

On Abraham

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Chapter I

The sacred laws having been written in five books, the first is called and inscribed Genesis, deriving its title from the creation (genesis) of the world, which it contains at the beginning; although there are ten thousand other matters also introduced which refer to peace and to war, or to fertility and barrenness, or to hunger and plenty, or to the terrible destructions which have taken place on earth by the agency of fire and water; or, on the contrary, to the birth and rapid propagation of animals and plants in accordance with the admirable arrangement of the atmosphere, and the seasons of the year, and of men, some of whom lived in accordance with virtue, while others were associated with wickedness.

But since of these things some are portions of the world, and some are accidents, and since the world is the most perfect and complete of all things, he has normally assigned the whole book to that subject. We have then examined with all the accuracy that was in our power, in what manner the creation of the world was arranged in our previous treatises;

but since it is necessary, to be consistent with the regular order in which the sacred history proceeds to go on, now to investigate the laws, we will for the present postpone the particular laws which are copies as it were; and first of all examine the more general laws which are, as it were, the models of the others.

Now these are those men who have lived irreproachably and admirably, whose virtues are durably and permanently recorded, as on pillars in the sacred scriptures, not merely with the object of praising the men themselves, but also for the sake of exhorting those who read their history, and of leading them on to emulate their conduct;

for these men have been living and rational laws; and the lawgiver has magnified them for two reasons; first, because he was desirous to show that the injunctions which are thus given are not inconsistent with nature; and, secondly, that he might prove that it is not very difficult or laborious for those who wish to live according to the laws established in these books, since the earliest men easily and spontaneously obeyed the unwritten principle of legislation before any one of the particular laws were written down at all. So that a man may very properly say, that the written laws are nothing more than a memorial of the life of the ancients, tracing back in an antiquarian spirit, the

actions and reasonings which they adopted;

for these first men, without ever having been followers or pupils of any one, and without ever having been taught by preceptors what they ought to do or say, but having embraced a line of conduct consistent with nature from attending to their own natural impulses, and from being prompted by an innate virtue, and looking upon nature herself to be, what in fact she is, the most ancient and duly established of laws, did in reality spend their whole lives in making laws, never of deliberate purpose doing anything open to reproach, and for their accidental errors propitiating God, and appeasing him by prayers and supplications, so as to procure for themselves the enjoyment of an entire life of virtue and prosperity, both in respect of their deliberate actions, and those which proceeded from no voluntary purpose.

Chapter II

Since then the beginning of all participation in good things is hope, and since the soul devoted to virtue pioneers and opens this path as a plain and easy one, being anxious to attain to that which is really honourable, the sacred historian has named the first lover of hope, Enos, giving him the common name of the whole race as an especial favour.

For the Chaldaeans call man Enos; as if he were the only real man, who lived in expectation of good things, and who is established in good hopes; from which it is evident that they do not look upon the man devoid of hope as a man at all, but rather as an animal resembling a man, inasmuch as he is deprived of that most peculiar possession of the human soul, namely hope.

For which reason, being desirous to deliver an admirable panegyric on the hopeful man, the sacred historian tells us, first, that “he hoped in the father and creator of the Universe,” and adds in a subsequent passage, “This is the book of the generation of Men,” and of their fathers, and grandfathers who had existed previously; but he conceived that they were the ancestors of the mixed race, that is to say, of that purer and thoroughly sifted race which is the really rational one;

for, as the poet Homer, though the number of poets is beyond all calculation, is called “the poet” by way of distinction, and as the black [ink] with which we write is called “the black,” though in point of fact everything

which is not white is black; and as that archon at Athens is especially called “the archon,” who is the archon eponymus and the chief of the nine archons, from whom the chronology is dated; so in the same manner the sacred historian calls him who indulges in hope, “a man,” by way of pre-eminence, passing over in silence the rest of the multitude of human beings, as not being worthy to receive the same appellation.

And he has very properly called the first volume, the Book of the Generation of the Real Man, speaking with perfect correctness; because the man who is full of good hope is worthy of being described and remembered, not with such a memory as is given by a record in papers, which are hereafter to be destroyed by bookworms, but by that which exists in immortal nature, where the virtuous actions are regularly recorded.

If then any one were to reckon the generations, from the first man, who was made out of the earth, he will find him who, by the Chaldaeans is called Enos, and in the Greek language ἀνθρώπος (the man), to be the fourth in succession,

and in numbers the number four is honoured among other philosophers, who have studied and admired the incorporeal essences, appreciable only by the intellect, and especially by the all-wise Moses, who magnifies the number four, and says that it is “holy and Praiseworthy;” and the reasons for which this character has been given to it are mentioned in a former treatise.

And the man who is full of good hope is likewise holy and praiseworthy; as, on the contrary, he who has no hope is accursed and blameable, being always associated with fear, which is an evil counsellor in any emergency; for they say, that there is no one thing so hostile to another, as hope is to fear and fear to hope, and perhaps this may be correctly said, for both fear and hope are an expectation, but the one is an expectation of good things, and the other, on the contrary, of evil things; and the natures of good and evil are irreconcilable, and such as can never come together.

Chapter III

What has now been said about hope is sufficient; and nature has placed her at the gates to be a sort of doorkeeper to the royal virtues within, which no one may approach who has not previously paid homage to hope.

Therefore the lawgivers, and the laws in every state on earth, labour with great diligence to fill the souls of free men with good hopes; but he who, without any recommendation and without being enjoined to be so, is nevertheless hopeful, has acquired this virtue by an unwritten, self-taught law, which nature has implanted in him.

That which is placed in the next rank after hope is repentance for errors committed, and improvement; in reference to which principle Moses mentions next in order to Enos, the man who changed from a worse system of life to a better, who is called among the Hebrews Enoch, but as the Greeks would say, “gracious,” of whom the following statement is made, “that Enoch pleased God, and was not found, because God transported Him.”

For transportation shows a change and alteration: and such a change is for the better, because it takes place through the providence of God; for every thing that is with God is in every case honourable and advantageous, since that which is destitute of any divine superintendence is useless and unprofitable.

And the expression, “he was not Found,” (this is not the translation of the Bible which says “and Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.”) is very appropriately employed of him whose place was changed, either from the fact of his ancient blameable life being wiped out and effaced, and being no longer found, just as if it had never existed at all, or else because he whose place has been changed, and who is enrolled in a better class; is naturally difficult to be discovered. For wickedness is a very multiform and extensive thing, on which account it is known to many persons; but virtue is rare, so that it is not comprehended even by a few.

And besides, the bad man runs about through the market-place, and theatres, and courts of justice, and council halls, and assemblies, and every meeting and collection of men whatever, like one who lives with and for curiosity, letting loose his tongue in immoderate, and interminable, and indiscriminate conversation, confusing and disturbing every thing, mixing up what is true and what is false, what is unspeakable with what is public, private with public things, things profane with things sacred, what is ridiculous with what is excellent, from never having been instructed in what is the most excellent thing in season, namely silence.

And pricking up his ears, because of the abundance of his leisure, and his superfluous curiosity, and love of interference, he is eager to make himself acquainted with the business of other people, whether good or bad, so as at once to envy those who are prosperous, and to rejoice over those who are not so; for the bad man is by nature envious and a hater of all that is good, and a lover of all that is evil.

Chapter IV

But the good man, on the contrary, is a lover of that mode of life which is not troubled by business, and withdraws, and loves solitude, desiring to escape the notice of the many, not out of misanthropy, for he is a lover of mankind, if any one in the world is so, but because he eschews wickedness, which the chief multitude eagerly embraces, rejoicing at what it ought to mourn over, and grieving at what it is becoming rather to rejoice.

On which account the good man shuts himself up, and remains for the most part at home, scarcely going over his threshold, or if he does go out, for the sake of avoiding the crowds who come to visit him, he generally goes out of the city, and makes his abode in some country place, living more pleasantly with such companions as are the most virtuous of all mankind, whose bodies, indeed, time has dissolved, but whose virtues the records which are left of them keep alive, in poems and in prose, histories by which the soul is naturally improved and led on to perfection.

It is on this account that the sacred historian has said that the man whose place was changed was not found, inasmuch as he is difficult to find and hard to seek out. Therefore, such a man emigrates from ignorance to instruction, and from folly to wisdom and from cowardice to courage, and from impiety to piety; and, again, from devotion to pleasure to temperance, and from vaingloriousness to simplicity, qualities superior to all riches, and more valuable as a possession than any royal or imperial power.

For if one may speak the plain truth, that wealth which is not blind, but which is clear-sighted, is the abundance of virtues, which we must at once conclude to be the genuine and legitimate predominance of good in comparison of all other bastard and falsely named powers, and to be the just and lawful superior of them all.

But we must not be ignorant that repentance occupies the second place only, next after perfection, just as the change from sickness to convalescence is inferior to perfect uninterrupted health. Therefore, that which is continuous and perfect in virtues is very near divine power, but that condition which is improvement advancing in process of time is the peculiar blessing of a well-disposed soul, which does not continue in its childish pursuits, but by more vigorous thoughts and inclinations, such as really become a man, seeks a tranquil steadiness of soul, and which attains to it by its conception of what is good.

Chapter V

For which reason the sacred historian very naturally classes the lover of God and the lover of virtue next in order to him who repents; and this man is in the language of the Hebrews called Noah, but in that of the Greeks, “rest,” or “the just man,” both being appellations very well suited to the wise man. That of “the just man” most evidently so, for nothing is better than justice, which is the chief among virtues, and which receives the highest honours like the most beautiful member of a company; and the appellation “rest” is likewise appropriate, since the opposite quality to rest is unnatural agitation, the cause of confusion, and tumults, and seditions, and wars, which the wicked pursue; while those who pay due honour to excellence cultivate a tranquil, and quiet, and stable, and peaceful life.

And in strict consistency with himself, the lawgiver also calls the seventh day “rest,” which the Hebrews call “the sabbath;” not as some persons fancy, because after six days the multitude was refrained from its habitual employments, but because in real truth, the number seven is both in the world and in ourselves free from seditions and from wars, and is of all the numbers that which is the most averse to contention, and the greater lover of peace.

And a proof of what I have here asserted may be found in the powers which exist in us; for six of those powers, namely the five outward senses and uttered speech, stir up continued and ceaseless war, both by sea and land, some of them doing so from a desire for the objects of the outward senses, which if they cannot obtain they are grieved, and the last by divulging with unbridled mouth numbers of things which ought to be buried in silence.

But the seventh power is that which proceeds from the dominant mind, which is more glorious than the other six powers, and which has by pre-eminent vigour obtained the mastery over them all, and when that retires, choosing solitude, and its own society, and living by itself, as one that has no need of any other, and that is all-sufficient for itself, being then emancipated from the cares and troubles that are found in the human race, embraces a calm and tranquil life.

Chapter VI

And the lawgiver magnifies the lover of virtue in such a way, that even when he is given his genealogy, he does not trace himself as he usually does other persons, by giving a catalogue of his grandfathers and great grandfathers, and ancestors who are numbered as men and women, but he gives a list of certain virtues; and almost asserts in express words that there is no other house, or kindred, or country whatever to a wise man, except the virtues and the actions in accordance with virtues. “For these,” says he, “are the generations of Noah; Noah was a just man, perfect in his generation, and one who pleased God.”

But we must not be ignorant that when he says man here, he does not mean merely to use the common expressions for a rational mortal animal, but that he means to indicate in an eminent degree him who verifies the name, having driven away all the untameable and furious passions and brutal wickednesses of the soul;

and as a proof of this, after the word man he adds as an epithet, “the just,” saying, “a just man,” as if no unjust person were a man at all, but to speak more properly a beast in the likeness of a man, and as if he alone were a man who is an admirer of justice;

he also says that he was “perfect,” intimating by this expression that he was possessed not of one virtue only but of all, and that being so possessed of them, he constantly exhibited every one of them according to his power and opportunities;

and finally crowning him like a wrestler who has gained a glorious victory, he honours him moreover with a most noble proclamation, saying that “he pleased God,” (and what can there be in nature that is more excellent than this panegyric?) which is the most visible proof of excellence; for if they who

displease God are miserable, those who please him are by all means happy.

