which we are told comes from its mother *penia*, is counterbalanced by the nature of his father *poros*, by whose power love is 'scheming for all that is beautiful and good' (203a).Love is, according to Diotima, a 'great spirit' somewhere between mortal and immortal, with the power of

> Interpreting and transporting human things to the gods and divine things to men; entreaties and sacrifices [from below], and ordinances and requitals [from above]: being midway between, it makes each to supplement the other, so that the whole is combined in one. Through it are conveyed all divination and priest-craft concerning sacrifice and ritual and incantations, and all soothsaying and sorcery. God does not mingle with man: but the spiritual is the means of all society and converse of men with gods, and of gods with men, whether waking or asleep.[115]

It is difficult not to read something approaching a theological account of a mediator between God and man at some points of this text, and the Paraclete, the advocate with God the Father, at others.[116] The nature of this mediation

[112] Plato, *Republic,* 509c, 516–517.
[113] Plato, *Symposium,* 205d. Translations of the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* are those of R.M. Lamb, as found in the Loeb Classical Texts; they have been amended, on occasion, as I see fit.
[114] Ibid., 202d, 204a.
[115] Ibid., 203d–203a.
[116] 1 Tim. 2:3-6. 1 John 1.

causes Diotima to place love between God and man, immortal in his converse with the divine resulting in 'ordinances and sacrifices' delivered from above, and mortal in relating 'ordinances and requitals' from above.[117] Love, as Diotima describes him, seems to correspond to the one who on Augustine's reasoning 'remained in heaven the Son of God, [but] walked on earth as Son of man…who appearing as the Son of Man, remained in heaven in his divinity'[118]—or, as Augustine elsewhere puts it, 'was so conjoined with the word of God that by conjunction he became at once the Son of God and the Son of man',[119] who is also 'in the form of God greater than himself, and in the form of man less than himself'.[120] For, as both God and man, Christ is properly mediator in being, on one understanding, the firstborn of creation (Col 1:15) dwelling with the Father, and so inseparable from the Godhead and its essence, but on another understanding the Son of Man, the word made flesh to dwell among us and show us the way to God, so that in the fullness of time we, along with the Son, might dwell with God in all His majesty.

A Platonist Lens for Justification by Faith

It is clear that not only does the Pauline metaphysical framework adhere to Gerson's framework of 'Ur-Platonism', so too does its positive construct regarding the 'First Principle of All', the Christian God. The clear monotheism of those Platonists contemporary with Paul himself, the so-called Middle Platonists, helps bolster this claim. We have, furthermore, identified the philosophical problem of justification as being essentially that of Platonic ethics in Paul's time, the problem of how to become assimilated or like unto God. The Christian answer to this problem, documented in Paul's own thought, as we shall discuss in greater detail as part of our exegesis of Romans and Galatians, is that assimilation to God comes through a gift of God himself, through His

[117] A similar position must be granted to philosophy, which in the *Phaedrus* is supremely identified with Love: The philosopher is not *sophos* but rather *philo-sophos*, somewhere between godly wisdom (for God alone is truly wise) and abject ignorance.
[118] *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione et de Baptismo Parvulorum, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* trans. Peter Holmes, Robert Ernest Wallis, and Benjamin Warfield (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1886).
[119] Ibid.
[120] Augustine, *De Trinitate,* 1.14.

grace. What remains to be examined is the question on which Luther particularly fixated, justification peculiarly by *faith*. Faith, understood as that which defines those who are justified, must be a gift of God, since only God saves, and only God justifies. If it is true that we are justified by faith, it must be by a faith that comes through grace. Indeed, to treat of justification by faith apart from any consideration of grace is nonsensical; any justification worth mentioning must in fact be 'through faith and by grace' (Eph 2:8), for it is a gift of God. Does Platonism provide the right philosophical framework to understand the problem of justification by faith as expressed in Paul? I believe that it does. This I will attempt to show with reference, in large part, to the dialogues of Plato himself, who was, of course, the Master of whom the Middle Platonists of Paul's time saw themselves as the faithful interpreters.[121] It is also essential to remember that, for Paul, the faithful are not justified except by a 'faith that works by love' (Gal 5:6). If, indeed, there is no justification except for those who follow Christ's injunctions, no justification apart from the virtue of charity, love of God and love of neighbour, our picture of justification can never be that merely of justification by faith alone, but always justification through grace by a 'faith that works by love'.

Do we have a framework within Platonism, and in particular within Platonic ethics, that facilitates our understanding of a justification through a faith that works specifically by love? I believe that we have this also, and I believe, furthermore, that such a framework is a valuable heuristic tool for understanding what Paul has to say about justification, particularly in passages of Romans and Galatians much prized by Reformers of *sola fides* persuasion. I intend in this work to outline the Platonic framework which I have in mind, mostly in relation to the Platonic dialogues themselves, and then to make use of this framework to embark upon an exegesis of Romans 1–6 and Galatians 2–3, 5–6.

I will contend that the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith can be seen to have its roots in the figure of Plato's Philosopher and his assimilation of divine justice. This is not a historical claim, but one of philosophical theology and hermeneutics. The question is less what books Paul had specifically read when he composed the definitive statements of 'justification by faith' in Romans and

[121] Boys-Stones 24-30.

Galatians than how we can understand a schema by which the doctrine might hold together. My contention is that such a doctrine does in fact hold together, and can be seen to do so within the framework of Plato's ethical system encapsulated in the figure of Plato's Philosopher, the lover of wisdom and the lover of God. Since my intention is to offer primarily a work of constructive philosophical theology, which nevertheless wishes to take recent New Testament scholarship seriously, I will preface my exegesis of Romans and Galatians with a broader discussion of theological questions at play from a systematic/dogmatic point of view.

2. The Philosopher's Justification: Reading Plato on Faith, Love, Justice and the Godly

The Doctrinal Coherence of Plato's Dialogues: *Status Quaestionis*

In this Chapter, I intend to outline the nature of Platonic ethics, as it relates to the Pauline problem of justification, by means of a reading of a selection of the works of Plato himself. The monotheistic turn of the so-called Middle Platonists, who wrote and taught in more or less the same time as Paul, certainly represents, as we have discussed in Chapter 1, a direction of travel whereby Platonism could more naturally serve not only as a tool for Christians wishing to better understand their faith, but also, in many cases, as a powerful signpost toward conversion.

The views of John Rist, that Middle Platonic monotheism may be seen as a direction of travel to which the Platonic dialogues are tending, are controversial. However, the assumption of any kind of doctrinal coherence to the Platonic dialogues is itself controversial. If, with subsequent Platonists, we ascribe our notions of Platonism to Plato himself, we must look to the Platonic dialogues themselves, and not simply to later syntheses of Platonic doctrine, to define what Platonism is. Indeed, the Middle Platonists, with whom we have hitherto chiefly concerned ourselves, saw themselves not as masters, but as mere interpreters of Plato their Master. But that the Platonic *Corpus* itself should be able to answer the question, 'what is Plato's view on x?', assumes some decree of doctrinal coherence.

Gregory Vlastos is perhaps the original, and certainly the most famous disputant, in recent decades, of the assumption of doctrinal unity and coherence in the Platonic Dialogues. Vlastos finds what he thinks is a set of radical changes in viewpoint between the Socrates of the supposed early Platonic dialogues, the so called 'Socratic' dialogues or 'Elenctic' Dialogues (*Apology, Charmides*, *Crito*, *Euthyphro*, *Gorgias*, *Hippias Minor*, *Protagoras,* and *Republic* I), and that of the supposed Middle and Late periods. Vlastos does not mince words:

> I have been speaking of *a* 'Socrates' in Plato. There are two of them. In different segments of Plato's corpus two philosophers bear that name. The

> individual remains the same. But in different sets of dialogues he pursues philosophies so different that they could not have been depicted as cohabiting the same brain throughout unless it had been the brain of a schizophrenic. [122]

Nowhere perhaps is this 'schizophrenic' Socrates seen more clearly for Vlastos, than in his treatment of the concept of form (*eidos*, *idia*). Vlastos thinks that the early Socrates has no metaphysical conception of the forms: postulating a form is simply a matter of giving a definition. Hence, 'what is F' must state 'because of which' (or 'or by which' or 'through which' or 'in virtue of which') anything is F.' [123] Vlastos admits that such a notion of form could imply an ontology, but he denies that the Early Socrates ever draws such an implication: he asks what is the form of F simply as if he were trying to formulate a definition, a merely theoretical, and not an ontological or metaphysical, reality. As such, for the early Socrates, forms are self evident principles of epistemology, but not something which a philosopher may be required to believe in (as in *Phaedo* 100b) as belonging to the realm of the ideal, the perfect, the unseen. [124]

This distinction is seen to be further strengthened by Aristotle's testimony in the *Metaphysics* that Socrates viewed the forms as 'non-separable' (*ou chorista* οὐ χωριστὰ) in the sense that he did not think that the forms existed in an ideal reality somehow removed from the visible realm. [125] Any inquiry into the nature of F, on Vlastos' view of early Socrates, is simply a matter of giving a definition of f, and has no ulterior significance, whether ontological or metaphysical.

Because the early Socrates eschews the ideal, and the metaphysical, he is classed by Vlastos as being *exclusively* a moral philosopher. But Vlastos also thinks that that there is a vast difference between how the early and the later Socrates treat of moral decision-making: the early Socrates thinks that virtue is simply a matter of knowledge, and that therefore, 'no man errs willingly' (*Protagoras* 345c) but simply due to lack of relevant knowledge of what is best for him. Hence, for the early Socrates, incontinence (*akrasia*) is impossible.[126] By contrast, the later Socrates creates the model of the tripartite soul

[122] *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, (Ithaca: Cornell, 1991), 46. Vlastos cites *Euthyphro* 5e, where the question *de jour* is 'what is piety'?.
[123]Ibid.,57.
[124] Ibid., 58-59.
[125]Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 1178b.
[126]Ibid. 99-102

specifically to deal with the problem of incontinence; our reason (*logos*) proposes a salutary end, and is bolstered by the virtuous encouragement of the spirit (*thumos*), but is in tern thwarted by recalcitrant passions (*epithymia).*[127]

Terence Irwin follows Vlastos in seeing a major shift in the ethical teaching of the Platonic Dialogues. Like Vlastos, Irwin discerns a chasm between the *Republic*'s doctrine of the tripartite soul, and the moral psychology of the earlier 'Socratic' dialogues, which Irwin calls 'psychological eudaimonism. [128] This involves the claim that, 'all of our intentional actions rest on our desire for the good and our belief that the action we choose is better than our other options.' [129] For Irwin, this is commensurate with the claim that knowledge is sufficient for virtue.

Julia Annas agrees that there are apparent contradictions in the teaching of the 'early' and 'middle' Plato that need addressing. However, Annas fixates not so much on the question of the separability of the forms, and the possibility of moral incontinence, but rather on the general 'aporetic' nature of the 'early' dialogues in contrast with the 'content-proclaiming' 'middle' dialogues.[130] However, Annas makes a strong case for a coherent reading of the Platonic *corpus* in pointing out that classic *tropes* of both the early and middle dialogues can be discerned in a single dialogue, the *Theaetetus*: in the manner of the 'early' dialogues, Socrates claims that he 'cannot express any views of his own' because he 'has no wisdom' (150c):

> and the reason of it is this, that God compels me to attend to the travails of others, but has forbidden me to procreate. So that I am not in any sense a wise man; I cannot claim as the child of my own soul any discovery worth the name of wisdom.[131]

Yet in the same dialogue, Socrates expounds his famous doctrine of assimilation to God:

> In God there is no sort of wrong whatever; he is supremely just, and the thing most like him is the man who has become as just as it lies in the power of human nature to be...There are two patterns set up in the world. One is

[127]Ibid., 48, 96.
[128]Terence Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford: OUP, 1995), 209.
[129]Ibid.
[130]Annas 17.Vlastos speaks of an early Socrates who seeks knowledge 'elenctically', and a 'Middle' Socrates, who 'seeks demonstrative knowledge and is confident that he finds it' (Vlastos 48).
[131] I am quoting from the translation of the *Theaetetus* that Annas uses: M.J. Levett, rev. M.F Burnyeat (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1990), 150c-d.

> divine and supremely happy; the other has nothing of God in it and is the pattern of the deepest unhappiness. This truth the evildoer does not see. [132]

The contrast is striking: Socrates disavowal of any views of his own followed by a definite view of human destiny and the moral *locus* of all human existence. Yet 'with fewer than 30 Stephanus numbers between them' they have somehow to be reconciled.[133] However both passages may be reconciled by the interpretation of later Platonists of the 'Sceptical Academy': any knowledge that Socrates claims to have is not vindicated as his own but simply extracted from others, via the elenctic/ Socratic method. As a midwife Socrates does indeed facilitate the birth of children, but these children are not his own. [134]

One of the major problems with Vlastos' extreme 'developmentalist' position, which I think Annas is right to point out, is that it was entirely unknown to readers of Plato before the 19th century, much less to the Platonists of antiquity.[135] The Middle-Platonists, for instance, seemed to assume that there was platonic doctrine on x, or a platonic view of y: 'In his chapters on Plato's ethics, Alcinous takes it for granted that there is a single ethical position to be found in Plato's dialogues'. [136]

Among recent Plato scholars, Christopher Rowe is noteworthy for arguing for the doctrinal unity of the Platonic dialogues, the so called 'Unitarian' school. Rowe thinks that the 'post-socratic' dialogues, 'in all central aspects depend and build on, even as they may extent, ideas and arguments contained in the Socratic dialogues.'[137] In relation to the theory of the Forms, Rowe thinks that this doctrine exists even in the background in dialogues where the explicit formulation is not used: The answer to the question 'what is F' even in the early dialogues, implies a search for an 'F-ness' that is not mere definition, but has ontological and metaphysical implications as well:

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[132] Ibid., 176 c-e. The translation here is very paired down. A literal version of the latter portion: 'there are truly patterns set up, my dear, one of the godly and happy, the other of the ungodly and wretched, but they who, from their folly and ultimate lack of understanding, do not see that this is so, forget that they are made like unto the latter on account of their unjust actions (176e-177a).

[133]Annas 18.
[134]Ibid., 19.
[135]Julia Annas, *Platonic Ethics Old and New*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) 84.
[136]Ibid., 32..
[137] Christopher Rowe, *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing,* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007). 39.

> when Socrates introduces objects like '(the) just itself', '(the) beautiful itself, and (the) good itself for the first time in *Phaedo* 65d, he is—I claim—doing no more and no less than (re-) introducing the very sorts of things whose definitions he seeks in the so called 'Socratic' dialogues, and the search for which preoccupies him in the life he describes in the *Apology*. [138]

Rowe's view that there is a common thread, on the question of the forms, between the supposed early and middle Platonic dialogues, seems, in his case, to stem from an unwillingness to define the theory of the Forms 'in the kind of detail that Plato himself omitted to give us'.[139]

Rowe searches for resonance within the Platonic Dialogues, if not explicit, than at least implicit. For instance, Rowe is sceptical that the Early Socrates who, according to Aristotle, rejected the theory of 'separable forms', should be understood in such a way as to contradict the metaphysical architecture displayed in the so-called Middle dialogues, and with it the 'two worlds' theory of the forms. [140] Rowe emphasizes that in the famous smilies of the sun, line, and cave, of the *Republic*:

> the lower level of objects relate to, and are informed by, the highest...even if we can't discover what beauty—for example—is from beautiful things, these particulars are capable of telling us *something* about what beauty is like. And it could scarcely be otherwise, insofar as particulars are what they are by virtue of their relationship to forms. In *this* sort of context, talk of separate worlds' looks considerably less useful than it may do in others. [141]

Where Vlastos sees a clear contradiction in the early Socrates' denial of *akrasia* in the *Protagoras*, and his subsequent illustration, in the *Republic*, of a tripartite soul specifically designed to account for such *akrasia*, Rowe's reading is a good deal more nuanced.[142] Rowe thinks that incontinence (*akrasia*) is explained not by an overpowering of reason by the appetites, but by the essentially 'intellectual error' of an agent who ascribes to the appetites too important a place because he has not sufficiently worked out what is good for him. [143] Hence, Rowe thinks the 'early-Socratic' intellectualist doctrine that 'no man

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[138]Ibid., 109.
[139]Ibid., 40 (footnote).
[140]Rowe is right to point out, however, that even if Aristotle's testimony is accurate in relation to the historical Socrates, it may or may not have any bearing on the Socrates represented by Plato in the early dialogues (Rowe 43).
[141] Ibid., 45.
[142]Rowe points out that that Socrates never actually refers to the Tripartite soul as possessing parts: the standard Greek words for part, *meros* or *morion*, are never used, but rather *eidos* ('kind', 'type') (169).
[143]Ibid.,173.

errs willingly', can, to some extent, be seen to have been preserved by the Socrates of the *Republic*.

Rowe thinks that the platonic soul, though it appears and acts as if it had three competing principles of motivation, each with its own claim, is not necessarily tripartite in itself. [144] Though Socrates spends much time in the *Republic* expostulating on the nature of a complex, class-based city as a metaphor for the tripartite soul, it is not in fact his preferred city, which is the simple, non-tripartite, 'true', 'healthy' city (ἀληθινὴ πόλις... ὥσπερ ὑγιής) derided by Glaucon as a 'City of Pigs'. [145] Instead, the more mundane, more complex city is illustrated in order to allow us to better discern wherein justice and injustice may be found.[146] But in the case of the soul in itself, that is to say, in its proper state:

> there will be none of the divisions that, in the context of ordinary human life, seem to justify talk of 'parts' of the soul: the soul, in such a context, becomes affected in such a way as to make it appear, in commonly occurring circumstances, *as if* it has distinct parts. [147]

Rowe's view seems to be that although the Platonic soul is inherently one, Socrates paints a picture of it's undergoing a kind of stress test of embodied life so that it appears to be tripartite.[148]

Whether or not one accepts the totality of the 'Unitarian' thesis, Rowe certainly succeeds, to my mind, in proposing a reading of Plato which, if not compelling in all its specifics, presents at least a plausible case for a coherent Platonic Ethics in the Platonic dialogues themselves. Yet if one were to except the extreme 'developmentalism' of Vlastos, and to some extent Irwin, on doctrines as crucial as the existence of the forms, and the nature of the soul, it would be difficult to present the dialogues as a whole, or even a selection of dialogues from the early and middle periods, as in any sense capable of providing a coherent outline of Platonism in general or Platonic ethics in particular. Finding this coherence is important if we are to enter the mind of

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[144]Ibid.,170.
[145]*Republic* 372e.
[146]Ibid.
[147]Rowe 170.
[148] G.R.F Ferrari contests this view, at least in relation to the *Phaedrus*, where both human and divine souls are described, mythologically, in the form of chariot and Charioteer [G.R.F Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicades: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge: CUA 1987) 126-128].

Plato's interpreters, including that of the Middle Platonists of Paul's time. The assumption of a Platonic system, even in the Platonic dialogues themselves, is, indeed, a vital precondition for speaking of a Platonic Ethics that may be discerned in the dialogues as a group.

Plato's Dialogues as a Prelude to Christian Theology: John Rist

And yet, as we discussed in Chapter 1, Middle Platonists hardly saw themselves as innovative thinkers so much as faithful interpreters of their Master, Plato himself. Indeed, the monotheistic identification of the Creator God of the *Timaeus* with the Form of the Good of the *Republic* should be seen I think, as John Rist very credibly argues, as the end-point towards which Plato's own thought was logically tending.[149]

For Rist, as for Gerson, Plato's views develop, but they develop within a system. For Rist however, this system, while being worked out, is moving towards an end-point which is logically the Middle-Platonist and indeed Christian doctrine that identifies the Creator God (the Demiurge) with the Good.[150] Although Gerson acknowledges the Christianizing movement in the development of Platonic thought as rising in a sense organically out of the works of Plato himself, he denies there is any identification of the Demiurge with the Good, however implicit, in the Platonic dialogues.[151]

Rist, however, is particularly struck by a late development in Plato's *corpus* whereby the Good becomes identified with the divine mind of the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*. In Plato's last work, the unfinished *Laws*, not simply the Good, but God, is declared to be the 'measure of all things'.[152] In the closing passages of

[149] John Rist, *Plato's Moral Realism*, (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2012), Chapters 8–9.
[150] Rist 233–241.
[151] Gerson cites *Timaeus* 48c and 53d to argue that the Demiurge is not, at least in the *Timaeus*, to be identified with the 'First Principle of All'. See Lloyd Gerson, 'Plato, Platonism and the History of Philosophy', in *What Makes a Philosopher Great? Thirteen Arguments for Twelve Philosophers*, ed. Stephen Hetherington (Oxford: Routledge, 2018), 23.
[152] Plato, *Laws,* 716c.

the *Laws*, a kind of rearticulation of the *Republic*'s Similitude of the Sun, Mind seems to take the place of the Good.[153] Rist also thinks Theophrastus' testimony supports an identification, even within Plato's own works, of the Demiurge with the Good. In particular, Rist has in mind what Theophrastus referred to as the second Platonic 'first principle', 'an efficient cause clothed in the power of the Good':

> For in effect what Theophrastus attributes to Plato—and he clearly has the *Timaeus* in mind—is a thesis whereby when Plato has his Demiurge look toward the best possible model, he is looking not outside himself to a 'third principle'—for Theophrastus names no third principle, no Form of the Good—but to himself *as* the equivalent of that 'third principle…. For although in itself the nature of the Demiurge does not change, in his acts he causes other things to change. He performs, that is, both the role of a traditional (and traditionally 'philosophical') god as mover and that of the peculiarly Platonic notion of a perfect model (or Form, or above all the Form of the Good) in accordance with which the best movement is possible.[154]

If Plato's thought, post-*Republic*, is indeed tending in this direction, Rist thinks it would be logical to conceive of the Forms of natural objects as ideas or concepts generated by the divine mind, and the moral forms (justice, beauty, wisdom, etc.) as divine attributes: God *is* truth, wisdom, justice, and beauty; God *thinks* the archetypical Man, tree, table, couch, etc…[155] On this view, Plato's dialogues are not simply anterior to a later Middle Platonism that has developed to the point that it becomes a useful handmaiden for Christian theology, but themselves constitute the foundations upon which later Christian Platonist thinking was to develop, and can indeed be seen to be already moving in this direction.

I will present the Platonic dialogues as a definitive treatment of Platonic ethics, and the best resource for use, both heuristic, and constructive, to apply to Christian theology. This, of course, presupposes the same level of systematic coherence in Plato's doctrine that would have been taken for granted by Plato's followers, not least by the Middle-Platonists of the early Christian era. As such, I will embark on a reading of key Platonic dialogues with the goal of clarifying the major principles of Platonic ethics as they relate to the philosophical problem of justification.

[153] Ibid., 897b.
[154] Rist 233–4.
[155] Ibid., 252.

Plato's Philosopher: The True Lover

In order fully to understand Platonic ethics, we must, in the first instance, examine the archetypal figure of Plato's ethical system, the Philosopher. It will be instructive to begin by examining the doctrine of assimilation of God, and hence justification, as contained in Plato's erotic dialogues. What we find is a portrait of someone who seeks the divine not only by faith, but more particularly by a 'faith that works by Love'. We will recall that in Christian and more precisely Pauline theology, the author of justification, God, is Himself Love. In Plato's ethics, the question of love is also paramount as it relates to the figure of the Philosopher.

It will be objected that, in the case of Paul, the love in question is *Christian* love, translated often as 'charity', to distinguish it from *mere* erotic desire; in short, Paul speaks of *agape* where Plato spoke of *eros.* Anders Nygren claims, in his hugely influential book *Agape and Eros,* that *eros* connotes only an acquisitive, egocentric, and often lustful desire, totally irreconcilable with Christian charity (*agape*). On this view, of course, the Philosopher's ascent to the divine has little or no theological significance, since the word Plato used for love was *eros* and not *agape*. Yet the philological claim about *agape* is, at the very least, not borne out by a study of relevant passages in the Septuagint: [156] The story of Shechem and Dinah is, in the first instance, one of selfish, sexual desire: 'And Shechem the Son of Hamar, who was ruler of the land, saw her and slept with her and defiled her, and attached himself to Dinah…and loved the maiden (ἠγάπησεν τὴν παρθένον), and let her pour out her thoughts to him' (Gen 34:2-3). In the third chapter of the *Song of Songs* we have, 'Επὶ κοίτην μου ἐν νυξὶν ἐζήτησα ὃν ἠγάπησεν ἡ ψυχή μου (In bed at night I sought him whom my soul I loved)(3:1). In Chapter 7 of the Song we have the almost embarrassingly lustful, 'Τί ὡραιώθης καὶ τί ἡδύνθης ἀγάπη, ἐν τρυφαῖς σου (How beautiful are you and how you please me, my love [*agape*], in your delights)'. This follows a recitation of the particularly ravishing qualities of the beloved's various parts. Though allegorical interpretations of the *Song of Songs* are legion, these passages are, in the first instance, erotic and lascivious; and the love associated with these sentiments is *agape*, where in Plato's time, and for those writers who saw him as their master, it would have been *eros.* Socrates'

[156] Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1953).

first and second speeches in the *Symposium*, the first in praise of love-making from a non-lover, the second, in praise of an integral, higher love that brings us to the divine, both treat *eros* as their subject. Yet, after the manner of koine Greek, both an object for lascivious pleasure in the Septuagint and the greatest Christian virtue in the New Testament are *agape*. *Agape* had simply become the most common word in the koine dialect for love of all kinds.[157] Indeed, *eros* and *agape* may both be seen to have various shades of more physical and more sublimated meanings, and may be seen as parallels within Paul's and Plato's respective systems of ethics.

The Philosopher/Lover in the *Symposium*

Let us return first to Plato's erotic dialogues, and first to the *Symposium.* Here, the later Christian notion of God as love is entertained and apparently refuted by the prophetess Diotima: It is in the nature of love to seek after something, and of the divine Love to seek after the Good, which is God himself, and therefore the divine love, in order to seek after God, must lack God's fullness. That God is love is therefore apparently refuted, analytically, by the nature of love itself. As Diotima reiterates, 'the man who does not feel himself defective has no desire of that whereof he feels no defect'.[158] This is also where Diotima distinctly identifies Love with the love of wisdom, philosophy: 'For wisdom has to do with the fairest things, and Love [in the trust sense] is a love directed to what is fair'.[159] Yet, at the same time, the notion that there is something divine about love, even if it lacks godly perfection in every sense, is wholeheartedly endorsed. Love is at the very least a spirit (*daimon*) (204c) capable of mediation with the divine; and the lover of the Good, the philosopher, somehow anointed by this spirit of love, is by the power of love placed on to a path towards God. The question, then, is in what manner this path

[157]See in particular, Catherine Osbourne, *Eros Unveiled: Plato and the God of Love*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).
[158] Plato, *Symposium*, 204d.
[159] Ibid., 204b. I use 'Love' with a capital L to indicate the true ideal of love.

to the Good, this path to God, is to be trod by those who pursue it with eagerness (*spoude*) and straining (*syntaxis*).[160]

The famous answer, always enigmatic on first reading, is that love consists in 'begetting in beauty both with regard to the body and the soul (τόκος ἐν καλῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ τὴν ψυχήν)'. This is seen firstly in terms of the begetting of human beings and the attraction that facilitates this. Love is a path to divinity in that it is a path towards immortality, the continual reproducing of oneself in the form of one's children (206d-e).[161] Immortality comes to man in the form of replacement and regeneration. On a smaller scale, the human body persists not by means of some sort of static continuance, but in the constant death and regeneration of cells.[162] The same can be said of thoughts and passions of the soul: In order to remember something, it is necessary to make the effort (*meletan*), to remind ourselves of this thing, and in a sense substitute some new, perhaps more meaningful version of this knowledge or sentiment as the old knowledge departs. The road to immortality and in a sense divinity must, it seems, be an active one of regeneration and reinvention. It is the renewing of the self day by day (2 Cor 4:16). This is also, as we have seen, the path of love.

A more abstract version of generation may be found in the begetting of virtues, in lieu of a physical begetting of children: Some people, Diotima explains, are full of yearning primarily in regard to their body, and pursue physical begetting and regeneration; but those who are fraught with love in their soul 'beget and conceive those things which pertain to the soul', which are human virtues.[163] Such virtues are indeed nurtured by friendship that consists in philosophical dialogue about the nature of the good life (209c), and those who are so inclined desire to reproduce the offspring of the soul, rather than merely those of the body, and love those who are not only fair of face and form but also capable of practising such a dialectic, for Plato the truest and most valuable *paideia*.[164] In doing so this type of lover approaches something close to the archetype of Love itself, for what is essentially attractive about such

[160] Ibid., 206b.
[161] Ibid., 206d-e.
[162] Ibid, 207e.
[163] Ibid., 209a.
[164] Ibid., 209a.

relationships, for this lover, is the possibility that, being inspired by beauty of his beloved, he comes to a conception of the good and blessed life, which is only possessed in full by God. Thus, the lover works his way up the ladder of love, the ascent from the love of individual beautiful bodies to the love of beautiful souls. At this point, physical attraction is of little consequence when compared with the possibility of begetting such conversation (*logos*), as to provide for the education of youth and the betterment of society (justice), and so to appreciate the beauty that resides in such things. Finally, the lover devotes more and more attention to the generalized facets of human organizations (law and society) and of human thought, and so comes to appreciate a more unified notion of beauty, beauty that is the source of all other beauty (210c): 'And turning rather toward the main ocean of the beautiful he may by contemplation bring forth in all their splendour many fair fruits of discourse and meditation (πολλοὺς καὶ καλοὺς λόγους) in a plenteous crop of philosophy; until with the strength and increase thereby acquired he decries a certain single knowledge connected with a beauty that has yet to be told' (210e).[165] The clearest and most generalized notion of beauty can be found in the knowledge of the best working of society and of human education (210c), in other words, the highest form of worldly wisdom. Yet what awaits the person who ascends this ladder is something more than worldly. For there will come a point when, having ascended the ladder, he will 'suddenly have revealed to him' (κατόψεταί) 'a wondrous thing, beautiful in nature' (210e), which is an ever-existent, immutable, perfect beauty, ineffable and incomprehensible in terms of human analogies, of which all things that are beautiful partake to the extent that they are beautiful.

This is not an equivalent of the Christian beatific vision. It is simply the moment in which the lover realizes that all particular beauty has its origin in what is beautiful itself. Those who have ascended as 'on the rungs of the ladder' (211d) do so through what is seen.[166] The unity of all beautiful things in the form of the beautiful itself is understood firstly by means of visible creation (Rom.1:20).[167] It is this vision which, coming upon the Lover (αὐτῷ μοναχοῦ γενήσεται), allows him to breed not images (*eidola*) but true

[165] Ibid., 210c.
[166] Ibid., 211d.
[167] Ibid., 212.

virtue. Beauty, already identified with the Good that all lovers seek, is also identified with truth: The one who seeks after true beauty is a lover of truth in general,[168] and words and deeds which are good and noble and hence beautiful are true in the sense of being truly good and noble. In *truly* acting out his love of the Good, the lover is destined to win God's favour (*theofilei*) (212a), and, so far as it is possible for mankind, to flourish in this life (211d) and the next.[169]

The Lover's Justification in the *Phaedrus*

There is, to be sure, still a good deal of ambiguity about the nature of Love,[170] a sense, perhaps, that Plato is trying to have it both ways by, on the one hand, endorsing love as sort of path to the divine[171]—as a god who, in one of his functions, holds direct intercourse with the divine through the handing down of 'ordinances and requitals'—and, on the other hand, denying that love is fully divine. Yet in the other Platonic love dialogue, the *Phaedrus,* Love's divinity seems almost to be taken for granted. When Socrates takes up Phaedrus' challenge to give a speech against Love, he covers his head in shame,[172] and after he has delivered the speech, confesses that he has 'sinned against a deity' (ἡμαρτηκότα εἰς τὸ θεῖον).[173] The impious speech, which Socrates claims is imitative of the style of Lysias, is rather ostentatious and overwrought, as if to suggest that simplicity and clarity of expression are anathema to the making of a false argument.[174] It is agreed that Love is 'the son of Aphrodite, and a god'.[175] Since a god can do no evil, denouncing one is surely a sin.[176] The arguments invoked to do so must therefore be false, though we must wait for the

[168] For Plato, all being owes its existence, *qua* being, to the form of the Good: What truly is, is good, and what is truly good, truly is (*Republic* 509b).
[169] *Apology* 41d; *Republic* 591e-592a, 613a, 618e–619a.
[170] 'Love' with a capital L, as with Lover, is used to denote the perfected form of love, which is love of the Beautiful and the Good.
[171] Hence it is called a 'divine affair' (*Symposium* 206a).
[172] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 237a.
[173] Ibid., 242c.
[174] Socrates' first speech on love does not in fact display much kinship to the orations of Lysias, known for their admirable clarity of expression. The whole thing seems to emphasize the extent to which a *false* speech, in the sense of a speech which propounds false ideas, cannot but be overwrought, and lacking in all simplicity and humility of expression, an idea that is emphasized later, in the discussion of rhetoric that ends the dialogue.
[175] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 242c.
[176] Ibid., 242e.

'Palinode', Socrates' second speech on love, for arguments and demonstrations to that effect. This speech praises the god Love by arguing that in intimate relationships, the lover should be favoured over the non-lover. In so doing, Socrates hopes to, 'wash out the brine from his ears with the sweet water of discourse'.[177] Socrates must first refute the notion that the lover's madness or frenzy, as in Socrates' first speech, renders him unsuitable to be taken as a lover. For if properly understood and utilized, so-called madness can be a great boon for mankind. Socrates says, 'the greatest of goods come to mankind through madness if indeed it is sent as a divine gift (θείᾳ…δόσει)'.[178] An example of this is the value which the Greeks attached to the oracle at Delphi: She is only inspired to speak prophetically when worked up into a kind of divine frenzy. In sum, 'in proportion as prophecy is superior to augury, both in name and in fact, in the same proportion madness, which comes from God, is superior to sanity, which is of human origin'.[179] Perhaps a better example of this divine madness at work, which applies to the present day, is the inspiration which an artist feels to create works of art.[180] Though all artists, it may seem, are inspired, in some sense, to produce whatever they have design to create, we have a very real sense that the true genius is inspired to an even greater degree, even to the point of frenzy or madness. Such examples merely hint that such a thing as other-worldly inspiration, or even madness, might be in fact the root of the greatest human flourishing and happiness.[181]

We are regaled in the *Phaedrus* with another schema of the ascent up the ladder of Love, one with a greater emphasis on the divine initiative by which the Divine brings the Lover towards itself. The subject here is not merely the Lover's coming to understand the unity of all beautiful things in the form of the beautiful (which is also the Good), and so to beget fine and just actions in

[177] *Phaedrus* 239b.
[178] Ibid., 245c.
[179] Ibid., 245c. Here Plato has drifted into the use of the singular for God, saying 'from God', not from the gods, which is natural for him, because all of the gods possess the same inherent characteristic of perfection, described variously as goodness, nobility, happiness, etc… The meditation in *Republic* 380–385 on the absolute perfection and immutability of the gods is probably Plato's fullest treatment of the matter, and best justifies the monotheistic outlook of his Middle Platonist disciples. Gods, in the plural, are spoken of and made use of in the myths that appear in the dialogues; but they are alike in partaking of all the same perfections. One could almost say that what can be said of one can be said of all.
[180] Ibid., 245a.
[181] Ibid., 245c.

conformity with this realization, but the soul's cosmic journey as it passes through both mortal and immortal realms. First, we get a brief argument for the immortality of the soul: soul is understood as something that activates itself; because it does not depend on something else to activate or de-activate it, it will continue to self-activate and therefore carry on living. Whatever self-activates is an *arxe* (a beginning, or principle on which things rest). Each individual soul is an *arxe* unto itself and cannot be destroyed, because the foundation on which its existence rests is self-sufficient and self-sustaining.[182]

We then get a picture of the soul as pair of winged horses and a charioteer. One of the horses is 'noble and well-bred' and does not err, and the other possesses opposite qualities.[183] It is important to remember that though it is tempting to identify the soul merely with the charioteer, whose task it is to manage and control the baser passions (the ill-bred horse) against those of the more noble passions (the well-bred horse), this is not in fact the picture which Socrates has in mind.[184] The whole artifice of charioteer and horses is meant to represent the soul. Far from a dualist picture of mind against matter, soul against body, Socrates' view of the soul is something much more akin to our notion of 'human person', the essential form of what makes someone who they are. It is true that Socrates describes the founding of human life as the moment when a soul, having lost its wings, 'falls down upon something solid…taking upon itself an earthly body, which seems to be self-moving because of the power of the soul within it'.[185] But this 'solid object' only becomes a human body by virtue of having been animated by a soul. It is therefore inaccurate to speak of a radical body/soul dualism here, where a human body as such cannot exist without soul, and the soul, though it can exist apart from the body, will, as a *human* soul, necessarily pertain to a human body.[186] The perfection of this body/ soul artifice, which we may term a human person, has also the capacity,

[182] Ibid., 245d-e. Socrates' argument here would seem to apply equally well for the *arxe* of the entire cosmos, implying the sort of world-soul, or at least the essential unity of all things within an intelligent soul, described in the *Timaeus*.
[183] Ibid., 246b.
[184] The picture drawn in Book 9 of the *Republic* is one of a composite soul composed of a man, a lion, and a beast, corresponding to the three essential inclinations, or components, of the tripartite soul and, as it happens, to the three most basic forms of constitutions within the city-state.
[185] Plato, *Phaedrus,* 246c.
[186] This goes some way towards refuting Augustine's implication in *City of God* 10:20 that Platonic philosophy does not allow for the possibility of God becoming man.

through the right and harmonious workings of its composite self,[187] to become immortal and God-like: Socrates says, 'though we have never seen or rightly imagined a god, we imagine an immortal being which has both a soul and a body which are united for all time'.[188] The soul pertains to the body, but also to the divine. The extent to which a human person[189] partakes of the beautiful, the wise, and the good is the extent to which he becomes more and more assimilated to the divine.[190]

Indeed, the gods in heaven, far from being disembodied and purified souls to the extent they lack any semblance of the composite architecture,[191]are themselves depicted as charioteers, with Zeus leading the way.[192] Even those who have joined the heavenly train of chariots and charioteers face the test of ascending to the outer surface of the vault of heaven, presumably by the same test of assimilation to the divine, but there is no indication that those who successfully pass this test must shed their horse and chariots in order to do so.

G. R. F. Ferrari thinks it particularly instructive that the partition of the soul, described in terms of a horse and charioteer, is valid, in the *Phaedrus*, for the souls of gods, as well as for mortals. Indeed, the model of the mortal philosopher's soul may be seen as in a sense derivative of that of the gods: whereas the soul of the philosopher governs only the spirit and passions of his body, so that, informed by a contemplative knowledge of the forms, he may bring all soul and body into harmony, the perfect divine soul is the custodian of all creation:[193]

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[187] See also the extensive explanation of the man-beast-lion composite in *Republic* Book 9, beginning at 588b.
[188] Plato, *Phaedrus,* 246d. A similar claim is made of 'essential being' in the *Sophist* (249).
[189] Saying 'human person' in place of 'soul' better reflects Plato's notion of soul as also pertaining to the human body in the sense that it is something without which a body cannot be said to be human.
[190] In the *Symposium*, as we have seen, the Lover's vocation is to *things* that are good, wise, and beautiful, most especially in the form of discourses (*logoi*).
[191] It should be noted that in Christian theology God is simple, and not composite, in the sense that none of God's essential qualities, or indeed persons, is dispensable, for they are essential to what God is. Socrates' argument here seems to be that the gods, possessing the essential perfections of God, including even that of 'creator'—since, for Plato, he who is perfectly good, must create (*Timaeus* 29e)—are soul and body, at least in potentiality. In other words, the divine can be depicted even in its essential nature by the image of the chariot and charioteer.
[192] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247a.
[193]G.R.F Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicades*: *A Study of Plato's Phaedrus*, (Cambridge: CUA 1987),126.

> the gods, no less than any disembodied soul (and in the mythical hierarchy, rather more), are concerned for all parts of the cosmos, not just for their place in it; hence also for inanimate matter. And this concern for the material, I suggest, Plato thinks of as the divine equivalent of embodied human appetites, and models in the matched horses: the 'sensuous' side as it were, of the god's nature.[194]

Certainly the Christological implications of this notion of a 'sensuous side' of divinity are intriguing. But what is clear above all in the *Phaedrus*, particularly when read in light of the rest of the Platonic *corpus*, is that there is a natural affinity between the embodied (in a sense fallen) human soul and divine soul that extends even to its composite nature.

Thomas Szlezák reads the exposition of the tripartite soul in light of the creation of the world-soul in the *Timaeus* (35b).[195] The *mythos* in the *Timaeus* speaks of a created soul furnished out of the contents of a mixing-bowl in which the Demiurge has mixed being of three classes, 'divisible', 'indivisible' and a 'mixture of the two'. The primordial soul is thus formed out of 'the same' (*autou*), 'other'(*thaterou*), 'being' (*ousia*). [196] Hence, even the primordial world-soul is in a sense tripartite. On this basis, the soul becomes capable of knowledge and perception:

> Inasmuch, then, as she is compound, blended of the natures of the same, the other, and being, these three portions...whenever she touches anything which has its substance dispersed or anything that has its substance undivided she is moved throughout her whole being and announces what she is identical with and from what she is different, and in what relation, where and how and when, it comes about that each thing exists and is acted upon, both in the sphere of the becoming, and in that of the ever uniform [197]

Thus, in the *Timaeus*, not only is the soul a compound of three portions (*moiras*), each relating by degrees more or less to realm of the forms, or to the realm of material things, she occupies an intermediate space between perfect being, and ever becoming, between the world of ideas, and the world of material things:

> The soul must take part in both words, and, if it is to know anything, has to comprehend the presence of both the eternal ideas and the ephemeral world of becoming (*vergängliche Werdewelt*), and, because it takes part in both worlds, it can turn towards the higher world until it gains a new ontological

[194]Ibid., 127.
[195] Thomas Alexander Szlezák, *Platon*: *Meisterdenker der Antike*, (München: C.H. Beck , 2021), 307-321.
[196]Plato, *Timaeus* trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge MA: Harvard, Loeb Classical Library), 35b.
[197]Ibid.

