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THE NOTION AND PROBLEM OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.

A POSITIVE solution of the question regarding the true nature and province of the Philosophy of Religion may best be reached by inquiring, first of all, what it is *not*, and cannot be. In proceeding thus we are following the path which history has pointed out to us. For a true insight into the problem of the Philosophy of Religion was gradually gained, only through, and as a consequence of, the erroneous conceptions of past centuries.

The Philosophy of Religion originated in ancient times under the form of a religious philosophy and philosophical religion. The oldest philosophical systems of the Hindoos, Egyptians, and Greeks were philosophies of religion in the sense of a philosophically constructed cosmology. These world-conceptions aimed to satisfy religious needs and to replace the popular mythical religions of which they claimed to be the higher and esoteric truth. The Gnostic systems of the second century of the Christian era stood in exactly the same relation to the religious faith of both Christian and non-Christian communities. They sought, by combining the mythical notions and historical traditions of the existing popular religions with the ideas and speculations of philosophical systems, to establish a higher form of religion. This compound of different elements they proclaimed to be the esoteric truth of all religions. The Philosophy of Religion in this sense is a centaur, an unnatural