Chapter VII

It is not then without great correctness that after he has praised the man as being possessed of such great virtues he adds, “and he was perfect in his generation.” Showing that he was not perfect absolutely, but that he was good in comparison with the others who lived at that time;

for in a little time he will also speak of other wise men who were possessed of unconquerable and incomparable virtue, not merely if contrasted with the wicked, nor because they were better than the other men of their age, and as such were considered worthy of acceptance and pre-eminence, but because having received a well disposed nature, they preserved it without any error or change for the worse; not fleeing from evil habits, but never having once fallen into them, and being by deliberate purpose practicers of all virtuous actions and speeches, by which system they had adorned their life.

Those then are the most admirable of all men who have adopted free and noble inclinations, not in imitation of or by way of contrast to others, but from an inclination to genuine virtue and justice for its own sake; he also is to be admired who is superior to his own generation and his own age, and who is overcome by none of those things which the multitude follows; and he will be classed in the second rank, and nature will give to such men the best of her prizes;

and the second prize is of itself a great thing; for what is not a great and most desirable object which God offers to, and bestows upon men? And the greatest proof of this is to be found in the exceeding graces which this man attained to;

for as that time bore an abundant crop of injustice and impiety, and so every country, and nation, and city, and house, and every separate individual was full of wicked practices, all men of free will and of deliberate purpose, as if in an arena, living with one another for the first rank in iniquity, and strove with all possible zeal and rivalry, every one seeking to surpass his neighbour in the magnitude of his wickedness, and failing in nothing which might render life blameless and accursed.

Chapter VIII

At whom God, being naturally indignant, and being angry that that which appeared to be the most excellent of animals, and which had been thought worthy of being reckoned akin to himself by reason of his participation in reason, when he ought to have practised virtue, devoted himself rather to wickedness, and to every species of vice, appointed a fitting punishment for them, and determined to destroy the whole race at that time existing by a deluge; and not only those who dwelt in the champaign country and in the lower districts,

but those also who lived in the most lofty mountains, for the great deep, being raised to a height which it had never reached before, burst through its mouths with its whole collective impetuosity into the seas existing among us, and they overflowed and inundated all the islands and continents; and incessant floods of everlasting fountains, and of native rivers and torrents combined together, mingled with one another, and rising to a vast height, so as to surmount everything.

Nor indeed was the air tranquil, for a deep and unbroken cloud overspread the whole heaven, and there were fearful storms of wind, and roarings of thunder, and flashes of lightning, and rapid hurlings of thunderbolts, ceaseless storms of rain being poured forth, so that one might have thought that all the parts of the universe were hastening to dissolve themselves into the one element of the nature of water, until, while the water from above kept pouring down, and that below kept bursting up, the streams were raised to a height above everything, so that they not only overwhelmed and hid from sight all the plains and all the level ground, but even the tops of the highest mountains, for every part of the earth was under water, so that it was wholly buried and carried away, and the world was mutilated of huge portions, and appeared in all its wholeness and integrity, fearful as it is to say or even to imagine such a thing, to be utterly crippled and destroyed. And likewise the air, with the exception of that small portion which is about the moon, was wholly obscured, being overcast by the violence and impetuosity of the water which overran all the region belonging to it with irresistible might.

Then were speedily destroyed all the crops and all the trees, for an unlimited quantity of water is as destructive to them as a scarcity, and innumerable

flocks of animals, both tame and wild, perished at the same time; for it was natural when the most excellent race of all, that of man, had been destroyed, that none of the inferior races should be left, since they were only created to be slaves to his necessities, and to be in a manner subject to his authoritative commands as their master.

When such numbers then of such mighty evils had burst forth which that time poured out — for all the portions of the world, except the heaven itself, were moved in an unnatural manner — as if they were stricken with a terrible and deadly disease. And one house alone, that of the aforesaid just and God-loving man who had received the two highest of all gifts, was preserved; one gift being, as I have said already, the not being destroyed with all the rest of mankind, the other that of becoming himself, at a subsequent period, the founder of a new generation of mankind; for God thought him worthy to be both the end of our race and the beginning of it, the end of those men who lived before the deluge, and the beginning of those who lived after the deluge.

Chapter IX

Such was he who was the most virtuous of all the men of his age, and such were the rewards which were allotted to him which the holy scriptures enumerate; and the arrangement and classification of the aforesaid three, whether you call them men or dispositions of the soul, is very symmetrical, for the perfect man is entire from the beginning; but he who has his place changed is but half entire, having appropriated the earlier period of his life to wickedness, and the subsequent time to virtue to which he afterwards came over, and with which at that subsequent time he lived. But he who hopes, as his very name shows, has still a defect, for though he is always wishing for what is good, he is not as yet able to attain to it, but he is like those who are on a voyage, who while they are eager to reach the harbour, are still kept at sea without being able to anchor in port.

Chapter X

I have now then explained the character of the first triad of those who desire virtue. There is also another more important company of which we must now proceed to speak, for the former resembles those branches of instruction

which are allotted to the age of childhood, but this resembles rather the gymnastic exercises of athletic men, who are really preparing themselves for the sacred contests, who, despising all care of getting their body into proper condition, labour to bring about a healthy state of the soul, being desirous of that victory which is to be gained over the adverse passions.

The particulars then on which each individual differs from the other, though all are hastening to one and the same end, we will hereafter examine more minutely; but it is necessary not to pass over in silence what it seems desirable to premise concerning the whole three taken together.

It happens then that they are all three of one household and of one family, for the last of the three is the son of the middle one, and the grandson of the first; and they are all lovers of God, and beloved by God, loving the only God, and being loved in return by him who has chosen, as the holy scriptures tell us, by reason of the excess of their virtues in which they lived, to give them also a share of the same appellation as himself;

for having added his own peculiar name to their names he has united them together, appropriating to himself an appellation composed of the three names: “For,” says God, “this is my everlasting name: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” using there the relative term instead of the absolute one; and this is very natural, for God stands in no need of a name. But though he does not stand in any such need, nevertheless he bestows his own title on the human race that they may have a refuge to which to betake themselves in supplications and prayers, and so may not be destitute of a good hope.

Chapter XI

This then is what appears to be said of these holy men; and it is indicative of a nature more remote from our knowledge than, and much superior to, that which exists in the objects of outward sense; for the sacred word appears thoroughly to investigate and to describe the different dispositions of the soul, being all of them good, the one aiming at what is good by means of instruction, the second by nature, the last by practice; for the first, who is named Abraham, is a symbol of that virtue which is derived from instruction; the intermediate Isaac is an emblem of natural virtue; the third, Jacob, of that

virtue which is devoted to and derived from practice.

But we must not be ignorant that each of these men was endowed with all these powers, but that each derived his name from that one which predominated in him and mastered the others; for neither is it possible for instruction to be made perfect without natural endowments and practice, nor is nature able to arrive at the goal without instruction and practice, nor is practice unless it be founded on natural gifts and sound instruction.

Very appropriately, therefore, he has represented, as united by relationship, these three, which in name indeed are men, but in reality, as I have said before, virtues, nature, instruction, and practice, which men also call by another name, and entitle them the three graces (*charites*), either from the fact of God having bestowed (*kecharisthai*) on our race those three powers, in order to produce the perfection of life, or because they themselves have bestowed themselves on the rational soul as the most glorious of gifts, so that the eternal name, as set forth in the scriptures, may not be used in conjunction with three men, but rather with the aforesaid powers;

for the nature of mankind is mortal, but that of virtues is immortal; and it is more reasonable that the name of the everlasting God should be conjoined with what is immortal than with what is mortal, since what is immortal is akin to what is imperishable, but death is hostile to it.

Chapter XII

We must, however, not remain in ignorance that the sacred historian has represented the first man, him who was formed out of the earth as the father of all those who existed before the deluge; and him who, with his whole family, was the only person left out of so universal a destruction, because of his justice and his other excellencies and virtues, as the founder of the new race of men which was to flourish hereafter. And that venerable, and estimable, and glorious triad is comprehended by the sacred scriptures under one class, and called, "A royal priesthood, and a holy Nation."

And its name shows its power; for the nation is further called, in the language of the Hebrews, Israel, which name being interpreted means, "seeing God." But of sight, that which is exercised by means of the eyes is the most excellent of all the outward senses, since by that alone all the most beautiful of

existing things are comprehended, the sun and the moon, and the whole heaven, and the whole world; but the sight of the soul which is exercised, through the medium of its dominant part excel all other powers of the soul, as much as the powers of the soul excel all other powers; and this is prudence, which is the sight of the mind.

But he to whose lot it falls, not only by means of his knowledge, to comprehend all the other things which exist in nature, but also to behold the Father and Creator of the universe, has advanced to the very summit of happiness. For there is nothing above God; and if any one, directing towards him the eye of the soul, has reached up to him, let him then pray for ability to remain and to stand firm before him;

for the roads which lead upwards to him are laborious and slow, but the descent down the declivity, being rather like a rapid dragging down than a gradual descent, is swift and easy. And there are many things urged downwards, in which there is no use whatever, when God having made the soul to depend on his own powers, drags it up towards himself with a more vigorous attraction.

Chapter XIII

Let thus much, then, be said generally about the three persons, since it was absolutely necessary; but we must now proceed in regular order, to speak of those qualities in which each separate individual surpasses the others, beginning with him who is first mentioned. Now he, being an admirer of piety, the highest and greatest of all virtues, laboured earnestly to follow God, and to be obedient to the injunctions delivered by him, looking not only on those things as his commands which were signified to him by words and facts, but those also which were indicated by more express signs through the medium of nature, and which the truest of the outward senses comprehends before the uncertain and untrustworthy hearing can do so;

for if any one observes the arrangement which exists in nature, and the constitution according to which the world goes on, which is more excellent than any kind of reasoning, he learns, even though no one speaks to him, to study a course of life consistent with law and peace, looking to the example of good men. But the most manifest demonstrations of peace are those which the

scriptures contain; and we must mention the first which also occurs the first in the order in which they are set down.

Chapter XIV

He being impressed by an oracle by which he was commanded to leave his country, and his kindred, and his father's house, and to emigrate like a man returning from a foreign land to his own country, and not like one who was about to set out from his own land to settle in a foreign district, hastened eagerly on, thinking to do with promptness what he was commanded to do was equivalent to perfecting the matter.

And yet who else was it likely would be so undeviating and unchangeable as not to be won over by and as not to yield to the charms of one's relations and one's country? The love for which has in a manner —

And we have witnesses of this in the lawgivers who have enacted the second punishment next to death, namely, banishment, against those who are convicted of the most atrocious crimes: a punishment which indeed is not second to any, as it appears to me, if truth be the judge, but which is, in fact, much more grievous than death, since death is the end of all misfortunes, but banishment is not the end but the beginning of new calamities, inflicting instead of our death unaccompanied by pain ten thousand deaths with acute sensation.

Some men also, being engaged in traffic, do out of desire for gain sail over the sea, or being employed in some embassy, or being led by a desire to see the sights of foreign countries, or by a love for instruction, having various motives which attract them outwards and prevent their remaining where they are, some being led by a love of gain, others by the idea of being able to benefit their native city at its time of need in the most necessary and important particulars, others seeking to arrive at the knowledge of matters of which before they were ignorant, a knowledge which brings, at the same time, both delight and advantage to the soul. For men who have never travelled are to those who have, as blind men are to those who see clearly, are nevertheless anxious to behold their father's threshold and to salute it, and to embrace their acquaintances, and to enjoy the most delightful and wished-for sight of their relations and friends; and very often, seeing the affairs, for the sake of which

they left their country, protracted, they have abandoned them, being influenced by that most powerful feeling of longing for a union with their kindred.