> status (*Seinstatus*) through 'likeness to God' or gives itself only to the ephemeral and the mortal, until it loses all contact with the divine. [198]

If, with Szlezák, one reads the model of the tripartite soul along the lines of the *mythos* of the 'world-soul' in the *Timaeus,* one can perceive clearly, I think, the inner drama, and struggle of the soul to becoming likened unto the divine, the struggle of the charioteer and two horses midway between heaven and earth, a state indeed inherent to the nature of soul itself.

The charioteers' view outside of the vault of heaven is described, in the *Phaedrus*, as 'colourless, formless, and intangible truly existing essence'.[199] The nature of this vision is further specified: In the revolution outside the vault of heaven the soul contemplates absolute justice, knowledge, and temperance. What is true for the souls of the gods, seen as chariot and charioteer, is also true of mortals who have made the ascent to this divine realm: '[The soul] which best follows after God and is most like him, raises the head of the charioteer into the outer region' (248a). Also, 'it is the law of destiny that the soul which accompanies God and obtains a view of any of the truths until the next cycle is free from harm until the next period, and if it can always attain this, is always unharmed'.[200] [201] Socrates summarizes the fate of human beings: 'whoever lives justly obtains a better lot, and whoever lives unjustly a worse lot' (249d).[202] But the means by which it is possible to live justly, understood in context, would surely seem to relate directly to the Philosopher/Lover's ascent into heaven so as to dwell with God in the heavenly realm. For the human virtues, by which a just life may be discerned, have already been shown to be the fruit of Love.

The shortest route to salvation, within this system, is to be guileless (ἀδόλως) philosophers who, after a number of shorter revolutions about the vault of heaven, 'become winged and go their way', with no indication that they will ever lose their 'wings' again, but will dwell forever among the heavenly

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[198] Szlezák 312 (my own translation).
[199] *Phaedrus* 274d.
[200] See also *Apology* (41d), *Republic* 592 and 621d (the endings of Book 9 and 10 respectively).
[201] Socrates' depictions of a cycle of incarnation need not overly concern us here. For what is true for each cycle of ascent and rebirth can surely be summarized as being a true description of metaphysics relating to the soul whether or not you allow for many cycles. Plato's inconsistency on this point seems to reflect this fact, for the myth of the last judgement in the *Gorgias* (523–526) contains no such allusions to reincarnation.
[202] Justice, the topic of the *Republic*, will be addressed more fully in reference to that work in particular, later in this chapter.

forms 'by which God is accounted divine' (πρὸς οἷσπερ θεὸς ὢν θεῖός ἐστιν).[203] But this ascent to salvation is also a return. As in the *Symposium*, the Philosopher/Lover's realization is that all beauty has its source in the one thing that is truly beautiful, the Good. But this realization comes by means of a recollection of the heavenly forms which the soul once descried when it journeyed with God and dwelt alongside true being (τὸ ὂν ὄντως)[204]. The sort of generalizing of perceptions implied in the *Symposium* is explained more clearly here: When a person is taken up by the *mania* of Love, he is inspired to seek out the true beauty which he recalls from his soul's nascent infancy while still in the bosom of the divine.[205] But in order to do so he must 'separate himself from human interests, and turn his attention towards the divine…[even while he] is considered by the many as one disturbed, for they do not realize that he is divinely inspired' (249d).

The Philosopher/Lover's ascent to God, much more than in the *Symposium,* is described in terms of a rhapsodic and quite detailed mythology. There is a greater emphasis in the *Phaedrus* on how an amorous relationship itself can be made use of as part of the ascent. Of particular note, however, is the extent to which the Philosopher/Lover is delineated in what we would term today to be moral rather than purely intellectual terms. It is true that the sort of generalizing of sense impressions into such abstract notions of beauty and justice has, in the modern sense, an intellectual component: the discourses described in the *Symposium* which are supposed to beget human virtues and lead one to an appreciation of the divine seem to strike us as intellectual conversations. But all matters of intellectual cleverness for its own sake, that is to say in any sense divorced from the supreme task of likening oneself to God, are actively denigrated.[206] As we have already seen, the Philosopher/ Lovers who sprout wings to dwell among the forms, which are the essential properties of the god (249c), are specifically described as 'guileless' lovers who, after this life,

[203] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249d. The heavenly forms mentioned in the *Phaedrus* are Justice, Temperance, and Knowledge (247e). The form of Knowledge appears to be predicated of the 'real eternal absolute' which, taking the Platonic *corpus* as a whole, and especially the *Republic*, seems to be the form of the Good, which is that for which everything is done, and has no other end but itself. Temperance would seem to describe the supreme working of the self, perfect soundness of mind and soul. Justice relates not just to the self, but to well-formedness and well-orderliness in general, whether within the soul or, indeed, the *polis*.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.
[206] See *Republic* 516d, part of the extended analogy of the cave.

'sprout wings' and go on their way to heaven; they are distinguished by being 'self-controlled and orderly, holding in subjection that which is evil to the soul' (256b). [207] They strive to 'lead the beloved to the conduct and nature of the god[208]…they exhibit no jealousy, no meanness towards the loved one, but endeavour by every means in their power to lead him to the likeness of the god whom they honour'.[209]

But Socrates is by no means a moral perfectionist. Even those Lovers who are not so unflinchingly upright in conduct are promised a place in heaven merely by virtue of having begun the journey: 'For it is the law that those who have once begun their upwards progress shall never again pass into darkness' (256d). 'If the *mania* of Love is truly a 'divine gift', it follows that it rests not in our own power, but in the power of God to bring us to the philosophic fruition of seeing the divine forms, the essential divine reality'.[210] This is not to say those who grow wings, the 'saved', the 'elect', need not be Philosopher/Lovers. Socrates is clear that 'only the mind of the philosopher can grow wings, for by memory he is, so far as is possible, in the presence of those things by which God is accounted divine'.[211] Someone may not appear to have achieved the requisite inner purification, that synthesis of senses and impressions into a realization of the unity of their originating forms, nor seem to have achieved that moral perfection which, according to Socrates, goes hand-in-hand with this synthesis; such perfection may in fact be impossible in this life. But 'the things that are impossible with men are possible with God':[212] If the power to grant the *mania* of philosophic love rests with God, then with God also rests the power to bring even what appears to be an imperfect philosophic love to fruition. The vital thing is simply is to get on the train of philosophic love, and God will, in His power, make sure that it arrives at its destination: All the

[207] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 256b.
[208] The myth here imagines Lovers seeking after images, in human form, of a particular god of the Olympian pantheon whose virtues they themselves most reflect, and which they also see reflected in their beloved. This is a rare departure from Plato's normal treatment of the gods as possessing all of the same essential qualities, as definitions of the Good, and therefore essentially one. One way of reconciling the myth here with the predominating monotheism of later Platonists is to read the different gods as representing particular virtues or perfections within the Godhead which 'make God divine' (*Phaedrus* 249c) since all are alike in their perfection.
[209] Plato, *Phaedrus* 253b.
[210] Ibid., 249c.
[211] Ibid., 249b
[212] Luke 18:27, the story of the rich man, the camel, and the eye of a needle.

Philosopher/Lover's groping and straining, and falling back, will, in the end, be justified.

Faith and the Problem of Justification in Plato

We are led to something very much akin to the classic problem for Christian theology which so occupied the Reformers: How can inevitably amoral human beings be justified before God? Of some import is a discussion in the *Protagoras* of Simonides' verses on how hard it is to be good (339a), and also how hard it is, once having become good, to remain so 'against the force of circumstance'.[213] It is admitted that being good to an extent worthy of God is impossible in this life. Instead, Simonides' conclusion, as quoted by Socrates, is that 'the man is sufficient who is not bad, and not very stupid, who knows justice, which is profitable to the state; I will find no fault with him'.[214] Later Simonides is said to aver that 'he who is moderately good and does no evil is sufficient...'.[215] We can see the outline of something akin to the problem of justification which confronted Luther. The Christian solution is not that 'he who is moderately good is sufficient', but rather than one is justified by the grace of God through a faith that works by love. But this remark can be understood as an inchoate solution, in Plato, to the problem of manifestly sinful human beings being reconciled with a perfect God. If anyone can be justified, his justification cannot simply be a matter of never erring.

Christian faith is lived out in trust and commitment. In Plato, this characterizes the animating ethic of the Philosopher. This is evident in a passage in the *Phaedrus*, towards the end of the Palinode, the same in which certain lovers who are said to be 'without philosophy' because they are liable to act out those more sensual aspects of love which 'are not approved by the whole mind.' For even these lovers are destined to 'continue their upward progress' to heaven.[216] Though they are defined at first as being 'without philosophy', they must, if we take Socrates at face value and believe that only philosophers can

[213] Plato, *Protagoras*, 344.
[214] Ibid., 346c.
[215] Ibid, 346e.
[216] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 256d.

'grow wings', find philosophy as a result of their love.[217] For the seed of philosophy is present: 'Their illicit practices grow more and more infrequent because they are not approved by the whole mind (*dianoia*)', yet they believe, however, that they have 'given and received great assurances (πίστεις τὰς μεγίστας) that they can never break and fall into enmity'.[218] Faith in love, or rather, 'faith which works by love', despite more lapses, allows them to live a life of philosophy.

Pistis and Rhetoric in the *Gorgias*

By far the most prominent use of *pistis*-related language in Plato is in the context of rhetoric. The word itself is related to 'πείθειν', 'to persuade' or in the passive, 'to be convinced, obey', which has immediate rhetorical connotations. When Socrates has finished relaying Diotima's words on the nature of love, he concludes *'pepeismai* (πέπεισμαι)', 'I am persuaded by it, and being so persuaded (*pepeismenos* πεπεισμένος) I will attempt to persuade others (*peithein* πείθειν)'.[219] The *Gorgias* ends with a kind of myth of the last judgement according to 'the law of Cronos', 'that every man who passed a just and holy life' departs to the Isles of the Blessed, and whoever has lived an unjust and impious life goes to the dungeon of requital and penance'.[220] In relation to this tale, Socrates affirms, 'ἃ ἐγὼ ἀκηκοὼς πιστεύω ἀληθῆ εἶναι', 'the things which I have heard I believe to be true'. Later, when the final tale has been told of a judgement and a judge who is no respecter of persons (523e; cf. Rom 2:11), Socrates declares, 'ὑπό τε τούτων τῶν λόγων πέπεισμαι…. I am convinced by these accounts, and I must therefore consider how I might show my judge that my soul is in the best of health. So leaving aside the honours of most men, I shall try, by inquiry into the truth, to be really good in as high degree as I am able, both in this life, and when I come to die'.[221] There is a

[217] Ibid., 249b.
[218] Ibid., 256d.
[219] Plato, *Symposium* 212b.
[220] Plato, *Gorgias* 523a-b.
[221] Plato, *Gorgias* 526e.

strong element of trust involved in being so convinced. For what Socrates is saying is not simply, or even essentially, that he believes that the tale really happened (though that may be the case), but that the essential message of what is being conveyed is true. In this sense, Socrates does believe the tale to be true, and has enough faith in this truth, and enough trust in its moral, to live accordingly.

It is only natural that *pistis*-related language, as a theme, should follow closely upon any discussion of rhetoric, the object of which is to persuade. One such discussion occurs in the *Gorgias*: Gorgias has just conceded that rhetoric produces faith (or belief) without complete knowledge: 'πιστεύειν… ἄνευ τοῦ εἰδέναι'.[222] Socrates was initially compelled to admit that rhetoric is meant not to instruct an assembled crowd 'in what is just, and what is unjust, but only to make them believe (ἀλλὰ πιστικὸς μόνον)' (455a). Nevertheless, the very nature of the art of rhetoric is to convince the multitude that certain things are just, and others unjust. A false rhetorician may urge the justice of things that are really unjust, and the injustice of what is really just. But a true rhetorician urges the justice of a claim that really is just. For just as the carpenter, in order to practice his trade, must have learned carpentry, the musician, music, and the doctor, medicine, so the true rhetorician, who commends things to the assembly as either just or unjust (and therefore either worthy or unworthy to be believed), must in a sense know what is just, and be able to do it.[223]

It is tempting to read the *Gorgias*, with its concept of 'believing without knowledge' (πιστεύειν…ἄνευ τοῦ εἰδέναι), as establishing an inflexible divide between *pistis* (faith) and *episteme* (knowledge). Angelica Taglia, author of a book-length study of Plato's use of *pistis*, thinks that the *Gorgias* marks a rupture in the history of Greek literature up to that point in the firm divide that it establishes between *pistis* and *episteme*.[224]Taglia thinks this marks a departure

[222] Ibid., 454e.

[223] Ibid., 460a–461b. The 'early' Platonic *corpus*, and I think to a large extend the later *corpus* as well, endorses the view that virtue and just action can be taught because they are essentially equivalent to knowledge: since everyone wishes to do what is good (or what they think good), what separates the good and the bad is simply the degree to which they know what is right and wrong (or whether what they think is right and wrong is actually so). In particular, see *Gorgias* 468–471.

[224] Angelica Taglia, *Il Concetto di Pistis in Platone* (Firenze: Editrice Le Lettere, 1999). Taglia thinks that, in the *Gorgias*, persuasion (πειθώ) 'can produce either *pistis* or *episteme,* but not both together' (151). Indeed, she thinks that, 'the *pistis* that is engendered is the result of a persuasion that cuts itself off from knowledge' ('La *pistis* è invece l'esito della

from pre-socratics such as Parmenides and Empedocles, and the historian Herodotus, for whom the path of *pistis* often opens the way to true knowledge.[225] However, Taglia draws, I think, the wrong conclusions from Socrates's delineation of 'two types of persuasion, one producing faith without knowledge (*pistis aneu eidenai*) and the other knowledge alone.[226] Socrates establishes that although one can have true and false faith one cannot have true or false knowledge. However, Socrates follows this up immediately with the observation that those who have learned something (and hence have knowledge) nevertheless 'are persuaded and have believed' (Ἀλλὰ μὴν οἵ τέ γε μεμαθηκότες πεπεισμένοι εἰσὶν καὶ οἱ πεπιστευκότες).[227] Taglia thinks that those who have believed (*pepisteukotes*) nevertheless do not have *pistis* because *episteme* and *pistis* have just been shown to be mutually exclusive.[228] And yet it would be strange indeed to think *pisteuo,* (apart from simply 'to believe') can not also mean to have faith (*pistis*); to separate the verb from the noun in this way is mere cavilling. In the end, the aim of the *Gorgias* is not to condemn *pistis* and rhetoric *tout court* but to come to understand the nature of true rhetoric, which, like false rhetoric, makes use of persuasion and produces faith in the listener, but unlike false rhetoric, produces a true faith, which brings the listener knowledge of the just and the good. [229]

Rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*: Plato's Treatise on *Logos*

The discussion of rhetoric that concludes the *Phaedrus* reminds us that the dialogue has, all along, played out as a kind of rhetorical challenge for Socrates to give a speech both for and against love. That the first speech is false and second speech true is emphasized: Socrates has committed a sin in giving the first speech against love. His second speech comes as a recantation of the first

persuasione che prescinde dal sapere') (151).
[225]Ibid., 143-149.
[226] δύο εἴδη... πειθοῦς τὸ μὲν πίστιν παρεχόμενον ἄνευ τοῦ εἰδέναι, τὸ δ' ἐπιστήμην (*Gorgias* 254e).
[227]Ibid., 454e.
[228]Taglia 152.
[229]*Gorgias* 460e.

(*palinodia*),[230] and yet he still feels guilty on account of having given a speech against Love:

> Blame Lysias, he says, the father of [that] discourse, [and] make him to cease from such speeches, and turn him, as his brother Polemarchus is turned, towards philosophy, that his lover Phaedrus may no longer hesitate, as he does now, between the two ways, but may direct his life solely towards love and philosophical discourses (ἁπλῶς πρὸς Ἔρωτα μετὰ φιλοσόφων λόγων τὸν βίον ποιῆται.)[231]

If the very fact of having given two contradictory speeches would seem to denigrate rhetoric as the art of persuasion, we are reminded that 'without the help of rhetoric, or discourse, the truth cannot persuade'.[232] The notion that we find in the *Gorgias* 'that the true art [of rhetoric] will never take hold where divorced from truth' is reiterated.[233] Far from being a vilified art, rhetoric is among the noblest of arts because it 'leads souls by means of words' (ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων).[234] Rhetoric, or speech-making more generally, has, therefore, the task of leading souls to the True and the Good, which dwell with God. To accomplish this, rhetoric makes use of *logoi*, 'speeches, words, discourse'.

As the discussion of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* moves on, something rather interesting begins to happen: The term *logos* begins actually to replace *rhetorike* as the precise subject of discussion.[235] The discussion moves from the art of speaking in general (*rhetorike*) to the means which that art employs (*logos*). When eight components of an effective discourse are enumerated, they are spoken of as components of the *logos*. The *logos*, we are told, must be well put together, well organized, and so be 'like a living being with a body of its own, as it were, so as not to be headless and footless, but to have a middle, and members composed in fitting relation to each other and to the whole'. The aim of this 'living ensouled *logos*' is 'faith', or 'persuasion'.[236] This is contrasted with the written (as opposed to spoken) word which is comparatively static, and

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[230] Hence Socrates's second speech in the *Phaedrus* is often referred to simply as the 'palinode'.
[231] Plato, *Phaedrus,* 257b.
[232] Ibid., 260e. See Rom 10:14.
[233] Ibid., 260e.
[234] Ibid., 261b. See also 272d.
[235] This is noticeable in the *Phaedrus* from about 264 onwards.
[236] In general, a response implying trust and assent, almost invariably expressed in greek by *pistis*-related language.

cannot answer for itself in the context of back-and-forth dialectic.[237] The sort of bringing-together and synthesizing of impressions into general notions which we have already seen described as part of the Philosopher/Lover's characteristic activity, and the separating out of disparate notions which do not belong together (good and evil, beautiful and ugly) are the province of the art of 'dialectic' which acts by way of *logoi*.

The highest form of the dialectic is indeed directed towards more abstract forms or ideas such as the nature of justice.[238] But the work of the *logos* is not simply to lead the soul to the knowledge of justice, beauty, and goodness, which are present supremely with God, but to beget further *logoi* in the souls of others which direct them in turn towards justice, beauty, and goodness, in short, toward the life of the Philosopher/Lover. The faithful, who are persuaded by the true *logos*, the true living discourse which needs must direct its hearers towards justice, and away from injustice, are themselves empowered to make converts to such a life by the *logos*, whose nature it is to persuade. It is the *logos*, therefore, in its capacity as 'leader of souls'[239] that is uniquely empowered, by means of 'faith' or 'persuasion' to lead human beings onto the path of philosophic love, to beget justice and all of the highest virtues; to 'sprout wings', and to ascend to God. But the Philosopher/Lover's faith is also a commitment to the divine life he has chosen to live: He is at once called by faith to live a life of philosophy, but his overpowering love of the Good, which is Beauty and Goodness itself, also compels him to commit himself to this path, and so to pass unerringly on a journey upwards (256d), begetting, in the process, through the power of *logos*, the faith, which he holds, in others.

From Platonic Faith to Platonic Justice (*Apology*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*)

We have established the correlation in Plato between *pistis*-related language and *logos*. We must now examine the more general, over-arching sense in

[237] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 276a.
[238] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 276e.
[239]'the power of logos coming to be as leader of souls (λόγου δύναμις τυγχάνει ψυχαγωγία οὖσα)'(*Phaedrus* 271e).

which a notion of faith is inherent to Plato's picture of the Philosopher. The essential question might be posed as follows: what kind faith is required to live the life of the philosopher? As we shall see, this need not always take the form of *pistis*, in Plato, but of *doxa*, the right opinion that forms the philosophic faith about the sovereign power of existence. One could also pose this question another way: what do you have to be convinced of in order to live the life of philosophy? Any answer must involve some sense in which the philosophic way of life is simply more worth living than any other. Put another way, it must show that the happiest possible life is the philosophic one.

Pistis and Plato's *Apology*

The most straightforward exhortation to a life of philosophy in the Platonic corpus is the *Apology*, which is, for this reason, often chosen as an introduction to Plato's corpus, or, indeed, an introduction to philosophy as a whole.[240] It is a work of rhetoric (*logos*), meant to convince us, or, to echo the *Phaedrus*, rather to lead our souls to see the truth. The beginning of the *Apology* contains an exhortation to the Athenian jurors to disregard Socrates' manner of speech and pay attention only to the question of whether what he says is just or unjust. This is a theme which is itself inherent to the Platonic philosophy; that the meaning or cause of all things can be reduced to such categories as the just or unjust, good or bad, true or false, beautiful or ugly.[241] To be convinced by Socrates' discourse, therefore, it is necessary, at least to some degree, to partake of his philosophy. It is one of the primary aims of Socrates' speech, at least as Plato imagines it, that the jurors should do so. Indeed, the *Apology* stands as an outline of and an exhortation to the philosophic life.

In the indictment against Socrates, in addition to the commonplace accusation against philosophers that they investigate things 'in the air' and 'beneath the earth', and make 'the weaker argument the stronger' (19b), there is the implicit suggestion that Socrates does not recognize the gods.[242] This is a very curious suggestion, because, as Socrates points out, he conceives his whole

[240] This was the case for me as an undergraduate at the University of Chicago.
[241] Passages from *Phaedo* 99–103 and *Republic* Book 6, soon to be discussed, make it clear that these ethical/metaphysical categories may be subsumed within the Idea of the Good.
[242] Plato, *Apology*, 18c.

life's project of engaging with citizens in dialectical exercises, and interrogating them as to the true extent of their knowledge, as a kind of divine mission. For the story is that an old friend of Socrates went to see the oracle at Delphi and asked whether there was anyone wiser than Socrates. The oracle replied that there was, in fact, no one wiser.[243] Perplexed by this, Socrates declares that, in an effort to understand the oracle, he should begin dialectic interrogations to discern in what sense others were either wiser or less wise than he. What Socrates learns is not that he himself is marvellously wise, but that, whereas the people most reputed to be wise, such as politicians, poets, and craftsmen, thought themselves to be wise but were not wise, he himself was neither wise nor believed himself to be wise.[244]

In light of the rest of the Platonic corpus, one can piece together here a key tenet of Plato's theology: the only one who is truly wise and good and just is God, and human beings' proper relation to God within this picture involves, before all else, an acknowledgement of their own relative ignorance and dependence on the Divine. As Socrates himself puts it, 'those present when I confute another think I am wise, but what…[the Oracle]… really means to say is that the god[245] is really wise and by his oracle [he] says that human wisdom is of little or no value…[and] this one…is wisest who, like Socrates, recognizes that he is not worth anything with respect to wisdom'.[246]

The wisdom which Socrates undoubtedly does possess, however, is a kind of negative wisdom:[247] Socrates may not be able to paint a precise picture of what moral actions consist in, for instance, but he knows for certain that the moral value of an act must take precedence over all other considerations: 'You speak well if you think that a man, who has anything at all to recommend him, should consider the danger of life or death, and not simply discover whether what he does is just or unjust, the works of a good or a bad man'(28c).[248] To give

[243] Ibid., 21b.
[244] Ibid., 22c.
[245] In this instance, where the god who speaks through the Pythian oracle is specifically invoked, I have neglected to capitalize the G, although, as we have seen, in Plato, what one can be said of one god can generally be said of all.
[246] Plato, *Apology* 23c.
[247]Terence Irwin proposes what I have called 'negative wisdom' may be understood simply as 'moral conviction'. Hence Socrates could have moral conviction, and still be sincere about possessing no wisdom because his moral conviction do not involve the accumulation of positive knowledge (Irwin 29).
[248] Ibid., 28c.

primacy, in all things, to the supreme categories of justice and goodness, whether or not one can supply a positive picture of what precisely this justice and goodness always consist in, seems to be the *sine qua non* of the philosophic life. This goes some way to explaining the curious fact of the *daimonion* which, Socrates says, 'only holds me back, and never drives me forward.'[249] For the *daimonion* is a representation of this type of negative wisdom: It may not be able to prod Socrates into knowing what exactly the right, expedient thing in each case is, but it can certainly hold him back from doing things which, in the way we have described, are obviously wrong, from giving deference to what is worse rather than to what is better.

For in the *Apology* Socrates does admit that he does know at least one thing: 'it is foul and wicked to do evil, and to disobey someone better than me, whether he be god or man'.[250] Hence, he must obey the oracle rather than the Court, and continue in his life of philosophy. One could of course debate whether a particular person is or is not better than another, whether a given action is right or wrong in a given instance. But Socrates' unflinching faith is that not to defer to a better, insofar as he truly is better, and not do what, based on the knowledge available, seems to be good, rather than evil, is to forfeit man's basic moral duty. Because this duty is presented as a sacred duty, to neglect it is sacrilegious. Socrates' faith in the supremacy, or, if you will, in the sovereignty of the Good, even in the face of death, must remain unflinching. This is because part and parcel of this faith of Socrates is the doctrine that 'no harm can come to the good man, whether in this life, of after it, and his deeds will never be neglected by the gods'.

Christopher Rowe is right, I think, to speak of a theory of the forms in the background in the *Apology*, where the doctrine is, if not explicitly present, than is at least presupposed.[251] We must, I think, take seriously Rowe's view that 'the full import of any dialogue will not be capable of being grasped without cross reference to others'.[252] Furthermore, 'we should not expect Plato to say everything he has to say about everything on every occasion.'[253] Indeed, the

[249] Ibid., 31c.
[250] Ibid., 29b.
[251]Rowe 44.
[252]Ibid.,, 23.
[253]Ibid., 121.

extent to which one reads in supposedly later metaphysical doctrines into the *Apology* is largely a product of whether one has sought some degree of unity in the platonic *corpus* to begin with, and whether one is able to adapt one's reading of the dialogues, though without of course ignoring the clear content of the texts, in order to accommodate this.

Rowe thinks that, 'if forms are things like justice and goodness, understood as non-identical with just things and good things, then the answer is that of course there are forms in the *Apology*.' [254] Indeed, the metaphysical structure lying in the background of the *Apology*, which can only be discerned in light of the rest of the Platonic *corpus*, is that a good man partakes of goodness itself, or the Good, which, as we shall shortly explore, is the essential cause and sovereign power of all that is. For the good man to be neglected by the gods (who are all supremely good in Plato) would therefore militate against the very order of existence. In short, he who is good cannot ever be disowned by the power of the Good, which is the supreme power of existence. On a more basic level, the good man, insofar as he is good, can come to no harm (evil), because then he would not be truly good: The good man, by virtue of his goodness, cannot be tainted by evil, for then he would not be good.

The *Apology* is a work of persuasive rhetoric. It is a very fine *logos* indeed. According to the *Phaedrus*, the object of such rhetoric is *pistis,* faith or belief. Since it exhorts us to the best of all possible lives, the philosophy which it begets is no ordinary faith or belief, but in a sense proceeds from *the* Faith (i.e. the only true faith worth having), the faith required to lead the philosophic life. It would also be tempting, for a non-Christian, or pre-Christian, to treat the *Apology*, the 'Palinode' of the *Phaedrus*, Diotima's speech in the *Symposium* or indeed the entire Platonic project of dialectic as being *the* Logos, the highest and truest sense of *logos*, which must take the name of the whole category of *logoi*: it is the truest *logos* in the sense that it exhorts human beings to live the best, most flourishing, holiest life possible. The object of such a *logos* must be the truest and best possible *pistis*. It is however not possible to speak, in light of the Christian revelation, of either the *Apology* or of Plato's entire corpus—or any speech or writing—in this way. Christians believe that the true *logos*, which exhorts us to the best and holiest possible life, was in the beginning with God

[254]Ibid.

and was God. Christians, in short, believe that the true *Logos* is God expressing Himself, a kind of divine rhetoric which reveals the nature of God, His relation to human beings, and their path to salvation. That faith which responds to, and is indeed convinced by, this rhetoric, is the true faith, faith in God and in His Son, the Eternal Word of God, His *Logos*. The true *pistis* is that which believes in, is convinced by, and indeed strives for union with the true *logos*. This parallel with a Platonic exhortation to philosophic living is not meant as a semi-facetious subterfuge of Christian ideas, much less as an earnest attempt in some sense to sanctify anything of the Platonic corpus, but to attempt to make plain the inherent connection in Platonic thought between faith and rhetoric, between *pistis* and *logos*, which has much significance for Christian theology.

Plato's *Phaedo* and The Theory of the Forms

This Platonic framework relies on the Platonic theory of the primacy of a generalized concept (*eidos*) within a given category of thought (the Theory of the Forms). This has already been explored, to some extent, in the *Symposium*, in which it is determined that the true Lover should take the name of lover in general. Perhaps the clearest delineation of this theory is given in the *Phaedo*. Philosophic faith in the primacy and sovereignty of the Good, the faith on which the philosophic life depends, is essentially an extension of this theory.

The *Phaedo* (96–100) provides an outline of how this theory of generalized concepts relates to the Platonic faith in the life of philosophy, and also how this relates to the supremacy of the Good. The dialogue as a whole, which is set in the hours just before Socrates drinks the hemlock, is perhaps best known for its many attempts to prove the immortality of the soul. It is in this context that the generation and decay of physical things is brought up (the specific question at hand is whether or not the soul is generated and decays, or whether it is immortal). Flagging this topic of how things change and develop in the natural world as something of more general interest (95e), Socrates relates a story of how, as a youth, he progressed from a zeal for scientific inquiry into nature to full philosophic maturity: he was excited about φύσεως ἱστορίαν, natural science, as we would term it today. It concerned such questions as, 'do heat and cold bring about the organization of animals?', and 'is it the blood, or air, or fire

by which we think?'[255] Socrates was seeking *aitias*, causes, reasons, and foundations, for the way things are. But the *aitias* that he found were merely descriptive. Instead of answering 'why' questions about the nature of things, they were merely answering 'how' questions.[256] A typical ancient example of such a descriptive *aitia* would have been, for instance, that 'man grows through eating and drinking…[where] flesh is added to flesh, and bone to bone'.[257] Another is that one person, a head's length taller than another, is 'taller by a head'. In the case of arithmetic, the *aitia* becomes more difficult to discern. Socrates, for instance, cannot decide 'whether, when one is added to one, the one to which the addition was made has become two or the one which was added and the one to which it was added became two by the addition of each to the other'.[258]

The young Socrates feels he may have found a way out of this causal confusion in Anaxagoras' doctrine that mind (*nous*) arranges and causes all things.[259] This doctrine at first appeals to Socrates because, as he sees it, it is in the nature of mind to arrange things in the way that it thinks best. Saying that mind causes everything would, then, be equivalent to saying that the cause of anything is the force of 'the best', or 'the good'. On this model, as Socrates describes it, 'if someone wishes to find the cause by which each thing comes into existence, and ceases to be, he must find out, in terms of what each thing is, what it does, and how it is affected, the thing that is altogether best for it…'.[260] As Socrates discovers, however, Anaxagoras does not draw the same implications from the study of mind that he himself draws. In the end, Anaxagoras thought of *nous* as one of the most powerful physical causes thrown into the mix of other merely descriptive causes.[261] Yet the cause[262] or explanation of Socrates' sitting in a prison cell about to drink the hemlock cannot simply involve a scientific description of how it is that his body maintains itself in a sedentary position in that particular place. The cause must

[255] Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. Harold North Fowler (Cambridge: Harvard, Loeb Classical Texts, 1914), 97b.
[256] *Aitia* is often used forensically with the sense of 'guilt', 'blame', 'fault'. It is easy to see, therefore, how on the Greek understanding causal notions of how and why begin to merge.
[257] Plato, *Phaedo*, 96d.
[258] Ibid., 97a.
[259] Ibid., 97c.
[260] Ibid., 97d.
[261] Ibid., 98c.
[262] Let it be assumed, henceforth, that by cause I mean *aitia*.

involve the claim that it 'seemed best' to the majority of Athenian jurors to send him there, and that he himself was willing [i.e thought it best] to submit to their sentence.[263] Socrates ridicules those who yet persevere in only assigning only physical, descriptive causes to things: 'They do not look for the power which causes things to be placed as it is best for them to be placed, nor do they think it has any divine force, but they think they can find a new Atlas, more powerful, and more immortal, and more all-embracing than this, and in truth they give no thought to the good, which must embrace and hold together all things'.[264] Socrates himself decides to adopt the policy of assessing causes in terms of this divine, all-embracing good. Implicitly admitting that the good is, in itself, ultimately incomprehensible, Socrates decides to look at 'shadows of the good', conceptions (*logous*).[265] His mode of inquiry is as follows: 'I assume in each case some principle (*logon*) which I consider strongest [and best] and whatever seems to me to agree with this, whether relating to cause or anything else, I regard as true, and whatever disagrees with it as untrue…. I will revert to those familiar subjects of ours, as my point of departure, and assume that there are such things as absolute beauty, and good, and greatness, and the like'.[266] Such a procedure relies on assumptions. It is not that Socrates knows for sure that the Good is the all-encompassing cause of all that is. For he himself admits he is incapable of looking upon it in itself, just as he is incapable of looking directly at the sun. His procedure, therefore, rests on affirmation of something that remains unseen. It is a matter of faith.[267] Though Plato does not use a *pistis*-related word here, his language is redolent of an attitude of faith on which philosophical method depends:

> If anyone tells me that what makes something beautiful is its lovely colour, or its shape, or anything else of that sort, I let that go, for all such things confuse me, and I hold simply, and perhaps foolishly to this, that nothing makes it beautiful but communion (call it what you please) with absolute beauty, however it may be gained; about the way in which it happens I make no positive statement as yet, but I do insist

[263] Plato, *Phaedo*, 98e.
[264] Ibid, 99c.
[265] The normal term for such generalized conceptions is *eidos* rather than *logos*. It seems to me, however, that Plato uses *logos* here in the context of the metaphor where such shadowy conceptions somehow *communicate* the nature of the good itself, which is itself ultimately unknowable.
[266] Plato, *Phaedo*, 100a
[267] The Christian tradition understands that faith relates to things that are *unseen* (See esp. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II, ii, Q 1, Art 5).

> that beautiful things are made beautiful by beauty. For I think that this is the safest answer I can give…and if I cleave fast to this, I think I shall never be overthrown.[268]

For Plato, impressions of things which strike us as being, for instance, just or beautiful may be generalized, in each case, into an overarching notion (usually the *eidos* or 'form') of the just, beautiful or so forth. This theory is easily ridiculed when extended to such ideas as the form of a table, the form of a window-shade, or the form of a colour (redness, blueness or so forth.) But when one considers that the form of a table is simply the implicit idea we have of an ideal, the theoretical table against which the goodness or suitability of each table is judged, it seems much more reasonable. To call a table good is implicitly to be working from the notion of a perfectly *good* table. This perfectly good table is also the truest table in the sense that it most truly realizes the unique virtues of a table. That the ideal table does not exist within the visible world is entirely to be expected. Perfect geometric figures do not exist in the visible world either. Yet they are the basis on which people calculated that the building in which I am writing these words can remain standing. Giving being and unity to all these forms is the Idea of the Good.[269] Again, although this might appear fanciful, it is in fact quite intuitive: an idealized form is, by nature, the best possible manifestation of the thing of which it is an ideal; it is the *best* possible version of that thing insofar as it represents the virtues of that thing, such as they are, to the greatest possible degree. Implicit in this schema is a notion of good or evil that Augustine explores in his engagement with the Platonists, that everything that *is* is good in the sense of being something rather than nothing.[270] The things that most truly *are* are the truest and most idealized representations of things as they appear and are therefore the best and truest

[268]Plato, *Phaedo*, 101d. trans. Fowler. Julia Annas thinks that in the case *Republic*, but curiously not in the case of the other Platonic dialogues, forms 'form the basis of a *good* persons understanding rather than being part of a detachable metaphysics' [Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) 238]. Given that the metaphysical discussions of the *Phaedo* are determinative of the attitude in which Socrates faces his imminent death, I am not at all sure that this does not apply here as well.

[269] Plato tends to use *idia* for the all-subsuming Form of the Good and *eidos* for the multiplicity of forms subsumed beneath it. This seems to me nothing more than a stylistic variation of word choice, of which Plato is very fond. However, in recognition of this, I shall refer to the *forms* of things, as idealized in general conceptions, but to the *Idea* of the Good.

[270] *Confessions* 7,12; 7,20.

versions of these things. The one thing that most truly is, among all others, is the idea of the Good itself. [271]

The Philosopher's Justification in the *Republic*

The Justification of the Soul and the Idea of the Good

The centrality of this 'Idea of the Good' is explored most fully in Book 6 of the Republic. What emerges is that far from being a discrete, alien force, estranged from human beings, the Idea of the Good is, as in the *Phaedo*, given active, causal properties. What emerges also in the *Republic* is that the power of the philosopher's 'faith', as I have described it, leads him to be 'likened unto God'. What this means substantially is that the philosopher's soul is made just by its assimilation to perfect justice, divine Justice, where each of the three parts of the soul are harmonized under the leadership of the *logos* (or *logistikon*). Instructively, it is the Idea of the Good itself which is the author of the philosopher's assimilation to divine Justice, his justification.

When it has been agreed, in the *Republic*, that the Guardians of the ideal city should be philosophers, those virtues which the philosopher must possess are reiterated. These are what Christian tradition has since codified as the 'cardinal virtues': justice, prudence, temperance, and courage, which had already been used to specify the unique virtue of every class of the ideal city.[272] In line with the main project of the *Republic*, however, the ideal city should be seen as but an analogy by which one can more clearly perceive the virtues of the human soul. [273] Socrates speaks, somewhat mysteriously at first, of another, longer

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[272] Plato, *Republic*, 428a, 504b.

[273] Many, of course, read the *Republic* as at least in part a political work. Against this reading, Annas points out that Aristotle completely ignores the *Republic* in his discussion of Plato's political theory (*Politics* 1279-1280) [Annas, *Platonic Ethics Old and New* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1999) 92]. G.R.F. Ferrari is also right to point out that even if the *Republic*

path to wisdom about such things, which had been alluded to in Book 4 (435b) but not followed up on, and which he now declares will render such things clear to those who undertake them. Socrates gives us some idea of the nature of this path, and in so doing orients the discussion strictly within the purview of moral rather than purely metaphysical thinking. But he also claims that the philosopher's outlook involves a great deal more than mere virtue ethics, more even than that sort of very Platonic virtue ethics, mingled with metaphysical speculations, which subsumes all virtues to a large extent under the virtue of justice.

Whereas the other cardinal virtues had earlier been linked to the proper performance of each social class within the city-state, and, by analogy, of each part of the soul, justice defines the harmonious functioning of the whole. By analogy, a just soul is one that is well harmonized among its three parts: reason (*logos*) understands, and the passions (*thymos* and *logos*) in harmony with *logos* compel and execute right action based on this understanding. Glaucon asks, 'Are not such things [the virtues] the greatest, or is there yet something greater than justice, and the things we have been discussing?' 'We must indeed contemplate something greater, Socrates replies, 'and not a mere sketch, but be sure not to be satisfied with anything but a full realization [of the thing we are seeking to describe]'.[274] In the end, the Philosopher's ethic must be described not merely in terms of justice, but in terms of the 'idea of the Good'.[275] This is what Socrates will take as his starting point, and this is what he must expound upon, that 'greatest knowledge', 'the Idea of the Good…by which just and good things become useful and beneficial (προσχρησάμενα χρήσιμα καὶ ὠφέλιμα γίγνεται)'.[276]

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is to be seen as not only a moral work but also a political work, it is beyond dispute that the work, 'recognizes that the city is capable of less than man...The city at its best supports it's philosophic class; but except in this sense, the city does not philosophize. Only individual philosophers can do that. The individual at his best is not only harmonious of soul but capable of philosophy, and it is philosophy, not kingship, that is the highest human achievement. The philosopher's productivity, his fertility of soul, is not cyclical, but progressive, taking him ever closer to god. Justice, accordingly, amounts to something more in man than in the city, despite being an analogous order of analogous elements in both. This is possible simply because man is something more than a city' (G.R.F. Ferrari, *City and Soul in Plato's Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). 90.

[274] Ibid., 504d-g.

[275] Ibid., 505a.

[276] Ibid., 505a.

It is instructive to note Socrates' pragmatic tone. It is not that we can have no idea of just things, just behaviour, or even perhaps Justice itself without the idea of the Good, but that such notions do not resonate to the extent that they actively inform the way we live our lives until they are understood in terms of the Good.[277]In a passage which contains much of the logic and oratorical method of the famous passage at 1 Cor 13:2, where Paul subsumes all of the virtues under the supreme virtue of charity, Socrates outlines the primacy of the Good:

> without this [the Good], however well we should come to know other things, be assured it will be of no use, just as nothing we possess is of any use at all without the Good. Or do you think it greater to possess all things rather than the Good, or know[278] all things without knowing the fair and the good (καλὸν δὲ καὶ ἀγαθὸν μηδὲν φρονεῖν)?'[279]

Interesting to note is the way in which Socrates squarely identifies *kalon* with *agathon*, the Fine/Beautiful, with the Good, an identification that is not made, as we have just seen, in the case of Justice and the Good. The object of the Lover's attraction may have been defined more particularly, in the erotic dialogues, as the Beautiful. The philosopher is himself defined as the one who seeks to gaze upon the Beautiful. Yet here, where the tone is not nearly so sensual, and the concrete subject matter not the ideal lover but the ideal city, the object of the philosopher's seeking is the Good, rather than the Beautiful. But Socrates more or less equates the Beautiful and the Good.[280] There is no reason to suppose, therefore, that the Philosopher/Lover of the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* is not also the Philosopher of the *Republic*.

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[277] I sometimes refer to the idea of the good as simply the Good, both where that is explicitly defined as such and where the context makes it apparent that that is what Plato has in mind.

[278] *Phronein*, Plato's most general word for knowing, without the specific connotation either of seeing (*eidein*) or of spectating/contemplating *(theasthai*).

[279] Plato, *Republic*, 505b. Translations from the *Republic* are my own unless otherwise indicated.

[280] It must be stressed that beautiful and good are not perfect synonyms for Plato. Right at *Republic* 505d Socrates says that although many may prefer the semblance of *dikaia* (just things), *agatha* (good things) are only ever desired for themselves. Socrates' point seems to be that the Good is the only thing that cannot, by its very nature, be desired contingently. As such, it may considered as a name of God. The Beautiful (*to kalon)* can indeed be synonymous with the Good, but only if understood as the Good described sensuously, or aesthetically. Unless spoken of as a non-contingent end in itself, the Good is no longer a name of God.

The Good has no end beyond itself. It is 'that which the whole soul pursues, for which it does all that it does, guessing at its nature, but yet remaining in the dark, not being able to sufficiently grasp what it is, nor to take advantage of a firm belief (πίστει…μονίμῳ) about it, as about other things'.[281] This is not an exalted description of philosophic striving, but in fact what Plato thinks is a true description of how most people, who do not yet possess the philosophic faith, may be seen to act. All act for the sake of what they take to be good; this is an inevitable facet of human experience which no one can avoid. If we have a confused notion of what is really good for us, this is not because we have ceased to seek what we think will do us good, but because we have a confused notion of what that Good is.[282] The project at hand is how we can move from an inevitable though unconscious and confused pursuit of the Good, without any firm belief about its true nature, to one that rests upon such a firm, singular belief (*pistis monimos* πίστις μονίμος).

From Platonic Faith to Platonic Justice

What sets the Philosopher apart, at least initially, is his *pistis*, his faith. The city-state, along the lines of the great political analogy that sustains the *Republic*, must be ruled by guardians, who have a firm and true belief about their relation to the Good, and who live by this as by faith. It is asserted, in Book 4, that the task of the Guardians—and, according to the *Republic's* political analogy, the task of the rational part of the soul, the *logistikon*—is 'to rule, be wise, and exercise forethought'.[283] The *logistikon*, as its name implies, acts as the *logos* of the soul (the guardians of the city). As we have seen, the meaning of *logos* is twofold, firstly meditating and understanding, and secondly communicating, imparting, and exhorting. Just as the harmonious functioning of the city relies upon the good council and effective communication of directives by the ruling class, so the *logistikon* must not only understand the framework upon which the whole soul is to live, but impart that lively faith necessarily to

[281] Plato, *Republic*, 505e.
[282] See Protagoras 345c for the source of the Platonic doctrine that no man ever errs willingly.
[283] Plato, *Republic*, 441e.

allow it to flourish within such framework. For it is the entire soul, the whole person, and not just the *logiston*, that must be moved to strive for the Good. Just as the Guardians must come to some understanding of the Good, if the city is to be just, so the *logistikon* must come to some understanding of the Good so that it can lead the whole soul by means of its understanding of the Good which, though never fully comprehensive, may be a provisional grasping by faith. The virtue descriptive of this state of affairs within the soul, where the *logistikon* (reasonable part) governs the *thymoeides* (the passionate part) and the *epithymetikon* (emotional part) in such a way that the entire soul flourishes as a well-harmonized whole, is justice.

Faith and the 'Offspring of the Good'

The knowledge which Socrates is anxious the *logistikon* should possess is not knowledge to the exclusion of faith (*pistis*) and opinion (*doxa*).[284] For any earthly knowledge of the Good cannot but be preliminary and incomplete: yet an understanding of the path to the Good, as Socrates relates it, is a type of knowledge, rather than mere opinion or belief. A full comprehension of the nature of the good itself is impossible for a human being to attain in this life.[285] Socrates asserts that 'opinions without knowledge' (ἄνευ ἐπιστήμης δόξας) are ugly things.[286] Glaucon agrees, and it is for this reason that he asks Socrates to discuss the nature of the Good in the way in which he has already discussed the nature of the cardinal virtues (what Socrates calls 'the longer way', rather than 'the shorter way'). Dialectic, on this model, engenders a kind of knowledge of what a true faith in the Good consists in, even as true knowledge of the Good is

[284] On Plato's 'divided line', faith occupies a place corresponding to that of opinion (*doxa*).
[285] Plato's use of the article with *theos* in this passage is in marked contrast to how he refers to each member of the train of gods in the palinode of the *Phaedrus* (247). There, in commanding their chariots, each is referred to individually as *theos*, rather than *o theos*. Here, he is referring to not just any god but *the* God. Origen makes an analogous distinction between *o logos* and *logos*, where the former is interpreted as the one true *Logos* of God, and the latter merely one of many *logoi*, whose source is the Divine *Logos* (Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, *The Writings of Origen*, trans. Frederick Crombie (T & T Clark: Edinburgh), Book 1, 2-3.
[286] Plato, *Republic*, 506c.

impossible in this life. For this reason, any earthly, and therefore provisional, knowledge of the Good remains within the realm of faith and opinion. For the Good itself belongs in the invisible realm of existence. As in the *Phaedo*, Socrates admits this openly: 'Let us now leave aside what the Good is in itself [for that is more than I can handle],' but let us speak of 'the offspring of the Good'.[287] The Good cannot be spoken of directly, and so we must speak of 'the offspring of the Good'.

Seeking the 'offspring of the good', in the *Republic*, amounts to a less sensuous version of the journey up the 'ladder of love' in the *Symposium*. It similarly involves a generalizing of sense impressions within categories which are themselves defined by an abstract positive notion (*eidos*). These categories are themselves subsumed within the categories (or forms) of the Beautiful and the Good.[288] Socrates explains the procedure: 'in the case of many things which we have set down, each thing is defined as it really is, according to one idea, after this one single idea has been posited (ὡς μιᾶς οὔσης τιθέντες)'.[289] Ideas, of course, can be contemplated in the mind (*noeisthai*) but not seen, such that the only way to paint a viable picture of the philosopher's ascent to the contemplation of ideas is through the analogy of sight.

The Similitude of the Sun

In the visible world, simply having eyes to see, and there being objects to be seen, does not allow us to see things. A 'third thing' is required, which is light. The source of all light is, of course, the sun. Socrates explains this in a very mystical tone: 'Which one can you name of the divinities in heaven who, as the Author and Cause of this, by his light makes our vision see best, and visible things to be seen?'[290] Although it would have been a Greek commonplace to refer to stars, including the sun, as divinities, the religious tone is, I think, deliberate. For the Similitude of the Sun is offered not for its own sake, but as an analogy by which to understand inner seeing; the contemplation (*noeisthai*) of the forms as they coalesce within the all-embracing category of the Good. We are meant identify the sun with the Good, and the human eye with the

[287] Ibid., 507d.
[288] Ibid., 507b.
[289] Ibid.
[290]Plato, *The Republic*, trans. ed. Paul Shorey ed. ('Teubner' Text 1889) (Cambridge: Harvard, Loeb Classical Texts, 1953), 508b.

human soul. Just as the eye must be in a sense 'sun-like' (508b) in order to receive and internalize the sun's rays, the human soul, working with a kind of inward rather than outward vision, must be disposed in such a way as to receive the benefits of the Good, from which all good things are derived. The eye is 'not identical' with the Sun (508b), nor is any *logos* identical with the exemplar *logos* which, according to John, was with God from the beginning. But there must be some way in which our *logos* is related to the supreme *logos*, some way in which human beings come to partake of God's essence to the extent that they can become the receptacles of His grace, and come to understand something of His nature.

The physically blind can form no clear picture of the objects around them, nor can they have a clear idea of what would enable them to form such a picture (i.e., the light of the sun). In a similar way, those who are spiritually blind cannot discern the true order of creation as dependent on the Good, without which (and here the analogy of the sun is very exact indeed) nothing of our visible world would have come into existence, have been sustained in existence, or ever be adequately understood. Significantly, all of these things may be seen as gifts in the purview of the Good. We are, for our part, completely dependent on the Good, just as we are dependent on the rays of the sun for all of life's nourishment. It is of great moment, therefore, that we make sure that we are spiritually sun-like (*heliodeidestaton* ἡλιοειδέστατόν) so that we can receive what the Good gives us. Certainly not least among these gifts is the ability to know something of the Good. With this knowledge we might become so disposed towards the Good that it can succeed in turning us towards itself, as by the rays of the sun; we may be so nourished and animated by the Good as to bear fruit that is of its very own making.

God and the Good

The kinship between the role of the Good in Plato and later metaphysical notions of God is difficult to overlook. Indeed, as we have outlined in Chapter 1, it was on this basis that the Middle Platonists of Paul's time specifically identified the Platonic Good with a monotheistic God. Much in the Platonic

dialogues suggests that the notion of God which Plato is working with is essentially unified, and perfectly good to an extent impossible for mortal humans to attain in this life. One could well doubt that, since Plato himself rarely developed a precise metaphysics that was anything more than an 'illustrative myth' or 'likely story', he would have precisely equated his concept of God with that of the Good. But what is clear, and what I have attempted to show, is that were Plato to have identified the Good with a sort of monotheistic God, it would not have been inconsistent with the rest of his philosophy. To do so, to reiterate, would be to interpret Paul along the lines of the Middle Platonists of Paul's time, such as Alcinous, and certainly along the lines of the Abrahamic monotheism of Philo, himself almost an exact contemporary of Paul.[291]

It is perhaps evident that my summary of the Similitude of the Sun has quickly adopted a Christian tone, not least because of my tacit identification of God with the Good when the latter is conceived of as an active, nearly personal force pulling the philosopher towards itself. Indeed, as I have been at pains to argue, this delineation of divine grace and divine dependence is to a large extent an accurate summary of the Platonic notion of the journey to God, as set out in Paul and indeed in much subsequent Christian theology. The extent to which their descriptions may be mingled together, with the appropriate substitution of God for the Good where the greater scriptural undercurrent would seem to require it, is not evidence that the Good is, on any analysis of Plato's metaphysics, identical to the Christian God in every respect, but that, in terms of the experience of the mystical ascent to the divine and the manner in which the faithful seeker of the divine, the Philosopher, comes to know the divine and so live a life sanctified and justified by the same, the framework imagined by both Paul and Plato coheres to a remarkable extent.

Nevertheless, the Middle Platonists did have a good metaphysical basis for their identification of the Good with the Christian God, the Creator and Sustainer of all that is: Socrates declares in the *Republic,* '[that] reality which gives truth to the objects of knowledge, and to the knower the power of knowing, [this]…is the idea of the Good insofar as it is capable of being

[291] Alcinous*, The Handbook of Platonism*, trans. John Dillon (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1993),10.18.

known'.[292] Socrates goes even further, describing the Sun, his metaphor for the Good, as that which 'not only furnishes the power of being seen to what exists in the visible realm, but also its creation, growth, and nourishment, though it is not itself creation'.[293] Socrates further claims 'that objects of knowledge not only receive their being known as objects from the Good, but their being and essence as well…'.[294] Plato is especially keen to emphasize the essential complementarity and yet distinction between Creator and Creation, and, more generally, between the realm of the seen and the unseen. The pursuit of 'offspring of the Good' is the means by which we understand the Creator and Sustainer Good by analogy (*analogon*) within the realm of the visible: 'in the invisible realm according to intelligence, and the intelligible, thus in the visible realm according to vision and the visible (ἐν τῷ νοητῷ τόπῳ πρός τε νοῦν καὶ τὰ νοούμενα, τοῦτο τοῦτον ἐν τῷ ὁρατῷ πρός τε ὄψιν καὶ τὰ ὁρώμενα)'.[295] Thus, the Good can be understood 'by the things that are made' (Rom. 1:20). It is possible that by 'the offspring of the Good' Plato could simply be referring to the Similitude of the Sun, that quintessential analogy of how the created order relates to the divine. But the concept, as presented in the *Republic*, appears much more comprehensive, and seems instead to represent more generally the way in which creation is analogically representative of the divine order. In first announcing his intention to turn his focus to the 'offspring of the Good' Socrates recalls the generalizing of impressions necessary to arrive at abstract, comprehensive types, or ideas, which we see delineated in the *Phaedo* (108B) and in the *Symposium*, where the Beautiful stands for the Good. The material, upon which such an exercise is practised, is visible creation. The Similitude of the Sun is particularly important to Plato's explanation of the dependence that creation has on divine reality: unlike the faculty of vision, which is dependent on light, the hearing faculty does not appear to depend on a separate entity to actuate what is heard.[296]

We cannot see anything of reality or come to know anything at all, and certainly nothing of the sun itself, beginning with its created order, without the

[292] Plato, *Republic* 508e.
[293] Ibid., 509b.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid., 508c.
[296] Ibid., 508c. I assume that Plato was unaware of sound waves.

nourishing power of the sun's rays. In words of Plato's analogy, 'the power which it [vision] has is dealt out by this [the sun], just as it is received abundantly [by vision]'.[297] In this way, the power of turning towards what is lighted is understood as a gift from the source of light itself, the sun. But it is no less true that the operative force in the particular case of the ascent up the ladder of Love in the *Symposium* is itself a gift of God, that vision of the beautiful which is not some kind of beatific vision in the heavenly realm, but a force of supernatural inspiration, which makes use of the beauties of the created, visible world. This is also the material, created component of the heavenly gift of divine madness discussed in the *Phaedrus* (244a).[298] The power of the offspring of the Good, the created realm of the visible, works not by *mere* analogy, but with a kind of material efficaciousness *ex opere operato.* Visible creation, when understood philosophically, is a divine gift possessing the power to impel us to seek and to find the Good in the realm of the invisible. Thus, the soul is turned from the realm of *opsis* (ὄψις, vision) to the realm of *nous*. In Paul, the essential dichotomy is, variously, between the realm of the carnal (κατὰ σάρκα) and the spiritual (κατὰ πνεῦμα),[299] between the Letter and the Spirit, and also between mind (*nous*) and flesh (*nous*): 'thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ, for by the law of God I serve mind (*nous*), and by flesh serve the law of sin' (Rom 7:25). The normal translation of *nous* as 'mind' is therefore slightly misleading. For by 'mind', or 'intellect', as some will have it, we may be given to understand a kind of pure intellectualism which does not at all capture the notion of spirit, as set against the flesh, with which *nous* is here identified. Spirit, in Paul, is something to be 'walked after' in order for the 'justice of the law to be fulfilled' (Rom 8:4), and not any spirit, but the Spirit that 'raised up Christ from the dead', which will also 'make our moral bodies alive by the sprit that dwells [in us]' (8:11), the Spirit by which we 'mortify the deeds of the body' in order to live (8:13). For 'the Spirit the bears witness to our spirit, that we are the children of God' (8:16). The identification of *nous* with *pneuma* also emphasizes the extent to which a life led in service of *nous* is a gift of the Spirit, that heavenly wind, or breath, which wafts down from heaven, and empowers us in us a life of patient charity, of faith which works by love. This breath

[297] Ibid., 508b.
[298] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 244a.
[299] Rom. 1:3, 8:5.

(*pneuma*) of God hits us, not in the realm of the unseen (of pure *nous*) but in the realm of the seen, the 'offspring of the Good'. Paul exhorts his readers not to be 'conformed to the world,' but to be 'transformed by the renewing of your mind [*nous*], in order to show forth the good, pleasing, perfect will of God' (12:2). Here, again, a life in service, of a renewed and revitalized *nous*, is not some kind of recondite intellectualism, but one of an ethic of patient, humble charity as members of the body of Christ (12:5); the ethic of faith that works by love.

In Plato, the Good is the cause (*aitia*) of knowledge and truth; but a fruit of the Good still nobler than these very intellectual-sounding concepts is the 'Habit of the Good'.[300] Within the framework of the Similitude of the Sun, vision is knowledge, and that light which enables it is truth. Just as the sun enables and furnishes the growth of visible things, and so is properly seen to be their cause, so the Good stands in relation to knowledge and truth. Yet, although light and vision must be in some sense like the sun (*helioeide* ἡλιοειδῆ) and yet are not themselves the sun, so knowledge and truth are like the Good (*agthoeide* ἀγαθοειδῆ) but are not themselves the Good. For objects of knowledge 'not only receive their ability to be known as objects from the Good, but their being and essence (*ousia*) as well.... [The] Good, however, is not essence [itself] but in fact transcends essence in dignity and power'.[301] The Habit of the Good would seem, unlike truth and knowledge, to belong more to the realm beyond essence, than truth and knowledge. Rather than having as its object the visible things of the world, the Habit of the Good is essentially a matter of will, or, more specifically, a pattern of willing that facilitates a certain kind of living. As we saw in the *Phaedo*, the sovereign power of existence arranges all things for the best.[302] This sovereign power, the Good, should be defined not primarily in terms of a kind of substantial essence, but in terms of will.[303] As such, it is the culmination and perfection of being, and yet also wholly other than any conception of being that depends on the circumscribed, hypothetical knowledge of the visible realm. Whereas knowledge and truth are not directly identified with the Good, though they remain 'like the Good', the Habit of the Good

[300] Plato, *Republic*, 509a.
[301] Ibid., 509b.
[302] Plato, *Phaedo* 99a-d.
[303] The Good is, according to the *Republic*, 'beyond essence', and therefore beyond individual instantiations of Being; it is not, however, beyond Being, but is the very source and fullness of Being.

seems in some sense to partake of the essence of the Good itself. Interestingly, it is also this very same 'Habit of the Good' that belongs fully to the realm of *nous*.

Plato's 'Divided Line' and the Philosopher's Justification by Faith

The 'Divided Line', meant as further explanation of similitude of the sun (509c), makes a division within the intelligible realm between divisions appertaining to *noesis* (νόησις) and those appertaining to *dianoia* (διάνοια). This latter is the domain of the geometers: taking certain assumptions (postulates), they make use of the realm of images as an aid, though these are not in any sense true representations of the ideal images they are describing, and then proceed to inexorable conclusions which are nothing but the consequences of their initial assumptions.[304] To the modern reader, this may appear the very height of intellectualism, pure intellect, not susceptible to the vagaries and errancy of sense-experience, working *a priori* to a conclusion. Plato is, on this view, supposed to endorse a kind of intellectualism, exalting the mathematicians, and what we might today term the purely analytic philosophers, 'making no use at all of objects of sense but moving by ideas, through ideas, and to ideas, and ending with ideas'.[305] This is supposedly why Plato was so keen on mathematics, studying with the Pythagoreans in Sicily, and enjoining research in such things in the Academy.

However, *dianoia* is not the highest division within the intelligible realm. That distinction belongs to the region of *noesis*. Here, instead of moving from assumptions directly to the implied conclusion, one uses assumptions merely as 'stepping-stones' (*epibaseis* ἐπιβάσεις) in order to ascend to the unassumed first principle (*arxe*) and thence to the conclusion. How this is meant to work in

[304] Plato, *Republic*, 511a.
[305] Ibid., 511c.

practice is not entirely clear.[306] It is instructive to note, however, that the knowledge required to embark on the path that constitutes the 'habit of the Good' is, unlike the path of *dianoia*, not a matter of intellection alone, in a purely cerebral sense, but of one's entire way of living. If it is truly the Habit of the Good, it must be consonant with the ascent to the Good of the philosopher. As we have seen, this involves a kind of generalizing of impressions into a generalized conception (*logos*) or form (*eidos*), and then assuming this as the highest principle involved according to which all varieties within the *eidos* may be identified. The example with which we have become most familiar is that of Beauty: the essential step on the path of True Love/Philosophy is the realization that all beautiful things partake of the same beauty, the Beautiful in itself. In a further generalization, the form of the beautiful, being a *typos* of the fitness of all things, is identified with the Form of the Good. As in the *Phaedo*, this is firstly a matter of making assumptions; one assumes the 'strongest principle' (*logos*) in every class of things, i.e., how everything within that class of things may act for the best, according to which the *eidos* will take its name.[307] These must necessarily remain assumptions because of the impossibility of grasping the precise nature of reality in the earthy realm.[308] These assumptions, or *hypotheses* (ὑποθέσεις), can only be accessed be means of *logoi*, 'reasons' or 'conceptions', which are the stepping stones upon which the philosopher then 'ascends to the unassumed, the *arche* of all, taking hold of what follows from it, [and] making no use of sense'.[309]

Likewise, the path of *noesis* involves the identification of assumptions made about what is the best feature of a certain class of things, such that a perfectly benevolent sovereign *nous* of all existence could will it to be so. Yet *noesis* also involves something like the moment of inspiration described in the *Symposium*, when the vision of absolute beauty is revealed to the Philosopher/Lover. It is

[306] Julia Annas thinks that the difference in method between 'thinking' (*dianoia)* and 'intellect' (*noesis*) is that 'thinking studies Forms in isolation, for the purpose of special subjects like mathematics, whereas 'intellect' studies them for their own sake, and in systematic connection, as being dependent on the Form of the Good' (Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, 251). In this sense, the distinction between *dianoia* and *noesis*, is moral: whereas the habit *dianoia* is amoral (but not necessarily immoral), the habit of *noesis* relies on seeing all things through a moral lens: the Good becomes fundamental in all explanations, and Goodness becomes 'supreme in the order of things' (Annas 244).
[307] Plato, *Phaedo* 100a-d.
[308] Ibid., 99e.
[309] Plato, *Republic* 511b.

essentially this moment, then, of receiving the divine gift of the realization of the essential oneness of all good things, and their identification with the un-assumed Good of all, that differentiates *noesis* from *dianoia*. For the path of *noesis* involves not simply applying *a priori* reason to assumptions in order to deduce results, but rather 'holding simply and perhaps foolishly' to assumptions about the primacy of the Good in response to a truth that has been mystically revealed about the unity of all things within the Good as the *unassumed* cause of all that is.

These are not *mere* assumptions. They are assumptions with wings. They allow the philosopher to ascend to the divine. They have, indeed, some of the character of Christian faith in that they are themselves a gift of divine origin. For not only must the philosopher, holding the unseen Good of all as his object, revert to conceptions (*logoi*) to aid in his ascent, but this ascent is based upon assumptions which are unerring in their trust and commitment to hold what has been revealed by divine inspiration. Travelling in the realm of *noesis*, the philosopher reverts to *logoi* as part of the dialectic, and then proceeds on the basis of these assumptions in order to hold as a matter of faith what has been revealed to him, the primacy of the Good.

It is *logos*, therefore, which, acting as divine rhetoric and 'leader of souls' (*Phaedrus* 261b), moves the philosopher into the domain of the divine. As we have seen, the appropriate response to this inspiring kind of rhetoric, which makes use of the natural, visible realm, as in 'the vision of the beautiful', is *pistis*—persuasion, or faith. This faith is born of the persuasive power of the divine discourse, or divine vision. Just as a fine orator will engender such persuasion (*pistis*) in his hearers that they cease to scrutinize every point, but are inspired to believe the speech full-heartedly precisely because they put their full trust (*pistis*) in the speech's deliverer, so the Philosopher, being inspired by the *logoi* of the Good as manifested in the 'offspring of the Good' in creation (507d), puts his full trust in the Good, the source of that inspiration, coming to believe in its absolute sovereignty and primacy, and stands prepared to believe whatever further should be revealed to him.

Faith as the Basis for Knowledge

Readers of Plato too often, I think, fail to understand the extent to which *pistis* leads the Philosopher to the practice of *noesis*. This is largely because *pistis* is, in a sense, accorded a lower status than *dianoia* and *noesis*: according to the Divided Line, *pistis* is the state of mind accorded to the perception of the highest division of visible reality, and is therefore transcended by both *dianoia* and *noesis*. [310]What such a reading overlooks, however, is that any dialectical ascent to the realm of the invisible begins with the sense impressions furnished by the visible. [311]

The conclusions at which one arrives based on these impressions are thus, according to the Divided Line, the conclusions of faith (*pistis*).[312] Faith, then, is the basis for assumptions about the existence of the intelligible realm as discovered and disclosed by the visible, and ultimately the basis for the sovereignty of the un-hypothetical idea of the Good. For Plato, the path to the most certain knowledge of all is in the first instance the path of faith.[313] Although such knowledge is the fruit of faith, it has, nonetheless, the character of certainty.

Festugière understands the certainty of the philosopher's faith in the forms in terms of Leibniz's notion of 'primitive truth'. For Leibniz, primitive truths are always perceived not simply as true, but as *necessarily* true. Some of these truths, such as the *a priori* deductions of logic, he calls 'primitive truths of reason'. But Leibniz thinks there is another class of primitive truths, which he calls 'primitive truths of fact', truths that are not deduced but intuited, and yet nevertheless strike one as true with the character of being necessarily true.[314]

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[310] Angelica Taglia, for instance, thinks that, even in the *Republic*, *pistis* cannot serve as 'a necessary stage on the way to the acquisition of knowledge' because 'faith takes the sensible as its object and the sensible, if considered as true, thwarts the ascent to the realm of ideas' ('il sensibile, se considerato vero, impedisce il raggiunamento delle idee) (Taglia 157).

[311]In this vein, Christopher Rowe is right, I think, to reject an overly-simplistic 'two worlds' theory of the Forms: because particulars 'could not conceivably exist independently of forms' these same particulars must be able to tell us something of the nature of the form (Rowe 45).

[312] Ibid., 511d.

[313] André-Jean Festugière, *Contemplation et Vie Contemplative Selon Platon* (Paris: Vrin, 1936), 217. Translations are my own.

[314] Festugière cites Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding* (*Nouv. Essais*, éd.P. Janet, 1866, L. IV, ch. 2, § 1, pp. 369 ss, Janet).

For Festugière, the Philosopher's contemplative 'seeing' corresponds to Leibniz's 'primitive truths of fact'. Being a 'primitive truth', the contemplation of the Divine is, on this model, the contemplation of a 'primitive truth of fact. The Philosopher's earthly perception of the primacy of the Good has the necessary character of purely deductive 'primitive truths of reason'. However, such truths are not deduced but contemplated, by means of what Festugière calls an '*immediation de sentiment*'.[315] The Philosopher's provisional contemplation of the Good, in this life, remains in the realm of faith, and yet retains the same character of absolute necessity as an *a priori* deduction.

On Festugière's reading of Plato, the contemplative knowledge of the philosopher is knowledge wholly conditioned by its object. The contemplative's intellect is thus, in a sense, joined to and subsumed by the object of his intellection:

> Knowledge is contemplation as long as, freed from the contours formed by the imagination, it establishes, between the intellect and the idea, an original type of knowing (*connaisance*) where Being, completely naked, unites itself to the intellect so as to become one with its object'.[316]

Precisely because the final object of philosophical contemplation is the 'real eternal absolute'[317] where the intellect (*nous*) is so united with its object so as almost to become fused within it, this type of contemplative knowledge depends, first of all, on a kind of faith in the invisible, rather than ordinary knowledge of the visible. But, as we have seen, this faith is itself facilitated by impressions of the visible, which have, nevertheless, the character of a sure and necessary conviction.

Summary of Platonic Ethics

The object of this chapter has been chiefly to trace a kind of proto-doctrine of justification through grace and by faith in some influential Platonic dialogues. In so doing, I wished to convey, not least, the eminent suitability of Middle-Platonic monotheism as a faithful reading of Plato himself. My chief aim, however, has been to trace a philosophical framework, a language of

[315] Festugière 217.
[316] Festugière 219.
[317] Plato, *Symposium*, 249d.

thinking about human flourishing in relation to the divine, within which I believe it is fruitful to read the Pauline doctrine of justification-through-faith. This framework may, in a purely monotheistic context, be summarized as follows:

1. **A Human End:** The aim of all human beings, and thus the highest concern of human ethics, is how to be reconciled with and likened unto/harmonized with God. (This was largely taken up in Chapter 1.)

2. **A Human Deficiency:** We are in ourselves incapable of being reconciled to and harmonized with God without divine aid.

3. **A Divine Reception:** We are drawn to seek after God by our reception of a divine gift from God Himself, which often takes the form of revelation within the visible order of creation.

4. **A Need for Philosophy:** In order to seek after God, one must become a philosopher, but the philosopher is substantially a lover of God, who lives by faith in Him, worked out by love.

5. **The Justification of the Soul:** We can only be reconciled to and harmonized with God when our souls are fashioned after the pattern of His divine justice. Thus, we only accomplish our end, as human beings, when our souls are harmonized after the pattern of divine justice, and so may ourselves be accounted just. Herein consists our justification.

This is, I believe, more or less the framework which Paul assumes in formulating his doctrine of justification by faith. I have endeavoured to show, in this chapter, that it is a thoroughly Platonic framework (and not simply Middle- or Neo-Platonic). In Chapter 4, I will undertake an exegesis of Romans 1–6, and in Chapter 5 one of Galatians 2–3, 5, and 6, key passages for much Reformation polemic on the question of justification. There I will apply this framework as a heuristic tool that facilitates, I think, a more coherent reading of what Paul has to say about justification.

3. From Platonic Faith to Christian Faith

Contemplation and the Theological Aesthetics of Faith

The theological pregnancy of Plato's claims about beauty does a great deal to commend theological aesthetics as an appropriate basis for understanding the nature of that faith which leads to union with God. For the Platonic doctrine of beauty as revelation of the divine is one of the clearest and most poignant ways in which the more general Platonic doctrine of reception of divine gift, of divine grace, of which the divine (God for Christians and Middle Platonists) is the author and the philosopher the receiver, is illustrated. It is chiefly this Platonic doctrine that provides a heuristic framework for reading Paul on justification, even in those passages supposedly most congenial to *sola fides* advocates among the Reformers, in Romans and Galatians.

André-Jean Festugière, cited in Andrew Louth's excellent overview of Christian mysticism, speaks about the vision of the beautiful in Plato as something 'not attained but revealed to the soul'.[318] Festugière is right to see this realization, essential to contemplation and the contemplative life in Plato, as a basis on which the Christian contemplative life might be understood. Indeed, even among the Greeks, all religion, even as Plato would have understood it, was contemplative in that it involved an attentive seeing or spectating of religious rites.[319] Even to be a spectator in the theatre would have had a mystical, religious element, as plays were offered as part of a festival in honour of the god Dionysius.

Our foray into the Platonic dialogues has helped us to delineate the mode in which such a transformative spiritual vision was received, and what precisely the modus operandi of the Philosopher was. The substantial answer which we have given is that the Philosopher/Lover is to be defined by 'that faith which works by love', or, more precisely perhaps, by the reception of grace, understood as the divine gift of God. More accurate, then, would be to say that the Philosopher is justified 'through grace and by faith' (Eph 2:8-9). This

[318]Andrew Louth, *Introduction to Christian Mysticism*, (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 13.

[319] The most concrete definition of *theoreo* (θεωρέω) is to spectate, as at the theatre, at the games, or as part of religious ceremony.

language of *pistis,* however anachronistic in the pre-Christian context of Plato's dialogues, is appropriate because, as we have seen, a revelation of God's *logos* aims to produce *pistis*, that is to say faith, persuasion, and steadfastness, whether in the reception of the divine gospel or in the pre-Christian reception of the *logos spermatikos*. The Philosopher lives through faith, and by the love of the Good under the guise of the Beautiful, which, adapted to the monotheistic Middle Platonist philosophy of Paul's day, is the love of God wrought by God's own gift of revelation.

The Christian tradition, very much in keeping much with this Platonic model, has taken up what is in many ways an aesthetic model of the reception of divine grace, the crux of the Platonic theory of justification outlined in the erotic dialogues, within the contemplative tradition. For contemplation, as implied by the Greek *theoria*, is conceived as the appropriate activity of the *nous*[320] or *intellectus* whereby God's *logos* is perceived. This role of *nous*, or indeed its property activity of *noesis*, is for Plato the highest division of the divided line, the pinnacle of dialectic and the realm of contemplation. Yet we must not allow the normal translations 'intellect' and 'mind' to give us the wrong idea about what it meant. According to Louth:

> The words 'mind' and 'intellect' have quite different overtones from Greek *nous*. The most fundamental reason for this is a cultural one: The Greeks were pre-Cartesian, we are post-Cartesian. We say, I think therefore I am, that is, thinking is an activity I engage in. There must therefore be an I to engage in it; the Greeks would say 'I think, therefore there is that which I think. I think *ta noeta*, the objects of thought that [for example for Plato] exist in a higher, more real world. This means that *nous* and its derivatives have a quite different feel from our words mind, mental, intellection. Our words suggest our reasoning, our thinking; *nous*, *noesis* etc. suggest almost an intuitive grasp of reality.[321]

Indeed, the most basic meaning of *theoreo*, spectate, would, as Festugière points out, be equally at home in religious and aesthetic contexts, whether in the theatre or outside the temple.[322] As indicated by the contemplative tradition,

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[320] Paul's use of *nous* in Romans 7:22 and 25 will be explored further in chapter 4, in which the law of the *nous*, the law of God, is contrasted with the law of flesh, the law of sin. In particular, the latter verse is instructive: 'Who will redeem me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ, for in my *nous* is the law of God but in my flesh, the law of sin'.

[321] Louth 13.

[322] André-Jean Festugière, *Contemplation et Vie Contemplative selon Platon*, (Paris, J. Vrin,1936 ; réimp. 1975).

however, no aesthetical theology is *merely* aesthetical, for it tends to the most fundamental ethical concern of the end of human existence, and the fate of our souls. As Josef Pieper puts it: 'the fulfilment of our existence takes place in the manner in which we become aware of reality; the whole energy of our being is directed towards the attainment of insight. The perfectly happy person, the one whose thirst has finally been quenched, who has attained beatitude—this person is the one who *sees*'.[323]

This happiness, this quenching, this perfection, consists in seeing. One of the reasons, perhaps, why the Church Fathers felt so at home within the Platonist tradition was that the Platonic theory of being likened unto God was intellectual in the sense that it was noetic. This is not at all to say that the Platonist prizes intellectual virtues above the moral virtues, but that any true act of intellection is the whole inward transformation of the contemplative philosopher on account of his seeing things as they are; recognizing, in fact, the forms which, being the object of God's own intellection, are in some sense the basis of God's divinity.[324] Our contemplation of the forms must also divinize us to the extent that we become like what we contemplate. Alcinous says,

> Contemplation is the activity of the intellect [*nous*] when intellecting the intelligibles…. The soul, engaged in contemplation of the divine and the thought of the divine, is said to be in a good system and this state of the soul is called wisdom, which may be asserted to be no other than likeness to the divine'.[325]

By contemplating the divine we become like the divine. Contemplation involves, for the Platonist, and for the Christian mystics who thought platonistically, the contemplative's being essentially absorbed into the object of his contemplation. As such it is no mere intellectual exercise, but involves a whole transformation of self, which results in a renewed power of seeing, a purifying of the eyes of the soul so that they might see the nature of reality by means of the Divine Light itself, and so be at home in that kingdom 'which has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof' (Rev 21:22).[326] To be justified in the Platonic Christian tradition is, ultimately, nothing other than to see God. The

[323] Josef Pieper, Happiness and Contemplation, Richard and Sarah Winston trans. (South Bend: St Augustine's Press, 1958, rep. 1998).58 (emphasis added).
[324] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249d.
[325] Alcinous, *Handbook of Platonism*, 2.4.
[326] Plato, *Republic*, 509c.

true philosopher, and indeed the true Christian, is the perfect spectator of reality, the perfect contemplative.

Thus, contemplation, the spectating of true reality, is far from a merely an exalted aesthetic experience, however sublime; it is not mere seeing, but neither is it the work of that discursive power of *ratio* proper to syllogistic thinking. To see as a contemplative is to see reality by simple intuition of the reality present to the one who sees.[327] Perfect contemplation is thus equivalent to that knowledge which the celestial powers in heaven possess; it is the knowledge which, in its most exalted form, God has of himself.[328] Therefore, according to Pieper, 'one of the characteristics of earthly contemplation is an unease in the face of the unattainable'.[329] It is for this reason that the Philosopher must perfect his inward vision so that it might become sun-like.[330] This involves, in large part, the perfection of the moral virtues as the necessary preparation for the proper exercise of the noetic function. The seeing of the *nous* has always its ethical *sine qua non*.

Yet there is still the question of how the sort of earthly contemplation is possible that anticipates, at least in an inchoate manner, the perfect contemplation that is the *visio veritatis*, the vision of God, made possible for Christians by the revelation of Jesus Christ, by which 'the face of the divine is visible'.[331] To be sure, the path of earthly contemplation is handicapped and circumscribed by the incommensurability of our fallen nature with the simple knowledge of divine truth, that is the final object of the Philosopher's searching out of this divine vision. Accordingly, earthly contemplation of the divine must have recourse to image, symbol, and likeness. Just as I can look at a portrait of my parents, a sibling, the Pope, the President, or the Queen, so can I have a picture of the Good in personalized form, for He was made flesh and dwelt among us. The Christian contemplative, like the mere Platonist, lives by a kind of imperfect and inchoate contemplation that works by the love of God, through the immanence of His divine grace. But the Christian reaches for this perfect contemplation with the assurance of divine immanence, and therefore the possibility of divine grace through Jesus Christ. The mere Platonist can say,

[327] Pieper 74.
[328] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II. II. 186 (1).
[329] Pieper 78; *Summa* II, ii 186 (2).
[330] Plato, *Republic*, 508b.
[331] Pieper 80.

with Pieper, that everything holds, and conceals, at bottom, a mark of its divine origin;[332] that one who catches a glimpse of it 'sees that his and all things are good beyond all contemplation, and seeing this he is happy'.[333] The Christian agrees, but asserts that nowhere does he see this more clearly than in the face of God in Jesus Christ, of His dying to sin, and rising in glory.

Festugière's Platonic Contemplative

The 20th-century French Dominican scholar André-Jean Festugière is the author of a magisterial study of Platonic contemplation: *Contemplation et La Vie Contemplative Selon Platon*.[334] It is the clearest, most persuasive reading of Plato from a Christian perspective that I have come across. Festugière frankly avows, in the book's opening sentence, that his scholarly interest in Plato is grounded squarely in his own Christian faith:

> This book is the fruit of a series of long reflections on the origins of Christian mysticism. It seemed to me, as it seemed to Clement, Origen, and Augustine, that the movement founded by Jesus gave new life to a pre-existent organism of which the philosophical structure goes back to Plato. When the Fathers thought mystically, they thought platonistically. The structure is not entirely new. Paul speaks of the old tree newly furnished by a new graft, newly nourished and transformed. To understand this transformation, we have to know its point of departure; we have to understand the tree.[335]

The old tree remains in the new, through Platonic philosophy, and, indeed, through the fullness of philosophical contemplation. Contemplation, then, Festugière takes as his theme. To begin with, he embarks on a philosophical survey of how the Greeks conceived of *theoria*: it had indeed, from the beginning, religious connotations. To contemplate was, first of all, to look upon marvels (*thaumata*).[336] Whether natural or celestial, its object was supposed to evoke fascination, mystery, and indeed otherworldliness; and the contemplative who looked on such things did so with a view to gaining insight into the nature

[332] Ibid., 86.
[333] Ibid., 88.
[334] André-Jean Festugière, *Contemplation et Vie Contemplative selon Platon*, (Paris, J. Vrin,1936 ; réimp. 1975).
[335] Festugière 5.
[336] Ibid., 19.

of things.[337] As a kind of 'spectating' that naturally led to knowledge, *theoria* came quite naturally to be associated with *logos*, especially in its theatrical, oratorical connotations.