But this man with a few companions, or perhaps I might say by himself, as soon as he was commanded to do so, left his home, and set out on an expedition to a foreign country in his soul even before he started with his body, his regard for mortal things being overpowered by his love for heavenly things.

Therefore giving no consideration to anything whatever, neither to the men of his tribe, nor to those of his borough, nor to his fellow disciples, nor to his companions, nor those of his blood as sprung from the same father or the same mother, nor to his country, nor to his ancient habits, nor to the customs in which he had been brought up, nor to his mode of life and his mates, every one of which things has a seductive and almost irresistible attraction and power, he departed as speedily as possible, yielding to a free and unrestrained impulse, and first of all he quitted the land of the Chaldaeans, a prosperous district, and one which was greatly flourishing at that period, and went into the land of Charran, and from that, after no very distant interval, he departed to another place, which we will speak of hereafter, when we have first discussed the country of Charran.

Chapter XV

The aforesaid emigrations, if one is to be guided by the literal expressions of the scripture, were performed by a wise man; but if we look to the laws of allegory, by a soul devoted to virtue and busied in the search after the true God.

For the Chaldaeans were, above all nations, addicted to the study of astronomy, and attributed all events to the motions of the stars, by which they fancied that all the things in the world were regulated, and accordingly they magnified the visible essence by the powers which numbers and the analogies of numbers contain, taking no account of the invisible essence appreciable only by the intellect. But while they were busied in investigating the arrangement existing in them with reference to the periodical revolutions of the sun, and moon, and the other planets, and fixed-stars, and the changes of

the seasons of the year, and the sympathy of the heavenly bodies with the things of the earth, they were led to imagine that the world itself was God, in their impious philosophy comparing the creature to the Creator.

The man who had been bred up in this doctrine, and who for a long time had studied the philosophy of the Chaldaeans, as if suddenly awakening from a deep slumber and opening the eye of the soul, and beginning to perceive a pure ray of light instead of profound darkness, followed the light, and saw what he had never seen before, a certain governor and director of the world standing above it, and guiding his own work in a salutary manner, and exerting his care and power in behalf of all those parts of it which are worthy of divine superintendence.

In order, therefore, that he may the more firmly establish the sight which has thus been presented to him in his mind, the sacred word says to him, My good friend, great things are often made known by slight outlines, at which he who looks increases his imagination to an unlimited extent; therefore, having dismissed those who bend all their attention to the heavenly bodies, and discarding the Chaldaean science, rise up and depart for a short time from the greatest of cities, this world, to one which is smaller; for so you will be the better able to comprehend the nature of the Ruler of the universe.

It is for this reason that Abraham is said to have made this first migration from the country of the Chaldaeans into the land of Charran.

But, some one may say, what is the use of these holes, unless the invisible mind, like the exhibition of a puppet show, does from within prompt its own powers, which at one time losing and allowing to roam, and at another time holding back and restraining by force? He gives sometimes an harmonious motion, and sometimes perfect quiet to his puppets. And having this example at home, you will easily comprehend that being, the understanding of whom you are so anxious to arrive at;

unless, indeed, you fancy that the world is situated in you as the dominant part of you, which the whole common powers of the body obey, and which each of the outward senses follows; but that the world, the most beautiful, and greatest, and most perfect of works, of which everything else is but a part, is destitute of any king to hold it together, and to regulate it, and govern it in accordance with justice. And if it be invisible, wonder not at that, for neither

can the mind which is in thee be perceived by the sight.

Any one who considers this, deriving his proofs not from a distance but close at hand, both from himself and from the circumstances around him, will clearly see that the world is not the first God, but that it is the work of the first God and Father of all things, who, being himself invisible, displays every thing, showing the nature of all things both small and great.

For he has not chosen to be beheld by the eyes of the body, perhaps because it was not consistent with holiness for what is mortal to touch what is everlasting, or perhaps because of the weakness of our sight; for it would never have been able to stand the rays which are poured forth from the living God, since it cannot even look straight at the rays of the sun.

Chapter XVII

And the most visible proof of this migration in which the mind quitted astronomy and the doctrines of the Chaldaeans, is this. For it is said in the scriptures that the very moment that the wise man quitted his abode, "God appeared unto Abraham," to whom, therefore, it is plain that he was not visible before, when he was adhering to the studies of the Chaldaeans, and attending to the motions of the stars, not properly comprehending any nature whatever, which was well arranged and appreciable by the intellect only, apart from the world and the essence perceptible by the outward senses.

But after he changed his abode and went into another country he learnt of necessity that the world was subject, and not independent; not an absolute ruler, but governed by the great cause of all things who had created it, whom the mind then for the first time looked up and saw;

for previously a great mist was shed over it by the objects of the external senses, which she, having dissipated by fervent and vivid doctrines, was scarcely able, as if in clear fine weather, to perceive him who had previously been concealed and invisible. But he, by reason of his love for mankind, did not reject the soul which came to him, but went forward to meet it, and showed to it his own nature as far as it was possible that he who was looking at it could see it.

For which reason it is said, not that the wise man saw God but that God appeared to the wise man; for it was impossible for any one to comprehend by his own unassisted power the true living God, unless he himself displayed and revealed himself to him.

Chapter XVIII

And there is evidence in support of what has here been said to be derived from the change and alteration of his name: for he was anciently called Abram, but afterwards he was named Abraham: the alteration of sound being only that which proceeds from one single letter, alpha, being doubled, but the alteration revealing in effect an important fact and doctrine;

for the name Abram being interpreted means “sublime father;” but Abraham signifies, “the elect father of sound.” The first name being expressive of the man who is called an astronomer, and one addicted to the contemplation of the sublime bodies in the sky, and who was versed in the doctrines of the Chaldaeans, and who took care of them as a father might take care of his children.

But the last name intimating the really wise man; for the latter name, by the word sound, intimates the uttered speech; and by the word father, the dominant mind. For the speech which is conceived within is naturally the father of that which is uttered, inasmuch as it is older than the latter, and as it also suggests what is to be said. And by the addition of the word elect his goodness is intimated. For the evil disposition is a random and confused one, but that which is elect is good, having been selected from all others by reason of its excellence.

Therefore, to him who is addicted to the contemplation of the sublime bodies of the sky there appears to be nothing whatever greater than the world; and therefore he refers the causes of all things that exist to the world. But the wise man, beholding with more accurate eyes that more perfect being that rules and governs all things, and is appreciable only by the intellect, to whom all things are subservient as to the master, and by whom every thing is directed, very often reproaches himself for his former way of life, and if he had lived the existence of a blind man, leaning upon objects perceptible by the outward senses, on things by their very nature worthless and unstable.

The second migration is again undertaken by the virtuous man under the influence of a sacred oracle, but this is no longer one from one city to another, but it is to a desolate country, in which he wandered about for a long time without being discontented at his wandering and at his unsettled condition, which necessarily arose from it.

And yet, what other man would not have been grieved, not only at departing from his own country but also at being driven away from every city into an inaccessible and impassable district? And what other man would have not turned back and returned to his former home, paying but little attention to his former hopes, but desiring to escape from his present perplexity, thinking it folly for the sake of uncertain advantages to undergo admitted evils?

But this man alone appears to have behaved in the contrary manner, thinking that life which was remote from the fellowship of many companions the most pleasant of all. And this is naturally the case; for those who seek and desire to find God, love that solitude which is dear to him, labouring for this as their dearest and primary object, to become like his blessed and happy nature.

Therefore, having now given both explanations, the literal one as concerning the man, and the allegorical one relating to the soul, we have shown that both the man and the mind are deserving of love; inasmuch as the one is obedient to the sacred oracles, and because of their influence submits to be torn away from things which it is hard to part; and the mind deserves to be loved because it has not submitted to be for ever deceived and to abide permanently with the essences perceptible by the outward senses, thinking the visible world the greatest and first of gods, but soaring upwards with its reason it has beheld another nature better than that which is visible, that, namely, which is appreciable only by the intellect; and also that being who is at the same time the Creator and ruler of both.

Chapter XIX

These, then, are the first principles of the man who loves God, and they are followed by actions which do not deserve to be lightly esteemed. But the greatness of them is not evident to every one, but only to those who have tasted of virtue, and who are wont to look with ridicule upon the objects

which are admired by the multitude, by reason of the greatness of the good things of the soul.

Therefore, God, having approved of his conduct which I have mentioned, presently rewarded the virtuous man with a great gift, inasmuch as he preserved sound and free from all pollution his marriage, which was in danger of being plotted against by a powerful and incontinent man.

And the cause of this man's design upon it arose from this beginning; there having been a barrenness and scarcity of crops for a long time, owing to a long and immoderate period of rain which prevailed at one time, and to a great drought and heat which ensued afterwards. The cities of Syria being oppressed by a long continuance of famine, became destitute of inhabitants, all of them being dispersed in different directions for the purpose of seeking food and providing themselves with necessities.

Therefore, Abraham, hearing that there was unlimited abundance and plenty in Egypt, since the river there irrigated the fields with its inundations at the proper season, and since the winds by their salutary temperature brought up and nourished rich and heavy crops of corn, rose up with all his household to quit Syria and to go thither.

And he had a wife of a most excellent disposition, who was also the most beautiful of all the women of her time. The Egyptian magistrates, seeing her and admiring her exquisite form, for nothing ever escapes the notice of men in authority, gave information to the king.

And the king, sending for the woman and beholding her extreme beauty, gave but little heed to the dictates of modesty or to the laws which had been established with respect to the honour due to strangers, but yielding to his incontinent desires, conceived the intention in name, indeed, to marry her in lawful wedlock, but, in fact to seduce and defile her.

But she, being destitute of all succour, as being in a foreign land, before an incontinent and cruel-minded ruler (for her husband had no power to protect her, fearing the danger which impended over him from princes mightier than he), at last, with him, took refuge in the only alliance remaining to her, the protection of God.

And the merciful and gracious God, who takes compassion on the stranger, and who fights on behalf of those who are unjustly oppressed, inflicted in a

moment painful sufferings and terrible chastisements on the king, filling his body and soul with all kinds of miseries difficult to be escaped or remedied, so that all his inclinations tending to pleasure were cut short, and, on the contrary, he was occupied with nothing but cares, seeking an alleviation from his endless and intolerable torments by which he was harrassed and tortured day and night;

and his whole household also received their share of his punishment, because none of them had felt any indignation at his lawless conduct, but had all consented to it, and had all but co-operated actively in his iniquity.

In this manner the chastity of the woman was preserved, and God condescended to display the excellence and piety of her husband, giving him the noblest reward, namely, his marriage free from all injury, and even from all insult, so as no longer to be in danger of being violated; a marriage which however was not intended to produce any limited number of sons and daughters — the most God-loving of all nations — and one which appears to me to have received the offices of priesthood and prophecy on behalf of the whole human race.

Chapter XX

I have heard men versed in natural philosophy interpreting this passage in an allegorical manner with no inconsiderable ingenuity and propriety; and their idea is, that the man here is a symbolical expression for the virtuous mind, conjecturing from the interpretation of his name that what is intended to be indicated is the virtuous disposition existing in the soul; and that by his wife is meant virtue, for the name of his wife is, in the Chaldaean language, Sarah, but in Greek “princess,” because there is nothing more royal or more worthy of pre-eminence than virtue.

And the marriage in which pleasure unites people comprehends the connection of the bodies, but that which is brought about by wisdom is the union of reasonings which desire purification, and of the perfect virtues; and the two kinds of marriage here described are extremely opposite to one another;

for in the marriage of the bodies it is the male partner which sows the seed and the female which receives it, but in the union which takes place with

regard to the soul it is quite the contrary, and it is virtue which appears to be there in the place of the woman, which sows good counsels, and virtuous speeches, and expositions of doctrines profitable to life; but the reason which is considered to be classed in the light of the man receives the sacred and divine seed, unless, indeed, there is any error in the names usually given; for certainly, in the grammatical view of the words, the word reason is masculine, and the word virtue has a feminine character.

But if any one, discarding the considerations of the names which tend to throw darkness over the subject, chooses to look at the plain facts without any disguise, he will know that virtue is masculine by nature, inasmuch as it puts things in motion, and arranges them, and suggests good conceptions of noble actions and speeches; but reason is feminine, inasmuch as it is put in motion by another, and is instructed and benefited, and, in short, is altogether the patient, as its passive state is its own safety.

Chapter XXI

All men, therefore, even the most vile, in word honour and admire virtue as far as appearance goes; but it is the virtuous alone who obey its injunctions; on which account the king of Egypt, who is a figurative representation of the mind devoted to the body, as if he were acting in a theatre, assumes the character of a pretended participation in temperance though being an intemperate man, and in continence though being an incontinent man, and in justice though an unjust man, and he invites justice to himself, being eager to obtain a good report from the multitude;

and the governor of the universe seeing this, for God alone has power to look into the soul, hates him and rejects him, and by the most cruel tests and powers convicts him of an utterly false disposition. But by what instruments are these tests carried out? Surely altogether by the parts of virtue which, whenever they enter, inflict great pain and severe wounds; for a torture is a deficiency of supply to that which is insatiable, and the torture of greediness is temperance; moreover, the man who is fond of glory is tortured while simplicity and humility are in the ascendent, and so is the unjust man when justice is extolled;

for it is impossible for two hostile natures to inhabit one soul, namely, for wickedness and virtue, for which reason, when they do come together, endless and irreconcilable seditions and wars are kindled between them; and yet this is the case though virtue is of a most peaceful disposition, and, as they say, is anxious whenever it is about to come to a contest of strength to make trial of its own powers first, so as only to contend if it has a prospect of being able to gain the victory; but if it finds its power unequal to the conflict, then it will never dare to descend into the arena at all,

for it is not disgraceful to wickedness to be defeated, inasmuch as ingloriousness is akin to it; but it would be a shameful thing for virtue, to which glory is the most appropriate and the most peculiarly belonging of all things, on which account it is natural for virtue either to secure the victory, or else to keep itself unconquered.

Chapter XXII

It has been said then that the disposition of the Egyptians is inhospitable and intemperate; and the humanity of him who has been exposed to their conduct deserves admiration, for He in the middle of the day beholding as it were three men travelling (and he did not perceive that they were in reality of a more divine nature), ran up and entreated them with great perseverance not to pass by his tent, but as was becoming to go in and receive the rites of hospitality: and they knowing the truth of the man not so much by what he said, as by his mind which they could look into, assented to his request without hesitation;

and being filled as to his soul with joy, he took every possible pains to make their extemporaneous reception worthy of them; and he said to his wife, "Hasten now, and make ready quickly three measures of fine meal," and he himself went forth among the herds of oxen, and brought forth a tender and well-fed heifer, and gave it to his servant;

and he having slain it, dressed it with all speed. For no one in the house of a wise man is ever slow to perform the duties of hospitality, but both women and men, and slaves and freemen, are most eager in the performance of all those duties towards strangers;

therefore, after having feasted, and being delighted, not so much with what was set before them, as with the good will of their entertainer, and with his excessive and unbounded zeal to please them, they bestow on him a reward beyond his expectation, the birth of a legitimate son in a short time, making him a promise which is to be confirmed by one the most excellent of the three; for it would have been inconsistent with philosophy for them all to speak together at the same moment, but it was desirous for all the rest to assent while one spoke.

Nevertheless he did not completely believe them even when they made him this promise, by reason of the incredible nature of the thing promised; for both he and his wife, through extreme old age, were so old as utterly to have abandoned all hope of offspring;

therefore the scriptures record that Abraham's wife, when she first heard what they were saying, laughed; and when they said afterwards, "Is anything impossible to God?" they were so ashamed that they denied that they had laughed; for Abraham knew that everything was possible to God, having almost learnt this doctrine as one may say from his cradle;

then for the first time he appears to me to have begun to entertain a different opinion of his guests from that which he conceived at first, and to have imagined that they were either some of the prophets or of the angels who had changed their spiritual and soul-like essence, and assumed the appearance of men.

Chapter XXIII

We have now then described the hospitable temper of the man, which was as it were a sort of addition to set off his greater virtue; but his virtue was piety towards God, concerning which we have spoken before, the most evident instance of which is to be found in his conduct now recorded towards the strangers;

but if any persons have fancied that house happy and blessed in which it has happened that wise men have stopped and abode, they should consider that they would not have done so, and would not even have looked into it at all, if they had seen any incurable disease in the souls of those who were therein, but I know not what excess of happiness and blessedness, I should say,

existed in that house in which angels condescended to tarry and to receive the rites of hospitality from men, angels, those sacred and divine natures, the ministers and lieutenants of the mighty God, by means of whom, as of ambassadors, he announces whatever predictions he condescends to intimate to our race.

For how could they ever have endured to enter a human habitation at all, unless they had been certain that all the inhabitants within, like the well-managed and orderly crew of a ship, obeyed one signal only, namely, that of their master, as the sailors obey the command of the captain? And how would they ever have condescended to assume the appearance of guests and men feasted hospitably, if they had not thought that their entertainer was akin to them, and a fellow servant with them, bound to the service of the same master as themselves? We must think indeed that at their entrance all the parts of the house became improved and advanced in goodness, being breathed upon with a certain breeze of most perfect virtue.

And the entertainment was such as it was fitting that it should be, the persons who were being feasted displaying at the banquet their own simplicity towards that entertainer, and addressing him in a guileless manner, and all of them holding conversation suited to the occasion.

And it is a thing that deserves to be looked on as a prodigy, that though they did not drink they seemed to drink, and that though they did not eat they presented the appearance of persons eating. But this was all natural and consistent with what was going on. And the most miraculous circumstance of all was, that these beings who were incorporeal presented the appearance of a body in human form by reason of their favour to the virtuous man, for otherwise what need was there of all these miracles except for the purpose of giving the wise man the evidence of his external senses by means of a more distinct sight, because his character had not escaped the knowledge of the Father of the universe.

Chapter XXIV

This then is sufficient to say by way of a literal explanation of this account; we must now speak of that which may be given if the story be looked at as figurative and symbolical. The things which are expressed by the voice are the

signs of those things which are conceived in the mind alone; when, therefore, the soul is shone upon by God as if at noonday, and when it is wholly and entirely filled with that light which is appreciable only by the intellect, and by being wholly surrounded with its brilliancy is free from all shade or darkness, it then perceives a threefold image of one subject, one image of the living God, and others of the other two, as if they were shadows irradiated by it. And some such thing as this happens to those who dwell in that light which is perceptible by the outward senses, for whether people are standing still or in motion, there is often a double shadow falling from them.

Let not any one then fancy that the word shadow is applied to God with perfect propriety. It is merely a catachrestical abuse of the name, by way of bringing before our eyes a more vivid representation of the matter intended to be intimated.

Since this is not the actual truth, but in order that one may when speaking keep as close to the truth as possible, the one in the middle is the Father of the universe, who in the sacred scriptures is called by his proper name, I am that I am; and the beings on each side are those most ancient powers which are always close to the living God, one of which is called his creative power, and the other his royal power. And the creative power is God, for it is by this that he made and arranged the universe; and the royal power is the Lord, for it is fitting that the Creator should lord it over and govern the creature.

Therefore, the middle person of the three, being attended by each of his powers as by body-guards, presents to the mind, which is endowed with the faculty of sight, a vision at one time of one being, and at another time of three; of one when the soul being completely purified, and having surmounted not only the multitudes of numbers, but also the number two, which is the neighbour of the unit, hastens onward to that idea which is devoid of all mixture, free from all combination, and by itself in need of nothing else whatever; and of three, when, not being as yet made perfect as to the important virtues, it is still seeking for initiation in those of less consequence, and is not able to attain to a comprehension of the living God by its own unassisted faculties without the aid of something else, but can only do so by judging of his deeds, whether as creator or as governor.

This then, as they say, is the second best thing; and it no less partakes in the opinion which is dear to and devoted to God. But the firstmentioned disposition has no such share, but is itself the very God-loving and God-beloved opinion itself, or rather it is truth which is older than opinion, and more valuable than any seeming. But we must now explain what is intimated by this statement in a more perspicuous manner.

Chapter XXV

There are three different classes of human dispositions, each of which has received as its portion one of the aforesaid visions. The best of them has received that vision which is in the centre, the sight of the truly living God. The one which is next best has received that which is on the right hand, the sight of the beneficent power which has the name of God. And the third has the sight of that which is on the left hand, the governing power, which is called lord.

Therefore, the best dispositions cultivate that being who exists of himself, without the aid of any one else, being themselves attracted by nothing else, by reason of all their entire attention being directed to the honour of that one being. But of the other dispositions, some derive their existence and owe their being recognized by the father to his beneficent power; and others, again, owe it to his governing power.

My meaning in this statement is this: — Men when they perceive that, under the pretext of friendship, some persons come to them, being in reality only desirous to get what they can from them, look upon them with suspicion, and turn away from them, fearing their insincere, and flattering, and caressing behaviour, as very pernicious.

But God, inasmuch as he is not liable to any injury, gladly invites all men who choose, in any way whatever to honour him, to come unto him, not choosing altogether to reject any person whatever; and, in truth, he almost says in express words to those who have ears in the soul, “The most valuable prizes shall be offered to those who worship me for my own sake:

the second best to those who hope by their own efforts to be able to attain to good, or to find a means of escape from punishments. For even if the service of this latter class is mercenary and not wholly incorrupt, still it nevertheless

revolves within the divine circumference, and does not stray beyond it.

But the rewards which shall be laid up for those who honour me for my own sake are rewards of affection; while those which are given to those who do so with a view to their own advantage are not given through affection, but because they are not looked upon as aliens. For I receive him who wishes to be a partaker of my beneficent power to a participation in my good things, and him who out of fear seeks to propitiate my governing and despotic power, I receive so far as to avert punishment from him. For I am not unaware that, in addition to these men not becoming worse, they will become better, by gradually arriving at a sincere and pure piety by their constant perseverance in serving me.

For even if the original dispositions, under the influence of which they originally endeavoured to please me, differ widely, still they must not be blamed, because they have in consequence only one aim and object, that of serving me.”

But that which is seen is in reality a threefold appearance of one subject is plain, not only from the contemplation of the allegory, but also from that of the express words in which the allegory is couched.

For when the wise man entreats those persons who are in the guise of three travellers to come and lodge in his house, he speaks to them not as three persons, but as one, and says, “My lord, if I have found favour with thee, do not thou pass by thy Servant.” For the expressions, “my lord,” and “with thee,” and “do not pass by,” and others of the same kind, are all such as are naturally addressed to a single individual, but not to many. And when those persons, having been entertained in his house, address their entertainer in an affectionate manner, it is again one of them who promises that he by himself will be present, and will bestow on him the seed of a child of his own, speaking in the following words: “I will return again and visit thee again, according to the time of life, and Sarah thy wife shall have a Son.”

Chapter XXVI

And what is signified by this is indicated in a most evident and careful manner by the events which ensued. The country of the Sodomites was a district of the land of Canaan, which the Syrians afterwards called Palestine, a

country full of innumerable iniquities, and especially of gluttony and debauchery, and all the great and numerous pleasures of other kinds which have been built up by men as a fortress, on which account it had been already condemned by the Judge of the whole world.