Heraclitus wrote that wisdom sees the *logos*, the reason, sense, or form of things, by means of its own power of *logos*, a power common to all human beings.[338] Heraclitus is, of course, best known for having held that all things are in perpetual flux (*panta rei*), whence the aphorism 'a man never steps into the same river twice'.[339] As Festugière explains, our obsession with the seemingly infantile claim that 'all is flux' altogether misses what was, for Heraclitus, the principle reality behind the apparently eristic aspect of things; for 'Eris resolves itself in harmony…and the law of eristic nature is only secondary and, to the eyes of the wise, indicates a deeper, unified order to existence'.[340] Heraclitus was, in this sense, the original theorist of philosophical contemplation because for him wisdom amounted to a certain kind of seeing reality, not the kind of seeing that discerns only the mutability of natural phenomenon, but that which, possessed of the *logos*, sees the underlying unity and stability within apparently eristic reality that is, in fact, the product of the universal logos out of which all things came to be.[341]It is clear in Plato's dialogues, however, that whereas contemplation certainly involves a particular way of looking upon reality, the transformation of heart and mind which attends the philosophic habit of contemplation does not depend upon the subjective nature of the contemplative himself. Rather, true contemplation involves the assimilation of the subject, the contemplative, to the object of his contemplation.[342] Indeed, one reason the contemplative philosopher's path to the divine vision so well models the path of Christian justification is that the true contemplative becomes likened unto that which he contemplates: the content of the *nous* is the very thing which the *nous*

[337] Ibid., 14.
[338] Fr 89; Festugière 89.
[339] Fr 12, 91.
[340] Festugière, 28. Aristotle, much along these lines, traces the development of the theory of the forms in relation to Heraclitus: 'The theory of Forms occurred to those who enunciated it because they were convinced as to the true nature of reality by the doctrine of Heraclitus, that all sensible things are always in a state of flux; so that if there is to be any knowledge or thought about anything, there must be certain other entities, besides sensible ones, which persist. For there can be no knowledge of that which is in flux' [Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Aristotle in 23 Volumes, Vols.17, 18, trans. Hugh Tredennick. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1933, 1989) 1078b].
[341] Fr 1.
[342] Festugière, 98.

contemplates. In the end, on the Platonic picture, the philosopher actually becomes what he sees and what he knows: by contemplating the eternal one becomes eternal; by contemplating the just one becomes just, one is justified.[343]

Excursus on the Epistemology of Salvation: Luther and St John

We find language in Luther, defending his *sola fides*, that is strongly indicative of this kind of epistemology of salvation and union with God:

> We say, faith apprehends Jesus Christ. Christian faith is not an inactive quality in the heart. If it is true faith, it will surely take Christ for its object. Christ, apprehended by faith and dwelling in the heart, constitutes Christian righteousness, for which God gives eternal life. Here let me say, that these three things, faith, Christ, and imputation of righteousness, are to be joined together. Faith takes hold of Christ. God accounts this faith for righteousness.[344]

Faith unites with Christ, with God, because faith takes Christ as its object. Where we contemplate Christ with faith we are united with Christ. Thus, 'Christ, apprehended by faith and dwelling in the heart, constitutes Christian righteousness'. In this respect, at least Luther's *sola fides* doctrine is entirely Platonic.[345]

But this Platonic picture is also the Johannine picture: 'When the Son of God should appear, we shall be like him (ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ) because we shall see him as he is' (1 Jn 3.5). It is precisely because we finally see, and therefore know, the nature of Truth and Justice itself that we become like unto these things, God, his eternal Word made flesh, Jesus Christ in all His glory. It is this kind of epistemology of salvation, if you will, that runs right through the heart of what John has to say about how we are justified in Christ, how we come to have

[343] Ibid., 95, 113.
[344] Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (1535) 2.15. Theodore Graebner trans. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1949).
[345] It is unclear to me why Luther adds, ' God accounts this righteousness'. Where a sinner is united with Christ, whom he apprehends by faith, surely any eschatological accounting would speak for itself! For Christ Himself has already been justified in His Resurrection, and all who dwell in Him are saved through His merits. There is a sense that Luther is drifting here from a Platonic, Patristic, and, as I believe, Pauline notion of Justification, as union with and assimilation to God by faith, with Luther expresses here very eloquently himself, to a notion of justification as mere forensic judgement, which, as I shall argue in Chapter 4, is neither Platonic nor Pauline.

koinonia (communion) with Him: 'in this we know that we have known Him, that we keep His commandments, and whoever says that he knows him and keeps not His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him, buy if he should keep His word (αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον) truly in this the love of God is completed; in this we know that we are in Him' (1 Jn 3:5). If he who *knows* is transformed and indeed inhabited by the object of his knowing, he must act accordingly. To know Christ means to share a *koinonia* with him (1 Jn 1:6), to share in the Love of God, and (following directly from this) to keep his commandments. God is Love, and if we know God it means that God's love dwells in us. God is also Truth, and therefore to know God means to be truthful. John does not say, simply, that if we deceive ourselves and say that we have no sin then we are being untruthful, but rather, 'If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us' (1 Jn 1:8). If we are not truthful about ourselves, we can have no *koinonia* with Him who is the Truth and the Light. A lack of virtue in the knower thus actually impinges upon his knowing, and thus also impinges upon his union with God.

To know Christ is to be inhabited by the Son of God, to become one of His, and, just as He died, and was, by the power of the Holy Spirit, transformed again into life, so will we be transformed from death into life if we truly know Him (1 Jn 3:14). But if we do not follow His commandments, if we do not love our brothers as He has commanded us, we have no eternal life in him (1 Jn 15). Christ commands us to believe in His name, and to love each other (1 Jn 3:23). We can say that we know Him for 'he dwells in us, by the Spirit which he gave us' (3:23-24).

Platonic v Modern Idealism in Festugière

Festugière makes a distinction between Platonic Realism and Modern Idealism: the modern idealist holds with Heraclitus that the perception of truth depends upon the manner in which reality is perceived, and assumes that the only true measure of the correct discernment of reality must rest in thought itself. Hence, the Modern Idealist supposes that 'knowledge is a construction of

thought which has no other guarantee than the thought itself'.[346] Platonic idealism, or simply Realism, by contrast,

> believes absolutely in objects of thought, and that apprehension of the intellect depends on the action of the intelligibles themselves. The certainty that they [the Platonists] had on this point seemed rather of the order of faith than of reason. If, for the modern idealist, *aithesis* [sensation] does not disclose *ousia* [being], for the Platonists, revelation occurs just as much within sensible reality as in the realm of pure spirit.[347]

The Philosopher gradually comes to perceive the true nature of reality through what Festugière calls a '*rassemblement synoptique*' of impressions, whereby sense impressions are seen to cohere within an *eidos* which is itself subsumed within the Idea of the Good. Since, for the Platonist, all true reality relies on the forms themselves, not on some variously defined life of the spirit, it is in fact the objects of the intellect's contemplation, ultimately the Good itself, Alcinous' 'First God', which must be the author of our knowledge of and hence assimilation to himself. The object becomes the subject, and the subject the object.

The ideas themselves divinise us through our contemplation of them.[348] Interestingly, the certainty by which this is understood is, at least on this side of the grave, 'of the order of faith'. As in Plato's Similitude of the Sun, 'The eyes of the soul [by which we contemplate] cannot reach the Transcendental Good unless the divine reflection itself [in Plato's similitude, the light of the sun] furnishes it with the power of sight. This is the Light of Faith'.[349]

One might certainly be surprised by Festugière's quite obviously Christianizing interpretation if later Christian philosophers such as Clement, Origen, and Augustine had not done likewise, buttressed as they were by the monotheism of Paul's Middle Platonist contemporaries. But what Festugière's reading of the Platonic corpus shows, I think, is that Plato's later monotheistic interpreters were not perhaps as far off in their interpretation of their Master as is often supposed, and that one can and indeed ought to understand the Christian philosophy just as much Platonistically as Middle- or Neo-Platonistically. As

[346] Festugière 212.
[347] Ibid.
[348] Ibid., 113.
[349] Ibid., 122.

Festugière assures us, '*Platon savant et Platon religieux ne peuvent pas se séparer*'.[350]

From Plato to Balthasar: The Aesthetics of Faith

Hans Urs von Balthasar's theological aesthetics give us a useful model of how Christian faith can be seen as a response to the gift of divine revelation. Balthasar's analogy for Christian faith with the persuasive power engendered by an artistic masterpiece is instructive: we are drawn to a masterpiece of art; we feel its unique power. We are taken in, indeed persuaded, by something that is not external to the work but is in fact essential to its own form and content; a power which, in affecting us, in a sense 'speaking to us', completely takes us in. The work has a power essential to itself which seems to have a claim on us, as if to require that we put our faith in it, and become its devotees. Because the work contains within itself the source of its authority, we believe in it, we may even devote ourselves to it, not for any external reason, but simply on the basis of the persuasive authority of the work of art itself. What Balthasar's analogy perfectly captures, I think, is the notion of Faith by an *auctoritate Dei revalentis*, faith in God's revelation on the basis of the authority of God Himself.[351]

What Balthasar's analogy assumes, of course, is that the object of faith can in some sense be seen, and therefore known. What this in turn implies is the view, shared by Origen and Clement, that knowledge is not in any sense in opposition to faith but indeed requires faith:

> The contrast between *pistis* and *gnosis* is basically that between, on the one hand, the Christian who by 'bare faith' relates in a purely external manner to the content of authority (who, therefore, does not progress beyond a faith based solely on authority, which primarily means obedience to the ecclesiastical *kergma*), and, on the other hand, the Christian who energetically strives to approximate interiorly what

[350] Ibid., 107.

[351] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: I. Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis trans. (Ignatius: San Francisco, 1982), 136, 156-9.

> he believes and, in so doing, *sees* the essential content unfold before his vision (*theoria*).[352]

A faith that in a sense sees, and therefore knows, is not a suppression of Christian faith, but its completion—Christian *gnosis*, Christian *theoria*. The supposed opposition of faith and knowledge in this sphere could be traced, as we discussed in Chapter 2, to a misreading of Plato's divided line: Since *pistis* is the affection assigned to that slice of the divided line corresponding to sensible reality, it is very easy to conclude that Plato, and indeed the Platonist system more generally, had a very low view of faith's importance to the philosophic ascent.[353] Yet it is precisely by the contemplative and even erotic response to, and reflection upon, sensible reality that the Philosopher ascends to the contemplation of the Good as 'the formal principle of the *noeta* and final cause of that dialectic which carries us up the ladder of ideas'.[354] Festugière makes use of an epistemological schema of Leibniz in order to understand Plato's divided line, which we have already traced in Chapter 2. To reiterate, Leibniz distinguishes between three different kinds of *a priori* truths, derivative truths (syllogisms, logical deduction), primitive truths of reason (e.g. the principle of identity, the principle of non-contradiction), and primitive truths of fact. It is to this third category that the Philosopher's faith, without doubting the existence of the forms and above all that Good which gives essence to the forms and illuminates them for us, properly belongs.[355] Far from a logical deduction or *a priori* analysis of terms, a belief in existence of the forms, and the Good, which furnishes them their essence, comes through '*une expérience immédiates interne d'une immédiation de sentiment*'.[356] In this way, Festugière concludes that the Platonic philosopher's knowledge of the Forms, and their unity in the Good, presupposes an act of faith: Thus, one can say that Plato *believed* in the reality of the forms. By this one does not mean that this truth offers less certainty when compared with a truth that is demonstrable by its cause, but that what it possesses is mystical; it rests on experience, a unique and irreplaceable

[352] Ibid., 133 (emphasis added).
[353] Plato, *Republic* 511d.
[354] Festugière 210.
[355] Festugière 217.
[356] Ibid., 218. Festugière makes clear that 'sentiment' is, in this case, the equivalent of the Platonic *nous*, 'the organ of contemplation' (219).

intuition which makes the perceived object a *true* object, but not in the manner of science or the *a priori* laws of reason.[357]

On this basis, perhaps one can understand the many biblical suggestions, often cited by Balthasar, that faith and knowledge are intimately intertwined: 'Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed in him, "If you continue in my word, then are you are my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"' (John 8:31-33); 'But if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works: that you may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him' (John10:38). Balthasar invokes Clement's emphasis on faith, already familiar to us: Christ is the pedagogue who leads men to the Father; we entrust ourselves to Him through *pistis* and are led to the light by grace, in which we participate through *zetesis*, the efforts of thought, *askesis*, and love.[358] True to Johannine theology, this light is restored objectively in the illuminating grace of baptism, in the 'anointing by the Spirit…but it must be developed by the believer, in himself, as Christ leads him by the hand…. Faith is the foundation, *gnosis* is the edifice built upon it. The former is the alpha, the latter the omega (Clement *Strom*. VII. 55. 5)'.[359]

For Balthasar, as for the early Church Fathers, faith, far from being a leap into the dark towards a conclusion based on no firm evidence, is in fact indispensable to all true knowing. Both faith and knowledge are the result of a certain way of seeing reality. The Christian's *pistis* and the Philosopher's *gnosis* both involve a kind of *reading* of reality as revealed by divine power. To have the faith of the Christian is in some sense to read the Christian form of revelation. Crucially, this power of reading is given by the Revealer Himself:

> Being is light, and this is the word (*logos*) which shines into the mind, a Word that has already received natural, creaturely intellect as a kind of grace and revelation; practically all that is then needed to extract the theology of faith from philosophy is to translate the general philosophical theory of knowledge into the Christian rinitarian mode, and to see Christ as the redeeming illuminator of the mind and Revealer of the Father.[360]

The Platonic philosopher reads reality in such a way that by 'divine dispensation' (*Meno*), a divine gift, he moves from particular beauties to the

[357] Ibid., 219.
[358] Quoted by Balthasar, 130.
[359] Ibid., 133.
[360] Ibid., 144.

great sea of beauty that is the source of all beauty, which is the Good itself.[361] In a similar way, the Christian is persuaded by means of a divine dispensation, which coheres in the divine rhetoric of the *logos* itself, in the revelation of Jesus Christ. Christian faith need not rely simply on a 'reading' of the revelation capable of being read into nature by means of something akin to the discernment of Plato's 'ladder of love', an erotic, philosophic striving after truth and the Good; it relies, ultimately, on that supernatural gift of God whereby we 'read' the revelation of Jesus Christ as the life, death, and resurrection of 'the Son of the Living God, a power given us not by flesh and blood, but by our Father in heaven' (Mt 16:29).

Again, for Balthasar, we are persuaded by the Christian revelation much the way in which we are persuaded by a great work of art, whose perfection, irreplaceability, and uniqueness strike us. Even so, the form of God's revelation possesses an authority worthy of belief in that it radiates Truth, Goodness and Beauty:

> The beautiful is, above all, a form, and the light does not fall on this form from outside and above, rather it breaks forth from the form's interior. *Species* and *lumen* are one if the *species* truly merits that name (which does not designate any form whatever but pleasing, radiant form). Visible form not only 'points' to an invisible, unfathomable, mystery; form is the apparition of this mystery, and reveals it while naturally, at the same time, protecting and veiling it. Both natural and artistic form has an exterior which appears, and an interior depth, both of which, however, are not separable in the form itself. The content (*Gehalt*) does not lie behind the form (*Gestalt*), but within it. Whoever is not capable of seeing and 'reading' the form will, by the same token, fail to perceive the content. Whoever is not illumined by the form will see no light in the content either.[362]

Christ as 'the central form of revelation' (149), in whose face we see God, teaches, presents, encapsulates and indeed radiates what He is. Who God is, is indeed inseparable from what He does in Christ. To be persuaded by the authority of Christ is to be persuaded by His inherent meaning, his inner 'depth', that is to say His full divinity, and oneness with His Father in heaven. To be persuaded by Christ, the form of Christian revelation, is to be persuaded not by any authority external authority but by the radiant Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, present in all its depth, in Christ Himself. It is little wonder that the Church subsists in making present this form of Christ within its bosom, by

[361]Plato, *Symposium*, 202.
[362] Balthasar 146-7.

offering Him, and making Him really present, in a Eucharistic sacrifice and meal. For the Church, in her preaching and liturgy, not only commemorates but also substantiates the life, death, and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Church, through her priests, taking on the role of Christ as Great High Priest, can indeed do so specifically because she is herself the Body of Christ.

From Platonic Philosophy to Christian Theology: A Tale of Two Converts

In order more clearly to link Platonism, which we have taken to be the philosophic framework *par excellence* for Christian theology, with the specifically Christian doctrine of justification; mere Platonist philosophy with full-throated Christian theology, I intend to survey contributions of two Church Fathers who were also noted converts from Platonist philosophy to Christianity: St Justin Martyr and St Augustine. What emerges from such a survey is not the familiar distinction whereby theology becomes a subset of philosophy relating to God, for this was very much the concern of the ancient philosophers as well, but the inability of mere philosophy, apart from divinely given faith, either to come to any doctrinal clarity about the First Principle of all or to dictate any substantive mode of explicitly worshipping God. What emerges, in particular, from a study of these two early philosopher converts is a conviction that the philosophical life must involve a life of prayer, and thanksgiving and praise of God, such as is fitting for the creature to render to its Creator. What we see in the case of Augustine is the conviction that true philosophical life, being a life of spiritual service and sacrifice to God, can only be sustained where such a life is anchored, sustained and nourished by explicit material and sacramental service in the form of the prayer, praise and sacrifice of Christian worship. Thus, the difference between mere philosophy and theology, for these converts of the Patristic period, becomes a distinction not in subject matter, but rather between a mere theology and a fully Christian *Theologia Orans*.

Mere Platonism v Revealed Christianity in Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr (100–165) professed Platonism before his conversion to Christianity. He recounts, in the beginning of his *Dialogue with Trypho*, his forays into various extant schools of philosophy, the Stoic, the Peripatetic and the Pythagorean, but finally choose to follow after the teaching of the Platonists, the end of which, according to Justin, was to 'look upon God'[363]. Yet it is particularly noteworthy that his conversion to the 'Christian Philosophy' involves rather a subsuming of the Platonist framework of justification within Christian worship and Christian dogma than a rejection of that framework. It may be more accurate to describe Justin's Platonism, as Richard Norris does, in terms of the second-century Middle Platonist Albinus's handbook *The Epitome of the Teachings of Plato*, where the *Demiurgos* of the *Timaeus* very clearly becomes God the Father, the World Soul, and the *logos*,[364] but as Norris himself implies, and we have argued, a kind of monotheistic or at least clearly non-polytheistic system can already, to a large extent, be read into the Platonic dialogues themselves.[365] Justin, though embracing Philo's conception of a finite universe, nevertheless wishes to take the myth of the *Timaeus* literally. If it is understood that the World Soul, through which the Creator fashioned all that it is, is in fact *the logos*, the eternal Son of God (who would become incarnate as the Son of Man), the reading becomes quite plausible.[366] As Henry Chadwick points out, Justin also understood Plato to propound divine revelation as necessary for all knowledge where the *Timaeus* declares, 'it is hard to find the Maker of the universe and unsafe to declare him once found'.[367]

In the *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin tells the story of his conversion. Justin recounts running into an old man, 'exhibiting meek and venerable manners', who, it becomes clear, is a Christian.[368] Justin tells the man he is out on a

[363] Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1.trans. Marcus Dods and George Reith ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe ed. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885.2.
[364] The famous *logos spermatikos* of the Stoics, to which Justin attributes the inspiration that led the Greeks to enunciate certain true doctrines.
[365] Richard Norris, *God and World in Early Christian Theology: A Study in Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen*, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1966), 27, 48. Reference is made to Justin *First Apology* 13.*; Second Apology* 10.6.
[366] Ibid., 56; Justin, *First Apology* 10.2.
[367] Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought And the Classical Tradition*, (Oxford: OUP, 1966).
[368] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 3.

solitary walk, which he finds congenial to philosophic contemplation. Justin, indeed, identifies himself as one who strives to practice philosophy.[369] It is instructive that philosophy, for Justin, is a *sine qua non* of *phronesis*, prudence, that supreme virtue whereby life is made worth living. To be sure, philosophy is substantially 'the knowledge of that which really exists, and a clear perception of the truth', but this knowledge is not a *merely* intellectual grasping of what is, but the sort of knowledge of what is that is inextricably linked to the *know-how* that leads to human flourishing.[370] For 'the reward of such knowledge and wisdom' is 'happiness'.[371]

The old man queries Justin as to how material, circumscribed, and changeable mankind can come to have knowledge of the unseen God who 'always maintains the same nature, and in the same manner, and is the cause of all other things.'[372] Justin answers that for Plato, God can be known by the mind alone:

> Plato indeed says that the mind's eye is of such a nature, and has been given for this end, that we may see that very Being when the mind is pure itself, who is the cause of all discerned by the mind, having no colour, no form, no greatness— nothing, indeed, which the bodily eye looks upon…[it] is beyond all essence, unutterable and inexplicable, but alone honourable and good, coming suddenly into souls well-dispositioned, on account of their affinity to and desire of seeing Him…[but] the majority of men will not, saving such as shall live justly, purified by righteousness, and by every other virtue.[373]

The old man asks Justin whether animals who live virtuously can come to see God, and is sceptical of Justin's assertion that human bodies are inherently superior to those of animals and, indeed, of such a sort that their minds alone can come to know God, whereas those of animals cannot: The old man remarks waggishly, 'If these animals could assume speech, be well assured that they would with greater reason ridicule our body'.[374] The old man, though still remaining unsatisfied as to Justin's understanding of humankind's special place within the Divine Plan, proceeds to interrogate the extent mind/body dualism of Justin's Platonism. He asks, 'Does the soul see [God] so long as it is in the body, or after it has been removed from it?' To this, Justin gives another non-

[369] Ibid., 2.
[370] Ibid., 3.
[371] Ibid., 3.
[372] Ibid., 3.
[373] Ibid., 4.
[374] Ibid., 4.

committing answer filled with hedges: 'So long as it is in the form of a man, it is possible for it to attain to this by means of the mind; but especially when it has been set free from the body, and being apart by itself, it gets possession of that which it was wont continually and wholly to love'.[375] Just as the place of animals within the economy of sanctification remains unclear according to Justin's Platonist philosophy, so is the extent to which this philosophy might allow for the resurrection of the body: Human beings can see God through and because of their mind, that is to say, while still possessing a body, but 'especially' (*malista*) once the mind has separated itself from the body. Which precise doctrine of the fate of the soul and body after death Justin holds, if any, is unclear. Even less clear is what Justin's philosophy requires him to believe about the nature of the soul once it has left the body. Does the soul, once it has re-entered a body, remember its previously embodied existence? Whether or not we presume that the Platonic philosophy endorses a transmigration of souls, present in the *Republic*'s Myth of Er but absent in the *Gorgias*' myth of Chronos, the problem still remains of whether a newly embodied soul is able to recollect either its vision of God in heaven, if it is among the elect, or the deadly sins which they committed in life, if they are not. If the economy of salvation and judgement is to hold together, the previous state or states of the soul or ensouled body must be recollected if souls are to be held responsible and therefore accountable for their state of saintliness or sinfulness, justice or injustice. But Justin cannot affirm this based on the teachings of his philosophy alone. He indeed feels compelled to admit that 'the philosophers know nothing of these matters.'[376]

Justin and the Old Man next proceed to a discussion of the immortality of the soul. For his own part Justin is equipped philosophically to expatiate on what Plato 'hints at' (*ainissomai* αἰνίσσομαι) in the *Timaeus* (5); but can offer no clear dogma, based on Platonic philosophy alone, as to the nature of the soul. In the end, the Christian convinces Justin that souls do not in themselves possess life and immortality, but are sustained in life only by God Himself, who is alone immortal and incorruptible. The old man alone, as a Christian, is able to offer a clear doctrine about the fate of souls after this life: 'The souls of the pious remain in a better place, while those of the unjust and wicked are in a

[375] Ibid.
[376] Ibid.

worse, waiting for the time of judgment. Thus, some that have appeared worthy of God never die; but others are punished so long as God wills them to exist and to be punished'.[377] It is just here, when Justin, as mere philosopher, has admitted the *aporia* into which he must fall where dependent on philosophy alone, that the old man introduces the prophets of the Holy Jewish scriptures who, not depending on philosophical demonstrations, were enlightened by the Holy Spirit Himself to speak the truth. Interestingly, the old man commends the prophets and their writing, not just because what they prophesied had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, but because 'they both glorified the Creator, the God and Father of all things, and proclaimed His Son, the Christ [sent] by Him'.[378] That Justin may be similarly sanctified by the Holy Spirit, the old man exhorts him to 'pray that, above all things, the gates of light may be opened to you; for these things cannot be perceived or understood by all, but only by the man to whom God and His Christ have imparted wisdom.'[379] To the old man, then, there is merit in prayer, in prayers of adoration, in praising and glorifying God, as befits the creation to behave to his Creator, and in supplicatory prayer, to ask for the grace of all those good things of which God is the only source. These practices are to be adhered to on the model of the prophets and the saints, though they have no automatic place in the life practices of the philosopher. Justin's concept of philosophy was never merely intellectual. It was in no sense divorced from the true aim of human flourishing that consists in the sort of service to and communion with God that comes though prayer and supplication. And yet it was the practical consequence of realizing one's dependence on God's many gifts, the wish to join in the *cultus* of the one true God, that was not in the remit of mere Platonic philosophy to commend.

Yet, in adopting the Christian faith, Justin does not in any sense see himself turning against philosophy. His philosophy has indeed been perfected. Through the revelation of inspired Christianity, he has finally given precision to his thinking about the nature of the soul and its judgment in the next life. These truths were, to be sure, contained in the Platonic philosophy, but nowhere were they capable of being so firmly and succinctly presented as divine truths to be held without doubting, except by the benefit of the Christian revelation, of its scriptures and its saints. Neither could the mere philosophical life, even focused

[377] Ibid.
[378] Ibid.,7.
[379] Ibid.

as it was upon practices and habits of living, have the practical, concrete, and life-defining character, the life-directing actions such as the recitation of specific prayers, or the participation in specific rites extending from the revealed tradition of God Himself made flesh:

> Justin: When he had spoken these and many other things, which there is no time for mentioning at present, he went away, bidding me attend to them; and I have not seen him since. But straightaway a flame was kindled in my soul; and a love of the prophets, and of those men who are friends of Christ, possessed me; and while revolving his words in my mind, I found this philosophy alone to be safe and profitable. Thus, and for this reason, I am a philosopher.[380]

Augustine: From Platonic Philosophy to *Philosophia Orans*

Let us now return to Augustine's personal history of his conversion. Much scholarship on Augustine, especially in philosophy circles, relates to Augustine's theories of how it is that we can know enough about God in order to say true things about Him. The question becomes, even more generally, how, in light of the Meno paradox, we can know anything at all.[381] Plato's (or Socrates') solution to the Meno paradox had been that learning and hence understanding are, in fact, acts of recollecting a pre-natal state of omniscience in the presence of the Divine Ideas. This theory Augustine initially adapted himself.[382] Later, however, Augustine describes the moment of understanding not so much as recollection as an illumination whereby 'the light of eternal reason…is present to them [the learners] insofar as they are able to understand it —not because they knew [these] things before and then forgot them'.[383]

Yet the extent to which the late Augustine departs from Platonic thinking on recollection must not be exaggerated. We must remember that the point of the theory of recollection is not to specify a true religious doctrine so much as to offer, by way of *mythos*, an account of the possibility of learning. The essential point of the recollection mythos is that that any genuine knowledge presupposes

[380] Ibid., 8.
[381] The so-called Meno paradox (*Meno* 81e–85b) concerns the possibility of attaining knowledge: if I wish to know something, which I don't know, how will I recognize when I have learned if I don't know it?
[382] For Augustine's initial endorsement of Plato's theory of recollection see *Solloquia* 2.20.34-35. See also Peter King, 'Augustine on Knowledge', in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (2nd edition) David Vincent Meconi, Eleonore Stump eds. (Cambridge: CUP, 2014).
[383] Augustine, *Retractationes*, (Paris: J.-P. Migne PL32, 1841), 1.4.4.

some form of divine illumination, or the impression or infusion of Divine Ideas.[384] We must not, therefore, take the recollection *mythos* of the *Meno* too seriously. It is not a positive religious doctrine, which can only come from God's own revelation. Indeed, as Plato himself acknowledged, knowledge of virtue, which is, after all, the type of knowledge under discussion in the *Meno,* can in the end only be acquired by *theia moira*, 'divine dispensation' (99e).[385] Whether this takes the form of divine illumination in the present life or a kind of predestination before this life is not specified. It must be left to revealed religion to formulate a doctrine more specific than this in order to lead us forth from fruitful but ultimately unsatisfying Socratic *aporia*. To say that Augustine, as a Christian, is compelled to reject Plato's theory of recollection is overly simplistic. It would be more accurate to say that Augustine accepts Plato's suppositions about the necessity of 'divine disclosure' but recognizes the doctrinal limitations of a merely illustrative Platonic *mythos* which could not have profited from direct Christian revelation.

Much of the theological story of Augustine's conversion is narrated in the *Confessions*. The extent to which Augustine subsumes his Platonic views within his Christianity rather than replacing them is, as we have already pointed out in Chapter 1, rather remarkable.[386] In Chapter 7 of the *Confessions* we get a first-hand description of a kind of Platonic assent to God. Yet this, like all Augustine's astonishing endorsement of the merely Platonic mindset, proves unsatisfactory in the end. The reason seems to be, again and again, that the ethic of humility, which is showcased and embodied in life and death of Him who is both God and man, is not sufficiently stressed. There is something a tad elitist, it seems, in a mystical assent to know God that does not sufficiently stress obedience and service to a God who is, in His full glory, beyond comprehension, essentially unknowable in this life. The revelation of the Christ event, for Augustine, is that God *has* made Himself known to us, in the form of a servant, the God-Man, our mediator.[387]

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[384] John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), 76.

[385] Plato, *Meno* 99e. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian* Philosophy, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale, 1986), 50-52.

[386] 'If, then, Plato defined the wise man as one who imitates, knows, loves this God, and who is rendered blessed through fellowship with Him in His own blessedness, why discuss with the other philosophers? It is evident that none come nearer to us than the Platonists' [Augustine, *City of God,* trans. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871.) 8.5].

[387] Augustine, *Confessions*, (P. Knöll, Teubner text, 1909), 11.3.

Particularly striking, in Book 7 of the *Confessions*, is the way in which Augustine's philosophical and theological meditations cohere more closely as his meditations on the Christian revelation become more detailed and profound.[388] Augustine's analysis of the Prologue to John's Gospel, in which the limits of Platonic philosophy are finally reached at the doctrine of the Incarnation, is followed by a newly discovered inspiration as to the existence of Truth in itself (7.10), and the first clear articulation, in the *Confessions*, of the *privatio boni* solution to the problem of evil (7.12-13): Evil has no substance, or being in itself; for everything that is must in some sense be good. Evil, therefore, is a corruption or privation of the good. Yet a substance that is corrupted must be, by definition, essentially good, and is only lesser by dint of being deprived of some of its goodness. Although the deprived substance stands in relation to the original as lesser, its essential nature, from which it is deprived, is equally good.[389] What emerges, in Augustine's moral outlook on creation, is a kind of relational ontology, at least as far as moral judgements are concerned, in which evil must be described only in terms of relation, and never in terms of being or essence.[390]

To me, at any rate, it is no accident that Augustine's articulation of the *privatio boni* doctrine follows hard upon his meditation upon the uniquely Christian revelation inaccessible to mere philosophy: 'But that the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, I did not read there [in the books of the Platonists]…that he emptied himself, taking on the form of a servant, made in the likeness and the fashion of men, and that he humbled himself, even to death on the cross'.[391] That God humbled Himself to live and die as one of us powerfully commends a Christian ethic of self-sacrifice for the sake of furthering justice and the establishment of God's Kingdom. But that God himself would descend from his lofty throne even to the margins of creation, retreating from his eternal glory and yet remaining ever fully God even as He becomes fully human, implies a great deal about the nature of creation itself in relation to its Creator: If God can, while remaining divine, insert Himself into

[388] In particular 7.9 examines the Prologe to the Gospel of John with regard to which doctrines have already been articulated by the Platonic philosophers and which have not. The latter, rather astonishingly, seem to amount to no more than the truth of the Incarnation.
[389] Augustine, *Confessions*, 7.12.
[390] Ibid.,7.13.
[391] Ibid.,7.13.

space and time, to live, suffer and die as one of us, it is impossible that this spatial, temporal and imperfect perfect world could be anything other than good. Though in relation to God it may have been deprived of this perfection as a result of the fall, and thereby come into a sinfulness in relation to God, nature, not excepting, of course, human nature, remains essentially the same. If it were not so, the Incarnation would appear nothing short of blasphemy, a lowering of the divine to the nature of the mundane, rather than a lifting up of the mundane, so as to reconcile it with its source and original. Indeed, for the Christian, the Incarnation is nothing more than God's coming to His own.[392]

In Book 10 of *City of God*, Augustine outlines the way in which the Christian revelation brings not just intellectual clarity about the way in which the perfectly good Creator God relates to creation, but also a new clarity about how the philosophical life is to be lived out in relation to Christ' sacrifice. For all the truths which the Platonist philosophers espoused, they lacked the structured symbolic life of service to God in prayer and thanksgiving provided by the Christian liturgy. It would be incomplete for Augustine to claim merely that the Platonist ethic has no space for the virtue of humility in reference to God. For, as we have shown in Chapter 1, any reading of both the life and activity of Socrates, or indeed, the mythologized figure of the Philosopher in the form of the deity Love in the *Symposium*, finds the virtue of humility at least implicitly commended.[393] Augustine does not claim that spiritual service to God is impossible without the external forms of Christian worship, or indeed that the purpose of such worship is an external rather than internal disposition in relation to God. But he does commend this external, liturgical service to God as fitting not just because it is suggestive of an inner disposition which he enjoins us to cultivate, but because it is somehow efficacious in itself in bringing about this inner reality. In a word, Christian worship is sacramental:

> Our heart when it rises to Him is His altar; the priest who intercedes for us is His Only-begotten; we sacrifice to Him bleeding victims when we contend for His truth even unto blood; to Him we offer the sweetest incense when we come before Him burning with holy and pious love; to Him we devote and surrender ourselves and His gifts in us; to Him, by solemn feasts and on appointed days, we consecrate the memory of His benefits, lest through the lapse of time ungrateful oblivion should steal upon us; to Him we offer on the altar of our heart the sacrifice of humility and praise, kindled by the fire of burning

[392] John 1.11, quoted in *Confessions* 7.9.
[393] 203d.

> love. It is that we may see Him, so far as He can be seen; it is that we may cleave to Him, that we are cleansed from all stain of sins and evil passions, and are consecrated in His name. For He is the fountain of our happiness, He the end of all our desires.[394]

The lineaments of where liturgy ends and mere inner contemplation outside the liturgy begins are not entirely clear. To witness the sacrifice of the liturgy seems to be subsumed with the sacrifice that 'contends for His truth even unto blood'; the offering of incense is melded into the offering of Love. The liturgical, for Augustine, is not merely symbolic, but efficacious. The Christian liturgy not only plays out the personal drama of philosophers' love of God, it in fact nourishes the philosopher on his path to Wisdom.

Conclusions from the Conversions of Justin and Augustine

For both Justin and Augustine, a key mistake of the merely Platonist philosopher was to suppose that religious rites were mere externals which, even in a pagan context, could be interpreted according to the philosopher's edification, whereas they ought in fact be realities which in and of themselves work, in the hearts and mind of the philosopher, to the building of charity, and the reality of God's kingdom.[395] What the Platonists lacked was not a large number of true doctrines concerning man and the divine. What they lacked, instead, was a true liturgy, and a true religion. For their Pagan worship had always to be interpreted in a light other than what its founders, or the great majority people who frequented its temples, supposed it to mean. Christian worship, instead, meant what it announced, by the very prayers of its liturgical and sacramental life.

Of course such a Christian liturgy would be quite impossible without that doctrinal clarity about the meaning and order of the cosmos, and our place within it. For without a doctrine of God, and His actions, hymns would have no content, prayers very little to say, liturgical commemorations little or nothing to

[394] Augustine, *City of God*, 10.3.
[395] See in particular Plutarch'a 'Isis and Osiris' and 'On the E at Delphi' for examples of Platonist interpretations of pagan rites. Plutarch, *Moralia* trans. Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press. London. William Heinemann Ltd. 1936).

recount. However, the Christian revelation provided the basis, for both Justin and Augustine, of a positive doctrine of God's saving actions which accords with and indeed clarifies the metaphysical and ethical commitments of their Platonism. For both these figures, Christianity is the perfect philosophy, and the perfect mode of speculative philosophical disquisition, a kind of *Theologia Orans.*

4. Paul's Epistle to the Romans and the Just Man Who Lives by Faith

The Problem of Justification in Romans

In Chapter 1 we outlined the suitability of Platonism as a framework in which Pauline doctrines may be understood. In Chapter 2, through a reading of key Platonic dialogues, we have shown that this Platonic framework is particularly suitable framework for understanding Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. In Chapter 3 we discussed the relationship between Platonic mere philosophy and Christian philosophy, via a discussion of contemplative theological aesthetics, Christian liturgy and the practice of prayer. In this chapter, I will offer an exegesis of Romans 1–6, a text rich in touchstone passages for the Reformation debates on justification, using a Platonist lens. In Chapter 5 we shall embark on an exegesis of Galatians 2–3 and 5–6.

It might well be asked whether it would not be profitable to do exegesis of only those passages in the Pauline corpus that bear most directly on the question of justification, rather than to embark on an exegesis of a continuous text (though I do not necessarily propose to make direct reference of every line of Biblical text). My reasons are many. Firstly, the question of exactly which passages bear most directly on the question of justification would be open to dispute; secondly, by only writing about those passages which I consider most important I could be accused, perhaps rightly, of cherry-picking those passages which most support my Platonic reading of Paul. Thirdly, if Scripture is in fact Holy Writ, it must firstly be coherent, and it must be allowed to speak for itself: A Platonic reading of Paul on justification can only be shown to be a viable framework through a varied and continuous selection of texts dealing with passages as they come, whether, in the first instance, they appear especially amenable to a Platonic reading or not. Indeed, one of the reasons I have chosen Romans 1–5 is that it contains many famous passages on justification that seem, in the first instance, not to admit of Platonist interpretation.

A major challenge of interpretation in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and Paul's doctrine of justification by faith more generally, is posed by the apparent incongruity of the source material of Paul's famous *sola fides* doctrine, with

much Pauline writing that envisages justification as in some sense the reward of a perseverance in the Christian virtues. A particular example of this tension may be seen in Romans 1:16–2:29, in which Paul claims that God will reward the one who perseveres in just works (2:8) and who 'keeps the justice of the law' (2:25), as set against Romans 3:21-28, in which Paul claims that 'the justice of God is manifested apart from the law to all those who believe' (3:22), that we may be 'justified by faith apart from the law'(3:28). It would seem rather facile to attempt to view 1:16–2:29 as either non-Pauline or simply meaningless in relation to the triumph of that 'faith alone' which is proclaimed in 3:21, because the sort of ethical requirements imposed in 1:16–2:29 have been shown to be impossible of attainment in our fallen state. In this chapter, I should like to outline a system of Platonic ethics by which to read Romans 3:21-22, 27-28 as essentially in harmony with 1:16–2:29.

James Dunn perceives the necessity of reconciling Romans 2 and 3. For Dunn, Romans 2-6-7 is evidence that Paul's polemic in Romans 3 could not have been simply directed against the view that, 'justification depended on works of achievement...'[396] Hence, the 'works of the law' denigrated in Romans 3:28, could not have meant simply good works but a kind of dependence on specifically *jewish* law: hence, justification by works of the law excludes gentiles, and indeed, would have excluded Abraham, whose 'faith was reckoned unto to him as righteousness' before the Jewish law of circumcision was given (Gen15: 6). [397] Dunn also makes much of Qumran text 4QMMST in which the works of the law commended are specifically ceremonial duties in regard to purification, which are then 'reckoned unto you as in justice'[398]

Dunn is certainly right to point out (and it is a point not made nearly frequently enough) that Paul in no way includes good works in his denigration of the law. However, as I shall explore more specifically in Chapter 5, in relation to *Galatians,* there is in fact an element of Paul's polemic against 'works of the law' that also targets a more general ethical reliance on codified law that is in fact incommensurate with the demands that Christ places upon his

[396]James D.C. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle,* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998) 365.
[397]Ibid., 355.
[398]Ibid., 358, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, 2 Volumes, trans. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert Tigchelaar (Leiden/Grand Rapids: Brill/Eerdmans, 1997 & 1998) 4QMMT, 117.

followers in Matthew 5. [399]This critique may in fact be situated within a tradition of Platonic Ethics, specifically evident in the *Statesmen*, as we shall explore in Chapter 5.[400] Paul's certainly does target the exclusivity of specifically *jewish* law, but his critique is, as we shall see, a good deal broader than that.

John Barclay has a much more integrative reading of Romans 1–3. Barclay is particularly sceptical of the view that Paul should have taken the time to outline a positive ethical vision in Romans 2, merely to abrogate this vision in Romans 3:20-28. For Paul's discussion in Chapter 2 includes an assurance of salvation for those who patiently persevere in good works, as they seek 'honour, and glory, and incorruption' (2:7). Divine favour is also accorded to those gentiles who practice the law without knowing it (2:14), and, more generally, to the one who is 'a Jew not outwardly', but inwardly; whose 'circumcision is of the heart through the spirit, not the word, whose praise is of God, not of men' (2:28-29). For Barclay, it is unlikely that all these pronouncements were 'purely hypothetical'.[401] Barclay frames the problem of reconciling Romans 1:16–2:29 with 3:20-3:28 in terms of how the 'incongruous' grace of God can be reconciled with the ethical demand that 'God is just and will judge human beings on account of their perseverance in either justice or injustice'.[402] Barclay's solution, to which we have already alluded, is that 'the foundation and frame of the patient good works that lead to eternal life is an act of divine power, an incongruous gift to sinful humanity whose transformative effects will be evident at the last judgment'.[403] But such effects are not merely those sufficient for a nominal verdict of guilty or innocent before the court of God, but of an inner, ethical quality, of the justice or injustice of the individual believer. God's justifying gift is incongruous, however, because it is not in any sense proportional to 'prior worth'; however, 'its foundation and existence is a lived practice…congruous with the righteous judgement of God'.[404] Presumably by, 'prior worth' Barclay has in mind the ethical qualities of a soul before it comes to Christ. Yet any genuinely good work which bestows any quality of justice to the soul in question (a justice which partakes of the 'justice of God')

[399]See Chapter 5, 'Christ's Commandment's on Justice and the Law'.
[400]See Chapter 5, 'Excursus on Law and Moral Perfection in Plato'.
[401] Barclay 466.
[402] Ibid.
[403] Ibid., 473.
[404] Ibid., 478.

must in a sense be the fruit of divine gift. Still, Barclay's point essentially mirrors what I will show to be a deeply Platonic insight, that the path to God is one inspired by means of a free gift of God himself, and is not the antithesis, but actually the foundation, of the perseverance in ethical living described in Romans 2.

Romans 1

Paul often gives Jesus' full title in which He is not simply identified as the Christ, Only Son of God, but as Jesus Christ *risen* from the dead. It is this above all else that makes Jesus unique, worthy of being truly called 'the son of God with value (*dynamis*) according to the spirit', that is to say according to unseen, inner reality, always a more fundamental reality for Plato, insofar as it gives meaning to everything we see around us.[405] Jesus of Nazareth is 'born of the seed of David according to the flesh' (1:3), that is to say according to the scientific (in the modern sense), descriptive reality of *how* things are but not *why* they are such and such a way. Anyone who knew Jesus could have seen that He grew up as Mary and Joseph's son (Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55; Jn 6:42), and was, so to speak, in the line of David, so far as corporeal matters are concerned; but this does not tell us who Jesus really is. When Paul speaks about *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), really a wind, a breath of life (which has few of the psychological connotations in Plato which it does in Paul), he is referring to something roughly identifiable with the higher element of the human soul, the *logos* (*Rep* 511e), or *nous*.[406]

Excursus on Paul's Use of *Pneuma*

It is likely that Paul would already have known about the Stoic conception of *pneuma*, as attested by Crysippus before him and by Alexander of Aphrodisias after him, of the *pneuma* that pervades and unifies all being, an idea which also appears in Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*. In the latter instance, the *pneuma* is more concretely 'breath', a warm diffusion of energy from the Divine Fire

[405] Plato, *Phaedo*, 98–100.
[406] Plato, *Timaeus*, 30b.

which the Stoics identified with God.[407] This spiritual radiation then, of the Divine Fire, would have been, for the Stoics, a materialistic representation of the *desmos* of Plato's *Timaeus*, which binds the elements of the cosmos together at the creation of the world.[408] For Philo, this binding force is the divine *logos* to whom God entrusts the ordering of the Cosmos.[409] What is called *logos* in Philo, who, unlike the Stoics, accords universal sovereignty to the invisible, the immaterial and the conceptual, was identified, by the more materially minded Stoics, with *pneuma*, wind, breath, or heat.[410] Both, however, would have been identified, by Platonists and Stoics alike, with the *desmos* of the *Timaeus*, as that through and in which everything was made (John 1).

Origen, however, explains the suitability of this concept of divine *pneuma*, the Stoics' warming, quickening wind of God's fire, in terms of its authority in scripture, where God is consistently identified with fire.[411] The most paradigmatic case is probably God's appearance to Moses as the burning bush (Ex 3:2).[412] This biblical *motif* is not only paralleled in the later Stoic philosophy, but may be thought to have a more ancient provenance in pagan philosophy, first of all with the pre-Socratic Heraclitus who speaks of a *pur aeidion* from which everything physical is derived: 'Not any god made the cosmos, the same which is composed of all things, but rather it always was and always will be an everlasting fire, by measure brought together'.[413] Heraclitus appears to contend that it is the *pur aeidion*, rather than some god from mythology, in which the cosmos subsists. The cosmos, therefore, is not so much created *by* the *pur aeidion* as *in pur aeidion*. The *arxe* of creation itself, that *by which* all that is created, is not fire but 'measure' (*arithmon*), that by which the fire is 'brought together and extinguished', which in Heraclitus' system cannot

[407] George Van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School*, (Tübingen: Mors Siebeck, 2003).
[408] 35a–36b.
[409] Philo, *De Plantatione* 10, *De Migratione* 220, Colson and Whitaker trans. (Cambridge: Harvard, Loeb Classical Texts, 1959). *Logos* is related to the verb *legein*, which, though it has a more common meaning 'to say', has the original sense of 'to gather together'; hence the identification with *desmos* would have been natural.
[410] Van Kooten 46.
[411] Origen, *De Principiis*, *The Writings of Origen*, trans. Frederick Crombie (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1869) II, 7,3.
[412] See Heb 12:29 'God is a consuming fire'; Jer. 5:14 'Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth as fire'; and Paul's injunctions in Romans to be ' fervent in Spirit'. See also Deut. 4:24, 9:3.
[413] Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. Walther Kranz (Berlin: Weidmannsche buchhandlung 1903). Fragment 30.

but be identified with his famous *logos*, 'according to which all things come to be'.[414]

In Plato's analogy of the cave, the proximate source of those shadowy figures which are all that the benighted prisoners can make out of the shadow of reality is fire, the means by which the light of Being, here represented by the light outside the cave, is delivered into the cavern of creaturely existence.[415] Where the distinction between forms and form-bearers arises in the *Meno*, fire is defined as that through which heat is delivered: it would be more accurate to say that something is hot not because it partakes of heat, but because it partakes of fire, according to the Platonic conception, the origin and original of heat.

To speak of divine immanence as heat, the warm breath of the *pneuma*, would have been only too natural for Paul. Not only was it in full conformity with the Hebraic scriptural tradition, it was amenable not simply to the rather materialistic Stoic cosmology very much current in his day, but, indeed, to the Heraclitan and Platonic schemata as well. But only the Platonic schema could give adequate philosophic coherence to a scriptural tradition that, unlike the current Stoic thought of Paul's day, rejected materialism, even as it maintained the real historical presence of God among His people. Within this framework, the divine *pneuma* becomes the bearer of God's fire; not simply the rays of the divine sun, to allude to another famous similitude in Plato, but, more in keeping with the biblical tradition, as the warm breath of the divine fire. Like Heraclitus, Paul has no need to substitute *pneuma* for *logos* as the *arxe* of all creation, which fashions and orders the cosmos. For the *Logos*, the Word of God, is, for Paul, that through whom all things are made. God's divine *pneuma* is that through which his grace is delivered and by and in which everything was not only made but finally sanctified, redeemed and brought into harmony with God's governance. For this, following the biblical precedents, and meditating on the Christ-event with that lens proffered by the most philosophical schema most congenial to the faith he spread, that of Platonism, Paul could find no better term than *agion pneuma*, the Holy Spirit.

[414] Ibid., Fragment 1.
[415] Plato, *Republic*, 514.

It seems evident that Paul's Roman readers must have already had some idea of what he meant by *pneuma*, though the typically Pauline dichotomy drawn between spirit and flesh, between the higher and lower elements of the soul, if we are to think in Platonic terms, and not our own, makes the sense reasonably clear. It is my contention that if we are to take Paul seriously as a coherent theologian, we must seek to discern the philosophic framework in which to most fully love and imbibe the Letter to the Romans, perhaps the most comprehensive and original statement of Christian doctrine. It is further my contention that, in this sense, the most natural philosophic framework in which to understand how Paul speaks about faith and justice in Romans is that of the Platonic ethics which Plato outlines himself, the subject of chapter 1 of this dissertation. The extent to which this framework begins to break down amidst miraculous evidence (the Resurrection) of God as an actor within finite human existence will be examined, where appropriate, in our reading of Romans. For where the Resurrection arrives, 'the signal, the fire alarm of a coming new world'[416], our conceptions must change, and so too our idea of a mutual relationship with God—yes, even God, that perfect, all-powerful, infinite power, and highest good, whom we are called to love, and towards whom we must devote every inch of our being.

Romans 1 (continued)

The only son of God is His *logos* who existed in the beginning with the Father, and through His original and all-encompassing intellectual capacity it was possible for the universe to be made. This *logos*, this original mind and soul[417] is the source from which the essence of both mankind, on the one hand, and individual human beings on the other have their origin. We have, all of us, the potential to becomes 'sons of God' (Jn 1) and in this sense not just sons of the Father, as the term would specifically imply, but children of the Father specifically through the Son, who was one with the Father at the creation of the world. One individual human being, Jesus of Nazareth, is anointed with the

[416] Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwin Hoskins (Oxford: OUP, 1933).
[417] See especially Clement's *Protrepticus* [Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, trans. Marcus Dods and George Reith, Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe ed (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885)].

power (*en dynamei* ἐν δυνάμει) (John 1:4) of this original of all souls in God. The higher power of His soul is a perfect copy of the original power itself; it is the 'spirit of holiness' itself, from the original holiness, or rather the source of all holiness.[418]

Yet it would be perhaps inaccurate to say that holiness is a property of God Himself (although, to be sure, God is the source of all good things). Plato defined *to osion* (the sacred, the holy) between God and man as 'what is gracious and pleasing (*kekarismenon* κεχαρισμένον) to the gods, but not profitable or dear to them [for a god, who is perfect, cannot lack anything]'.[419] But Paul uses *agiosyne* (holiness, saintliness). It would be instructive to examine whether these terms correspond. Although the virtue of holiness would seem to describe the human being in relation to God, this virtue, like any other, can never be perfected by purely mortal and sinful man, but instead receives its perfection in our Mediator and advocate with God the Father, Jesus Christ the Just (1 Jn 2:1). He who is anointed with the *logos* of and in God Himself is not only worthy of being given the fundamental spiritual and psychological identity of God, but also of God- made-man 'according to the flesh'. The Son, the *Logos*, was eternally with the Father from the beginning of time. The Son is and always has been, in a sense, the human face of God. The Spirit of Holiness (πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης) is therefore the Spirit of *the* Divine Holiness which can exist in one who is fully God (else His Holiness could not be perfect) and fully man (otherwise he could not be described as holy in respect to his relationship to God the Father). For the 'spirit of holiness' is really the spirit of the perfect holiness united with and in God Himself, the Form of Holiness within God Himself, in Christ Jesus.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, according to the essential human characterization of one's 'soul' or 'spirit, which is, in his case, a spirit 'of [perfect] holiness'. It has been taken as axiomatic, in the ethics of Plato, that all perfected notions of fitness and rightness inhere in the highest and overarching Good itself, which is God. God's *logos*, His Son, must be the manner in which such things are transposed, or *mediated*, in terms of man's relationship to God. Wisdom, 'the fear of the Lord' (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10), and holiness, or godliness,

[418] See Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of* John, The *Writings of Origen*, trans. Frederick Crombie (T & T Clark: Edinburgh), Book 1.
[419] Plato, *Euthyphro*, 15b.

are transpositions of God's perfection so as to relate to human virtues. The highest form of these virtues must of course be present in the human side of God, who is 'in the form of a servant our Mediator'.[420] Origen writes: 'Whatever is predicated of the wisdom of God will be applied to the Son in virtue of his being the life, the word…all these titles are derived from his power and operation, and in none of them is there the slightest ground for understanding anything of a corporeal nature'.[421] But the message that forms the Gospel, and Paul's message here, is of the revelation of the corporeal Christ, God in the form of a servant, the culmination of which is His being risen from the dead. Paul is surely not saying that Jesus is holy only because He rose from the dead. But he *is* saying that it was precisely by Christ's triumphant resurrection that He was affirmed to be perfectly holy. It is this resurrection which accords with and vindicates the spirit of perfect holiness that rested in Him, and it is also a foretaste of things to come: For the Spirit of God, as we will see re-asserted and expanded in Chapter 10 of Romans, has also the power to raise us from the dead, for this is the same spirit that came to rest in Christ Jesus (10:9-11). How do we know that the same spirit which was in Christ is in us? By the test of holiness, the currency by which (*en dynamei* ἐν δυνάμει)[422] any spirit is to be evaluated.

We are then introduced to the concept which will in many ways become the theme of the Epistle: faith. We are told that it is through Christ our Lord that we are able to 'take up the apostleship which is reckoned in terms of the obedience of *faith*' (1:5). It is instructive to note that here, where the notion of faith first appears in Romans, it is not invoked specifically as faith in or of Jesus Christ, or even of 'Our Lord Jesus Christ', which is the phrase used repeatedly in this long sentence that forms the opening salutation of the letter. Instead, it is a faith available to 'all nations for His name's sake', that is to say under the banner of Christ 'who, having been risen, may be proclaimed Lord of all' (1:6). Specifically, the Epistle has in mind 'all the beloved of God who are in Rome,

[420] Augustine, *De Trinitate, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, trans. Peter Holmes, Robert Ernest Wallis, and Benjamin Warfield (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1886).
[421] Origen, *De Principiis*, in *The Writings of Origen*, trans. Frederick Crombie (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1869) I. 2.4.
[422] Plutarch is cited twice by LSJ, in *Lycurgus* and *Solon*, to use the word with something of this meaning.

and are called holy' (1:7). The emphasis is on the obedience of faith, which is then confirmed in Christ and His revelation.

Paul could have referred simply to all those who believe in Christ, but has instead chosen to introduce faith as a general concept which is applied, in light of recent revelations, to the sphere of all nations, and specifically, in this case, to a group of people in Rome, among whom, as is made clear by the names listed in Chapter 16, are included many gentiles. The obedience of faith must therefore be taken, at least in part, as a general concept that needs clarification. Still to come is the identification of faith with the Comforter (1:11), the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:16). Paul promises to share with the Romans a sort of spiritual good (*charis*).[423] Yet this spiritual good is defined in terms of 'our mutual faith'. This faith is explicitly defined in terms of 'the Spirit and the Gospel of Jesus Christ'.

We have only to read on to discern its intellectual heritage, and full meaning. But even here we have the outline of a twofold meaning of the concept of faith as Paul wishes to make use of it. This faith is defined, for those who knew Jesus personally, as a belief in His divinely anointed status as Son of God (Mk 16:16), which necessarily involves following Christ in discipleship and the keeping of His commandments (Jn 12). It is therefore a faith that demands, first and foremost, love of God and love of neighbour, the principles *sine qua non* of the Christ's message and commandments. But it is also a faith that affirms the miracle of this man, Jesus of Nazareth, that He was raised from the dead, and so confirmed in both His divine mission and His divine status. When Jesus confessed, according to John's Gospel, 'I and the father are one' (10:30) he was not speaking in a rhetorical sense. This is the Faith to be proclaimed ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ (*en to evangelio)* 'as far as the Gospel is concerned' (1:9). Yet as far as the Spirit is concerned (ἐν τῷ πνεύματί *en to pneumati*) we must discover a deeper and more long-standing intellectual and prophetic heritage that traces itself back long before the revelation of Jesus Christ. This is the approach which Paul himself takes in quoting Hebrew scripture, using specific quotations to support general and timeless theological claims.[424] There is, of course, no

[423] The Greek *charis* has a wide-ranging and general meaning of some favour/kindness/goodness done. I think, therefore, that the most judicious way of translating what Paul has in mind here would be, 'that I might convey to you a spiritual good' (1:11).

[424] See Francis Watson's discussion of Paul's 'as it was written' in chapter 1, 'Justification and Hermeneutics' of *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T & T Clark, 2004).

contradiction between a faith propagated in respect of Spirit and in respect of gospel. What has been made clear above all by this revelation is that this Spirit is first given and then strengthened and nourished by the same God with whom he who possesses such a Spirit yearns to be in communion (8:28).

Paul writes, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power[425] of salvation for all who believe, first to the Jew, then to the Greek' (1:16). Here, we have the participle form of the verb 'to believe' or 'to have faith', *pisteuo*, rather than some form of the noun *pistis* used in a general way. Paul seems to have in mind the belief that Jesus rose from the dead, for this is the culmination and capstone of the gospel, the part of the story without which Jesus is just another godly man. If the true significance of this event is grasped, it bears restating, this must involve the keeping of Jesus's commandments. This is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what vindicates and guarantees the triumph of Justice, the rising from the dead of Jesus Christ the just (1 John 2:1), so those who are made just in Christ will also rise by His same Spirit (Rom. 8:12).

We are given what Francis Watson refers to as the 'antecedent' to a biblical quotation using the formula 'as it is written', which makes a general theological claim that is then showed to be generated by the passage itself.[426] Paul's antecedent here is thus: 'For in the same [gospel] the Justice of God is revealed from faith to faith'(1:17).[427] The proof text is from the book of Habakkuk: 'the just man will live by faith' (2:4). Perhaps we should look at its context: Chapter 1 of the Book of Habakkuk is a lamentation to God, of the sort we see in numerous psalms, at the apparent prosperity of the unjust at the expense of the just, the godly at the expense of the ungodly: 'I will cry out to you when I am wronged, and you will not save me' (1:2). Something of the nature of the injustice spoken of is mentioned: 'The judge takes [bribes] and thereby the law is disbanded. Justice is not thoroughly executed, and the ungodly man imposes upon the just man, for the judgement that has come forth has been perverted'

[425] Again, if Paul is using *dynamis* at all in the sense found in Plutarch, 'power' has connotations of 'value' or 'currency'. The gospel as the 'currency of salvation' would seem to make more sense to the modern reader, in the sense of something in terms of which something is reckoned, evaluated, and understood.
[426] Watson 47.
[427] It has been the usual practice to translate *dikaiosyne* as 'righteousness' in Greek biblical literature and 'justice' in non-biblical literature. That this is untenable I hope, among other things, to demonstrate.

(1:4).[428] The invading Chaldeans' plundering has been interpreted as a judgment on God's people; and yet the author still doubts that the God of Israel, who is everlasting, could allow such a thing to happen. Habakkuk's preoccupation is, in fact, with an ethical question at the very heart of Plato's *Republic*: Why is it worth it to be just rather than unjust?[429]

In light of this, it is relevant to ask whether the 'the just' in Paul, defined quite properly in relation to the 'Justice of God' (*dikaiosyne theou* δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ), really belongs in a category by itself, utterly distinct from the notion of justice common to the ancient thinkers, from Plato up until Paul's time. Is it really meaningful for N.T. Wright to invoke Deuteronomy 27–30 where, he claims, ' "righteous acts" here clearly does not mean 'virtuous acts'. It means "acts in fulfilment of God's promise"'?[430] The promises given to Moses in Deuteronomy 27–30, in the context of God's covenant, place considerable and specific ethical demands on the Israelites. However, there has often been a tendency in New Testament scholarship to build a distinction between ethical/legal notions of justice, in a non-biblical context, and a relational notion of justice, concerning God's covenant with his people: God is just and possesses justice (or righteousness) because He is faithful to promises made to his people; man is just when, for his part, he makes good on his side of the bargain and is either condemned or acquitted before the bar where he himself is the defendant and God the judge.[431]

James Dunn is unequivocal that *dikaiosyne,* as Paul uses it here, is not meant in the Greek sense of 'an idea or ideal against which the individual and individual action can be measured' but rather 'a relational concept' that may be glossed as 'the meeting of obligations laid upon the individual by the relationship of which he or she is a part'.[432] But what Dunn does not explain is how a general notion of *diakiosyne* as a 'relational concept', cannot also leave room for the Greek notion, nor does he explain why or how Greek speaking gentiles, to whom the list of names at the end of Romans would indicate the

[428] I am translating from the Greek Septuagint.
[429] This is also of course the theme of the Book of Job.
[430] N.T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (London: SPCK, 2009), 4.
[431] For a version of this view in classic Pauline scholarship see for instance Frederick Brooke Westcott, *St Paul and Justification* (London,: Macmillan, 1913). This school, of course, goes back to Luther. Wright is wont to emphasise God's righteousness both in terms of the law court setting and in terms of His faithfulness to promises made.
[432]Dunn 341.

Epistle was at least partially addressed (16:5-12), would have glossed *diakosyne* in this exclusively Hebraic sense, to the exclusion of Greek notions of *diakiosyne* then current.

Anthony Thiselton, in a recent commentary on Romans, takes it for granted that Paul's use of *dikaiosyne* mirrors the Old Testament use of *tsedeq*, which has both a 'relational' and 'ethical' meaning, both 'of being in accordance with a norm; fundamentally with the character of God' and in relation to 'ethical conduct.' [433] However, one should also note J.A. Ziesler's conclusion in his scrupulous study of justice-related words in the Old Testament: 'it is not correct that they [such notions in the Old Testament] *denote* a relationship.[434] They denote rather activity within a relationship'.[435] Also, it is not altogether clear why Wright and others choose to read δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as something akin to the faithfulness of God to His covenant, when there are other passages in Paul in which God is more specifically called faithful (*pistos* πιστὸς) rather than simply just.[436]

Much more useful, I think, than searching for a synonym for 'justice', with which certain schools of theology and New Testament scholarship might be more comfortable, would perhaps be simply to understand Paul's use of 'justice' in the classical sense in which we find it in Plato and his successors in Paul's time. For, as we shall see, this also produces the more theologically coherent reading of Romans.

In relation to the Habakkuk quotation in particular, Cranfield's assessment of the context is that 'it focuses attention on the justified man, not God's activity in justifying him…. The righteous shall be preserved because of his steadfast loyalty'.[437] But part and parcel of this loyalty must of course be man's orientation towards justice (righteousness) and that just living which finds its

[433]Anthony C. Thiselton, *Discovering Romans*: *Content, interpretation, reception*, (London: SPCK 2016).
[434]J.A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness* (Cambridge: CUP, 1972). Ziesler does an exhaustive statistical analysis of the usage of justice-related words *tsedeq*, *tsdedaqah*, and *tsaddiq* and concludes only 8.23 percent are 'purely forensic', and 91.77 percent relate to human activity; 16.77 percent relate to situations which are 'legal as a whole', and 83.22 percent relate to 'non-legal activity' (Ziesler 34).
[435] Ibid., 36.
[436] 1 Cor 1:9, 1 Thes 5:24.
[437] C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 100.

perfection in the justice that dwells in God. Justice as applied to human beings, and the sense in which a person may be called just, and may develop the courage to become so, is the focus of 1:16. Justice as predicated of God must refer to the exemplar of this virtue, as present with God, but understood by us chiefly in human terms, even to the point of God Himself becoming human. As Watson points out:

> the most significant implication of Romans 1:17 is that the much-disputed righteousness [justice] of faith cannot be understood in abstraction from the human figure of the one who is righteous [just]. Paul's point is surely that the righteousness [justice] of Habakkuk's righteous [just] person is a righteousness [justice] approved by God.[438]

To be sure, *diakaisyne theou* is descriptive of God's action, insofar as it can be described through miraculous events in human history, and in particular the rising from the dead of Jesus Christ. The justice of God must be perfect justice, just as the goodness of God must be the highest goodness, the beauty of God the greatest beauty, and the piety and wisdom of God, insofar as they are embodied in God the Word-made-flesh, the most perfect piety and wisdom that can be conceived. Justice must be part of the very nature of God Himself; this is surely how we have seen the moral and intellectual virtues, which are essentially united in Plato; and there is therefore no contradiction at all between the justice of God and human justice.[439] For although the source of all justice is God, and when we seek to be just, we seek to embody God's essence, and so to dwell more closely with God, we as mortal and circumscribed human beings can only understand justice in terms of *human* justice, just institutions, just laws, just governments, and by extension the just man and the just soul, as in the *Republic.*

Paul affirms this reading himself right after he quotes Habakkuk: 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and injustice upon men who hold the truth to be in injustice' (1:18). It has been shown to be axiomatic in the system of theology which Paul inherited that God is the only perfect truth, a theology also embraced, in the mouth of Jesus Himself, in

[438]Watson, 48.

[439] Cranfield endorses the view that *dikaiosyne theou* is a genitive of origin, or subjective genitive, that is to say 'justice whose source is God' (99). This seems to me the only natural reading, and is also thoroughly Platonic. However, why this sense necessarily excludes that of the objective genitive meaning *dikaiosyne* 'which God bestows' as Thiselton seems to assume (77), is not at all clear. Surely the justice which God bestows is that very justice whose source is God.

John's gospel (14:6). We can, however, have a glimpse of that truth which resides in God. Indeed, not only do our notions of such concepts as they relate to human affairs have their source in God himself, but it is through such conceptions that we come to know God. In a strange but essential kind of paradox, we come to know human justice through an idea of the perfect justice of God, and yet we can only begin to talk about the perfect justice of God in terms of justice in human affairs:

> What is able to be conceived of God is manifest to them to whom God has made known these things. For the invisible things of God…[that are made]…are understood by the things that are made from the creation of the world. For in knowing God they neither glorified nor gave thanks to Him as befits God (οὐχ ὡς θεὸν), but they became vain in their meditations, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Rom. 1:21).

The consequence of this kind of outlook, is, for Paul, a corruption in human ethical activity. Human activity, understood in human terms, is far from belonging to separate ethical categories from God's activity, so that that we would have to translate the former as 'justice' and the latter as 'righteousness'; rather, God's justice and human justice must be understood in terms of each other. Lest this sort of 'holding the truth to be in injustice' seem merely a metaphysical assertion, Paul gives us a picture of man's denying, in practice, that justice is in fact a part of God's essence and God's truth (1:21-32). It is a picture of human injustice and immorality being played out, which is part and parcel of man's perverted orientation towards God, and his disregard for perfect justice, which exists as part of God's essence.[440]

Romans 2

Is this what Paul means by the justice of God? For indeed 'the Justice of God' is 'revealed from faith to faith'. Again, we have only to read on for an answer. After we have waded through Paul's sampling of unjust and ungodly behaviour, Paul sums things up: 'We know that the judgement of God is, according to truth, upon those who do such things' (2:2). Perhaps faith has a great deal to do with the nature of just and unjust actions, their ethical quality,

[440] 25:1 also contains the theological assumption of God as truth, indeed the very essence and source of all other truth: 'They [the unjust] changed the truth of God into a lie'.

so to speak. Yet how can what one *does* and what one *believes* be reconciled into a single notion of faith? Paul asks if his reader is not aware that 'the goodness of God leads to repentance' (2:4). Merely the recognition of the supreme Goodness of God, of the existence of a sovereign God under whose authority all existence is ordered, all life has its meaning, and consequently under whom 'the lot of the just man will not be abandoned', may serve as a foundation for repentance, that change of heart and mind which leads us to seek God.[441] For it is God who will 'render to each according to his deeds, to those who by persevering in doing good (καθ' ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ) seek glory, honour and incorruption [that is to say] eternal life' (2:6).

This emphasis on seeking is apparent in Paul's famous exhortation at the Areopagus in Athens, as described in Acts: 'God made the whole human race from one man to dwell upon the face of the earth, ordering the appointed seasons and the boundaries of their dwelling place, to seek God, if they should grope for him and find him, for he exists and is not far from each one of us' (Acts 17:26-27). God intended man to seek Him; this is his destiny. Seeking the invisible, we must necessarily grope in the dark, but with perseverance, and God's help (for He is near at hand), we can be sanctified, and brought to the justice of His kingdom. Not only is God not far from us, but, indeed, 'in him we live and move and have our being'. God calls us to seek and grope after Him, and so repent, for He has established the day when He will judge the world by His justice (17:31).

A similar notion of seeking is fundamental to Platonic ethics. We can see this in some of the final passages of Plato's *Republic*.[442] Socrates is discussing the habits and conditions in this life that lead someone to choose a more noble rather than a less noble position in the next. The details of Plato's Pythagorean mythology of reincarnation need not overly concern us here (they are indeed absent in the *Gorgias* myth [523–528] of the judgement of the dead). Of greater moment is the essence of what Socrates is trying to convey, which is that how we live in the next life, described as which life, among the many offered to us, we will by our own free choice choose for ourselves,[443] is circumscribed and

[441] See Plato, *Apology 41d*, *Republic*, 613.
[442] Plato, *Republic* 619a.
[443] Ibid., 617e. What follows, 'It is the fault of the chooser; God is blameless', is striking not only for its use of the singular 'God', but also for Plato's apparent endorsement of what would become the Christian doctrine of freedom of will in relation to God's perfect goodness and beneficence [see especially William Temple, *Lectures on Platonism and*

indeed conditioned by how we live in the present life. Similarly, the life activities in which we engage will necessarily condition the state of the soul of the one who performs such activities and follows such a vocation: 'But there was no determination of the quality of soul', Socrates asserts, 'because the choice of a different life was inevitably determined by a different character'.[444] We must take heed of the great struggle of life (ὁ ἀγών), 'great, though it does not appear so (οὐχ ὅσος δοκεῖ), as to whether a man become good or bad, whether he should be taken in by honour and riches or poetry and be so constituted as to neglect justice and every virtue'.[445] This, for Socrates, is 'the great hazard facing man', which is confronted where 'each of us will neglect all other studies for this one, and become a seeker (zetetes ζητητὴς) and pupil, if it is in fact ever possible to learn and to seek such things, of the one who can make us wise, and able to distinguish the good and the bad life…'.[446] The Christian faith says, with the benefit of God's revelation made known in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that this is no one other that God Himself, God's Word, the Son of God, Jesus Christ through whom and in whom God reveals Himself.

Why such a digression from Paul's text? The subtleties of Socrates' point here help us, I think, to understand what might intelligibly be meant by 'the faithful' in Paul's letter. They are, first of all, using the language of Chapter 2, those who seek honour and glory and incorruption, the eternal life attendant upon *perseverance* in doing good works (2:6). Paul's point is not, as is made abundantly clear in Romans 3:10-18, that we have simply to double down in following the law. Paul's hyperbole does not seem out of place, for, he seems to say, even if God's people did succeed rather well in keeping the precepts of the law, it would have been, as Augustine wrote, 'without the assistance of the spirit of grace', and therefore acted out 'through the fear of punishment, not

Christianity, and Paul Shorey, *Platonism Ancient and Modern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938)].

[444] Ibid., 618b. This is Paul Shorey's translation of what I find to be an extremely difficult passage to translate. the point, however, seems to be that the state of one's soul is defined by the life one lives: it is no good fussing over the precise constitution of the soul, for the soul will be moulded by the general project of how one lives.

[445] Ibid. The use ἄξιον in this phrase ἄξιον ἀμελῆσαι δικαιοσύνης τε καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς is interesting, due to the moral connotation of worth, the sense that one who allows himself to be taken in by the allure of money and power in a sense *deserves* to neglect justice and virtue, which is but another way to say, as Socrates's argument runs, that he deserves a less-than-flattering fate in the next life.

[446] Ibid., 618b-c.

love of righteousness [*justitia*, justice]'.[447] Paul's 'all are wretched' lamentation is marked not only by the many ways in which the Israelites break the precepts of the law (we have already seen this in Chapter 1), but rather, much more generally, by the fact that 'not one person is just' (3:9). This lack of justice is not defined *per se* as a failure to adhere to specific ethical precepts, but rather more generally as failure of understanding,[448] which is in turn defined as a failure to become ὁ ἐκζητῶν τὸν θεόν, one who seeks out God. Socrates' point at the close of the *Republic* provides a useful heuristic tool to interpret Paul: the overarching question is one of the orientation of our life, which will itself be determinative of what sort of life we will find ourselves willing and eager to engage in, and which will become, by consequence, the state of our soul that arises from our activities. In short, works follow from vocation; works follow from faith (James 2:18, Ephesians 2:10).

If we understood faith here to bear the fruits of holding fast to the godly vocation, a striving and seeking after God, in whom we trust, that trajectory which sets us on a path to be likened unto God, the notion becomes more intelligible. For such a vocation of striving to meet God, and to finally 'look upon the truth itself' as Socrates prefigures it in the *Republic*, is lived out in the purification of the soul in this life.[449] Just as in the Myth of Er human souls have to choose the nature of their next life, so man is constantly choosing the nature of this life (and the next) through attention to the justice or injustice of his soul (618e) and is thereby constantly formulating anew its affinity or lack affinity to God.[450] This is, if you will, the attention that must be paid to 'the inward man renewed day by day' (2 Cor 4:16): 'All other consideration he [the just man] will dismiss…. [He] must hold this adamantine opinion, in going down to Hades, so that he will not there be taken in by money and Tyranny, and such like deeds, and so do many incurably bad things, and yet himself suffer still more…' (619a).[451] This adamantine opinion is the firm basis on which a life is lived that shuns the world in favour of seeking after the divine. It is also the

[447] Augustine, *De Spiritu et Littera*, trans. Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 5, ed. Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887).
[448] Augustine quotes Job 28 in his commentary on this passage, namely 'Godliness (θεοσέβειά in the Septuagint, Paul's favourite source)' is wisdom and to depart from evil is understanding' (28:28)
[449] Plato, *Republic*, 475e.
[450] Ibid., 618a.
[451] Ibid., 619a. Paul Shorey's translation, more elegant than what I could come up with.

foundation of virtue. On the basis of it we learn how to 'choose the mean, in order to flee excess in either direction'.[452] We can then become more specifically attuned to how to practice justice, how to live out this 'adamantine opinion' to which we must hold fast.

For Paul, the firm persuasion of faith plays a corresponding role. It is the foundation upon which one lives a life of seeking after God: that Jesus Christ is Lord is the adamantine opinion, the indispensable conviction to which we must hold if we are not to be taken in by the temptations of the world, 'money, tyranny, and such like deeds.' Such an opinion is adamantine where it is held with a faith that leads us seek to God, to do good, and so to be fashioned after the likeness of His justice. In this way, the just man lives by faith.

Romans 3:1-24

This emphasis on a faith that renews and restores the state of the soul as it reaches towards God is affirmed negatively, rather than positively, in the lamentations of universal human sinfulness and inadequacy of Romans 3. What follows from 'not seeking out God' (3:11) is 'not doing good' (3:12), which itself can be manifested in deceitful and vicious talk (3:13-14), or violence (3:15-18). In sum, 'there is no fear of God before their eyes' (3:18). Wisdom and the 'seeking out' of God so as finally to be 'likened unto God' are thus - identified with fear of the Lord, as in the Luke 1:50, the *Magnificat*, where those who are loved of God will have the benefit of His help and His mercy.[453]

Again, Paul's solution is not a mere doubling down on the precepts of the law; for even among the Israelites such general signs of seeking after God, and translating this into general and full-hearted just living (3:10-3:18), are conspicuously absent. Man must love and want to do good, not do it begrudgingly, and for that he must love and seek after God. The foundation of

[452] Ibid.

[453] See Plato, *Republic* 613a. The use of προθυμεῖσθαι is, I think, instructive, because it indicates the extent to which Socrates enjoins a full-bodied commitment to seeking after God in becoming just. This is done by means not just of the higher principle of the soul, *nous,* but also by the *thymos*: not just by reason, but also by the emotions as well. The connection of such language to the Christian imperative to be united to God, which we have seen the lover/philosopher in Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* cannot, is expressive of the Platonic framework in which Paul first formulated Christian theological ethics.

his doing so is the assent of the will to the revelation of Jesus Christ, and the firm trust in His justice. In Platonic terms, the philosopher must wish (*ethele* ἐθέλῃ) and therefore choose to be zealous (*prothumeisthai* προθυμεῖσθαι) for becoming just, and for practising virtue, in order to be likened unto God.[454] The Christian view may be seen in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus, as the new Moses, declares 'blessed' those 'who hunger and thirst after justice, for they will be filled' (5:6). The foundation of a Christian thirsting after the justice of God is Christian faith: Those who hunger and thirst for justice in faith will be justified by faith. The mere philosopher's choice to seek the wisdom of God becomes the divinely inspired assent of the will of Christian faith. What is needed, in short, is a law that God will 'put in…[our] inward parts' (Jeremiah 31:33), which Augustine takes to mean that man should 'not fear the law which alarmed them externally, but…[should] love the very righteousness of the law which dwelt inwardly in their hearts'.[455]

When Paul says that 'the justice of God has been manifested, as testified by the law, and the prophets, by faith of Christ Jesus to all those who believe…' (3:20-21), he is making a powerful claim for the centrality of the Christ-event to Christian faith. Such a claim finds coherence within the specific Platonic ethical framework. Both a more general and a more zealous, full-throated, and positive embrace of God's justice are required if one is to be reasonably described as 'seeking after God' (3:11), that is to say, seeking his 'glory, honour, incorruption, and eternal life' (2:6). This is the 'justice of God apart from the law', which may be understood according to ethical model of the philosopher/lover.

That the justice of God has been manifested by faith in Christ to all those who believe is of supreme moment. But in order to understand this, the essential mystery of the cross, it was necessary to establish what the justice of God apart from the law, by faith, might actually mean on its own terms. This in no way negates the fact that this justice is 'by faith in Jesus Christ to all believers' (Rom

[454] Plato, *Republic* 613b.
[455] Augustine, *De Spiritu et Littera, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, trans. Peter Holmes, Robert Ernest Wallis, and Benjamin Warfield (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1886), 37.

2:10). But in order to understand the power of this 'faith in Jesus Christ', it is necessary to discover what God's justice without the law might mean. Paul's emphasis here is not simply on doing but on seeking, and not simply seeking to do good, but seeking the 'glory and honour and incorruption' which are present in God, and consequently seeking God Himself. A necessary preliminary to this seeking is, as we have seen, a belief in the supreme, authoritative goodness and justice that is God, a belief which, by its very natures, commands us to strive toward this eternal font of all that is noble and just. Thus, the goodness of God leads to repentance. But it is precisely in steadfastly seeking God, and seeking to dwell with God, that we are led to be just and to do good. Similarly, it is impossible to seek to dwell with God without seeking to do what is just and good. And the means by which one is led through this vocation is that 'Faith which works by love' (Gal 5:6); love of God who is the source of all that is Good; faith in God, with whom perfect justice dwells, begetting the sure hope that because God is sovereign over all things, His justice will triumph; faith that, in the grand scheme of things, the just man will never be abandoned, even as Christ crucified rose again.

Holding, then, this notion of the God of justice by faith, which is apart from the law, we now examine the meaning of a justice of God that comes specifically by the faith of Christ. The emphasis, of course, is on the universality of Christ. Whereas the law was designed as the patrimony of the sons of Israel, Christ, as the Son of Man, is by nature universal: all faithful people, of whatever background, can be justified by faith, through the redemption of Christ Jesus. This happens by means of God's grace, the free and active gift of God's justice, a harmonization with God, to all who believe and trust in Him.

There are, therefore, two important dynamics here to keep in mind, by no means mutually exclusive but in fact concurrent: 'faith' and 'grace'. Faith would seem to stand primarily on the side of the believer,[456] and is expressed by the one who thirsts after God and His justice; grace, on the other, stands on God's side; it is God's own saving action in bringing us to Himself. The faith that saves is, indeed, perfected by grace, not in the sense that faith alone can

[456] Faith can and should be spoken of as a gift of God, and no sure lines can, I think, be drawn to distinguish faith (understood according to the sense in which it is actuated by us in response to God's gift) from grace (understood as pure gift) which could be at all adequate to the true nature of both.

take us 90 percent of the way to heaven, with grace making up the remaining 10 percent of the journey, but that the entire nature of faith, and indeed the life of the just man, 'who will live by faith', is transformed as a result of God's action. Indeed, a faith that works by love, and is dependent on grace, is entirely different in kind from any faith which purposes, and will inevitably fail, to reach the heavenly city without God's assistance.

Excursus on Platonic and Christian *Pistis*

What we have described as a notion of the Philosopher's faith in Plato was not inevitably referred to by the Greek noun *pistis*, meaning faith in the sense of trust or (more likely) conviction, or even by the verb *peitho* meaning to persuade or be persuaded (in the passive). In Plato, we have also encountered faith in the sense of 'adamantine opinion' (*doxa*). But where we do encounter related words in Plato they are inevitably correlated with *logos*. For *pistis*, in Plato, is very much the object of *logos*. In fact, part 5 of the outline of a *logos* (as rhetoric) which Socrates presents in the *Phaedrus* is *pistosis*, 'confirmation', which succeeds '*tekmerion*' (a sure sign, proof).[457] What all these *pistis*-related words indicate, in essence, is assent, confirmation, and commitment to the aim of the *logos*. This can, and often must, involve a particular opinion (a *doxa*) about the absolute primacy and sovereignty of the Good (*Phaedo* 101d), not least with regard to what will await the just and the unjust after this life: the triumph of justice, on a very cosmic scale, and the subduing of injustice. But this opinion is firmly connected to the conviction that philosophic vocation to seek out God is the most fruitful of all human vocations. Faith in the sense of *pistis* is not only the persuasion, but the trust necessary to persevere in this vocation. This vocation is sanctified not least because, as we have seen, it is incited by God Himself.

This inherent connection between *pistis* and *logos* was maintained in Greek at roughly the time of Paul's writing. Plutarch, in his treatise *De Garrulitate*, speaks of a *pistis* 'which all speech (*logos*) strives for. For this is its proper aim [of *logos*], to engender *pistis* in the hearers' (503d). We also have Peter's pronouncement at the Council of Jerusalem against the requirement of

[457] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 266d.

circumcision: 'You know that from the beginning God made a choice among you, that the gentiles, by my mouth, should hear the word (*logon*) of the gospel and believe (*pistis*)' (Acts 15: 17).[458]

The other dynamic is that of grace. Again, it is tempting to view the theology of grace as a complete innovation of the Christian faith. One could describe, as we have done, an ethic of 'faith that works by love' in pre-Christian Platonic philosophy, and correlate this with the way in which Paul's own ethic gives priority to faith. But this picture still places the prerogative fully on our side, rather than on God's side. Without grace, the philosopher may love God, and strive to dwell in His eternal city[459], but the object of his love remains static and impersonal. Perhaps the God identified with the Good in Plato cannot be defined as an actor. Perhaps the revelations of Jesus Christ have given us the conception of God as not only actor but also Saviour. However, as we have seen, in the Platonic dialogues divine disclosure operates within much the same concurrent relationship with 'philosophic faith' as grace in Paul does to a more specifically Christian faith. It is not entirely clear whether, in the philosopher's path to the divine, the priority is given to the faith which defines the philosophic life or to the divine gift which incites or even compels him to the path of philosophy[460]. The conclusion which we have drawn is that they operate concurrently. It is in just this framework that faith and grace work in Paul.