And the cause of its excessive and immoderate intemperance was the unlimited abundance of supplies of all kinds which its inhabitants enjoyed. For the land was one with a deep soil, and well watered, and as such produced abundant crops of every kind of fruit every year. And he was a wise man and spoke truly who said —

As men, being unable to bear discreetly a satiety of these things, get restive like cattle, and become stiff-necked, and discard the laws of nature, pursuing a great and intemperate indulgence of gluttony, and drinking, and unlawful connections; for not only did they go mad after women, and defile the marriage bed of others, but also those who were men lusted after one another, doing unseemly things, and not regarding or respecting their common nature, and though eager for children, they were convicted by having only an abortive offspring; but the conviction produced no advantage, since they were overcome by violent desire;

and so, by degrees, the men became accustomed to be treated like women, and in this way engendered among themselves the disease of females, and intolerable evil; for they not only, as to effeminacy and delicacy, became like women in their persons, but they made also their souls most ignoble, corrupting in this way the whole race of man, as far as depended on them. At all events, if the Greeks and barbarians were to have agreed together, and to have adopted the commerce of the citizens of this city, their cities one after another would have become desolate, as if they had been emptied by a pestilence.

Chapter XXVII

But God, having taken pity on mankind, as being a Saviour and full of love for mankind, increased, as far as possible, the natural desire of men and women for a connexion together, for the sake of producing children, and detesting the unnatural and unlawful commerce of the people of Sodom, he extinguished it, and destroyed those who were inclined to these things, and

that not by any ordinary chastisement, but he inflicted on them an astonishing novelty, and unheard of rarity of vengeance;

for, on a sudden, he commanded the sky to become overclouded and to pour forth a mighty shower, not of rain but of fire; and as the flame poured down, with a resistless and unceasing violence, the fields were burnt up, and the meadows, and all the dense groves, and the thick marshes, and the impenetrable thickets; the plain too was consumed, and all the crop of wheat, and of everything else that was sown; and all the trees of the mountain district were burnt up, the trunks and the very roots being consumed.

And the folds for the cattle, and the houses of the men, and the walls, and all that was in any building, whether of private or public property, were all burnt. And in one day these populous cities became the tomb of their inhabitants, and the vast edifices of stone and timber became thin dust and ashes.

And when the flames had consumed everything that was visible and that existed on the face of the earth, they proceeded to burn even the earth itself, penetrating into its lowest recesses, and destroying all the vivifying powers which existed within it so as to produce a complete and everlasting barrenness, so that it should never again be able to bear fruit, or to put forth any verdure; and to this very day it is scorched up. For the fire of the lightning is what is most difficult to extinguish, and creeps on pervading everything, and smouldering.

And a most evident proof of this is to be found in what is seen to this day: for the smoke which is still emitted, and the sulphur which men dig up there, are a proof of the calamity which befell that country; while a most conspicuous proof of the ancient fertility of the land is left in one city, and in the land around it. For the city is very populous, and the land is fertile in grass and in corn, and in every kind of fruit, as a constant evidence of the punishment which was inflicted by the divine will on the rest of the country.

Chapter XXVIII

But I have not gone through all these particulars for the sake of showing the magnitude of that vast and novel calamity, but because I desired to prove that of the three beings who appeared to the wise Abraham in the guise of

men, the scriptures only represent two as having come to the country which was subsequently destroyed for the purpose of destroying its inhabitants, since the third did not think fit to come for that purpose.

Inasmuch as he, according to my conception, was the true and living God, who thought it fitting that he being present should bestow good gifts by his own power, but that he should effect the opposite objects by the agency and service of his subordinate powers, so that he might be looked upon as the cause of good only, and of no evil whatever antecedently.

And kings too appear to me to imitate the divine nature in this particular, and to act in the same way, giving their favours in person, but inflicting their chastisements by the agency of others.

But since, of the two powers of God, one is a beneficent power and the other a chastising one, each of them, as is natural, is manifested to the country of the people of Sodom. Because of the five finest cities in it four were about to be destroyed by fire, and one was destined to be left unhurt and safe from every evil. For it was necessary that the calamities should be inflicted by the chastising power, and that the one which was to be saved should be saved by the beneficent power.

But since the portion which was saved was not endowed with entire and complete virtues, but was blessed with kindness by the power of the living God, it was deliberately accounted unworthy to have a sight of his presence afforded to it.

Chapter XXIX

This, then, is the open explanation which is to be given of this account, and which is to be addressed to the multitude. But there is another esoteric explanation to be reserved for the few who choose for the subjects of their investigation the dispositions of the soul, and not the forms of bodies; and this shall now be mentioned. The five cities of the land of Sodom are a figurative representation of the five outward senses which exist in us, the organs of the pleasures, by the instrumentality of which all the pleasures whether great or small are brought to perfection;

for we are pleased either when we behold the varieties of colours and forms, both in things inanimate and in those endowed with vitality, or when we hear melodious sounds, or again, we are delighted by the exercise of the faculty of taste in the things which relate to eating and drinking, or by that of the sense of smell in fragrant flavours and vapours, or in accordance with our faculty of touch when conversant with soft, or hot, or smooth things.

Now of these five outward senses there are three which have the greatest resemblance to the brute beasts and to slaves, namely the senses of taste, smell, and touch: as it is with reference to these that those species of beasts and cattle which are the most greedy and the most strongly inclined to sexual connections are the most vehemently excited. For all day and all night they are either glutting themselves insatiably with food, or else in a state of eagerness for sexual connection.

But there are two of these outward senses which have something philosophical and preeminent in them, namely, sight and hearing. But the ears are in some degree more slow and more effeminate than the eyes, since the latter go with promptness and courage to what is to be seen, and do not wait until the objects themselves are in motion, but go forward to meet them, and desire to move themselves so as to face them. But the sense of hearing inasmuch as that is slow and more effeminate, may be classed in the second rank, and the sense of seeing may be allowed an especial pre-eminence and privilege: for God has made this sense a sort of queen of the rest, placing it above them all, and stationing it as it were on a citadel, has made it of all the senses in the closest connection with the soul;

and any one may conjecture this from the common changes which take place in its essential organs; for when grief exists in the soul of man, the eyes are full of concern and melancholy; and on the other hand, when joy is in our heart the eyes smile and rejoice; and when fear gets the upper hand they are full of turbulent and disorderly confusion, and are subject to all kinds of irregular motions, and quiverings, and distortions.

Again, if anger occupies us, the sight becomes more fierce and bloodshot; and when we are considering or deliberating, the eyes are tranquil and motionless, and almost as intent as the mind itself; just as at moments of the relaxation and indifference of the mind, the eyes are relaxed and indifferent;

when a friend approaches the feeling of goodwill towards him is proclaimed by a calm and serene look; on the other hand, if we meet with an enemy, the eyes give an early indication of the displeasure of the soul; when our mind is inspired by boldness, our eyes bound forward and are ready to start from our heads; when we are oppressed with feelings of shame or modesty, they are gentle and repressed. And, in short, we may say that the sight has been created to be an exact image of the soul, which is thus beautifully represented by it through the perfection of the Creator's skill, the eyes showing a visible representation of it, as in a mirror, since the soul has no visible nature in itself;

but it is not in this particular alone that the beauty of the eyes exceeds the rest of the outward senses, but also because the use of the other senses is interrupted during our waking moments; for we must not include in our statement the inactivity which results from sleep; for they are at rest whenever there is not some external object to put them in motion; but the energies of the eyes when they are open are continuous and uninterrupted, as the eyes are never satiated or wearied, but continue to operate in accordance with the connection which they have with the soul;

and the soul itself is everlastingly awake, and is in perpetual motion both night and day; but to the eyes, as being to a great degree partakers of the fleshly nature, a self sufficient gift was given, to be able to continue exercising their appropriate energies during one half of the entire period of life.

Chapter XXX

But we must now proceed to speak of that which is the most necessary part of all, the advantage which we derive from the eyes. For it is to sight alone of the external senses that God has caused light to arise, which is both the most beautiful of all existing things, and is, moreover, the first thing which is pronounced in the sacred scriptures to be good.

Now the nature of light is twofold: for there is one light which proceeds from the fire which we use, a perishable light proceeding from a perishable material, and one which admits of being extinguished. But the other kind is inextinguishable and imperishable, descending to us from above heaven, as if every one of the stars was pouring down its beams upon us from an everlasting

spring. And the sense of sight associates with each of these kinds of light, and through the medium of both of them does it approach the objects of sight so as to arrive at a most accurate comprehension of them.

Why now need we attempt to panegyryze the eyes further by a speech, when God has engraved their true praises on pillars erected in heaven, namely, the stars? For for what purpose were the rays of the sun, and the beams of the moon, and the light of all the other planets and fixed stars called into existence, except as fields for the energies of the eyes in their service of seeing?

On which account men, using the most excellent of all gifts, contemplate the things which exist in the world, the earth, the plants, the animals, the fruits of the earth, the seas, the effusion of waters springing from the earth and gushing forth in torrents and floods, and the varieties of fountains, some of which give forth cold and others hot water, and the nature of all things that exist in the air; and all the different species, of which we thus arrive at the knowledge, are innumerable and indescribable, and cannot be compromised in speech. And above all these things, the eyes can behold the heaven, which is truly a world created in another world, and it can also survey the beauties and divine images existing in heaven. Which now of the other external senses can boast that it has arrived at such a pitch of power as this?

Chapter XXXI

But now, dismissing the consideration of those of the outward senses which are in the stables, as it were, fattening up an animal which is born with us, namely, appetite, let us investigate the nature of that sense which receives speech, namely, hearing; the continued and vigorous, and most perfect course of which exists in the atmosphere which surrounds the earth, when the violence of the winds and the noise of thunder sound with a great dragging noise and terrible crash.

But the eyes in a single moment can reach from earth to heaven, and taking in the extremest boundaries of the universe, reaching at the same moment to the east and to the west, and to the north and to the south, so as to survey them all at once, drag the mind towards what is visible.

And the mind, at once receiving a similar impression, does not continue quiet, but being in perpetual motion, and never slumbering, receiving from

the sight the power of observing the objects appreciable by the intellect, comes to consider whether these things which are brought visibly before it are uncreated, or whether they have derived their origin from creation; also, whether they are bounded or infinite. Again, whether there are many worlds or only one; also, whether there are five elements of the whole universe, or whether heaven and the heavenly bodies have a peculiar and separate nature of their own, having received a more divine conformation, differing from that of the rest of the world.

Again, by these means it considers if the world has been created, by whom it has been created, and who the creator is as to his essence or quality, and with what design he made it, and what he is doing now, and what his mode of existence or cause of life is; and all other such questions as the excellently-endowed mind when cohabiting with wisdom is accustomed to examine.

These, and similar subjects, belong to philosophers, from which it is plain that wisdom and philosophy have not derived their origin from anything else that exists in us except from that queen of the outward senses, the sight, which God saved alone of the region of the body when he destroyed the other four, because these last were slaves to the flesh and to the passions of the flesh; but the sight alone was able to raise its head and to look up, and to find other sources of delight far superior to those proceeding from the bodily pleasures, those, namely, that are derived from the contemplation of the world and the things in it.

Therefore it was appropriate for one of the five outward senses, namely, the sight, like one city in the Pentapolis, to receive an especial reward and honour, and to remain while the others were destroyed, because it is not only conversant with mortal objects as they are, but is able to forsake such, and to depart to the imperishable natures, and to rejoice in the sight of them.

On which account the holy scriptures very beautifully represent it as “a little city, and yet not a little One,” describing the power of sight under this figure. For it is said to be little, inasmuch as it is but a small portion of the faculties which exist in us; and yet great, inasmuch as it desires great things, being eager to behold the entire heaven and the whole world.

Chapter XXXII

We have now, then, given a full explanation concerning the vision which appeared to Abraham, and concerning his celebrated and allglorious hospitality, in which the entertainer, who appeared to himself to be entertaining others was himself entertained; expounding every part of the passage with as much accuracy as we were able. But we must not pass over in silence the most important action of all, which is worthy of being listened to. For I was nearly saying that it is of more importance than all the actions of piety and religion put together. So we must say what seems to be reasonable concerning it.

A legitimate son is borne to the wise man by his wedded wife, a beloved and only son, very beautiful in his person, and very excellent in his disposition. For he was already beginning to display the more perfect exercises of his age, so that his father felt a most strong and vehement affection for him, not only from the impulse of natural regard, but also from the influence of deliberate opinion, from being, as it were, a judge of his character.