Romans 3:1-24 (continued)

To return, then, to Paul's text 'the justice of God by faith in Christ Jesus to all who believe' is a justice imputed to the believer who, by his own power, cannot harmonize and order his soul to the extent that God Himself is harmonized. Lacking this divine justice, his judgement will also be fallible, as will his knowledge of right and wrong. An ethical system based on prescriptions (the law) is therefore found wanting. A minute codification of right or wrong

[458] I am indebted to Michael Wolter for pointing out these passages, and for the translation of Plutarch. See Michael Wolter, 'The Reality of Faith. Some Thoughts about the Significance of Faith in the Theology of Paul', in *Participation, Justification, and Conversion*, ed. A. Despotis (W'UNT II, 442), (Tübingen: 2017), 13-27.
[459] See Plato, *Republic* 592b.
[460] This is also, as we have seen, the path of justice, that is the fashioning of a soul in such a way as to harmonize with God's justice.

action, or indeed any neat legalistic criterion by which to judge right and wrong action, is insufficient.[461] The Justice of God, which, as perfect justice, can only dwell with and by God, is therefore imputed to 'the faithful' (τοὺς πιστεύοντας). The ethic of the faithful must necessarily consist in both a more general and more fervent striving to see God, as part of a 'faith which works by love'. This divine *pistis* is the response of affirmation of and trust in the divine *logos*. But this *logos* is not a philosophic argument arrived at by means of dialectic, as in Plato, though it is hardly possible that Paul would have rejected the validity of Socrates' claim that only the just are truly blessed. Instead, this *logos* is Christ himself. Not defined simply as presiding over the state, or the human soul, this *logos* presides over all of existence, and, being essentially the author of existence, communicates the nature of reality to human beings.[462] Paul does not simply talk about 'the justice of God given to those who believe in Christ Jesus', but about the justice of God revealed 'by the faith of Christ' to all the believers (τοὺς πιστεύοντας) in Christ Jesus. He seems to be almost intentionally oblique.

The reason for Paul's choice of phrase cannot be that by 'faith in Christ' he has in mind Jesus Christ's own faith, which led Him obediently to the cross. For 'faith of Christ' in 3:22 has to be the same faith as 'faith in His [Christ's] blood' in 3:25. It is therefore faith on the part of Christian believers, not of Christ Himself. Assuming that they are two separate faiths is, indeed, antithetical to a consistent reading of the passage, and indeed of the epistle as a whole, where the theme is clearly that of the faith of the Christian believers, as prefigured by Abraham (Rom 4:14).[463] Again, if Paul had wished to refer to Christ as 'faithful' he could easily have used the adjective *pistos*, as in Cor 1:9 ('God is faithful'). This to some extent mirrors the problem of interpreting God's justice as simply another mode of God's faithfulness.[464] Surely if Paul wished to refer to God's trustworthiness, or commitment to fulfilling the covenant with His people, he

[461] It is highly doubtful whether Paul would have been impressed either by Kant's categorical imperative or by the utilitarian's maxim of 'the greatest good to the greatest number'.
[462] I am neither reading John's Gospel into Paul nor making any historical claims in that direction. I am merely pointing out that, in the context of faith, and indeed, as the object of faith, Christ does very much take role of *logos* in these passages. That this concords with the opening of John's Gospel is not, of course, surprising, or unexpected if one believes both works to be Holy Scripture of the New Testament.
[463] Here my reasoning matches that of John Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, Chapter 15.
[464] This is the approach taken by N.T. Wright and James Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007).

would have done so explicitly. Instead of the justice of God, we might have read of 'the *faith* of God' (*pistis theou* πίσις θεοῦ) if that had been Paul's intention. Yet we read instead, 'the *justice* of God through the faith of Christ Jesus' (3:22). Justice is proclaimed through Christ, and the faithful are justified by God's grace.

Paul's choice to use a plural participle of *pisteuo* with only an implied rather than an explicit object (in this case Christ) is instructive. Not having ever used the term 'Christian' to demarcate the members of the Church, Paul occasionally uses a plural participle of *pisteuo* in its place. An alternative would be Paul's habitual demarcation of those who are 'in Christ', that is to say, those who are within the salvific power of His mystical body.[465] In 1 Corinthians, we read, 'when by the wisdom of God the world knew not God by wisdom, God, by the foolishness of preaching, saved the faithful (τοὺς πιστεύοντας)' (1:21); in Ephesians, 'the overwhelming greatness of His power upon all the faithful' (τοὺς πιστεύοντας) (1:19). From earlier in Romans we will recall a parallel case in which the participle of *pisteuo* πιστεύω is in the singular rather than the plural: 'the power of God for salvation to the faithful one (τῷ πιστεύοντι)' (1:17). The absence of any explicit object of faith, in these instances, shifts the focus from that in which the faithful believe to the nature of the faithful themselves as objects of God's grace. Instead of a subject which, holding to a discrete post-Cartesian view of realty, calmly reviews the nature of the evidence, and decides what he should or should not believe, the 'faithful', in being persuaded of their belief, are caught in the flame of God's own disclosure to them. The relationship between God and 'the faithful' is one in which patient seeking on the part of the believer and the loving disclosure and gift of salvation on God's part exist dynamically together, and grow from strength to strength in relation to each other.

That there is no specific object of *pisteuo* in Rom 3:22 focuses our attention on the ethical nature of the faithful as a group. Reading this passage in the context of Romans 2:6, where Paul claims that God will 'render to each according to his deeds, to those who by persevering in doing good (καθ' ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ) seek glory, honour and incorruption, eternal life' (2:6), we begin to discern the ethical nature of these 'faithful'. To be sure, they must 'seek out God', a vocation Paul commends in lamenting the absence

[465] E.g. Rom. 8:1 Cor. 3:1 Cor. 12

thereof (3:11). But this ethical picture of 'the faithful' must also be viewed within the concurrence of faith and grace. This is where the schema of Plato's Philosopher becomes singularly appropriate. For the faithful philosophers in the *Symposium* who ascend up the 'ladder of love' are actively drawn towards the divine by disclosure of beauty in its most divine and generalized form. In the *Phaedrus*, they are actuated by what is distinctly described as the gift of divine *mania*. This is, in a sense, the true *logos spermatikos* at work, whose business is *psychagogia*, the leading of souls to the divine. [466] The pupil of this divine rhetoric is the philosopher, who, like Paul's believer, is made just by his faith, not yet a Christian faith, but a philosophic faith that is the foundation for his striving to see God, and which prefigures the Christian faith of Paul.

To reiterate, Paul's picture is not simply God-made-flesh on the one side and those who believes in Him on the other. His language is both more abstract and more dynamic. In particular, it causes the reader to wish to capture the ethos of who these 'faithful' are. To be sure, the mechanism of salvation is still played out by and in the revelation of Christ. But the nature of the faithful response to the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ cannot be understood purely in terms of the sacrificial language of Romans 3, but must be read also in light of the ethics of 'patient seeking' outlined in Romans 2. Just because Paul thought that no one had tread this path of philosophic perseverance with full success does not abrogate that God will 'render each according to his works, to those who by perseverance in good deeds seek honour and glory and incorruption and eternal life' (2:6). As John Barclay points out, 'the foundation and frame of the patient good work that leads to eternal life is an act of divine power' [467], the very divine power which has been manifested in Jesus Christ, and without which no human soul can harmonize with God's perfect justice. This does not at all mean that we are justified by works; but rather that our striving in good deeds, as we seek after God, is entailed by our faith. To say that the foundation of this perseverance in good work in seeking God and His kingdom (2:6) is rewarded by God is simply another way of describing our justification by faith.

We are therefore 'justified freely (δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν) by His grace through the redemption (διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως) in Jesus Christ', but this supremely important fact does not fundamentally alter the ethical framework of

[466] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 261a; 271c.
[467] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 473.

the sort of faithful seeking after God that Paul has already described. We have looked to Plato's ethical schema, in which primacy is given to faith in the sense of philosophical/erotic seeking after the divine, and not to mere adherence to a criterion of right and wrong, or for that matter, any notion of merit gained purely by good works. Crucially, this schema does not at all contradict the utter dependence of the seeker on divine gift, and divine revelation, but actively endorses it. It is therefore a coherent frame in which to describe Paul's 'faithful' who are 'justified by faith apart from the law', but will also be judged for the extent to which they have patiently strived in good works to seek out God.

The central, metaphysical significance of Christ's revelation is then presented: 'we are justified freely by the redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις) in Jesus Christ, whom God set forward as a sacrifice through faith in his blood…' (3:24-25). Paul has clearly imbued the passage with the language of sacrifice: *apolutrosis* (ἀπολύτρωσις) means not just liberation (i.e. from captivity) but often more specifically the ransoming of a captive, or manumission of a slave.[468] The sense, in any case, seems to be that the liberation acted out in Jesus Christ has come at a price. The much-contested *ilasterion* (ἱλαστήριον) is typically used in the Septuagint to mean the 'mercy seat', literally the lid of the ark of the Covenant, on which the blood of the sacrificial victim was poured on the day of atonement, where God would 'appear in thick darkness, once more reconciled with his people'.[469] The phrase 'through faith in His blood' reinforces this interpretation of ἱλαστήριον, and clarifies the picture of a kind propitiatory sacrifice for sin.[470]

Yet this sacrifice is unique. It is not simply a matter of somebody's sacrificing somebody else (Jacob intending to sacrifice Isaac for instance in Gen 22), or of the priest sacrificing an animal, but rather of Christ sacrificing Himself. For if it is true both that God has 'put Christ forward as a propitiation' and that since Christ is, in His heavenly nature, true *logos* and true God Himself (John 1). He has also to sacrifice Himself. Hence 'finding himself to be a man in form, he humbled himself, even unto death' (Phil 2:8). The sacrifice of Christ is, in a very real sense, self-sacrifice; the self-sacrifice of holy men and women; the sacrifice of martyrs, whether red or white. It is in this sense that Paul exhorts

[468] In particular Cranfield's Commentary on Romans, which I found particularly useful.
[469] See Barrett's Commentary on Romans 3:25.
[470] 'Propitiatory sacrifice' is also Cranfield's preferred reading; he notes it was also that of Chrysostom.

the faithful, 'I beseech you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to lay out your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be modelled after this age, but rather be transformed by the renewing of your mind, in order to commend to yourselves the good, perfect and acceptable will of God' (Rom 12:1-2). Jesus' sacrifice must also, therefore, form His ethical character, which is, indeed, the good, the perfect will of God. It is this holy end to which we have access in faith, as members of the mystical body of Christ. Christ's sacrifice is unique in being perfectly 'holy and pleasing to God', because of who Christ is. But the rest of us, 'the faithful', can have access to the fruits of this sacrifice through faith, so that, through God's grace, we are united in Christ's mystical body. In light of the Christian revelation, this can begin with faith in Christ's blood, but can only be lived out, through that 'reasonable service' which is the Love of God, the striving for His kingdom.

But there is also the metaphysical side to Christ's sacrifice. For John, Jesus Christ is our advocate (*parakleton*) with God the Father precisely because He is 'the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the whole world' (1 Jn 2.1). God's justifying and sanctifying act is directly most fittingly explained by Christ's propitious sacrifice (*ilasmos*) not only for our sins, but for the whole world. Barnabas says that Christ came in the flesh so that we might look upon what is by its heavenly nature invisible. But Barnabas does not just think that God became man simply to be a salutary example of what God is like, so that human beings can become like him: 'For did not the Son of God come into flesh for this reason, so that the completion (*teleion*) of sins might be brought to a head (*anakefalaiose* ἀνακεφαλαιώση) to those who persecuted his prophets unto death?'[471] Christ's propitiatory sacrifice only has meaning however, if, with Paul, we understand that we too 'have been crucified with Christ, so that it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me' (Gal 2.20). If we are members of the body of Christ, which triumphs over every power and authority, then we must die and then be born again in Him.

That God should empty Himself to the extent that His own *logos*, not at as a phantasm of Himself but as a true expression of His nature, as a man of flesh and blood, who dies, descends to the dead, is the supreme testament of God's embrace and redemption of all creation. God made flesh, in a fallen world, is a

[471] *Epistle of Barnabas*, 5.12.

lowly man who humbled Himself, was crucified, and descended into the realm of the dead. David Bentley Hart, who refers to Christ, rightly and evocatively, as God's 'supreme rhetoric', writes, 'it is the very flesh of Jesus that reveals the nature of his divinity—the essential condescension of his divine love'.[472] It is not that God has condescended, in the sense of stepping aside, for a moment, from the nobility of his Godhead, to take on human form, but rather that this human form is essentially, in its very flesh, the supreme physical representation in our fallen world of who God is, how He speaks (*logos*) and how He persuades (*pistis*). It is, therefore, the supreme representation of the divine rhetoric, the divine *logos*. Hart writes: 'All wealth and all poverty are already accomplished in his eternal life of pouring out and receiving, his infinitely accomplished bliss and love…. He is the God he is in his very divestment and in his Glory, both at once, as the same thing, inseparably....'[473] Christ's sacrificial death is the acting out, in space and time, and flesh and blood, of God's salvific action. Indeed, Christ's sacrifice is not just a representation of the supreme rhetoric (*logos*) whose aim is the *pistis* of living, by God's grace, to seek out God, but it is also efficacious: Christ's sacrifice has acted out the infinite, all-embracing reality of the Triune God in space and time, and so, in a very real sense, has made it come to pass, as far as humanity is concerned, that it is God's nature not only to judge but to save humanity, and so to bring humanity to Himself. This is God's supreme separation within Himself, between the infinite glory of the eternal *logos* and the humiliating death of the *logos*-made-flesh. In the realms of the mortal, this separation is acted out as God's sacrifice of Himself.

In the work of the mysterious but supremely influential Father known as Dionysius the Areopagite, this is expressed purely in terms of the Platonic language of the Good. The Good and the Beautiful, understood indeed not as static forms but as two of God's essential names, describe a God who is not only an actor, but the embodiment of love. This God is a God who does not simply love but loves supremely, and indeed merits the name of love itself (1 Jn 4:8). For Dionysius, love is a capacity which 'is brought out from and through the Beautiful and the Good.'[474] The very cause of the Universe is 'the very good

[472] David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), Ibid., 320.
[473] Ibid., 322.
[474] Dionysius 'the Areopagite', *On the Divine Names*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 4.12 709D.

superabundance of his [God's] divine yearning (*eros*)[475] all that is carried out in the loving care He [God/the Good] has for everything'.[476] God was, and is, as Creator and Sustainer of all things, the supreme expression, nay, the very definition of love. God indeed, the Good itself and the Beautiful itself, is both supremely Love and the supremely beloved. God is supremely Love in the eternal provision He makes in our creation and salvation in the 'providence he has lavished on his subordinates [i.e. ourselves and creation]'.[477] God is,

> as it were beguiled by Goodness, by love and by yearning [*eros*], and is enticed away from his transcendent dwelling place and comes to abide within all things, and he does so by virtue of his supernatural and ecstatic capacity to remain, nevertheless, within himself…. He [God] is yearning, on the move, simple, self-moved, self-acting, pre-existent in the Good and returning once again to the Good.[478]

In relation to the problem of evil, Dionysius takes the familiar interpretation that evil is not only the privation of the Good but the privation of all being itself, and only ever a 'productive force through the activity of the Good'[479]. The Good, then, extends to all things that *are*, and as such 'extends as far as the lowliest of things.'[480] So it is when God-made-man sacrifices Himself and extends as far as the lowliest of things, even to the realm of the dead.

Romans 3:25-27

In Romans 3:25-26 we recur to the theme introduced in chapter 1, the justice of God in relation to the faith of Christ and to the just living of the faithful (1:17). Here again, any justice predicated of God must be perfect justice, the justice which dwells with God and reigns supreme in His eternal city.[481] This

[475] Luibheid chooses to translate *eros* as yearning to differentiate it from *agape* (love), though it is far more common to find the former translated as 'love', and the latter as 'charity'. In truth, as I have already argued, the words have essentially the same meaning: that *agape* was favoured by the generation of writers which composed the Septuagint and the New Testament does not in itself indicate that *agape* meant Christian charity as opposed to purely erotic love. Indeed, *agape* is used in both senses in the Septuagint. Whether one reads *eros* or *agape* for love has a great deal more to do with the era of Greek literature from which the texts arises than with the sense in which 'love' is being used.
[476] Ibid.
[477] Ibid., 4.13 (712a).
[478] Ibid., 4.12 (712d).
[479] Ibid., 4.20 (717d).
[480] Ibid; cf. *Phaedrus*, 247d.
[481] See Plato, *Republic*, 592b

supremely equitable and harmonized right functioning has been given concrete expression in the analogy of the city-state, as befits the legal signification of the word 'justice'.

In Plato's *Phaedrus*, the divine form of justice is gazed upon by the gods' cohorts of psychic charioteers when they have reached the mysterious abode outside the vault of heaven, the domain of the 'colourless, formless, intangible, truly existing essence'.[482] It is this political analogy of this perfect, practical harmony which Plato relies upon to speak of the city within us (ἐν αὐτῷ πολιτείαν) upon which the wise man (literally he who possesses *nous*) will fix his gaze.[483] Yet Plato hints that the analogy of this psychic city within, by which one can speak illustratively of the justice and injustice of the soul, may not be merely symbolic after all. The philosopher will eschew honours (or, one assumes, office) that serve to weaken the 'habit of the Good' (509a).[484] Although he may find it impossible to go into politics, he may, after a manner of speaking, be able to participate in politics in the ideal city described in the *Republic*.[485] Glaucon concludes, 'perhaps there is a pattern of it [this ideal city] laid up in heaven for those who wish to contemplate it, and so beholding, to constitute himself its citizen'[486].

Thus, in Plato, priority is given to the act of willing. With rhetoric, somewhat in the mode of 'ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find', Plato attaches no additional salvific conditions to this willing: he who hopes to see the eternal city and become its citizen has only to *wish* to see it, and in so wishing to constitute himself its citizen. In the *Phaedrus* too, it bears recalling, even those philosopher/lovers who are not so unflinchingly upright in their conduct are promised a place in heaven merely by virtue of having begun the journey: 'For it is the law that those who have once begun their upwards progress shall never again pass into darkness....'[487] Thomas Aquinas defined faith as a sure assent of the intellect to something unseen, made with complete certainty.[488] For Thomas then, with Christian faith, as with Plato's philosophic

[482] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247c.
[483] Plato, *Republic*, 521e. See Luke 17:21: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within'.
[484] Ibid., 509a.
[485] Ibid., 592b.
[486] Ibid. trans. Paul Shorey.
[487] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 256d.
[488] *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q1, A4.

faith, primacy is given to the will; it is the will that must assent without doubting.

Yet the context of the passage from the *Phaedrus* shows that a great deal more is implied. The conversation has turned around the Philosopher's hope that his tripartite soul be harmonized in such a way that the emotions and the passions (symbolized by the beast and lion respectively) are subject to the guidance of the *logos* (man). These are understood by analogy with the various classes of the *politeia*, on which the philosopher yearns to keep his eyes fixed. The philosopher is, merely by virtue of his erotic seeking of the divine, moved to beget fine speeches (*logos*) and virtue.[489] Where primacy is given to the unflinching search for the divine, and the 'adamantine opinion' necessary to forge a path to it, the result is a harmonized soul, which, in terms of Plato's political analogy, must be said to be just. In this way, divine justice, the 'justice of God', may be seen to be of a piece with the justice of an individual soul. That faith which, in its fullness, is sufficient to acquire this justice, as a free divine gift, by which God draws the philosophic seeker to Himself, is the instrument of justification, because it alone is capable of leading us to the path of philosophy by which God's justice is imputed to the soul. In this way, Plato's philosopher serves as the prototype of Paul's 'the faithful', that ethical category which Paul is so fond of using; and it alone can impute God's justice to the individual soul, hence 'justification'. That the faithful are never perfectly justified in this world is, as we have seen, essential to the Plato's ethics: he who seeks wisdom has, by definition, yet to attain wisdom in all its fullness. So too the mysterious election, by grace, of 'the faithful' could not possibly be a matter of our individually just soul being worthy to dwell with God's perfect justice, 'by its own power'. For the path of faith and love, which begets virtue, has never been sustained, nor ever was begun, by our own power, but by God's own disclosure of Himself to draws us to Himself.

New Testament scholarship has often rejected the view that justification in Romans could in any sense mean 'to make just, or righteous' (rather than merely 'hold to be just'). C.K. Barrett, for instance, one of the lions of New Testament studies in the 20th century, holds that *dikaio* means not to make just but merely to hold just. However, Barrett details a number of arguments in support of the 'make just' sense of *dikaio*: First, that the class of verbs to which

[489] The virtues, later called cardinal, outlined in *Republic* 427e, 435b.

the verb belongs has normally a 'factitive or causative meaning'; that the Hebrew verb *hizdiq,* which stands behind the Greek *dikaio*, regularly has the meaning 'to make just'; and third, that if we take *dikaio* to mean merely 'to account just' and not 'to make just', we risk falling into 'a legal fiction, which men feel instinctively not legitimate for God if he is a moral being'.[490] Although Barrett accepts that *dikaio* means to make, not to account just, he yet contends that 'just' (or righteous, as he translates *dikaios*) 'does not mean 'virtuous', but 'right, clear, acquitted in God's court'.[491] Nevertheless, Barrett concludes that 'justification means no legal fiction but an act of forgiveness in God's court. Far from being a legal fiction, this is a creative act changing the relation between God and man'.[492] The undoubted focus of much of Paul's text, as we have demonstrated, is the ethical character of those who 'live by faith, not a mere relationship between God and man'. How this ethically vacuous notion of mere relationship is to be squared with the language of Romans 2 requiring patient perseverance in good works, or indeed, the many virtues that are the fruit of charity (1 Cor 13:13), Barrett does not explain.

In Romans 3:27-31, Paul confronts the apparent paradox of the total sufficiency of faith for justification, on the one hand, and the idea that the lived-out ethics of just actions (as enshrined to some extent in the law) will be rewarded in heaven, on the other. This 'either/or' dichotomy of faith set against works is, however, false. For a truly moral life, in the sense that our just dealings (and the just state of our soul) must have, as their foundation and inspiration, God's own justice. That divine gift which impels us to embrace the path of faith is therefore both the initiation and perfection of the true philosophy as the path to God's justice. The absolute sufficiency and necessity of faith is summarized as 'the law of faith, whereby man is justified by faith apart from law'. But this sufficiency can only be understood in terms of the justifying ethic of the faithful, prefigured in Romans 2. The system of Platonic ethics is an appropriate framework within which to understand Paul's doctrine of justification, because it is able to attach the epithet 'God-loved' to the philosopher, someone who, as a seeker of the divine is, by definition, still lacking in Godliness.

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[490] See Barrett's commentary on Romans 3 [*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: A. & C. Black, 1957)].
[491] Ibid.
[492] Ibid.

In addition, though the virtues of the philosopher are enumerated clearly in Plato, the priority of his ethical vision for philosophy rests clearly with a faithful, even erotic seeking out of the divine that is inspired by the divine itself. Plato does not accord any justifying merit intrinsic to just actions themselves, or even to the virtues. What has salvific power above all else, for Plato, is the unerring faith of those who embark on a philosophic quest for the divine, a faith which itself depends upon the belief that that those who embark and persevere on such a path may dwell in the divine forever. Salvation, in Paul, may be understood not just as sanctification, but also as justification, because the transformation wrought by the grace of God's spirit produces the fruit of just and virtuous living.[493] The soul too, even on its own terms, may be seen to be harmonized, in the end of time, so as to be worthy to dwell in the eternal city. Hence the language of justice and justification is singularly appropriate.

Because we will always lack the supreme wisdom of God, in all its fullness, in this life (indeed the very notion of erotic seeking presupposes a sense of insufficiency), all sense of complacency, or worse, of boasting of one's own's status with God, is axiomatically excluded. For the ethic of 'the faithful' is necessarily an ethic of sacrifice, of one whose 'praise is not of God but of men' (2:30). Indeed, when God Himself came to dwell in our world, His life was one of sacrifice, the antithesis of boasting. The boasting that Paul has in mind, however, is that done by some Jews, of their own privileged position in the sight of God, as His chosen people, to whom, uniquely, the law of Moses has been given.[494] But if God is one (i.e. the same Lord is the Lord of all people), then God must be able to save all of mankind. The law of works (meaning the

[493] Paul's 'but you are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified' (1 Cor 6:11) is highly significant, for it establishes that justification is but one way of describing that transforming holiness of the Christian life that makes us worthy to dwell with God. Justification is not in fact Paul's most common way of describing this transformation. Yet justification seems particularly appropriate in the context of Romans because of Paul' engagement with the Jewish law, and more generally, with the ethical norms of 'just living'. The context in 1 Corinthians is also robustly ethical: 'Know that the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God. Do not go astray, [for] neither the fornicators, nor the idolaters, nor the adulterers, nor the [morally] lax, nor the sodomites, not thieves, nor the rapacious, nor the drunks, nor the abusers, nor the extortionists, shall inherit the kingdom of God, and you know it! But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of Christ our Lord, and by the spirit of our God' (6:9-11). From these sins we are washed when we are forgiven, sanctified when, by the power of the spirit, we are directed towards a holy living, and justified when this path yields the fruit of just action, and a just state of the soul. The means by which this threefold transformation is achieved is faith.

[494] See the commentaries of Barrett, Cranfield, and Byrne.

Mosaic law) is therefore insufficient; the law (or rule[495]) of faith, accessible to those who do not even know the law, must be preferred. Works in this case are not the sort done with 'perseverance', leading to justification in heaven (2:6), but are those that spring from a feeling of pride and self-sufficiency, a fatal non-receptiveness to the grace of God.

Romans 4

In Romans 4:1-3, we are given a substantial example of this ethic of faithful living. Who better to look to than Abraham, the father of the Jewish faith? Here also we find one of the major motives of Paul's letter, the contrasting of what is 'according to the flesh' (*kata sarka* κατὰ σάρκα) with what is 'according to the spirit' (*kata pneuma* κατὰ πνεῦμα; emphasized particularly in Romans 8). Jesus Christ came as the Son of David according to the flesh, as son of God, 'according to the spirit of holiness'. It does not appear that Paul wishes to remove the title 'Son of David' from Jesus entirely, but it must be admitted that the conception of Jesus as 'son of David' does not tell us who Jesus *truly* is. It would not be wrong to say that I myself am a person of middle height, with brown hair; but that does not describe who I truly am, in that it says nothing of my *telos*, nothing of what I am for, or what I am destined to be. (To be sure, if you dyed my hair, and cut off my limbs, it would not change who I fundamentally am.) In 2 Corinthians, Paul makes this distinction into a general imperative to 'know no one according to the flesh. For if we had understood Christ according to the flesh, we would not [now] understand him' (5:16-16). The imperative, then, is to see the world, not according to mere physical phenomena, but in terms of what the world means. But meaning for Paul was a matter of discerning causes (*aitia* in Plato), which must have reference to the

[495] *Nomos*, the Greek word for law, also has the sense of rule or principle, and is the origin of the English word 'norm'. It may rightly be objected that if Paul wished to use *nomos* differently here, why did he not use another word altogether? With regard to this objection, it may be pointed out that Paul's use of *nomos* in both contexts (the law of works and the law of faith) seems deliberate. Whereas the precise nature of a law entirely written down on the one hand and a law of faith on the other are, of course, meant to be contrasted, the latter takes the place of, and indeed supersedes, the former. Hence, their parallel status must be emphasized. Further, justification by faith is not the polar opposite of justification by the law. For the Jewish prescriptions for ethical living that are the most general, and hence the most difficult to obey, are not overthrown, but rather the mechanism for attaining them, never fully in this life, but in a way that prepares us for the next, is now shown to be 'faith which works by love'.

spiritual realm, the realm of the unseen, and to the *telos* of reality. Like Plato, Paul rejects materialistic causes in favour of God (the highest Good), that all-embracing cause which disposes all things for the best. However, in Paul's case, this providential will for the best is played out in terms of God's relation to the Jewish people within salvation history. All people and all things must primarily be understood spiritually (*kata pneuma* κατὰ πνεῦμα), that is to say in terms of God's created order, and their individual part within that order.

At first glance it seems strange that Paul should endorse 'not working' over working, as if to encourage a sort of quietism or an evangelical self-assurance of one's own salvation which depends purely on the moment of faith, and involves nothing other than outward endorsement of Christ as saviour without any expectation that the fruit of such an endorsement will produce good works (Rom 4:4-6). However, as so often in Paul, this superficial reading, when seen in context, becomes untenable: a previous mention of works in Romans, already discussed at some length, occurs where Paul quotes Psalm 62:12, that God will 'give to each according to their works, to those who with perseverance seek honour and glory and incorruption, eternal life' (2:6-7). As we have seen, this assurance is not superseded by the Christ event, but is itself a picture of living out faith through grace, and, as a description of the instrument of justification, remains valid. Thus, for Paul to reject all just 'working' (*ergaszomai*) as antithetical to that faith which justifies would prove the Epistle inharmonious, and unbecoming of Holy Scripture. To reiterate, we might reasonably conclude this if we were at a loss to find a framework within which to read the whole letter coherently. But such a move would be exegetically lazy: Paul cannot here mean 'works' and 'working' in the same sense in which he uses the words in 2:6-7. A more appropriate parallel passage may be found in the discussion of boasting which closes the second chapter of Romans, which we have already discussed (3:27-31). But this passage comes directly after Christ is announced as a 'ransoming and [bloody] sacrifice' (3:24-25). As such, Christ's sacrifice on the cross commends the virtue of obedience. Even in Plato, humility and resignation before the divine is the virtue *sine qua non* of philosophic seeking. For to receive that grace which is the food of 'faith which works by love', one must above all humble oneself to the level of pure receptiveness to the divine power with the disposition and willingness to serve Him, to seek and to love Him above all else.

This receptive humility implies a kind of epistemological scepticism. For to admit that the highest possible wisdom, to live after the justice of God, is received as a gift rather than procured by one's own power presumes also that the highest form of philosophical knowledge is not with in our own power to acquire. For Plato's philosopher, any knowledge worth having is subsumed within the larger, ethical locus of the Good, and is finally procured only by those who dwell in the Eternal City forever.[496] Yet Plato insists, on the basis of Meno's Paradox,[497] that the type of virtue equivalent to philosophical wisdom cannot be taught, or indeed learned, in the normal way, but only called to mind from a pre-bodily existence in heaven, in which we could see the nature of things as they truly are. Towards the end of the *Meno*, Plato reformulates this doctrine with much stronger Christian overtones: because people who do good cannot have learnt to do so in the way we learn other things, they must have been inspired to do so (*enthousiontes*) by some power more than human:

> For indeed, the men empowered to rule cities wisely do not differ in wisdom from the oracles and the soothsayers: for these men too are divinely inspired [ἐνθουσιῶντες] to speak much truth, yet they do not really know that of which they speak…. No less would we declare these men to be divine, filled with godly power, truly inspired and possessed by God, when they speak and do many great things.[498]

Epistemological scepticism, when understood as the wholesome distrust of our own ability to know and do right, becomes the basis on which we confess our indebtedness to divine action for justification. For Plato, indeed, human virtue is a divine gift. As Socrates sums up his answer to the principle question of the dialogue, 'Virtue, by nature, cannot be taught, but by divine ordnance [*theia moira* θείᾳ μοίρᾳ] it comes without reason to those to whom it comes'.[499]

For Paul, the one who expects full justification with God based merely on an education in right and wrong, through normal, merely human means of learning, is glossed as the one who *works*, and to whom 'the recompense is reckoned not

[496] Plato, *Republic*, 592b.
[497] Meno's paradox appears to show that all learning is impossible: if the act of learning is to acquire knowledge one does not already have, how is one to recognize this knowledge, in order to learn it, if one does not already have it? But if one does already have it, then there is nothing to learn! Socrates' solution, in the first instance, is that to learn is actually to remember from a previous existence. Plato does not have in mind a previous life so much as state before birth in which the soul was able to see the forms of things as they truly are in heaven.
[498] Plato, *Meno*, 99c-d.
[499] Ibid., 100a.

according to grace, but according to debt' (4:4). The one who expects that the highest form of knowledge and virtue, that disposition of the mind which justifies and ultimately saves, is founded in God's own action and providence (θείᾳ μοίρᾳ) is the one Paul describes as 'not working'. He is the man of faith. His faith is reckoned not according to debt, but for justice (4:5).[500]

It is of this man that Psalmist speaks when he says that to the blessed man, God 'imputes justice apart from the law' (4:6). This is Paul's summary of the Psalmist's 'blessed are they whose unlawfulness is forgiven, whose sins are covered;/ blessed the man to whom the Lord reckons no sin' (4:7-8). This amounts to a proof text, if you will, that Paul's ethical ideal is that to which the holy scriptures are tending, one day to be embraced by the life and death of Jesus Christ. In particular, Paul seems to have found, in the psalm, something more than a mere forensic justification of the believer. The holy man is just because justice is of God (*dikaiosyne theou* δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ). The God who justifies the unholy (4:4) must, therefore, be the same God who 'covers our transgressions': justification implies preliminary forgiveness and cleansing. Psalm 32 is therefore *à propos*: we are blessed where God imputes to us no sin, but rather is forgiving and 'covers up' our sins. God justifies him, and imbues him with the holiness of His own justice, the fruit of which are the virtues natural to the life of a 'faith which works by love'. If Paul implied nothing ethical in 'being reckoned as just', the quotation from Psalm 32 would be entirely out of place. Surely, we ought to assume that it is not.

Those whose unlawfulness is forgiven are not declared just merely in anticipation of their final acceptance into the eternal kingdom, but are also, in a sense, blessed here and now. Their sins cleansed, and their souls sanctified, they are more just now than they were before. They have, as it were, a new lease on life; they are happy and blessed (*makarioi*). He is blessed to whom God reckons no sin, not simply because God will grant him salvation at the last day but because he has, here and now, repented of all his sins, and wills to live a life of

[500] The difference between 'reckoned according to' (λογίζεται κατὰ) in the case of debt and 'reckoned for' (λογίζεται…εἰς) in the case of justice is subtle but instructive. In the former case, the 'wages of working' are reckoned *according* to debt because theses wages are not equivalent to debt, nor result in debt, but, without any superadded power outside themselves, can never amount to anything more than a moral debt in God's eyes. The faith of the one who does not work is reckoned *for* justice because faith, or rather faithful charity (faith which works by love), is itself the instrument of justification. This faith is not reckoned according to justice itself, for this would fall short in reference to God's justice. Instead, faith ultimately leads the faithful, through love, to a justice only present with God.

seeking out God. To him can rightly be ascribed the justice of the Philosopher seeking the Good. In the Sermon on the Mount, the poor in spirit, the meek, the mourners, the peacemakers, the persecuted for the sake of justice, and those who thirst for justice are accounted *makarioi* (μακάριοι) primarily in light of a future justification: the poor in spirit *will* receive the kingdom, those who mourn *will* be comforted. Matthew's recollection of Jesus' speech does not of course exclude that those who mourn have any comfort here and now; that the poor in spirit already, in a sense, have a share in the Kingdom of Heaven in this life. For Jesus often talks of the Kingdom of Heaven, not as an eschatological reality, but as something already present among us.[501] Unlike in the Sermon on the Mount, it is this latter sense of justification in the here and now, a real rather than merely forensic justification, anticipating perfect justification at the last day, which occupies Paul in this instance with the aorist passives ἀφέθησαν and ἐπεκαλύφθησαν, indicating completed action (Rom 4:7).

A more definitive proof in Holy Scripture of the primacy of justification by faith may be found in the figure of Abraham to whom 'faith was reckoned for Justice' (Gen 17:11; Rom 4:9).[502] The phrase itself, 'Abraham believed, and it was reckoned to him as justice', would, in isolation, support the view that justification by faith is merely forensic (in the sense of being acquitted in the court of heaven) or at least merely covenantal, in the sense that justification is the manifestation of God making good on his promise to save his people without any necessary ethical sense implied.[503] If faith being 'reckoned as justice' is to be read as a gloss for justifying faith, the purely forensic or covenantal framework would seem to make sense. But Abraham's justice was not simply waiting for him in the court of heaven, where he shall merely be *declared* just because he was faithful to God. No, Abraham's supreme faithfulness and obedience to God constituted, in themselves, the very essence of just living, so far as it can be attained by fallen man in this world. To do justly is to hear and to obey God's call, and, with 'all our heart, all our strength,

[501] Mt 4:26-29; 10:19.
[502] 'Justification by faith' insofar as we endorse the doctrine as Pauline should be assumed to indicate a justification through faith, and by grace, which is actuated in the supreme virtue of Charity.
[503] This is more or less N.T. Wright's position: Wright's claim in *Justification* that righteous acts do not mean virtuous acts, but rather 'acts in fulfilment of God's promise'(4), seems to assume that Paul, writing to an audience of both Jews and Gentiles, is somehow speaking in code. Surely any common notion of righteousness (or justice, as I translate it) is that it *does* in some sense imply righteous and hence virtuous actions.

and all our mind' to love God, and to serve Him in all that we do. Abraham was declared just because, in obeying God's call, he was imbued with what may be considered the very form of just living, faith in God borne out in his life to the extent that all that was most dear to him paled in comparison with his adherence to the divine call.

Paul honours circumcision, representative of the purely ritualistic law, as the 'seal of the justice of faith' (4:11). But though this justice of faith is symbolized and commemorated in circumcision, the symbol forms no part of the essence of what it symbolizes. Circumcision is not 'the justice of faith, but merely a sign of that justice of faith first pre-eminently found in Abraham'.[504] Circumcision, therefore, is not intrinsic to the faith. For Abraham's first act of faith and obedience, to leave his country and his people in order to go the land that God had prepared for him (Gen 12:1-2), occurred before the sign of circumcision was instituted.[505] Thus, Abraham became 'the father of all the faithful by uncircumcision for their being reckoned for justice (εἰς τὸ λογισθῆναι [καὶ] αὐτοῖς [τὴν] δικαιοσύνην)' (4:11).

In Romans 4:12-28, Paul clarifies that circumcision is not itself a barrier to justice or justification. For Abraham was not just the father in faith before being circumcised, but, as the first to be circumcised, represented also the power and importance of this rite as symbol. Faith, either with or without circumcision, is, however, of infinitely greater importance because it regards a whole new life of serving God, a life lived according to God's commands. Abraham was 'the father of the circumcision', but on a deeper level, the father of those 'who, in uncircumcision, walked in the footsteps of his faith'. To live the faith of Abraham is certainly not just to hold certain opinions about God and His Son, but to walk in line with that faith.[506] This involves a whole life lived in seeking and loving God through the grace of His Spirit. Merely forensic justice is inconsistent with a faith that must be lived out with the obedience of the soldier, and the fervour of a besotted lover.

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[504] At the last supper Jesus tells his disciples not, 'this is a sign of My body, which will be given for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins,' but rather, 'this *is* My body… (Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:22). However, God tells Abraham not that that circumcision will be a covenant 'between you and me' but merely that it will serve 'as a sign' of that covenant (Gen 17:11).

[505] See Gen 17:10-14 for the institution of the sign of circumcision.

[506] The verb στοιχέω is mainly used in military contexts; with the dative, as here, 'to be in line with, to walk with', in the sense of marching in step with fellow soldiers.

This whole *modus operandi* allows us to speak of the 'justice of faith' not merely as an anticipatory justification, but a living, breathing justice that defines the soul, to which the souls of the faithful men and women of Christian philosophy are tending. 'The summons to Abraham to be the chosen one' is not 'through the law', not merely through a judgment of adherence or non-adherence to statutes, but through a whole way of life meant to embody 'the justice of faith' (4:13). Any picture of this 'justice of faith' which holds fast within the legalistic framework of compliance or non-compliance lacks the fullness and vigour of a life aspiring after God's justice. It risks, in fact, falling into a theology which the concept of justification by faith was specifically fashioned to avoid, a theological ethics of mere law. Merely to assent outwardly to a proffered faith, and receive justice and salvation, becomes a kind of mere legal compliance; not to assent, and so receive injustice and damnation, a mere legal non-compliance. But for Paul, 'if we are chosen out of the law, then faith [and indeed 'justice of faith'] becomes void, and the summons is revoked' (4:14): If faith strives not for the 'justice of faith', but merely for legalistic compliance, it is not a faith that saves.

Romans 4:15 is Paul's first explicit statement of a recurring motif: with the law came sin; salvation, therefore, must come apart from the law. Why salvation and justification should come from the 'justification of faith', rather than a legalistic adherence to codes of conduct, has just been explained. But the claim here is more specific: the law itself is the cause of sin; without the law sinning is impossible. This is glossed in Chapter 7 as a matter of being aware, through the code of law, that something is sinful.[507] But this rather subtle epistemological argument is uncharacteristic of Paul in that it is almost theologically vacuous. Surely awareness of sin came first to Adam and Eve when, in disobedience to God's command, they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There are also countless episodes of sin, even awareness of sin, in the Old Testament narratives before the Mosaic Law was given. It seems reasonable, therefore, to interpret Paul as talking not about the Mosaic Law in particular, but of the idea of codified law in general. For there must be another, more theological sense in which sin may be said to 'come with the law'. Wherever there is sin there is law because law, by nature, is meant as an

[507] 'But I did not know sin if not through the law, for I would not have known [sinful] desire if the law had not said, 'do not have sinful desire' (7:7).

imperfect constraint on the sinful actions of fallen people.[508] If one is to move beyond the realm of sin of the earthly city to the realm of sinlessness in the Eternal City (in other words, to be justified) one cannot, therefore, rely on an ethics merely of law. One must instead reach for a greater, more transcendent justice, incapable of being defined in its divine perfection. Only such a pursuit can fashion the soul after God's justice.