To him, then, being conscious of such a disposition, an oracular command suddenly comes, which was never expected, ordering him to sacrifice this son on a certain very lofty hill, distant three days' journey from the city.

And he, although attached to his child by an indescribable fondness, neither changed colour, nor wavered in his soul, but remained firm in an unyielding and unalterable purpose, as he was at first. And being wholly influenced by love towards God, he forcibly repressed all the names and charms of the natural relationship: and without mentioning the oracular command to any one of his household out of all his numerous body of servants, he took with him the two eldest, who were most thoroughly attached to their master, as if he were bent upon the celebration of some ordinary divine rite, and went forth with his son, making four in all.

And when, looking as it were from a watch-tower, he saw the appointed place afar off, he bade his servants remain there, and he gave his son the fire and the wood to carry, thinking it proper for the victim himself to be burdened with the materials for the sacrifice, a very light burden, for nothing is less troublesome than piety.

And as they proceeded onwards with equal speed, not marching more rapidly with their bodies than with their minds along that short road of which holiness is the end, they at last arrive at the appointed place.

And the father collected stones wherewith to build the altar; and when his son saw everything else prepared for the celebration of the sacrifice, but no animal, he looked to his father and said, "My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the victim for the burnt Sacrifice?"

Therefore, any other father, knowing what he was about to do, and being depressed in his soul, would have been thrown into confusion by his son's words, and being filled with tears, would, out of his excessive affliction, by his silence have betrayed what was about to be done;

but Abraham, betraying no alteration of voice, or countenance, or intention, looking at his son with steady eye, answered his question with a determination more steadily still, "My child," said he, "God will provide himself a victim for the burnt offering," although we are in a vast desert where perhaps you despair of such a thing as being found; but all things are possible to God, even all such things as are impossible and unintelligible to men.

And even while saying this, he seizes his son with all rapidity, and places him on the altar, and having taken his knife in his right hand, he raised it over him as if to slay him; but God the Saviour stopped the deed in the middle, interrupting him by a voice from heaven, by which he ordered him to stay his hand, and not to touch the child: calling the father by name twice, so as to turn him and divert him from his purpose, and forbid him to complete the sacrifice.

Chapter XXXIII

And so Isaac is saved, God supplying a gift instead of him, and honouring him who was willing to make the offering in return for the piety which he had exhibited. But the action of the father, even though it was not ultimately given effect to, is nevertheless recorded and engraved as a complete and perfect sacrifice, not only in the sacred scriptures, but also in the middle of those who read them.

But to those who are fond of reviling and disparaging everything, and who are by their invariable habits accustomed to prefer blaming to praising the action which Abraham was enjoined to perform, it will not appear a great and admirable deed, as we imagine it to have been.

For such persons say that many other men, who have been very affectionate to their relations and very fond of their children, have given up their sons; some in order that they might be sacrificed for their country to deliver it either from war, or from drought, or from much rain, or from disease and pestilence; and others to satisfy the demands of some habitual religious observances, even though there may be no real piety in them.

At all events they say that some of the most celebrated men of the Greeks, not merely private individuals but kings also, caring but little for the children whom they have begotten, have, by means of their destruction secured safety to might and numerous forces and armies, arrayed together in an allied body, and have voluntarily slain them as if they had been enemies.

And also that barbarous nations have for many ages practised the sacrifice of their children as if it were a holy work and one looked upon with favour by God, whose wickedness is mentioned by the holy Moses. For he, blaming them for this pollution, says, that, "They burn their sons and their daughters to their Gods."

And they say that to this very day the Gymnosophists among the Indians, when that long or incurable disease, old age, begins to attack them, before it has got a firm hold of them, and while they might still last for many years, kindle a fire and burn themselves. And, moreover, when their husbands are already dead, they say that their wives rush cheerfully to the same funeral pile, and whilst living endure to be burnt along with their husbands' bodies.

One may well admire the exceeding courage of these women, who look thus contemptuously on death, and disdain it so exceedingly that they hasten and run impetuously towards it as if they were grasping immortality.

But I will make the following reply to the envy and ill-temper of these men. Of those who sacrifice their children, some do so out of habit, as they say some of the barbarians do; others do it because they are unable by any other means to place on a good footing some desperate and important dangers threatening their cities and countries. And of these men, some have given up their children

because they have been constrained by those more powerful than themselves: and others, out of a thirst for glory, and honour, and for renown at the present moment, and celebrity in all future ages.

Now those who sacrifice their children out of deference to custom, perform, in my opinion, no great exploit; for an inveterate custom is often as powerful as nature itself; so that it diminishes the terrible impression made by the action to be done, and makes even the most miserable and intolerable evils light to bear.

Again: surely, they who offer up their children out of fear deserve no praise; for praise is only given to voluntary good actions, but what is involuntary, is ascribed to other causes than the immediate actors — to the occasion, or to chance, or to compulsion from men.

Again, if any one, out of a desire for glory, abandons his son or his daughter; he would justly be blamed rather than praised; seeking acquire honour by the death of his dearest relations, while, even if he had glory, he ought rather to have risked the loss of it to secure the safety of his children.

We must investigate, therefore, whether Abraham was under the influence of any one of the aforesaid motives, custom, or love of glory, or fear, when he was about to sacrifice his son. Now Babylon and Mesopotamia, and the nation of the Chaldaeans, do not receive the custom of sacrificing their children; and these are the countries in which Abraham had been brought up and had lived most of his time; so that we cannot imagine that his sense of the misfortune that he was commanded to inflict upon himself was blunted by the frequency of such events.

Again, there was no fear from men which pressed upon him, for no one knew of this oracular command which had been given to him alone, nor was there any common calamity pressing upon the land in which he was living, such as could only be remedied by the destruction of his most excellent son.

May it not have been, however, from a desire to obtain praise from the multitude that he proceeded to this action? But what praise could be obtained in the desert, when there was no one likely to be present who could possibly say anything in his favour, and when even his two servants were left at a distance on purpose that he might not seem to be hunting after praise, or to be making a display by bringing witnesses with him to see the greatness of his

devotion?

Chapter XXXV

Therefore putting a barrier on their unbridled and evil-speaking mouths, let them moderate that envy in themselves which hates everything that is good, and let them forbear to attack the virtues of men who have lived excellently, which they ought rather to reward and decorate with panegyric. And that this action of Abraham's was in reality one deserving of praise and of all love, it is easy to see from many circumstances.

In the first place, then, he laboured above all men to obey God, which is thought an excellent thing, and an especial object for all men's desire, by all right-minded persons, to such a degree, that he never omitted to perform anything which God commanded him, not even if it was full of arrogance and ingloriousness, or even of positive pain and misery; for which reason he also bore, in a most noble manner, and with the most unshaken fortitude, the command given to him respecting his son.

In the second place, though it was not the custom in the land in which he as living, as perhaps it is among some nations, to offer human sacrifices, and custom, by its frequency, often removes the horror felt at the first appearance of evils, he himself was about to be the first to set the example of a novel and most extraordinary deed, which I do not think that any human being would have brought himself to submit to, even if his soul had been made of iron or of adamant; for as some one has said, —

In the second place, after he had become the father of this his only legitimate son, he, from the moment of his birth, cherished towards him all the genuine feelings of affection, which exceeds all modest love, and all the ties of friendship which have ever been celebrated in the world.

There was added also, this most forcible charm of all, that he had become the father of this son not in the prime of his life, but in his old age. For parents become to a certain degree insane in their affection for their children of their old age, either from the circumstance of their having been wishing for their birth a long time, or else because they have no longer any hope that they shall have any more; nature having taken her stand there as at the extreme and furthest limit.

Now there is nothing unnatural or extraordinary in devoting one child to God out of a numerous family, as a sort of first fruits of all one's children, while one still has pleasure in those who remain alive, who are no small comfort and alleviation of the grief felt for the one who is sacrificed. But the man who gives the only beloved son that he is possessed of performs an action beyond all powers of language to praise, as he is giving nothing to his own natural affection, but inclining with his whole will and heart to show his devotion to God.

Accordingly this is an extraordinary and almost unprecedented action which was done by Abraham. For other men, even if they have yielded up their children to be sacrificed on behalf of the safety of their native land or of their armies, have either remained at home themselves, or have kept at a distance from the altar of sacrifice; or at least, if they have been present they have averted their eyes, and left others to strike the blow which they have not endured to witness.

But this man, like a priest of sacrifice himself, did himself begin to perform the sacred rite, although he was a most affectionate father of a son who was in all respects most excellent. And, perhaps, according to the usual law and custom of burnt offerings he was intending to solemnise the rite by dividing his son limb by limb. And so he did not divide his feelings and allot one part of his regard to his son and another part to piety to God: but he devoted the whole soul, entire and undivided, to holiness; thinking but little of the kindred blood which flowed in the victim.

Now of all the circumstances which we have enumerated what is there which others have in common with Abraham? What is there which is not peculiar to him, and excellent beyond all power of language to praise? So that every one who is not struck by nature envious and a lover of evil must be struck with amazement and admiration for his excessive piety, even if he should not call at once to mind all the particulars on which I have been dwelling, but only some one of the whole number; for the conception of any one of these particulars is sufficient by a brief and faint outline to display the greatness and loftiness of the father's soul; though there is nothing petty in the action of the wise man.

Chapter XXXVI

But the things which we have here been saying do not appear solely in the plain and explicit language of the text of the holy scriptures; but they appear, moreover, to exhibit a nature which is not so evident to the multitude, but which they who place the objects of the intellect above those perceptible by the outward senses, and who are able to appreciate them, recognise. And this nature is of the following description.

The victim who was about to be sacrificed is called in the Chaldaean language, Isaac; but if this name be translated into the Grecian language, it signifies, "laughter;" and this laughter is not understood to be that laughter of the body which is frequent in child sport, but is the result of settled happiness and rejoicing of the mind.

This kind of laughter the wise man is appropriately said to offer as a sacrifice to God; showing thus, by a figure, that to rejoice does properly belong to God alone. For the human race is subject to sorrow and to exceeding fear, from evils which are either present or expected, so that men are either grieved at unexpected evils actually pressing upon them, or are kept in suspense, and disquietude, and fear with respect to those which are impending. But the nature of God is free from grief, and exempt from fear, and enjoys the immunity from every kind of suffering, and is the only nature which possesses complete happiness and blessedness.

Now to the disposition which makes this confession in sincerity, God is merciful, and compassionate, and kind, driving envy to a distance from him; and to it he gives a gift in return, to the full extent of the power of the person benefited to receive it, and he all but gives such a person this oracular warning, saying, "I well know that the whole species of joy and rejoicing is the possession of no other being but me, who am the Father of the universe;

nevertheless, though it belongs to me, I have no objection to those who deserve it enjoying a share of it. But who can be deserving to do so, save he who obeys me and my will? for to this man it shall be given to feel as little grief as possible and as little fear as possible, proceeding along that road which is inaccessible to passions and vices, but which is frequented by excellence of soul and virtue."

And let no one fancy that that unmixed joy, which is without any alloy of sorrow, descends from heaven to the earth, but rather, that it is a combination

of the two, that which is the better being predominant in the mixture; in the same manner as the light in heaven is unalloyed and free from any admixture of darkness, but in the sublunary atmosphere it is mingled with dark air.

For this reason, it seems to me to have been, that Sarah, the namesake of virtue, who had previously laughed, denied her laughter to the person who questioned her as to the cause of it, fearing lest she might be deprived of her rejoicing, as belonging to no created being, but to God alone; on which account the holy Word encouraged her, and said, "Be not afraid," thou hast laughed a genuine laugh, and thou hast a share in real joy;

for the Father has not permitted the race of mankind to be wholly devoured by griefs, and sorrows, and incurable anguish, but has mingled in their existence something of a better nature, thinking it fitting that the soul should sometimes enjoy rest and tranquillity; and he has also designed that the souls of wise men should be pleased and delighted for the greater portion of their existence with the contemplation of the soul.