Romans 4:16-17 makes clear that the faithful seeking out of God is the only path which leads to the justice of God because it is the only path which inherently recognizes our dependence, as fallen creatures, on God's grace. For to live by faith is to 'see through a glass darkly', and to trust that the fullness of things will be revealed and perfected by God Himself. To live by law does not imply that same humility which is the *sine qua non* of philosophy, but rather a certainty of what exactly just living consists in (obeying the law) and what it does not (disobeying the law). Such an ethic essentially rejects the necessity of grace because it rejects the reality of human beings as fallen creatures, and therefore excludes the sort of disposition that is receptive to God's saving gift and conscious of its own moral insufficiency.

Abraham's faith, of which all of us are heirs when we walk in his footsteps, holds as its object a God who 'makes the dead living, and calls what is not, what is' (4:17). The KJV, reflecting the Vulgate, renders καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα as 'calling the things which are not *as if* they were', taking the ὡς as qualifying the ὄντα. This is untenable, for it implies that ὄντα ('things that are') do not possess being in themselves, but are only a kind of simulacrum of being; they do not exist; it is only *as if* they exist. This is a rather convenient reading for those who think justification is either purely forensic, anticipatory (of the judgement at the last day), or purely a making good on a covenant. On this view, God justifies the faithful not by imbuing the soul of the believer with a measure of justice, but simply by counting an unjust soul as if it were just. Yet this is to assume that καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα is not an allusion to God as creator. Yet Genesis describes God's act of creation very much as a calling of things into existence: God speaks, saying, 'let there be light', and there is light.[509] God creates *ex nihilo*: Before creation, there was nothing that existed,

[508] See the discussion of the limits of codifiable law in Chapter 5, in relation to Galatians 5 and Plato's *Statesman*.
[509] Gen. 1:3.

only τὰ μὴ ὄντα, 'what is not'. In creation, God calls this 'what is not' in to being, with the result that there become things that are (*onta* ὄντα). The most theologically consistent way to read καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα is therefore to understand ὡς not as an adverb of manner (e.g. 'so', 'thus', 'as') but as a substantive, final clause, employed here, as often, in the context of a command: 'God who calls what was not in such a way that it becomes something that is.' To offer a looser but equally valid translation of κᾰλέω, we might render it, 'God *summons* what is not into something that is'.[510]

If God could create existence out of nothing, He can, in an act of grace, imbue the souls of the faithful with a truly existing justice that is not merely symbolic or anticipatory. Indeed, when God imbues those who seek Him with justice, though it is yet imperfect, and relies still on the fallible free will of the mortal believer for sustenance, it is not a merely simulacrum but partakes of the true justice, the 'justice of God'. If it were not so, believers could not show the fruits of their faith with acts of virtue, holy deeds done according to God's will. This is the power of God in relation to those who walk in the 'the justice of faith'.

Romans 4:18-20 attracts our attention to what has come to be called 'salvation history'. This is normally understood in terms of the history of covenants between God and His people, beginning with Abraham. Abraham's justification was not primarily 'of works'. For his story is not that of a man who, with not a little pride, vowed to adhere to the holy prescriptions handed down to him. Indeed, this was an era before the Mosaic Law was given. Abraham's favour with God was to be found in his absolute obedience to the Lord's commands, an obedience that required absolute faith in the justice of God. Abraham was not given prominence among the unfaithful but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, for he became convinced that God was able to carry out what He had promised; 'wherefore it was also reckoned to him as justice' (4:20-21). In obeying the injunction to circumcision, Abraham and his wife Sarah are blessed with a child, even in their extreme old age, through whom the race of God's chosen people is to be perpetuated. The test of Abraham's truly 'adamantine faith'[511] comes with the injunction to sacrifice his son Isaac, whom, one might imagine, he loved more than anything in the

[510] See the extensive LSJ entries for 'ὡς' and 'κᾰλέω'.
[511] Plato, *Republic*, 619a.

created world. God commands Abraham not only to, in a certain manner, bring Isaac to his death, but actually to strike the deadly blow himself. This could not be farther removed from the ethos of rigid obedience to a juridical code in which one can take great pride (justification by works). For by his act of supremely obedient faithfulness, Abraham intended to destroy the very person in whom he likely took the most pride of all, his very own son. Unlike strict adherence to a written code (according to the flesh), Abraham's obedience is wrought of a greater understanding of the meaning of his life, his own spiritual path (to use a trite word), and the cosmic order of which the one great commandment is that the imperfect, fallen creature should serve with every fibre of his being his own Creator, who is Truth, and Justice, and Love itself.

In 4:23-25 it is clear that Abraham is not merely an example but an exemplar of faithful living ('without the law', for Abraham lived before the law); and it is in this vein that we should live faithfully in light of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Our faithful living will, as it was with Abraham, be reckoned unto us for justice. Our 'faith which works by love' will, by the grace of God, become the instrument of our justification. The occasion for our justification is Jesus' death and resurrection. As in 3:25-26, it is not immediately clear what this means. There, Christ Jesus is presented as a liberation, a ransom for those held in the captivity of sin, as the lid of the Ark of the Covenant on which the blood of propitiatory sacrifice for sin was shed on the Day of Atonement. There, Christ's death and resurrection seems to possess a salvific power as a playing out of the inner working of the Godhead for our salvation. Christ died and rose again at the appropriate time (τῷ νῦν καιρῷ), 'to be the Justifier of the one who is of the faith of Jesus (εἰς τὸ εἶναι…δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ) (3:26).' The sense given by εἰς is that of purpose. Yet at the close of chapter 4, Paul's language about the atonement is more ambiguous: Jesus was betrayed *because of*[512] our transgressions, and raised *because of* our justification.

It is a theological commonplace to speak of Jesus' being betrayed because of our sins. For the circumstances leading to Jesus' execution are, if nothing else, the perfect paradigm of human sinfulness: God's people met with God's only

[512] The preposition διά with the accusative normally has a causative meaning, in the sense of *propter hoc*, 'because of' or 'on account of', where the object of the preposition is the cause of the subject (LSJ). Although there are a few instances in which διά with the accusative indicates a subject that is the cause of the object, it seems unlikely that Paul would have used διά to express unclearly what he had already expressed, many times, quite clearly by means of εἰς.

son, and, with a few notable exceptions, did not recognize Him for who He was, but handed Him over to be crucified. This microcosm of sinful man's rejection of God's only Son is also a sacrament or efficacious sign of the cosmic, eternal reality of God's participating in our falling state, suffering, through the Son, and extending to the farthest reaches of human misery, the farthest reaches of existence. Jesus' suffering, death, and descent to the dead embody, indeed, the reality of God's omnipresence; the diffusion of the Highest Good to all of existence in order to redeem that existence, for God is Creator and Sustainer of all that is.

Yet in saying that Jesus was 'raised *because of* our justification', rather than '*for* our justification', Paul seems to contradict his language in Chapter 3 about Jesus being our propitiation and liberation from sin (3:24-25). Both, however, can be true. For Paul, I contend, both *are* true. In the greater cosmic scheme, it is no contradiction to say that Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection both proceed and follow from our sin and justification. Indeed, to ascribe physical priority to an event of essentially metaphysical significance is a category mistake. God forgives us and justifies us by His grace. This is signified and embodied by God's taking human form, dying, and rising again. It is true, therefore, that Christ rose again *for* our justification; but it is equally true that Christ rose again because of a justification which God willed, and, indeed, it was in God's nature that he could embody this in Christ's death and resurrection. For there is no before and after in God considered as His heavenly, atemporal self; as eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is only the before and after of Christ dead and Christ risen, the supreme before and after, which, in the person of God brought into time, buries our death of sinfulness, and raises us to justice and eternal life.

Romans 5

Having approached the atonement now from two different angles, it is right that Paul should pull Christ's meaning together in a summary of how we are justified. The faithful are justified, that is to say, they 'have peace with our Lord Jesus Christ' who will pass judgement on us at the last day (5:1). Being at peace

with Christ, with God, they are harmonized with God's justice, being justified through their faithfulness. We have access to the grace of the Holy Spirit, that sanctifying gift without which we cannot be justified, 'through our Lord Jesus Christ' (5:2). The reasons we must receive God's grace that, with our free cooperation, fashions our soul after the pattern of God's justice that is specifically *through our Lord Jesus Christ*, are manifold: Christ the *logos* is, in a sense, the human side of God. It is in being made in God's word that we are made 'in the image of God'. Through Him the Godhead becomes intelligible to us. It is by *logoi* that we pursue the dialectic of abstracted concepts, until we understand that all reality has, as its foundation, the Beautiful, the True, and the Good, names of God. It is by the rhetorical *logos* of God's self-disclosure, represented supremely by His taking our very own flesh, that we receive the faith steadfastly to seek His eternal city. By the incarnation of the *logos*, it is finally manifested, within the physical and temporal realm, that God embraces us within our fallen state; he 'became sin',[513] not to become sinful himself, nor to condemn us for our sin,[514] but to cleanse us of our sin and to lead us on the path of His justice.

Paul has only just declared that boasting (*kauxaomai*) of one's own justice is to be excluded (3:27). For the pride that comes with being sure of one's own good standing with God is irreconcilable with that humility necessary to seek God by a 'faith that works by love'. But if it is wrong to boast of a knowledge of God or of a self-assuredness of our standing with Him, both of which can never be attained in this life, surely it must also be wrong to boast of *hope* in their attainment in the next (5:2-3)? Yet Paul seems to be using *kauxaomai* in a slightly different way. Much as Paul used *nomos* variously in Chapter 3 in relation to faith instead of works,[515] he seems here to be using *kauxaomai* not in the sense of 3:27 (where it is positively excluded) but rather in the sense of 2 Corinthians 9, where he expresses his great satisfaction in the missionary work of Achaia. Paul wishes to broadcast their success so that he himself might impel the Macedonians, with whom he is then dealing, to redouble their efforts. In this

[513] 2 Corinthians 5:21, '[God] made the one who knew no sin for us, that we might become the justice of God in Him'. Jesus became sin, not to the extent of becoming sinful, but of embracing our wretchedness, itself the result of sin, so that, being embraced by the Godhead while even on the margins of holiness, we might come within the justifying power of God's grace, through the Holy Spirit.
[514] John 3:21.
[515] 'Where then is the boasting (καύχησις)? It is excluded. By what law (νόμος)? Of works? Nay, but by faith (3:27)'.

context, *kauxaomai* means not to boast in one's own standing, but to broadcast far and wide good news that has transpired as result of somebody else's efforts. Such is the boast that Paul can rightly make of the Christ event, and the hope for reconciliation which proceeds from it. Such a boast is not born of pride, but the evangelical hope of proclaiming the good to all the ends of the earth. It excites no complaisance, or self-assurance of our own salvation, but rejoices in the gift made known to us in Christ, and with charity and joy seeks to widen the ranks of the faithful.

It is in this sense also that we may 'boast of our afflictions' (Rom 5:3). We are not to let all and sundry know how much we have endured, so that we may boast of how much virtue and holiness we have thereby procured for ourselves. For this would be to be no better than the hypocrites whom Jesus denounced in the Sermon on the Mount.[516] Rather, we are to boast of our afflictions only to show the way; to demonstrate to those not already counted among the faithful that the path of 'faith which works by love' will involve many hardships: many will be persecuted for Justice's sake, and yet theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:10); to demonstrate that suffering, perhaps an unavoidable part of a life seeking out God, can in fact be salutary. Suffering is a necessary consequence, in our fallen world, of faithfully seeking God: 'suffering works perseverance (hypomone)' (3:3), that same perseverance according to which the faithful, in searching out God, 'seek honour and glory and incorruption' (2:7). This same perseverance, alongside steadfastness of spirit in our quest to see God, and to live by His justice, inevitably results in '*dokime*', 'proof' or 'trial' (5:4). The idea seems to be that a faith that perseveres through hardship is thereby proved to be genuine. A merely outward profession of faith is of no value if it cannot, with the perseverance of philosophic seeking, endure the trials necessarily accruing to it in a fallen world.[517]

As Paul emphasizes repeatedly, especially in Chapter 8 of Romans, God's gift of grace whereby He discloses Himself to us and brings us to Himself, operates by means of the Holy Spirit. But to receive this gift of justification is to

[516] Mt 6:16.

[517] The idea that the servants of the Lord must suffer tribulations which humble their pride, and test their attachment to the Lord, is a theme running through both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. In the former case, the metaphor is usually that of refining metal: Deut. 8:25, Is 48:10, Psalms. 66:10-12, Jer. 9:7. It is also a frequent theme in the New Testament: (e.g. 2 Cor. 12:9, 1 Peter 4:13 and 5:10, and perhaps most strongly in James 1:12).

persevere in that good works by love, the love of God. ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ is probably capable of being interpreted as both a subjective and objective genitive. However, unlike 'the faith of Christ Jesus' of Romans 3:22, it does in fact seem, within both the immediate context (and that of the larger Pauline corpus) and the New Testament as a whole, to bear sense of both subjective and objective genitive. The objective genitive is suggested by the text that immediately proceeds it. For the perseverance which 'works fortitude, and fortitude works hope', is itself the fruit of that which works by love, the Love of the Christian philosopher, the love *for* God and neighbour. Yet what follows reminds us quite emphatically of God's ἀγάπην εἰς ἡμᾶς, His 'love for us'. His love for us is shown in this, that 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (5:8). Yet both senses are of course connected, nay, inherently intertwined. The perseverance of seeking out God by grace, through faith (Eph. 2.8), is wrought of a love for God which is itself the fruit of God's love for us, His divine disclosure whereby He not only points the way towards Himself, but actually effects the cleansing, sanctifying, and justifying necessary for our souls to harmonize with His justice.

Both His disclosure and His justifying action are effected, and acted out, with temporal finite existence, in Christ Jesus's dying and rising again. By the death of Him who was perfect, yet born in a world fallen into sin, we die to the world, and die to sin; by His resurrection, we are born again unto eternal life. We are justified in Christ's blood in that we are justified through His having been for us the *ilasterion*, the 'mercy seat' sprinkled with blood on the Jewish Day of Atonement. Every Christian indeed is called to a life of sacrifice in imitation of Christ's supreme life of sacrifice: 'He that shall save his life, in this life, shall loose it, and whoever shall loose his life for My sake shall find it' (Mt 16.25); 'He who loves his life in this world shall loose it, and he who hates his life in this world will find it unto everlasting life' (James 12:25). We participate in Christ's sacrifice where Christ, the eternal word, is in us: 'It is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me' (Gal. 2:20).

Yet a life of sacrifice is inherent in every Christian philosophical life, even if it does not end in martyrdom. Again here, as in Romans 3, there are echoes of Paul's exhortation in Romans 12 to 'lay out your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be modelled after this age, but rather be transformed by the renewing of your mind,

in order to commend yourselves to the good, perfect and acceptable will of God' (1-2). The true philosopher necessarily leads a life of sacrifice, because in place of the delights attainable in the earthly realm, he has set his heart on what can only be achieved in the next, and that not by his own power, but by the reception of a gift from the very one he is seeking. In the *Symposium* the god Love is described as being the child of Resource and Poverty. Because he is the lover and hence the seeker of Wisdom (who Clement of Alexandria reminds us is Christ), his life is necessarily one of deprivation, of, in a sense, hating this life and loving eternal life, of dying to this life in order to live to eternal life. That power which enables us to embark on the Christian philosophic life, through the cleansing or forgiveness of sins, and which leads upwards, renewing us day by day in the spirit (2 Cor 4:16), is Christ Himself, through His Spirit. Where Christ, who is even now with us and in us, faced humiliation and death, so do we, if not in actuality, then by the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart (Ps 50), sow the seeds of a life of humility and sacrifice, that necessary preliminary to the true philosophic life that loves and seeks the Wisdom that is Christ (1 Cor 1:24).

Christ's sacrifice is, in a certain sense, a paradigmatic *mythos* illustrating a certain way of life; and the author of this *mythos* is God Himself, the Father who discloses Himself through His Son. But this disclosure is also efficacious, because it involves the entry of God's Trinitarian self into space and time so as to offer an embrace to all of humanity. God pours His love into our hearts though the spiritual and, at least normally, invisible gift of the Holy Spirit. But this is both demonstrated and embodied (played out if you will) in the Christ event.

According to this paradigmatic *mythos* (the 'Son of Man'), Christ, as Son of Man, is the *typos*, the archetype of mankind, taking on sin in becoming man in a fallen world, dying at the hands of sinners, and then overcoming sin through His resurrection. *Typos*, however, has not the same epistemological or metaphysical meaning as *eidos* (form, idea) if one is talking of an archetype (LSJ); and it is precisely for this reason that it can apply to the way in which all mankind participates in Adam, but does not sufficiently define the way in which we participate in Christ. Through Adam, as mythological *typos* of mankind, all have sinned, as he sinned, in paradise. Thus, we have come to inhabit a fallen world (Rom. 5.14). Through this one man, therefore, sin and death came into

the world (5:12). Whether this be understood as the hereditary propagation of a disposition to sin from Adam to the rest of the human race or, more broadly, as the fall from grace in paradise of all of existence as a result of Adam's sinning does not appear, for Paul, to be a major preoccupation. If Christ is the propitiation 'not only for our sins, but for the whole world' (1 James 2:2), something of the fallenness of the whole cosmos, beyond mere human heredity, must be involved.

Even if we take *typos* to mean merely a kind of literary example or archetype of our own fallen state, of which the expulsion from paradise is the perfect *mythos*, the reality of the fallen world in which we find ourselves requires not merely typological but real cosmic redemption over not just our own sin but over every cosmic power and principality (Col 2:9), which are also fallen. The scapegoat and the red heifer, as types of the Christ who was sacrificed, again, not as metaphysical instantiations of Christ in a previous time (though, to be sure, it is a commonplace among Church Fathers that where God speaks in the Old Testament, it is in fact his Son, the *logos*, who speaks) but as prototypes, in mythological form, establish the literary background against which Christ makes sense to us.[518] Adam was not Christ: but his story, the story of one man leading all of creation into sin and indeed mortality, means that the restoration of all creation in one man, Our Lord Jesus Christ, not only makes sense but is expected. Thus does the Christ event gain greater mythological meaning: 'If by the transgression of one man all have died, how much does the grace of God, freely by the grace of God, abound unto all men' (Rom.5:17). Whereas condemnation came by one man, so reconciliation came by one man, Christ, the new Adam. Just as Adam's transgression extends to all of humanity, so is justification, effected and made known by grace and through faith in Christ Jesus, extended to all men (5:18). With Adam's transgression came death, human mortality. By faith of Christ comes 'justification of life (δικαίωσιν ζωῆς)' (Rom. 5:18).

After Adam, sin reigned, but had yet be brought into sharp relief by the clear impossibility that even holy men and women should always fulfil the entirety of the Mosaic code. In between, Adam's sin was reckoned unto mankind in the same way that it was after the codification of the Mosaic law (Rom 5:14). What indeed emerged was the insufficiency of a written code of law to define the

[518] Epistle of Barnabas, 7-8.

precepts of natural law, that law, incapable of being exhaustively set down in statutes, which is nonetheless fulfilled by those holy men and women 'who do by nature the things of the law, being a law unto themselves' (Rom. 2:14).[519] As we discuss in Chapter 5, in relations to Galatians 5, the insufficiency of written law to comprehend the tenets of a virtuous life is a common Platonic motif. Plato was, as we have seen, deeply sceptical of the written word, static, unresponsive, and incapable of engaging in the dialectic argument to the extent of that 'living, breathing word which expresses itself variously according to the circumstances'.[520] For Plato, the ideal state is not one of laws, but of the perfectly just, philosophical ruler who can adjust his ordinances as circumstances require.[521] The Law of Moses brought man's sin into relief (5:20). Yet even if this Law could have been followed to the letter, it could not, being a collection of written, non-living statues, encapsulate the fullness of the natural and eternal law which reigns according to the perfect justice of God's kingdom. Against the insufficiency of the law, then, was the true justice attainable through the philosophic faith of Christ commended more strongly. For the justification of our soul after its divine pattern was not in our own power to attain, but it is the gift of God himself, 'the grace of God ruling through justice unto eternal life' (5:21), a divine gift for those who love and seek God, 'striving for glory and honour and incorruption' (2:7).

Romans 6

Chapter 6 reads as an extended meditation on the meaning of being 'in Christ' by means of our faith, working by love trough His grace. Faith, as Joseph Ratzinger puts it, may be seen to be 'a handing over of the self to God',[522] a losing of that self in which 'the sphere of the ego overshadows the sphere of Christ'. 'It is in just this sense that Paul can say, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and

[519] Origen's view is that the things of the law which holy men and women do by nature are in fact the precepts of natural law, not the written precepts of the Mosaic code, inaccessible to holy gentiles (Origen, *Commentary on Romans*, 2.6-7).
[520] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 264b.
[521] Plato, *Statesman*, 294b.
[522] Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1968), 230.

the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:19-21)"'.[523]

Since it was not only mankind but all of creation that fell from grace 'with Adam', all of creation must be restored in Christ. It is Christ as *logos* who, in a manner analogous to the creation of the world, renews the world, subduing anew all the powers and principalities and physical elements of creation which have fallen from grace. Death, a result of the fall of creation, is the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26). To be in Christ, to live by Christ indwelling in the soul, must be to inhabit not only the glorified Christ, but the crucified Christ as well (Rom. 6:6-11): When we are baptized, as Christ commanded, to join the ranks of the faithful, 'we are baptized unto his death' and 'buried with him' (Rom. 6:4). But since Christ also rose from the dead, we too may rise again with him if we 'walk in newness of life' as His faithful servants.

Indeed, to be in Christ's body should signify a great deal more than to be simply a faithful member of the body of His followers, the body politic, if you will, of Jesus Christ, His *ekklesia* of believers. For 'we know that we have been planted into the likeness of His death and resurrection' (Rom 6:5). For this Word, the *Logos*, is also Him who suffered, died, and rose again. In possessing the Spirit of God, His Spirit, we are therefore buried to sin, and, by the same God, live to God, to be assimilated to His Kingdom and His justice (Rom 6:6-11).

In Colossians, we find a profound meditation on the meaning of Christ's body:

> You must not allow anyone to cheat you by insisting on a false humility which addresses its worship to angels. Such a man takes his stand upon false visions; his is the ill-founded confidence that comes of human speculation. He is not united to that head of ours, on whom all the body depends, supplied and unified by joint and ligament (ἁφῶν καὶ συνδέσμων), and so growing up with a growth which is divine. If, by dying with Christ, you have parted company from the elements of the world (ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου), why do you live by these prescriptions, as if the world were still your element? (Col 2:18-20)[524]

George Van Kooten's work on this passage is particularly illuminating. On Van Kooten's view, Paul, or the Pseudo-Paul of Colossians as some contend,

[523] Ibid., 211.
[524] Knox trans.

adapted a well-known Platonist and later Stoic conception of the cosmos as a body held together by bonds (*desmoi*), which, according to the *Timaeus*, binds together the elements at the creation of the world (31b-32c).[525] In Philo, God's *logos* is also accorded this very role as 'a glue and bond filling up all things with its being' (Philo *Quis. Res. Div. heres 188*).[526] *Logos,* of course, is related to the verb *legein*, which, although it has a more common meaning 'to say', has the original sense of 'to gather together'; hence the identification with *desmos* would have been natural. In 1 Corinthians we read: 'Christ is the first-fruits, and then come those who are in His presence (ἔπειτα οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ), yet at the end He [Christ] places His kingship in the hands of God, His Father, when He shall subdue all rule, authority and power (ὅταν καταργήσῃ πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν)' (1 Cor 15:23-25).[527] Van Kooten shows convincingly that the ἐξουσία (authority) does not, as in the Septuagint version of Daniel 7:27, mean earthly power, but rather cosmological forces which are subdued by God's eternal *logos*, the Lord of all. In this way, the 'rule, authority and power' of 1 Corinthians may be related to the element of the cosmos (*stoixeia*) from which Christ freed us: 'Thus, because we were children, we were under the yoke of the elements of the cosmos (*stoixeia*), but then, in the fullness of time He sent His son, born of a woman, and under the law, so he might free all people under the law, so that we might obtain a share in His sonship' (Gal 5:3-5). As Van Kooten points out, citing Plutarch and Philo, as well as 2 and 4 Maccabees, the cosmic elements would have been invariably linked, in the pagan as well as the Jewish mind, to ritualistic laws meant to variously serve, propitiate, or in general mediate a relationship with the physical elements of the cosmos.[528] Furthermore, 'men are composed by borrowing small portions from the four elements of the cosmos [earth, air, fire, and water]. The loan is repaid at death when man is resolved into the elements. Man is not only comprised of, but also enclosed by, these elements so that it is altogether impossible to slip out through the elements'.[529]

We may understand Romans 6:14 in this way: because we live not under grace, but under the law, 'sin does not reign over us (ἁμαρτία γὰρ ὑμῶν οὐ

[525] Van Kooten, George, *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School*, (Tübingen: Mors Siebeck, 2003), 42.
[526] Ibid., 46.
[527] Knox trans.
[528] Van Kooten 66-7.
[529] Van Kooten 67.

κυριεύσει)'; the ritualism of the law, by which is accounted, among other things, our subservience to the material elements (*stoixeia*), has no hold over us as members of Christ's triumphant body. Being engrafted, therefore, into Christ's body we serve Him, and His Kingdom; we serve justice rather than sin. It is a question of which master we serve: If we commend ourselves and our lives to sin we are the slaves to sin, but if we commend ourselves and our lives to God, to Christ, we are slaves to His justice and holiness (6:18-19). But this slavery to God's justice is not in fact slavery at all but freedom. For only in the harmonization of our souls with God's divine pattern are we truly our best working selves, free according to the true sense of each of us, as we were envisioned by God in His unique creation of each one of us, according to His plan (3:20).[530]

It is vital to remember that although Paul is, in the first instance, speaking of the whole orientation of our lives to Christ, of which the animating power is the 'faith that works by love', this faith lives and dies, to a large extent, in what we do: 'What fruit do you gain in that of which you are ashamed? For the end of these things is death' (6:21). Slavery to God and the consequent freedom and flourishing of our soul lead to virtuous actions, and, with repletion, virtuous habits of life. But those actions 'of which we are ashamed' disfigure our soul, and twist it out of harmony with God's justice. Such actions lead not to God, and His justice, but to death: 'For the purchase of sin is death, but the gift of God (τὸ δὲ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ ζωὴ) is eternal life in Christ Jesus' (6:23). Hence, Paul brings together the contradictory strands of salvation by reward for patient striving in good works (2:6-7) and salvation by faith in Christ Jesus 'apart from the works of law' (3:38). The gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ brings us victory over sin; but without our cooperation, instead of being renewed day by day (2 Cor 4:16), we are disfigured day by day: we fall out of harmony with God's justice, and so lose the Kingdom of Heaven, first within our hearts and our souls, and then without us, when we are judged at the last day.

Christ is all powerful, all salvific, the saviour of mankind, as well as of all creation. To be in Him and within His power is to participate in that

[530] This is in some sense the Christian completion of what we summarized in Point 5 of the summary of Platonic ethics which ends Chapter 2: We can only be reconciled to and harmonized with God when our souls are fashioned after the pattern of His Divine Justice. Thus, we only accomplish our end, as human beings, where our souls are harmonized after the pattern of divine justice, and so we may ourselves be accounted just. Herein consists our justification.

recapitulation of all creation back into the Father (1 Cor. 15:28), its divinisation and justification whereby it is worthy to become the kingdom of God. But what exactly does it mean to be in Christ, and to participate in His victory, other than to be fashioned according to His likeness? We have seen that for the Platonist, the goal of ethics is to be likened unto God.[531] We have also read Paul's words elsewhere about those who, with their faces uncovered, mirror His glory and image and are transfigured from glory to glory, as by the Holy Spirit (τὴν δόξαν Κυρίου" κατοπτριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος) (2 Cor. 3:18). Elsewhere, Paul uses the verb *metamorfoo* (to metamorphosize, transfigure) in the passage from Romans 12 already cited: 'be not conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (*nous*)'. It seems likely that the sort of transfiguration Paul has in mind is that which occurs in Christ whereby we are made according to the likeness of God (καθ᾽ ὁμοίωσιν).

Perhaps relevant is the way in which Clement distinguishes how human identity is made after the image of God at our creation (κατ᾽ εἰκόνα), an identity retained even after the fall, from our being made after the likeness of God (καθ᾽ ὁμοίωσιν) (Gen. 1:26), a status to some extent lost as a consequence of the fall, but nevertheless capable of being realized, by God's grace, as the telos of Christian life, the full assimilation to God in Christ, and the power of living by and *in* Christ.[532] In the *Protrepticus*, Clement of Alexandria makes clear that he believes that Paul has reconciled the *telos* of Platonic ethics, being likened unto God, with the Christian revelation in Christ: 'he becomes just and holy with wisdom (Plato, *Theaetetus* 176b) by the power of Jesus Christ, to the extent that he is likened unto God (δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως᾽ γενόμενον ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ εἰς τοσοῦτον ὅμοιον ἤδη καὶ θεῷ)'.[533] Only by participation in Christ who is Himself wisdom can we be fashioned after the true likeness of God.

[531] Alcinous, *Handbook*, 28; Plato, *Theaetetus*, 176a-b, *Laws* 715e, *Phaedrus,* 248a.
[532] Clement, *Stromateis* 2.22. Quoted in Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 172 (Citation added).
[533] Clement, *Protrepticus*, 18.12.122.4, quoted by Van Kooten, 177.

5. Faith, Love and Law in Galatians 2–3, 5

Justification in Galatians

Luther's later commentary on Galatians (1531) further develops his notion of a twofold Christian righteousness (justice), proposed in his sermon *De Duplici Iustitia* (1519). Galatians, with Romans, become, in many ways, the scriptural centrepiece of the Reformation's revolution in the theology of justification. In this later commentary on Galatians Luther propounds more strongly the idea of two different kinds of righteousness: active righteousness of the law only, and passive righteousness of Christian faith.[534] Luther's theological arguments for this are, as on many occasions, heavily pastoral and psychological:

> Wherefore I admonish you, especially such as shall become instructors and guiders of consciences, and also every one apart, that ye exercise yourself continually by study, by reading, by meditation of the Word and by prayer, that in the time of temptation ye may be able to instruct and comfort both your own consciences and others, and to bring them from the law to grace, from active and working righteousness to passive and received righteousness, and, to conclude, from Moses to Christ…. [The Devil] is wont to set against us those places of the Gospel wherein Christ himself requireth works of us, and with plain words threateneth damnation to those who do them not. Now if here we be not able to judge between these two kinds of righteousness, if we take not by faith hold of Christ sitting at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession unto the Father for us wretched sinners, then we are under the law and not under grace, and Christ is no more a saviour but a lawgiver. Then can there remain no more salvation, but a certain desperation, and everlasting death must needs follow.[535]

Particularly striking in this passage is that Luther betrays, to a large extent, the weakness of his own theory, that Christ Himself does in fact require us to obey certain commandments. Luther might also have mentioned that Paul also enjoins us to persevere in good works (Rom 2:6-7). Luther does not here attempt to reconcile this fact with his theory of two distinct kinds of righteousness/justice (*iustitia duplex*), but takes refuge in a theory of a kind of salvation by apprehension of theSaviour. As we discussed in Chapter 3, this has in fact strong resonances in the Platonic and Johannine tradition of divine contemplation, whereby the contemplator is effectively merged with the divine

[534] Martin Luther, 'Commentary on Galatians', *Selections from his Writings*, John Dillenberger ed. (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1962), 531.
[535] Ibid., 109.

object of his contemplation; he becomes what he sees, what he knows. However, this tradition, unlike that of Luther, has no equivalent notion of a twofold justice. For the Platonist and the Christian, both Johannine and, as I have endeavoured to show, Pauline as well, *all* justice has its originator and archetype in divine justice.[536] Certainly Mosaic law, and indeed any written law, proves, in the end, an inadequate expression of how to conform to this justice. It is not expressive of an altogether different kind of justice, but rather an imperfect expression of the same justice.

Luther's mode of divine contemplation and salvation by apprehension of the Saviour is, if anything, too constrained. Whereas the Johannine or Pauline Christian would contemplate Christ directly as saviour, and assign the same primacy to this contemplation as Luther, they would also see Christ as wisdom, justice, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor 30), in all that is just in the world and human affairs, rising by decrees to the perfection of that justice that is Christ Jesus, the *logos*, co-eternal with the Father. Thus, the Johannine or Pauline Christian, unlike Luther, sees no radical disjunction between the justice gifted to us in Christ Jesus and our duty to live this justice, however inadequately, in our earthly affairs, because he knows that the Justice whereby we do good has for its origin divine Justice.

In this chapter, I will embark on an exegesis of key passages in Galatians 2–3, 5, and 6 on the theme of justification, using the same Platonic lens which we employed for Romans 1–6 in Chapter 4, hoping therein to bring a similarly coherent reading of what Paul has to say on justification with the same heuristic tool.

Galatians 2

The discussion of justification in Galatians is, much more than that in Romans, motivated by an experience on Paul's part, a conflict arising with the Apostle Peter: Paul accuses Peter of perverting the gospel of Christ by hypocrisy: He readily eats with gentiles, but as soon as some fellow Christians

[536] See Chapter 3.

'sent by James' arrive (2:13), he takes himself away from them 'out of fear of those of the circumcision' (2:12). Others such as Barnabas have followed their lead, 'though they knew they were not behaving rightly according to the truth of the Gospel' (2:14). Paul asks Peter why he, as a Jew, is willing to live as a gentile and yet compels others to live as Jews. To be sure Jews by birth, or 'by nature' (*fysei*), belong to the family of God's people. They are among those elected by God to be a witness to His power and justice, and are, in this hereditary and symbolic sense, not to be accounted 'among the sinful gentiles (οὐκ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί)' (2:16). But becoming like unto the justice of God kingdom, to be assimilated to God's nature, in Jesus Christ, His word and image, according to which image we are made, and so have everlasting peace with God, being given the gift of his justice, is not a matter of belonging to the any particular race. It is about how we orient our life, how we live and what we live for. It is, in short, a question of our faith in God.

As Paul is recorded to have put it to the Athenians at the Areopagus: 'God gave life and breath to all things, and made from one man the whole race of men (ἐξ ἑνὸς πᾶν ἔθνος ανθρώπων) to dwell upon the face of the earth defining the seasons and the boundaries of their habitation, for them to seek God, if they should grope after Him, and find Him (ζητεῖν τὸν θεὸν εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὕροιεν), for He is not far from each one of us' (Acts 17.25-27). Paul affirms that membership in an *ethnos* (race) is immaterial as far as being justified with God is concerned, because all of us are made of the same *ethnos*. Peter himself, of course, came round, in the end, to the Pauline view: following the divine vision on Joppa commanding him to eat unclean animals, Peter met with the Roman centurion Cornelius, 'a just man who fears God'. Peter says that although it is normally considered unlawful (*athemiston*) to come together with a gentile, God has revealed 'not to say any man is common or unclean' (Acts 10:28): 'Of a truth God is no respecter of persons, but in every race (ἐν παντὶ ἔθνει) he who fears God and works justice is acceptable to Him' (Acts 10:34). What matters is that having groped after and found God, in Christ Jesus, 'we see after Him' (Acts 17:26). As the philosopher, through the gift of love, seeks after that wisdom only present in the knowledge of God, and so obtains a 'divine dispensation' (*Meno* 99e), so the faithful Christians seek reconciliation and harmonization, in their soul, with God, 'through perseverance in good work, seeking honour and incorruption and eternal life' (Rom 2:7).

Indeed, 'we know that man is not justified by the works of law (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου) except by the faith of Christ Jesus' (2:14). It might be possible to apply Origen's paradigm from Romans about the use of the article for *nomou* also to Galatians.[537] Perhaps, in declaring man not to be justified 'by works of the law' (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου), Paul has in mind not merely the *Jewish* law but codifiable law in general. On this view, what is in question, therefore, is the not the salvific and justifying possibility of the Jewish law, as a code of ethics, confined as it is to only the Jewish people, whereas we know that God made all of mankind out of only one race of people, but whether a merely legalistic ethical framework can satisfy the calling of the Christian gospel.

Excursus on Law and Moral Perfection in Plato

We will recall that Plato's Philosopher is defined not by his strict adherence to a written paradigm of do's and don'ts, but by an entire conception of what human flourishing consists in. This is principally a life of seeking after the divine, impelled by an attraction to beauty and virtue, and nourished by a realization of the unity of all that is fine and noble within the idea of the Good. In Middle Platonism, the idea of the Good becomes, much more definitively, a monotheistic Creator and Sustainer God.[538] Hans-Georg Gadamer seizes upon the paradox of knowledge in the *Meno* in order to elucidate the way in which human virtue in Plato is always in a sense *given*. If, as Socrates claims, virtue essentially consists in knowledge of the Good, then surely it, like any other sort of knowledge, can be taught. Yet there are two seemingly fatal objections to this. The first is theoretical: if someone who has no knowledge of something then acquires that knowledge, how will he recognize that he has acquired it if he genuinely had no knowledge of it? The second is empirical: 'the sons of great men, who have had the best education and upbringing thinkable, are often grave disappointments'.[539] The answer to both these paradoxes in the *Meno* is, in the words of Gadamer, that 'something other than knowledge must play the

[537] Origen claims that, at least in Romans, *nomos* with the article refers to the *Abrahamic* law, and *nomos* without the article refers to the *natural law*. [*Commentaire de l'Épitre aux Romains*, trans. M. Fédou, notes et index. L. Brésard (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, coll. Sources Chrétiennes 532, 2009)].
[538] See especially Alcinous, *Handbook* (10) and Plutarch, *On the E at Delphi* (393a), to say nothing of the Jewish Platonism of Philo.
[539] Ibid., 51.

decisive role here, something that Plato calls *theia moira*, divine dispensation'.[540]

In the *Statesman*, Plato explores the place of codified, written law in relation to the political ideal of the *polis* that fosters goodness and justice in the souls of its citizenry. The question immediately at hand, however, is what the nature of the ideal politician (or statesman) might be. The metaphor employed is that of a 'divine shepherd…higher than a King'[541], whose office is 'the voluntary herding of voluntary bipeds'. Ideally, Plato's Shepherd/Statesman would not rule according to inflexible statutes, but according to his own true notions of justice and injustice. He would therefore be able to adapt judgements more fittingly to individual circumstances:

> the law, at a loss to comprehend what exactly is the best and most just thing to do, is not always able to prescribe the best solution. For the variety of men and their actions does not allow a simple one-size-fits-all solution, so to speak, in order to bring peace and harmony to a diverse human nature; nor can we affirm that there is any such art or science capable of lasting that can do this. For the law is always striving for the self-same thing, rather like a man who, stubborn and unlearned, can never do anything contrary to one single design of his, and if ever a new problem arises, never inquires after the best solution if there is a chance that it should contradict the rational which he himself has already established for all situations….[542]

We would never wish a doctor to apply only one remedy to the same ailment regardless of the particular circumstances of the patient involved; not would we want a pilot stubbornly to apply the protocol contained in the manual, regardless of conditions which may not have ever been envisaged by the writers of the manual.[543] The ideal government, therefore, would consist of a ruler who possesses, within himself, an unerring sense of right and wrong, which he could then apply to the many and varied circumstances incapable of being comprehended by written codes. The trouble is that such Philosopher-Kings are in short supply (if they ever existed at all). Much more common are the tyrants who, untrammelled by the basic conventions of written law, apply their whims and prejudice to every circumstance without any view to what is right. Thus, a constitution of written laws, though necessarily imperfect, is in most instances the best imitation which human beings can fashion of the ideal constitution, in

[540] Ibid., 276d.
[541] Plato, *Statesman*, 275b.
[542] Plato, *Statesman*, 294b.
[543] Ibid., 296a–297a.

which the sovereignty belongs absolutely to those with an unerring sense of right.[544]

Any notion of a perfected moral community, a 'kingdom of God' which exists supremely in the next life but is prefigured by God's servants here on earth, must therefore transcend an ethic of mere law. If Christ, as *logos* and saviour of the world, is truly calling the human race into this moral community of the faithful, its foundation cannot be mere law but a sense of the true justice born of faith in Him who is alone just and good and perfected through a love that both draws us inexorably towards Him, the font of all justice, and binds us to our fellow man in a mutual pursuit of that harmonious community of faith, the body of Christ, that earthly foundation of what will one day become the eternal City of God.

Christ's Commandments on Justice and the Law

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus cites the Israelites' hardness of heart for the allowance of divorce in the Mosaic law; as if this were a measure to limit damage, so to speak. But Jesus has greater moral ambitions for His disciples. Indeed, the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount become more demanding as they become more general: 'Love your enemies; bless them that curse you' (Mt. 5:44) is surely much more difficult of attainment than the dietary and hygienic codes of the Law. Jesus came 'not to abolish the law, but to fulfil it'; and claims that 'not a jot or one tittle of the law shall disappear until all is accomplished' (5:18). But Jesus clearly means the new law of faith in love, for He then interprets what the fulfilling of this law means: 'If anyone shall ignore even the least of these injunctions [i.e. the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount] and teach people thus, he will be allotted the least place in the kingdom of God' (5:17). In other words, 'unless your justice abounds more greatly than even that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you will not inherit the Kingdom of God' (Mt. 5:20). If justice be understood in a merely legalistic sense, this statement becomes nonsensical; for the Pharisees, who devote themselves to scrupulous adherence to every iota of the law, cannot be surpassed in legal compliance. But if the ethic of a more fervent, more general turning to God, as preached in the

[544] Ibid., 301d.