Chapter XXXVII

This is enough to say about the piety of the man, though there is a vast abundance of other things which might be brought forward in praise of it. We must also investigate his skill and wisdom as displayed towards his fellow men; for it belongs to the same character to be pious towards God and affectionate towards man; and both these qualities, of holiness towards God and justice towards man, are commonly seen in the same individual. Now it would take a long time to go through all the instances and actions which form this; but it is not out of place to record two or three.

Abraham, being rich above most men in abundance of gold and silver, and having numerous herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, and being equal in his affluence and abundance to any of the men of the country, or of the original inhabitants, who were the most wealthy, and being, in fact, richer than any sojourner could be expected to be, was never unpopular with any of the people among whom he was dwelling, but was continually praised and beloved by all who had any acquaintance with him;

and if, as is often the case, any contention or quarrel arose between his servants and retinue and those of others, he always endeavored to terminate it

quietly by his gentle disposition, discarding and driving to a distance from his soul all quarrelsome, and turbulent, and disorderly things.

And there is no wonder, if he was such towards strangers, who might have agreed together and with a heavy and powerful hand have repelled him, if he had begun acts of violence, when he behaved with moderation towards those who were nearly related to him in blood, but very far removed from him in disposition, and who were desolate and isolated, and very inferior in wealth to himself, willingly allowing himself to be inferior to them in the very things in which he might have been superior;

for there was his brother's son, when he departed from his country, who went forth with him, an inconstant, variable, whimsical man, inclining now to one side and now to another; and at one time caressing him with friendly salutations, and at another, being restive and obstinate, by reason of the inequality of his disposition;

on which account his household also was a quarrelsome and turbulent one, as it had no one to correct it, and especially his shepherds were so, because they were removed to a great distance from their master. Accordingly, they, in their self-willed manner, behaving as if they claimed complete liberty, were always quarreling with the managers of the flocks of the wise Abraham, who yielded a great many points, because of the gentle disposition of their master; in consequence of which, the shepherds of his nephew turned to folly and to shameless audacity, and gave way to anger, cherishing illtemper, and exciting a spirit of irreconcilable enmity in their hearts, until they compelled those whom they injured to turn to their own defence;

and when a somewhat violent battle had taken place, the good Abraham, hearing of the attack made by his servants on the others, though only in self-defence, and knowing as he did that his own household was superior both in numbers and in power, would not allow the contest to be protracted till victory declared for his party, in order that he might not grieve his nephew by the defeat of his men; but standing between the two bodies of combatants, he, by his pacific speeches, reconciled the contending parties, and that not only for the moment, but for all future time too;

for he knew that if they continued to dwell together, and to abide in the same place, they would be always differing in opinion and quarrelling with

one another, and continually raising up quarrels and wars with one another. In order that this might not be the case, he thought it desirable to abandon the custom of dwelling together, and to separate his habitation from that of his nephew. So, sending for his nephew, he gave him the choice of the better country, cheerfully agreeing himself to abandon whatever portion the other selected, as he should thus acquire the greatest of all gains, namely, peace;

and yet, what other man would ever have yielded in any point whatever to one weaker than himself, while he was stronger? and who that was able to gain the victory would ever have been willing to be defeated, without availing himself of his power? But this man alone placed the object of his desires, not in strength and superiority, but in a life free from dissension and blessed with tranquillity, as far as depended on himself; for which reason he appears the most admirable of all men.

Chapter XXXVIII

Since then this panegyric, if taken literally, is applied to Abraham as a man, and since the disposition of the soul is here intimated, it will be well for us to investigate that also, after the fashion of those men who go from the letter to the spirit of any statement.

Now there is an infinite variety of dispositions which arise from different circumstances and opportunities in every kind of action and event; but in this instance, we must distinguish between two characters, one of which is the elder and the other the younger. Now the elder of the two is that disposition which honours these things which are by nature principal and dominant; the younger is that which regards the things which are subject to others, and which are considered in the lowest rank.

Now the principal and more dominant things are wisdom, and temperance, and justice, and courage, and every description of virtue, and the actions in accordance with virtue; the younger things are wealth, and authority, and glory, and nobility, not real nobility, but that which the multitude think so, and all those other things which belong to the third class, next after the things of the soul, and the things of the body; the class which is in fact the last.

Each then of these dispositions has, as it were, flocks and herds. The one which desires external things has for its flocks, gold and silver, and all those things which are materials and furniture of wealth; and, moreover, arms, engines, triremes, armies of infantry and cavalry, and fleets of ships, and all kinds of provisions to procure domination, by which firm authority is secured. But the lover of excellence has for his flock the doctrines of each individual virtue, and its speculations respecting wisdom.

Moreover, there are overseers and superintendents of each of these flocks, just as there are shepherds to flocks of sheep. Of the flock of external things, the superintendents are those who are fond of money, those who are fond of glory, those who are eager for war, and all those who love authority over multitudes. And the managers of the flocks of things concerning the soul are all those who are lovers of virtue and of what is honourable, and who do not prefer spurious good things to genuine ones, but genuine to spurious good.

There is therefore a certain natural contest between them, inasmuch as they have no opinions in common with one another, but are always at variance and difference respecting the matter which has of all others the greatest influence in the maintenance of life as it should be, that is to say, the judgment of what things are truly good.

Now, for some time the soul was warred against by some enemy, and was full of this quarrelsome principle, inasmuch as it had not yet been completely pacified, but was still troubled by some passions and diseases which prevailed over sound reason. But from the time when it began to be more powerful, and with its superior force, to destroy the fortification of the opposite opinions, becoming elated and puffed up with pride, it in a most marvellous manner began to separate and detach the disposition in itself, which admires the external materials, and as if conversing with man, says to him, Thou art unable to dwell with —

it is impossible that thou shouldest be connected by alliance with — a lover, of wisdom and virtue. Come, then, and migrating from thy present abode, depart to a distance, since you have no communion with me, and, indeed, cannot possibly have any. For all the things which you conceive to be on the right he imagines to be on the left; and on the contrary, whatever you think is on the left, is looked upon by him as on the right.

Chapter XXXIX

Therefore the virtuous man was not only peaceful and a lover of justice, but also a man of courage and of a warlike disposition; not for the sake of making war, for he was not of a contentious and quarrelsome character, but for the sake of a lasting peace for the future, which hitherto his adversaries had destroyed.

And the most convincing proof of this is to be found in what he did. Four great kings had received for their inheritance the eastern portion of the inhabited world; and they were obeyed by all the eastern nations, both on this and on the other side of the Euphrates. Now all the other parts remained unharassed by contentions, obeying the commands of these kings, and contributing their yearly taxes and tribute without seeking for any excuses; but the land of the inhabitants of Sodom alone before it was destroyed by the fire began to break the peace, having been designing to revolt for a long time.

For as it as a very rich country it was ruled by five kings, who had divided the cities and the land among them, though the district was not an extensive one, but fertile in corn and trees, and abounding in all kinds of fruit. What then their size gives to other cities, that the excellence of its soil gives to Sodom; on which account it had many princes for lovers who admire its beauty.

These, on all other occasions, had paid the appointed revenues to the collector of the taxes, honouring and at the same time fearing those more powerful sovereigns of whom they were the viceroys. But when they were completely sated with good things, and when, as is ordinarily the case, satiety had begotten insolence, they, cherishing a pride beyond their power! began at first to lift up their heads and to become restive. Then, like wicked servants, they set upon their masters, trusting more to their factious spirit than to their strength.

But their sovereigns, remembering their own nobleness and being fortified with superior power, went against them with great disdain, as if they would be able to defeat them by the mere cry of battle. And having engaged them in battle, they in a moment put some of them to flight, and others they slew in the flight, and so they destroyed their army to a man. And also they led away a vast multitude captive, which they distributed among themselves with much

other booty. Moreover, they led away captive the brother's son of a wise Abraham, who had a little while before emigrated into one of the cities of the Pentapolis.

Chapter XL

This was communicated to Abraham by some one of those who escaped from the defeat of his countrymen, and it grieved him exceedingly, and he would not be quiet any longer, being much concerned at what had happened, and mourning more for him alive and in captivity than if he had heard that he had been killed. For he knew that death (*teleutē*) as its very name imports, was the end (*telos*) of all living beings, and especially of the wicked, and that there are innumerable unexpected evils which lie, as it were, in ambush for the living.

But when he was preparing to pursue them for the purpose of delivering his brother's son, he found himself in want of allies, inasmuch as he himself was a stranger and a sojourner and as no one could dare to oppose the irresistible power of such mighty monarchs flushed with recent victory.

And he devised for himself a most novel alliance. For necessity is the mother of invention, and expedients are found in the most difficult circumstances when a man has set his heart on just and humane objects. For having collected together all his servants, and ordering the slaves whom he had purchased to remain at home (for he was afraid of desertion on their part), he assembled all his domestic servants, and divided them into centuries, and marched forward in their battalions; not, indeed, trusting to them, for his was still a most insignificant force, in comparison with that of the kings', but placing his confidence in the champion and defender of the just, namely in God.

Therefore putting forth all his exertions he hastened on, in nowise relaxing his speed, until, watching his opportunity, he fell upon the enemy by night, after they had supped, and when they were just on the point of betaking themselves to sleep. And some he slew in their beds, and those who were arrayed against him he utterly destroyed, and with great vigour he defeated them all, more by the courage of his soul than by the adequacy of his means.

And he did not cease from attacking them until he had utterly destroyed the hostile army with their kings, and slain them all to a man in front of their camp, and had brought back his brother's son after this splendid and most glorious victory, bringing back also as fair booty all their cavalry, and all the multitude of their beasts of burden, and a most enormous quantity of spoil.

And when the great high priest of the most high God beheld him returning and coming back loaded with trophies, in safety himself, with all his own force uninjured, for he had not lost one single man of all those who went out with him; marvelling at the greatness of the exploit, and, as was very natural, considering that he had never met with this success but through the favour of the divine wisdom and alliance, he raised his hands to heaven, and honoured him with prayers in his behalf, and offered up sacrifices of thanksgiving for his victory, and splendidly feasted all those who had had a share in the expedition; rejoicing and sympathising with him as if the success had been his own, and in reality it did greatly concern him. For as the proverb says: —

These things, then, are what are contained in the plain words of the scriptures. But as many as are able to contemplate the facts related in them in their incorporeal and naked state, living rather in the soul than in the body, will say that of the nine kings the four are the powers of the four passions which exist within us, the passion of pleasure, of desire, of fear, and of grief; and that the other five kings are the outward senses, being equal in number, the sense of sight, of hearing, of smell, of taste, and of touch.

For these in some degree are sovereigns and rulers, having acquired a certain power over us, but not all to an equal extent; for the five are subordinate to the four, and are compelled to pay them taxes and tribute, such as are appointed by nature.

For it is from the things which we see, or hear, or smell, or taste, or touch, that pleasures, and pains, and fears, and desires arise; as there is no one of the passions which has any power to exist of itself, if it were not supplied by the materials furnished by the outward senses.

For it is in these things that their powers consist, either in figures and in colours, or in the faculty of speaking or hearing which depends on the voice, or in the flavours, or in odours, or by the subjects of touch, whether they are soft or hard, or rough, or smooth, or hot, or cold. For all these things are

supplied to each of the passions by means of the outward senses.

And as long as the taxes beforementioned are paid, the alliance among the kings remains; but when they are no longer contributed, as they were before, then immediately do quarrels and wars arise. And this appears to happen when painful old age supervenes, in which none of the passions becomes weaker, but rather perhaps stronger than their ancient power; but the sight becomes dim, and the ears hard of hearing, and every one of the other outward senses more blunt, being no longer equally able as before to judge and decide accurately of every subject submitted to them, nor any longer to pay a tribute which will be equal to the number of the passions. So that it happened very naturally that they being thoroughly exhausted and laid prostrate by them were easily put to flight by the adverse passions;

and the statement that follows is in strict consistency with what might be naturally expected, namely, that of the five kings two fell into wells, and three took to flight. For touch and taste reach to the very deepest portions of the body, sending down into the entrails those things which are suitable for digestion; but the eyes and ears, and the smell, roaming abroad for the most part, escape the slavery of the body.