Sermon of the Mount, is genuinely adhered to, the result will be not a greater forensic justice, but rather a greater justice of soul; a more full-throated, divine justice than what the Pharisees, in their legalism, can ever hope to acquire.

New Testament Scholars working in the tradition of the Reformation do not tend to read the disjunction of Faith and works in Paul (Gal 2:16) in light of Christ's injunction to outdo the Pharisees in justice (Mt 5:20). In relation to Romans, James Dunn stresses that Paul's indictment of 'works of the law' could not have been directed against good works, but against those specific prescriptions 'done to maintain covenant righteousness, not least by separation from the gentiles.'[545]In a recent article, Jonathan Linebaugh rightly stresses that this disjunction between faith and works in Galatians involves 'a grammar of nothingness and creation – a grammar of death and life, and so presumably lays the groundwork for a justice that "abounds more greatly than even the scribes and the Pharisees"'(Mt. 5:20)'. [546]Yet Linebaugh does not sufficiently stress this point, that 'new creation' in Christ is what makes us capable of that perfection which Christ enjoins on us. Linebaugh's claims that, 'justification relates to preaching, praise and prayer as a grammatical rule' (293) risks seeming to give our justification little overall moral resonance.

Galatians 2 (continued)

Paul must 'die to the law, in order to live to God' (Gal. 2.19). Indeed, the injunction 'Be perfect, as your father in heaven is perfect' (Mt. 5:48) is incapable of realization by those who put their hope in a merely legalistic justice. But it is just as incapable of realisation for those whose conception of 'the justice of God through faith in Christ' (Rom. 3:21) is merely forensic, who, living by outward affirmations alone, reject the inner striving of the Christian to seek God. But those who wish fervently to seek God in faith, and are humble enough to receive the gift of grace that moves such faith, will one day be perfected in the kingdom of heaven, the heavenly city of God.

[545]Dunn, James, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 360. See also Chapter 4, 'The Problem of Justification in Romans'.pg. 133.
[546] Jonathan A. Linebaugh, 'The grammar of the gospel: justification as a theological criterion in the Reformation and in Paul's letter to the Galatians', S*cottish Journal of Theology* Vol.71 (3) 287-307 (Cambridge: CUA 2018), 298.

Yet, even as we seek that justice which transcends merely legalistic prescriptions, we cannot but fail, repeatedly. We are yet sinners; 'by the works of law will no flesh be justified' (Gal 2:16). But we are not therefore to infer that justice obtained only by the path of faithful seeking and groping after God (Acts 17:27), revealed to us in Jesus Christ, is a path to earthly perfection. We are transformed in the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18) in a way that fully grasps the Kingdom of Heaven, but by our life of seeking God in faith we are granted, by His power, a foretaste of that full transfiguration. For although we now only 'know in part and we prophesy in part...when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away with' (1 Cor. 13:9-10). Yet even now, as we are giving the seed of this supernatural perfection through the life of faith, we remain sinners (Gal. 2.17).

We may cast our mind to Simonides' assertion in the *Protagoras* that no man can be made truly good in this life.[547] This forms, in fact, a *datum* of Platonic ethics. But it is nonetheless true, for Plato, that the mind (*nous*) of the philosopher can 'sprout wings' and ascend to heaven.[548] Once the philosopher grows wings, despite his many continued moral shortcomings, he is nevertheless destined to continue his upward progress to heaven.[549] If therefore 'we seek to be justified with Christ', we will inevitably find that 'we are yet sinners' (Gal 2.17). But our inability to reach godly perfection in this fallen world, even as we seek Christ, does not of course mean that Christ is 'the minister of sin' (Gal. 2:17). For though faith in Him does not make us perfectly sinless on earth, it gives us, by the power of God, the wings of grace that transport us to His eternal kingdom.

Through faith, Paul is 'crucified in Christ' so that, dying to the powers of the world (2 Col. 3:18), he may live to the transcendent power of God's eternal kingdom. This power is given as a gift from God Himself. He is the author of our justification, by the gift of His Spirit. Just as, for the Platonic Philosopher, the seed of the philosophic life of faith seeking God is a gift of divine inspiration,[550] the Christian is given a power through faith by grace (Ephesians 2.8), that he 'might haply grope after Him and find Him' (Acts 17.27). Thus we do not live in harmony with God by our own power: 'It is not I who live, but

[547] Plato, *Protagoras,* 346c.
[548] Plato, *Republic,* 249b.
[549] Plato, *Phaedrus,* 256d.
[550] Plato, *Phaedrus,* 244a.

Christ who lives in me, and though I live in the flesh (ὃ δὲ νῦν ζῶ ἐν σαρκί) I live in the Son of God who loves me and gave himself for me' (Gal 2.21). Christ who lives within us is the seed of that justice which, maturing within our souls, and being nurtured and growing in fruition by our exercise of the virtues, will only achieve fruition within the true justice of God's eternal city. We must not, indeed, confuse this justice, 'the justice of God by faith in Jesus Christ' (Rom. 3:22), with mere legalistic justice (διὰ νόμου) that comes by law alone. Legalistic justice is transcended by the divine justice accessible by grace, the gift of God showed pre-eminently in Christ, God made man, freely dying for us, so that, joined with His sprit, the true and everlasting word of God, we may follow where He leads us, to heaven.

Galatians 3

The true doctrine of Jesus Christ, 'whom you saw crucified' (Gal 3:1), cannot be lived by an ethic of mere legalism 'from the works of the law'; it is not thus that we receive the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead but rather *ex auditu fidei*, 'by the hearing of faith' (3:4). The emphasis on faith *ex auditu* has proved controversial particularly with the debates among 20th-century Catholic theologians.[551] Yet that faith should be *ex auditu* (*ex akoes*) is but natural. For we have seen that *pistis* as a concept has fundamentally rhetorical associations; it must be seen to correlate with *logos*. The correlative response of trust in, and persuasion by, *logos* (speech, thought, idea, or work of rhetoric) is *pistis*. To say, therefore, that *pistis* is *ex auditu* is simply to elaborate upon its essential meaning. *Pistis* is the response of the *nous* (*intellectus*) to the *logos*, in this case the divine *logos*, which is preached as a living word that dwells within our hearts, not as the dead word of mere legalistic codes.[552] Paul, therefore,

[551] Indeed, an affirmation that faith is obtained *ex auditu* is article 5 of the 'Anti-Modernist Oath' which Pope Pius X enjoined on all Catholic clergy: 'Quinto, certissime teneo ac sincere profiteor, fidem non esse caecum sensum religionis e latrebis subconscientiae erumpentem, sub pressione cordis et inflesione voluntatis maraliter informatae, sed verum assensum intellectus veritati extrinsecus acceptae *ex auditu*, quo nempe, quae a Deo personali, creatore ac Domino nostro dicta, testata et revelata sunt, vera esse credimus, propter Dei auctoritatem summe veracis' (emphasis added).

[552] The correlation between the *logos* and *pistis* within rhetoric has been a recurring theme in this work (see Chapter 4). For the rhetorical associations of *pistis* in koine Greek, see Plutarch, 'De Garrulitate' *Moralia*, ed. Gregorius N. Bernardakis (Leipzig: ed.Teubner, 1891), 503d.

commends to that Galatians that their Christian living, confirmed by miracles, is indeed born of this faith, this persuasion of the whole person to seek God in Christ (3:5).

As in Romans, Paul here invokes the example of Abraham, who was justified because of his performance of 'works of the law'. The Mosaic law had, indeed, yet to be given (Gal 3:17-18). Instead, Abraham 'believed in God, and it was reckoned to him as justice' (3:6). God's promise to Abraham, therefore, that in him all people will be blessed (Gen. 12.3; 18.18) is a promise that by the same faith that Abraham had in God we will be not only blessed, but also justified (Gal 3:6-9). This promise has never been rescinded and is therefore still good (Gal 3:15-17): We are justified by faith, the faith of Abraham. It is not just that no one can be justified by 'works of the law'; those who try are actually under a curse (*hypo karatan* ὑπὸ κατάραν), for Deuteronomy tells us, 'cursed is everyone who does not remain in the words of the law put down in this book' (Deut. 27:26). The quotation from Deuteronomy would seem to imply that Paul has in mind only the works of the Mosaic law in declaring that those under the law are cursed. However, the lack of an article in 'ἐξ ἔργων νόμου' suggests that Paul is referring again not just to the Mosaic law, but also to the notion of justification by adherence to written law in general. If this is the case, the limitations of law, as propounded by Platonic ethics, are again of great moment (See Gal. 2). However, even the commandments of the Decalogue, which Paul specifically commands us to fulfil, cannot themselves be fulfilled by means of a legalistic ethic, but by love of neighbour (Rom. 13:10), which, for a Christian, is also inseparable from love of God. If one thinks that one has fulfilled even these commandments via an ethic of legalism, without the love of God and neighbour, one preforms the exterior works in vain, and has no portion of the divine justice of God's Kingdom. Indeed, by legalistic notions alone, Christ was himself accursed, for the law accounts cursed the one who 'hangs on a tree' (Deut. 21.23, Gal. 3:15).

What, then, was the law for? What, indeed, is any law for (Gal 3:19)? Paul's answer, again, follows very much along the lines of what Platonic ethics has to say about law, and shares its assumptions. Written legal statutes cannot in themselves define that justice constitutive of the ideal kingdom, the Kingdom of God. But short of this ideal kingdom, a system of prescribed, written laws is the

best way to approximate its justice.[553] Before Christ's revelation and the bestowing of that grace whereby we could live, through faith, for God's kingdom, being fashioned in our souls after the pattern of divine justice, an approximate justice of legal statutes was the best that could be hoped for (Gal 3:20-27). In this sense, law was our tutor (*paedagogos*) (3:24). But full justification, and hence harmonization with God's perfectly just kingdom, comes only through faith in Christ (3:25-26). Where we have been baptized in Christ, we have 'put on Christ' (3:27); we have draped upon our souls the mantel of His justice, and have, therefore, no need of the *paedagogos* of the Law. Nor indeed are we bound to the Mosaic law on account of ethnicity, if we be Jewish, 'for there is neither Jew nor Greek, nor slave nor free, nor male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (3:27). For in Christ's justice, the justice of God's kingdom, all are equally free citizens, and special laws, differing in respect to different classes of people, no longer apply. In receiving this justice, in Christ, we are the true children of Abraham (3:29).

Galatians 5

Paul's emphasis on freedom in Galatians 5:1-4 may first strike one as anachronistic. But although the modern political science which places freedom (and democracy) at the height and summit of all political constructions may have been anathema to ancient philosophy, a political and spiritual notion of freedom was not without great significance. In a Jewish context, freedom, in its most concrete sense, would have been seen paradigmatically in the Jewish people's liberation from slavery in Egypt to the land prepared for them by the Lord. Crucially, however, this freedom was almost the antithesis of licence: Israel is freed from captivity in Egypt so it may be able to serve God by adhering to His law. Freedom, in this context, is therefore the freedom necessary to serve the Lord in wisdom and holiness.[554] Indeed, the statement of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy is prefaced by a calling to mind of Israel's former slavery and deliverance: 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the house of slavery in Egypt' (Deut.5:6). What has this to do with the injunctions of the Decalogue? It is tempting to read this purely as an

[553] Plato, *Statesman*, 301d.
[554] Prv 9:10, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'.

assertion of God's power, and an exacting of *quid pro quo* service in return for a good deed done: I, God, am worth listening to because I have shown my great power and influence in freeing you from slavery in Egypt. Furthermore, after what I have done for you, you owe me your devoted service. But this interpretation fatally overlooks the fact that the fulfilment of the statutes of the Decalogue involves not mere outward service, but an inward spiritual and moral service to the God who is supremely just. Yet before Israel could receive the law, it had to be liberated from slavery. The precondition, it would seem, for following after God in justice and wisdom is a kind of freedom from slavery.

In the Greco-Roman milieu of which Paul was also part, freedom would have been a precondition for the cultivation of philosophy. Although Paul is not in the least implying that slaves cannot come to the fullness of charity in Jesus Christ, it would have been commonly understood in his day that being a freeborn man was necessary for the sort of education required to cultivate philosophy. What are now termed the liberal arts were seen, in the first century, as an object of study suitable only to a freeman, and not to a slave. Indeed, the idea of a philosopher-slave would probably have seemed absurd in a first-century context. The irony of all this is that Paul seems deliberately to be alluding to the establishment of the law in order to insist that it has been overthrown by the law of Christ. But if the new law of faith (Rom 3:27) has overthrown the old law, surely a new freedom must overthrow the old freedom in order to make this possible. This new freedom is based in a kind of spiritual servitude and humility in relation to God; both the epistemological scepticism essential to the philosopher and that service to the poor essential to the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Just as the Israelites had to wait until after being liberated from slavery in Egypt to receive God's law, so too the law of faith in Christ remains inaccessible to those who continue in the bondage of the old law.

But the slavery that Paul describes here is spiritual and moral rather than physical. The slavery of the old law which Paul has in mind amounts to a reliance on the purely forensic ethics of compliance or non-compliance to a written code, and an ethic that does not in itself presuppose an inner conversion of the soul to seek God in love. To claim to be justified merely by the written law (5:4) is to deny the inner transformation and harmonization of the soul which, by legal analogy,[555] allows souls, and not just city-states, to be become

[555] Plato, *Republic*, 433a.

just. Whoever is circumcised because he presupposes to find therein an infused, sacramental justification of the soul will not bear the fruit of that inner transformation wrought by faith in Christ. His justice will be outward only. This would apply also to him whose faith is one of mere outward assent, itself a kind of merely legal compliance that lacks the necessary transformation of mind, which Christ alone, as true *logos*, and 'Leader of Souls', can effect.[556]

What both these mistaken theories of justification have in common is what we have already identified as an ethic of mere adherence or non-adherence to codifiable law. Because it precludes an ethic of charity unbounded by individual texts, or articles requiring assent, this ethic reveals, indeed, a fatal lack of moral ambition. Law, by its very nature, is meant as an imperfect safeguard on the norms of society; law can circumscribe the unjust behaviour of citizens, but it cannot in itself create just souls. Those who operate 'in the spirit of faith' are contrasted with those 'in the law' (Gal. 5:5). The implication of receiving the hope of justice in the 'spirit by faith' as opposed to 'in the law' seems to be twofold: firstly, that we have not received this hope legalistically, but as the natural fruit of a faith that yearns to see God.[557] Secondly, this hope is received not merely in the spirit of faith (in the sense of the idiomatic phrase whereby I might say speak of 'the spirit of Paul', or 'the Spirit of Vatican II') but by *the* Spirit, the Spirit of God, which rose Christ from the dead, and which will also raise those up at the last day who have the same Spirit in them (Rom. 8:11). For we live by faith, striving to see God, not through our own power, but through the gift of God's Spirit. It is this 'Spirit of adaption' which we receive, and 'through whom we cry Abba, Father' (Rom 8:15). The faithful live, therefore, not just in the Spirit of faith, the Spirit of philosophy in Christ, but also through God's Spirit which, being received with steadfastness of purpose, nourishes and indeed impels us on the road to Christ Himself. Within God's Spirit, the faithful live, then, in 'the hope of justice', a hope not only in the moral order of a cosmos which we believe will be refashioned as the New Jerusalem, God's divine and eternal city, but in the hope of seeing God who is Himself justice (1 Cor 1:30), and in whose presence is also the highest 'glory and honour and incorruption' (Rom. 2:6).[558] Just as the faithful may rightly 'boast in the hope of God's glory' (Rom. 5:2), by broadcasting far and wide His gospel, we may

[556] Plato, *Phaedrus* 261b.
[557] See Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 3.10.45.
[558] See Origen, *Commentary on Romans,*5:8 (on Romans 2:5-7).

likewise boast, and indeed hope, in His justice. For just as justice has its paradigmatic fullness in God, so God's glory consists in the aesthetic splendour of His presence.[559] In Exodus, the glory of God in the tabernacle consists in His presence, manifested by a cloud over the tabernacle (Ex 40:38). God will, by His spirit, raise up the saints at the last day from the dishonour of mere earthy existence to the glory of the presence of God.[560] Thus, justice will come to reign, and the moral order of the cosmos be perfected, by means of the present glory of the Lord laying claim not only to all the souls that have ever been, but indeed to all of existence, so that 'God will be all in all' (1 Cor 15:28). Hope in God's justice is therefore also the hope of His glory, in which we may boast.[561]

Since our hope is 'by faith', it matters not at all whether we be circumcised, but whether we keep the faith which hopes in God's justice. This is pre-eminently 'a faith which works by love' (Gal 5:6). Here Paul has quite clearly nailed his ethical colours to the mast: legalistic ethics cannot justify the soul of man; only 'faith which works by love' (5:6). We have said a great deal about how Paul's ethic of faithfulness necessarily involves firm commitment and striving to meet God, very much in the model of Plato's proto-Christian philosopher. We have further noted than in Plato as well as in Paul, this striving is itself animated by divine power. In Plato, the ethical picture of the philosopher was expressed, at least in part, by means of the lover's ascent from the love of beautiful things, to the love of beauty itself, to the love of the Good. Yet it was the philosopher's ever-loftier drive to see the divine that was itself the animating power of his faith in the moral order of the cosmos, and, indeed, the worthwhileness of such an arduous endeavour. It was because the militating power of the philosopher's faith was his love, and because the *arxe* of this love was itself divine disclosure, that such faith, it was concluded, was divinely given.[562] The instrument of the philosopher's justification in Plato was therefore love. In Galatians 5:6, we are given a clear statement that this is also the case for Paul.

Ἐτρέχετε καλῶς, literally 'you were running well' (Gal 5:8), contrasts markedly with the use of the verb in Romans 9. The subject of Gal 5:8-10, though subsumed within the larger theme of justification, is God's election of

[559] Hebrews 1:3.
[560] 1 Cor 15:43.
[561] Rom. 5:2.
[562] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 244a, *Symposium* 210e.

the nation of Israel, which has a claim to that inheritance. Yet 'Israel is not all of Israel' (Rom. 9:6): Not all those among God's chosen people had the same share in God 's blessing. And yet 'Isaac and Jacob, whom God did bless, and preordain for great things, were not yet born when he blessed them, and could have done neither good nor ill, that there might be a calculation of selection' (Rom. 9:11): 'For it is neither of the one who wills, nor of the one who runs (οὐδὲ τοῦ τρέχοντος), but of him who shows mercy' (Rom. 9:16). The context in Romans 9, though subsumed within the larger theme of justification, is nominally that of the claim to inheritance of the House of Israel; of who can lay claim, in light of the Christ event, to be a member of God's chosen people. For we know that, in general, Paul thinks that striving (literally 'running') and willing are much of what the ethic of faith consists in: philosophical striving by means of love to see God is, indeed, Paul's Christian alternative to the ethics of legalism which the gospel has abolished.[563] It would be incongruous, therefore, if Paul were to claim that the quality of faith is irrelevant because the power to wash, sanctify, and justify (1 Cor 6:11) rests with God alone.[564] This is not, of course, to undervalue the essential point we have been making, that the engine of justification is God's own Spirit whereby He draws us to Himself (Rom 8:5-6. 13-14); but it is certainly not illegitimate to describe our response to the gift of the Spirit in terms of patient striving (Rom. 2:6, 8:19) or willing (Mt. 7:7-8).

Romans 9 is focused on God's election of the people of Israel. This was in no sense based on any prior merit on their part, but as a means of God's showcasing His glory, and, in the fullness of time, acting out His sanctifying and redemption of the world through the Incarnation. God choose Israel once and for all. Although Israel would be called again and again to return to God and follow His law, to turn away from a life of idolatry and iniquity, and to serve Him in wisdom and holiness, the Israelites' sins did not invalidate the covenant already established.

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[563] See Rom. 2:6-8.

[564] For Clement, faith is 'the beginning of action, being the foundation of rational choice' and indeed 'directly becomes knowledge, reposing on a sure foundation.' (*Stromateis* 2.2). Since the first principles of the most important knowledge (i.e. of the principles that stand behind the cosmos, including, of course, the 'First Principle of All') are ultimately unprovable, true knowledge must rely on faith as its hypothetical starting point [Clement of Alexandria*, Stromateis*, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2 trans. William Wilson, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885) 2.5].

However, the gift of faith in Christ needs always to be renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16), confirmed and strengthened in steadfast hope (Rom. 8:19) and above all in love of God and of neighbour (Gal 5:14). Though the grace by which we believe is offered without regard for any inner worth or merit, it cannot be sustained if it is not fostered in a life of philosophy, a life of seeking Christ. The most immediate fruit of this Christian philosophy is a life of virtue.[565] Hence, when Paul exhorts his brothers and sisters to a life of probity, the stakes could not be higher: 'The unjust shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven'; indeed, 'neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God' (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

In context, it would seem those who have stopped the brethren from believing in the truth have put it out that Paul himself had taught necessity of circumcision. Paul treats the accusation as a slander: far from simply allowing that Christians need not be circumcised in order to be grafted into the inheritance of God's elect, Paul, in ever stronger terms, says that such a suggestion is actually contrary to the faith. For those who would 'be justified by the law' are 'accursed of Christ'. Those who have falsified Paul's teaching on this front have therefore 'stopped them from believing in the truth' (Gal 5:7). Their belief that Paul preached the necessity of circumcision, and therefore observance of the law more generally, is not from Christ, 'the one who calls'; it is not the word of God. Thus, Paul refers to this persuasion as *peismone* rather than *pistis*, which would seem to be reserved for the true persuasion, the true faith of Christ (Gal. 5:8). Indeed, the question of the necessity of circumcision is no minor point of teaching: At stake is the supremacy of the law, and, accordingly, whether salvation belongs only to the Jewish people, physically marked out by the sign of their covenant with God in circumcision; and, more generally, whether the ethic of the Christian is one of legalism or one of faith through love, a love that strives for a moral perfection only realizable in the kingdom of God. The question of the necessity of circumcision might appear but 'a little leaven', but even a little leaven can cause all the dough to rise, and make a whole loaf of bread (Gal. 5:8). By such erroneous teachings will the

[565] Clement calls faith the 'greatest mother of the virtues' in observing that faith seems to gather together all of the virtues and indeed serve as their essential precondition (*Stromateis* 2.5).

faith be won or lost; and he who teaches such things will have to give an account for himself when he faces judgement in heaven (5:9).

In Galatians 5:11-15, as at the beginning of the chapter, Paul is obliged to define in what sense Christ has set us free, and indeed, what freedom means to the faithful. Being free from the legal requirements of the Jewish ceremonial law is not a pretext for licence; for were the Jews saved from slavery in Egypt to indulge in the transitory pleasures of the flesh, or to better serve God in the justice of faithful living? For the fruits of the flesh are works evincing a state of mind completely alien to philosophic faith, faith in Christ who is God's wisdom and justice (1 Cor 1:30). Having been endowed with free agency, the soul is furnished with inspirations ranging from the highest (*pneuma*) to the lowest (*sarx*). Indeed, it bears repeating that the human person is defined immaterially, according to the Platonist system, by the soul, a soul which cannot be conceived of apart from (at least potentially) belonging to the body, that is to say the material, visible matter in which it either will, has been, or is at present ensouled, and which contains the *logistikon*, the Man; the *thumikon*, the lion; and the *epithumikon*, the beast. These three parts of the Platonic soul are all equally soul. The soul's orientation as a whole towards the supervision of either the *logistikon* or the *epithumikon* may be measured by the extent to which the parts of the soul are harmonized on the model of the ideal city-state (and hence may be called just).

We might also think of Aristotle's 'single, intermediate entity' which the soul uses 'to perceive in sensation, by way of a mean, the good and the bad as such'.[566] Acting in accordance with this mean makes man logical; but he could just as easily use such a faculty of free choice in relation to the mean 'according to the good and the bad as such' to procure thereby a greater enjoyment of those sensations which he shares in common with the animals (431a).[567] This is the nature of the freedom into which we are called, not for the corruption of the flesh, but that we might 'serve one another in love' (Gal 5:13), love being, as we have described, the operative force of that justifying faith which works by love (5:13). It would seem that the *pneuma* of Galatians 5 corresponds to the *nous* of Romans 7:25: 'In my mind (*nous*) I serve the law of God, in the flesh the law of sin'; where *pneuma* would have normally been, as part of Paul's

[566] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 431a.
[567] Ibid.

pneuma/*sarx* dichotomy, we have *nous* instead: 'Walk in the spirit (*pneumati*) and do not fulfil the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires (*epithumei*) [things] contrary to the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and they are at enmity one against the other' (Gal. 5:14-15).

Less obvious, but no less fundamental, is the identification, according to the Platonic conception, of *nous* (or *noesis*; here identified with Paul's *pneuma*) with *logos*. In Plato, *nous*/*noesis* is the partition within the schema of the divided line that involves dialectical ascent to the habit of the Good by means of a gift of divine disclosure.[568] The proximate instrument of this ascent is that philosophic faith which works by love, and is nourished through the gradual perfection of dialectic, the art of *logos*. For, as we have seen, it is precisely the unifying and generalizing of conceptions among the species or form of a group of phenomenon—the realisation, for instance, of that essential, abstract beauty by which all things can be experienced as beautiful—on which the philosophic faith, in Plato, to a large extent rests. Thus, in the *Phaedo*, Socrates assumes, in each genre of enquiry, some principle (*logos*) and considers 'strongest' and 'best' 'whatever seems to agree with it'.[569] It is the positing of this *logos*, in a dialectic that works by means of *logoi*, that is itself a response to the divine, rhetorical *logos* which we have to heed and to follow, that is the starting point of the philosophic faith which with we have identified with the highest division within Plato's divided line.[570] That the *logistikon* is the faculty of the soul that occupies itself with *logos*, is therefore, for the Platonist, a matter of course. The kinship of Paul's dichotomy of *pneuma* against *sarx* with Plato's dichotomy of *logos*/ *nous* against *epithumia* thus becomes evident.

This quasi-dualism of spirit against *sarx*, *logos* against *epithumia*, cannot however be understood in the sense of sprit against flesh as if flesh were an evil in itself, which cannot be as long as we believe that the Word was made flesh. John Crysostom notes, in relation to this passage of Galatians, that 'flesh' denotes 'not the material of the body, but a vicious tendency of the soul'.[571] The

[568] Plato, *Republic*, 509b. See discussion of Plato's 'Divided Line' in Chapter 2.
[569] 'For this I regard as true and everything that disagrees with it as false. I will revert to these familiar subjects of ours as my point of departure and assume there are such things as absolute beauty, and goodness, and greatness, and the like' (Plato, *Phaedo* 101d).
[570] Plato, *Republic*, 511c.
[571] John Crysostom, 'Commentary on Galatians', *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series* Vol. 13. trans. Gross Alexander ed. Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1889).

Platonic ideal, and indeed, as we have argued, the Pauline as well, is of a harmonization of the entire soul under the supervision of *logos* rather than an overcoming, or even excision, of the passions of the soul, which, as Socrates often demonstrates, are necessary for the life of virtue.

What we must be on our guard against is the tyranny of *epithumia*, against which is placed the path of *logos*, *nous*, and *noesis*, understood in the Pauline system as well as the Platonic as necessarily working by love. Our freedom must not be used to indulge in 'the unseemliness of the flesh, but rather than we might serve each other in love' (Gal. 5:14). We offer, then, a reasonable service to God and to our neighbour, whom we commend to God (Rom. 12:1). We cultivate and renew our *nous* precisely through a life of service and sacrifice that is utterly devoid of selfishness. For the Christian faithful see the redemption of all things in Christ, perfected in the kingdom of God, as the culmination of their own divinely inspired love of God. To be in Christ, and His divine life, is to thirst for Christ's coming to His own, the redemption and perfection of those who love Him, when God will be 'all in all' (1 Cor 15: 28). To love our neighbour as ourselves is, in the first instance, to thirst for God's kingdom not selfishly but objectively; what is wrong to do to myself must, if we believe in the transcendental ethical categories, be wrong to do to my neighbour. The same rules and benchmarks must apply. Justice is justice, whoever happens to be concerned, whether myself or my neighbour. Justice is immutable and eternal, though expressed and embodied in the divine life of the Son (1 Cor 15), who, with unerring justice, will come to judge the quick and the dead. Indeed, if His body subsists among His people in the Church (1 Cor 12), it is quite impossible to love him, as eternal in the Godhead, and not to love the other members of His body.

To live then by the Spirit, by *logos and noesis*, is to allow one's soul to be harmonized with the pattern of heaven. This cannot be attained by a life lived solely 'by the law'. Along the same lines of Paul's spirit/flesh dichotomy is his spirit/law (or spirit/letter) dichotomy. The perfection of Christian living by the Spirit is set against a legalism that works merely negatively (i.e. by acting as a constraint against the excesses of *sarx*/*epithumia*). To love merely *hypo nomou*, then, is hardly better than to love for the flesh alone. Indeed, Paul's summary, in Galatians 5:20, of the sins of the flesh makes it quite clear that the spirit/flesh, spirit/Letter, *logos*/*epithumia* dichotomy—which, we may reiterate, is solved

not by the annihilation of the *epithumia* by the *logos*, but by the harmonizing of the whole through the grace of the Holy Spirit—is meant as a comprehensive picture of the types of sins into which our soul is prone to fall. It is certainly not confined only to matters of sexual incontinence. Although a host of sexual sins are indeed mentioned, so are murder, idolatry, witchcraft, enmity, strife, pride, jealousy, and riotousness (Gal. 5:20-21). Paul declares that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (5:21). But Paul's exhortation is not merely legalistic and negative, as we have described. For to say no to the vices of the flesh is, for Paul, to reorient and refashion the flesh, redeemed in Christ, for the use of those virtues that are the gifts of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, magnanimity, liberality, goodness, faith, meekness, and continence; and 'against such things there is no law' (5:22).

However, this pronouncement, that against the fruits of the Spirt there is no law, is ambiguous. We might understand it in the sense that none of the laws of Moses, if properly understood, according to the spirit, not the letter, could ever have prohibited such fundamental virtues as holy living, for, indeed, they were given for no other reason than to commend this life to us. We might, alternatively, understand that if anything in the Mosaic code should in fact contradict and impugn the fostering of such virtues it is to be regarded as superseded and indeed overthrown by the law of Christ. One might have expected, in this context, not 'against such things there is no law' but rather 'for such things there is no law' (perhaps *pros nomon* rather than *kata nomon*), so as to claim, once again, that the law of Moses, the Law of the Flesh, is not sufficient, and that one must live finally in the *logos*, in the *pneuma* of Christ. In addition, the use of the genitive rather than the accusative with *kata* does tempt one to read this more in the sense of 'from', 'by', or indeed, 'concerning such things', there is no law. Liddell and Scott cite Plato's use of '*epainos kata tinos*', which means' praise concerning whom'. However, we also find, in Aeschylus, '*logos kata tina'* meaning speech against someone; and the consensus of later translations, including the Vulgate, which has '*adversus*' for '*kata*', and Luther, who has '*wider*' for '*kata*,' and the main English translations, incline me to accept the rendering 'against such things there is no law'. Militating also in favour of this reading is that Paul has already discoursed abundantly on the limits of an ethics of mere law: that life of the Spirit in faith

cannot be encapsulated by a legalistic ethics has already been established (Gal. 5.4).

However, if no written law or set of laws can adequately define the moral flourishing of the faithful Christian, there remain difficulties interpreting 'against such things [the fruits of the Holy Spirit] there is no law'. Within the confines of the New Testament, one will recall Christ's teaching in defence of teaching on the Sabbath, in defiance of the letter of the Abrahamic moral code: 'The sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath' (Mt.12:1-8). Understood outside the context of obvious good works, in this case healing the sick, we might conclude that one is always free to contravene moral law if one thinks one will thereby do good, and indeed accomplish the more robust and full-throated demands of the Gospel to love God and neighbour. However, this view presents serious difficulties. Where one is free to make one's own moral decision on the basis of one's own moral sense alone, however much this sense might be sublimated by reference to 'conscience', one can presumably justify anything and everything; nothing, even those commandments reiterated by Christ Himself, can be called binding in and of itself, and no moral law can be seen as objectively true, no action as right or wrong in itself. Yet it would surely not be contested that the commandment 'thou shall not steal', for instance, does have exceptions: the starving man who steals a loaf of bread from one who is well off may well be justified. Killing in self-defence is not to be considered murder. But besides these well-known exceptions there are a multitude of others: does telling a lie to save a life constitute a permissible lie, or, in this circumstance, does the lie no longer even bear the character of a lie? To endorse the pure deontological position would be to deny that one can ever define exceptions to unconditional moral maxims except by redefining the moral maxim.

However, Platonism, the ethical system into which, as I have argued, Paul's thought most coherently fits, presents, as we have seen, something very far from a purely deontological picture. Where we are presented, as in Galatians 5, with a list of do's and don'ts, the works of the flesh as against the works of the fruits of the Spirit, one finds that this overwhelmingly consists not in specific actions to be enjoined or proscribed, but rather the virtues [i.e. habits] and vices defined by such actions. For who is guilty of the sin of envy but the one who is envious? And who is envious [i.e. possesses the vice of envy] but he who, repeatedly and

without repentance of heart and mind, acts on his envy? The same is true with drunkenness: a drunk is not anyone who drinks, but only he who excessively and habitually drinks. What is excess? What is habitual? Surely this must be determined not least by the extent to which one's drinking tarnishes the exercise of the other moral virtues. Fornication is to be understood as the work of the flesh depriving the practitioner of the kingdom of heaven insofar as it is a subset of the various other, more generalized habits, such as incontinence, unfaithfulness, and, in general, a lack of charity, a failure to love God and neighbour. 'Those who do such things' are not non-habitual offenders who repent, amend their lives, and, after reorienting themselves to God, relinquish the *ergon* of 'envy, strife, idolatry…' and put on the *ergon* of Christian love.

Just as Plato's philosopher is defined in terms of the cardinal virtues, wisdom, courage, temperance, on the model of the forms and habitual qualities of these things, which in fact themselves define the various classes in the ideal state, the harmony of the whole city-state in the *Republic*, and indeed, the extent to which it can be termed just or unjust, may be reckoned in terms of the proper performance by each class of its characteristic virtue.[572] Clearly, any individual man reared in the city—and indeed, of much greater moment for our purposes, he whose soul conforms to the pattern of this city—would, in the concrete matters of everyday life, prove himself to be just. He would neither embezzle funds, nor betray another, nor abandon his parents, nor neglect his religious duties. But he would not do this because he is a good scrupulous follower of the written moral law, but because his soul would be like unto the justice of God. It would be impossible for him *not* to fulfil those commandments that are merely the particular instantiations of the justice of a soul that possesses the Spirit of God.

Paul's conclusion, therefore, that against such fruits of the Spirit 'there is no law' must be understood in terms of the of justification by that faith which works by love that is both logically and ontologically prior to mere obedience to the law. It is prior as the archetype is to the shadow, as beauty itself is to the beautiful creature; for man is just not because he obeys the moral law, but because he has that which shows forth the fruit of the Spirit of God he obeys the

[572] Wisdom for the guardians, courage for the soldiers, and temperance for the artisans. The harmony of all classes is justice. Hence all four 'cardinal' virtues have their place. Plato, *Republic*, 427e–433b.

moral law. He lives in the Spirit, and therefore he lives in Christ, or rather Christ lives in him (Gal. 2:20).

Summary of Justification in Galatians

Making use, again, of Platonic ethics, as we have defined it as a heuristic tool, we have endeavoured to read key passages of Galatians in a coherent manner. As a result, it must be concluded that the main lesson Luther drew from the Epistle, the two natures of *dikaiosyne* (justice/righteousness), one passive and Christian, the other passive and un-Christian, is untenable. Galatians, more explicitly even than Romans, has dealt with the problem of a merely legalistic ethics. Luther is surely right, as we have been at pains to show, that Paul rejects legalistic ethics *tout court*. Luther is also right that Paul gives primacy to faith, rather than the scrupulous observance of statutes. Yet, what I believe is especially clear if one reads Galatians within the framework of Platonic ethics, as we have done, is that the 'faith which works by love' may be seen by its fruits in virtuous living. But it is not because of the Christian's virtuous living that he has this faith. It is rather because he has a divine faith strong enough to bring him towards God, and His divine justice, that his soul itself can be fashioned after the pattern of this divine justice. Thus, to reject mere legalism is, for Paul, in no sense to reject all ethical notions of just living that would have also conformed, to large extent, to pre-Christian, Platonic notions.

6. Conclusion

Our survey of the heavily Platonic milieu of the early Church and a systematic consideration of its system (Chapter 1) have given us good reason to apply the Platonic lens to the problem of justification, so much the *cause celebre* of Luther and the Reformers. In Chapter 2 we grounded our understanding of Platonism, as it relates to the Christian theological question of justification, in key dialogues of Plato himself. In Chapter 3, we examined the problem of justification in relation to questions of Christian contemplation and theological aesthetics, and used the example of two Platonist/Christian converts to study the interface of mere Platonism, on the one hand, with fully Christian theology on the other. In Chapter 4 we embarked on exegesis of Romans 1–6 through a Platonist lens. In Chapter 5 we did the same for Galatians 2–3, 5 and 6.

Our aim has been to use Platonic ethics, outlined in Chapter 3, as a heuristic tool by which to read Paul on justification coherently. In the summary that closed Chapter 3, we outlined Platonic ethics, in contradistinction to the more general Ur-Platonism of Lloyd Gerson, in five basic points.[573] Their

[573] We summarized Platonic ethics at the end of Chapter 2 under five principles. They are reprinted here.

1. **A Human End:** The aim of all human beings, and thus, the highest concern of human ethics, is how to be reconciled with and likened unto/harmonized with God (This was largely taken up in Chapter 1).
1. **A Human Deficiency:** We are in ourselves incapable of being reconciled to and harmonized with God without divine aid.
2. **A Divine Reception:** We are drawn to seek after God by our the reception of a divine gift from God Himself, which often takes the form of revelation within the visible order of creation.
3. **A Need for Philosophy:** In order to seek after God, one must become a philosopher, but the philosopher is substantially a lover of God, who lives by faith in Him, worked out by love.
4. **The Justification of the Soul:** We can only be reconciled to, and harmonized with, God where our souls fashioned after the pattern of His divine justice. Thus, we only accomplish our end, as human beings, when our souls are fashioned after the pattern of divine justice, and so may ourselves be accounted just. Herein consists our justification.

Pauline/Christian equivalents seem, in fact, a natural evolution, indeed their perfection, as Christian ethics. All of these points remain valid for Pauline ethics, and indeed have been our chief hermeneutical tool for reading Paul on justification. They have only to be further expounded and perfected in light of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Our assimilation with and reconciliation to God occurs *in Jesus Christ* (Point 1: 'A Human End'). The divine gift, the divine aid on which we depend, may be referred to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (Points 2-3: 'A Human Deficiency'; 'A Divine Reception'). We must indeed become philosophers, loving the wisdom that is God in Christ; for the true philosopher is the Christian who lives by faith in Him, specifically in Him revealed as the incarnate God, Our Lord Jesus Christ (Point 4: 'A Need for Philosophy'). The harmonization of our souls after the divine image of justice (Point 5: 'The Justification of the Soul'), in Paul, is obtained for the lover of God who lives by faith in Him. Just-living, defined in terms of the cardinal virtues, though inchoate and imperfect in this life, is the fruit of the philosophic faith, the Christian Faith. The faithful striving rewarded with eternal life (Rom 2:6-7) is the fruit of our Christian faith, 'apart from the works of the Law' (Rom 3:28); our faith in God, our faith in Christ.

It must be stressed that it has been in no sense the goal of this project to argue for a kind of syncretism of Platonism and Christianity. At the very least, as we attempted to show in our discussion of Justin and Augustine's conversion to Christianity in Chapter 2, such a syncretism, even if desirable, would be quite impossible. In order to have a religion one must have worship, which 'mere Platonism' in no way envisions; and in order to have worship one must have clear doctrines on such matters as the fate of one's soul, the destiny of the world, and the true name of God, about which mere Platonic ethics comes to no firm conclusions. This is not, of course, an indictment of a system of ethics that developed before the Christian revelation was made known in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For it must be kept in mind that Platonism and Platonic ethics form an invaluable resource and tool for Christian theology, specifically on the question of justification by faith; and indeed, there is some consensus among the Fathers that Platonism was the best of the pre-Christian philosophies.

Furthermore, there is little doubt that Platonism was the system of thought within which most early Christians and Church Fathers, who were theologically inclined, attempted to understand the Gospel made known to them in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This study has, I hope, given reason to consider that this was likely the case for Paul as well. I have offered no historical or contextual proof to that effect, apart from the Platonist context of Paul's intellectual milieu in Chapter 1. However, the success of Platonic ethics as a heuristic tool for reading Paul, particularly on the question of justification by faith, will, I hope, lead scholars to further interrogate Paul's possible indebtedness to this most noble of moral visions, a vision which, I believe, finds its true and perfect expression not in mere Platonic ethics, but in the life of the Christian, in the triumph of the saints.

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