The good man — threatening to attack all of these, when he saw that those who had lately been friends and confederates were now in a state of disease, and that there was war instead of peace arising among the nine kingdoms, as the four kings were contending with the five for sovereignty and dominion — on a sudden, having watched his opportunity, attacked them; being desirous of the establishment of democracy in the soul, the most excellent of constitutions instead of tyrannies and absolute sovereignties, and wishing also to introduce law and justice instead of lawlessness and injustice, which had prevailed up to that time.

And what is here said is not a cunningly devised fable, but is rather one of the most completely true facts, which may be seen to be true in our own selves. For it very often happens that the outward senses observe a sort of confederacy which they have formed with the passions, supplying them with objects perceptible by the outward senses; and very often also, they raise contentions, no longer choosing to pay the tribute fairly due from them, or else being unable to do so, by reason of the presence of corrective reason; which when it

has taken up its complete armour, namely, the virtues, and their doctrines and contemplations, which form an irresistible power, conquers all things in the most vigorous manner. For it is not lawful for perishable things to dwell with what is immortal.

Therefore the nine sovereignties of the four passions and the five outward senses are both perishable themselves and also the causes of mortality. But the truly sacred and divine word, which uses the virtues as a starting place, being placed in the number ten, that perfect number, when it descends into the contest and exerts that more vigorous power which it has in accordance with God, subdues by main force all the aforesaid powers.

And at a subsequent period his wife dies, she who was most dear to his mind and most excellent in all respects, having given innumerable proofs of her affection towards her husband in leaving all her relations together with him; and in her unhesitating migration from her own country, and in her continued and uninterrupted wanderings in a foreign land, and in her endurance of want and scarcity, and in her accompanying him in his warlike expeditions.

For she was always with him at all times, and in all places, never being absent from any spot, or failing to share any of his fortune, being truly the partner of his life, and of all the circumstances of his life; judging it right equally to share all his good and evil fortune together with him. For she did not, as some persons do, shun any participation in his misfortunes, but lie in wait only for his prosperity, but with all cheerfulness took her share in both, as was fitting and becoming to a wedded wife.

And though I might have many topics for panegyric on this woman, still I will only mention one, which shall be the most manifest possible proof of all the others. For she, being barren and childless, and fearing lest her husband's Godloving house might be left entirely destitute of offspring, came to her husband and spoke as follows: —

“We have now lived together a long time mutually pleasing each; but we have no children, which is the cause for which we ourselves came together, and for which also nature designed the original connection between husband and wife; nor indeed can there be any hope of your having any offspring by me, since I am now beyond the age of childbearing;

do not you then suffer for my barrenness, and do not, out of your affection for me, while you are yourself able to still become a father, be hindered from being so. For I shall not feel any jealousy towards another woman whom you may marry, not for the gratification of irrational appetite, but in order to satisfy a necessary law of nature.

For which reason I will not delay to deck a new bride for you, that she may fulfil what is wanting on my part. And if the prayers which we will offer up for the birth of children be blessed with success, then the children which are born shall be your own legitimate children, but by adoption they shall be by all means mine.

“And that you may have no suspicion of any jealousy on my part, take, if you will, my own handmaid to wife; who is a slave indeed as to her body, but free and noble as to her mind; whose good qualities I have for a long time proved and experienced from the day when she was first introduced into my house, being an Egyptian by blood, and a Hebrew by deliberate choice.

We have great substance and abundant wealth, not like people who are sojourners. For even already we surpass the natives themselves in the brilliancy of our prosperity, but still we have no heir or successor, and that, too, though there might be one, if you would be guided by my advice.”

But Abraham, marvelling more and more at the love of his wife for her husband thus continually being renewed and gaining fresh strength, and also at her spirit of forecast so desirous to provide for the future, takes to himself the handmaid who had been approved by her to the extent of having a son by her; though as those who give the most clear and probable account say he cohabited with her only till she became pregnant; and when she conceived, which she did after no long interval, he then desisted from all connection with her, by reason of his natural continence, and also of the honour in which he held his wife.

So then he speedily had a son by this handmaid, but at a very distant period after this he had also a legitimate son, after he and his wife had both despaired of any offspring from one another. The bounteous God having thus bestowed on them a reward for their excellence more perfect than their highest hopes.

It is sufficient to mention this as a proof of the virtue of Abraham's wife. But the topics of praise of the wise man himself are more numerous, some of

which I have lately enumerated. Moreover I will mention also one circumstance connected with the death of the wife, which ought not to be buried in silence.

For when Abraham had lost such a partner of his whole life, as our account has shown her to have been, and as the scriptures testify that she was, he still like a wrestler prevailed over the grief which attacked him and threatened to overwhelm his soul; strengthening and encouraging with great virtue and resolution, reason, the natural adversary of the passions, which indeed he had always taken as a counsellor during the whole of his life; but at this time above all others, he thought fit to be guided by it, when it was giving him the best and most expedient advice.

And the advice was this; not to afflict himself beyond all measure, as if he were stricken down with a novel and unprecedented calamity; nor, on the other hand, to give way to indifference, as if nothing had happened calculated to give him sorrow. But rather to choose the middle way in preference to either extreme; and to endeavour to grieve in a moderate degree; not being indignant at nature for having reclaimed what belonged to her as her due; and bearing what had befallen him with a mild and gentle spirit.

And there are evidences of these assertions to be seen in the holy scriptures; which it is impossible should be convicted of false witness, and they tell us that Abraham, having wept a short time over his wife's body, soon rose up from the corpse; thinking, as it should seem, that to mourn any longer would be inconsistent with that wisdom by which he had been taught that he was not to look upon death as the extinction of the soul, but rather as a separation and disjunction of it from the body, returning back to the region from whence it came; and it came, as is fully shown in the history of the creation of the world, from God.

But just as no man of moderation or sense would be indignant at having to repay a debt to a lender or to return a deposit to the man who had deposited it; so, in the same manner, he did not think it becoming to show impatience when nature reclaimed what belonged to her, but preferred to bear what was inevitable with cheerfulness.

And when the magistrates of that country came to sympathise with him in his sorrow, seeing none of the customary signs of woe which were usually

exhibited in their land by mourners, no loud wailing or howling, no beating of the breast, no loud cries of men or women, but a steady, sober depression of spirits on the part of the whole household, they marvelled exceedingly, even though they had been previously full of astonishment and admiration at all the rest of the man's way of life.

And then, not concealing in their own minds their ideas of the greatness and beauty of his virtue, for it was all admirable, they approached him and addressed him thus:— "Thou art a king from God among Us." Speaking most truly, for all other kingdoms are established by man by means of wars, and military expeditions, and indescribable evils, which those persons who aim at power inflict mutually on one another, slaying one another, and raising up vast forces of infantry, and cavalry, and fleets. But the kingdom of the wise man is bestowed upon him by God; and the virtuous man receiving it is not the cause of evil to any one, but is rather the author to all his subjects of the acquisition and also of the use of good things, proclaiming to them peace and obedience to the law.

There is also another praise of him recorded in his honour and testified to in the holy scriptures, which Moses has written, in which it is related of him that he believed in God; which is a statement brief indeed in words, but of great magnitude and importance to be confirmed in fact.

For on whom else can we believe? Are we to trust in authorities, or in glory and honour, or in abundance of wealth and noble birth, or in good health and a good condition of the senses and the mind, or in vigour of body and beauty of person? But in truth every kind of authority is unstable, as it has innumerable enemies lying in wait to attack it. And if in any instance it is firmly established, it is only so confirmed by innumerable evils and calamities which those who are in authority both inflict and suffer.

Again, honours and glory are most unstable, being tossed about among the indiscriminate inclinations and feeble language of careless and imprudent men; and even if they endure, their nature is not such as to produce any genuine good.

And as for riches and illustrious birth, those things sometimes fall to the lot of the most worthless men. And even if they should belong only to the virtuous, still they are but the praises of their ancestors and of fortune, and not

of those who now possess them.

Nor, again, is it right for a man to pride himself on his personal advantages, in which other animals are superior to him. For what man is stronger or more vigorous than a bull among domestic animals, or than a lion among wild beasts? And what man is more sharp-sighted than a falcon or an eagle? And what man is so richly endowed with the sense of hearing as that stupidest of all animals, the ass? Also what man is more accurate in his sense of smell than a hound, who huntsmen say can trace out by means of his nose animals who are lying at a distance, and can run up to them with perfect correctness, and course, though he has not seen them; for what sight is to other animals that is the sense of smell to hounds and to all the dogs which pursue game.

Moreover, the greater part of the irrational animals enjoy excellent health, and are as far as possible entirely exempt from disease. And also in any competition in respect of beauty, some things which are even destitute of vitality, appear to me to surpass the elegance of either men or women ; as, for instance, images, and statues, and pictures, and in a word all the works of either the pictorial or plastic art which arrive at excellence in either branch, and which are the objects of study and desire both to Greeks and barbarians, who erect them in the most conspicuous places for the ornament of their cities.

Therefore, the only real, and true, and lasting good is trust in God, the comfort of life, the fulfillment of all good hopes, the absence of all evils, and the attendant source of blessings, the repudiation of all unhappiness, the recognition of piety, the inheritance of all happiness, the improvement of the soul in every respect, as it thus relies for support on the cause of all things, who is able to do everything but who wills only to do what is best.

For as men who are going along a slippery road stumble and fall, but they who proceed by a dry, and level, and plain path, journey on without stumbling; so also those men who are conducting their soul through the road of bodily and external good things are only accustoming it to fall; for these things are full of stumbling and the most insecure of all. But they who by those speculations which are in accordance with virtue, hasten towards God, are guiding their souls in a safe and untroubled path. So that we may say with the most absolute truth, that the man who trusts in the good things of the

body disbelieves in God, and that he who distributes them believes in him.

But not only do the holy scriptures bear witness to the faith of Abraham in the living God, which faith is the queen of all the virtues, but moreover he is the first man whom they speak of as an elder; though they were men who had preceded him who had lived three times as many years (or even more still) as he had, not one of whom is handed down to us as worthy of the appellation. And may we not say that this is in strict accordance with natural truth? For he who is really an elder is looked upon as such, not with reference to his length of time, but to the praiseworthiness of his life.

Those men, therefore, who have spent a long life in that existence which is in accordance with the body, apart from all virtue, we must call only long-lived children, having never been instructed in those branches of education which befit grey hairs. But the man who has been a lover of prudence, and wisdom, and faith in God, one may justly denominate an elder, forming his name by a slight change from the first.

For in real truth the wise man is the first man in the human race, being what a pilot is in a ship, a governor in a city, a general of war, the soul in the body, or the mind in the soul; or again, what the heaven is in the world, and what God is in the heaven.

And God, admiring this man for his faith (*pistis*) in him, giving him a pledge (*pistis*) in return, namely, a confirmation by an oath of the gifts which he had promised him; no longer conversing with him as God might with man, but as one friend with another. For he says, "By myself have I Sworn," by him that is whose word is an oath, in order that Abraham's mind may be established still more firmly and immoveably than before.

Let the virtuous man both be and be called the younger and the last, since he only pursues such objects as may produce revolution and as are placed in the lowest rank.

Thus much is sufficient to say on this subject. But God, adding to the multitude and magnitude of the praises of the wise man one single thing as a crowning point, says that "this man fulfilled the divine law, and all the commandments of God," not having been taught to do so by written books, but in accordance with the unwritten law of his nature, being anxious to obey all healthful and salutary impulses. And what is the duty of man except most

firmly to believe those things which God asserts?

Such is the life of the first author and founder of our nation; a man according to the law, as some persons think, but, as my argument has shown, one who is himself the unwritten law and justice of God.