

On the Cherubim

Philo of Alexandria



Chapter I

“And God cast out Adam, and placed him opposite the paradise of happiness; and he placed there the cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of Life. In this place Moses uses the expression, “He cast out,” but previously he said, “He sent out,” not using the various expressions at random, but being well aware with reference to what parts he was employing them with propriety and felicity.

Now a man who is sent out is not hindered from returning at some subsequent time; but he who is cast out by God must endure an eternal banishment, for it is granted to him who has not yet been completely and violently taken prisoner by wickedness, to repent, and so to return back to virtue, from which he has been driven, as to his great country; but he who is weighed down by, and wholly subjected to, a violent and incurable disease, must bear his misfortunes for ever, being for all times unalterably cast out into the place of the wicked, that there he may endure unmitigated and everlasting misery.

Since we see Agar, by whom we understand the middle kind of instruction which is confined to the encyclical system, twice going forth from Sarah, who is the symbol of predominant virtue, and once returning back by the same road, inasmuch as after she had fled the first time, without being banished by her mistress, she returned to see her master’s house, having been met by an angel, as the holy scriptures read: but the second time, she is utterly cast out, and is never to be brought back again.

Chapter II

And we must speak of the causes of her first flight, and then again of her second perpetual banishment. Before the names of the two were changed, that is to say, before they had been altered for the better as to the characteristics of their souls, and had been endowed with better dispositions, but while the name of the man was still Abram, or the sublime father, who delighted in the lofty philosophy which investigates the events which take place in the air, and the sublime nature of the beings which exist in heaven, which mathematical science claims for itself as the most excellent part of natural philosophy,

and the name of the woman was still Sarai; the symbol of my authority, for she is called my authority, and she had not yet changed her nature so as to become generic virtue, and all genus is imperishable, but was as yet classed among things particular and things in species; that is to say, such as the prudence which is in me, the temperance which is in me, the courage, the justice, and so on in the same manner; and these particular virtues are perishable, because the place which receives them, that is to say I, am also perishable.

Then Agar, who is the middle kind of encyclical instruction, even if she should endeavour to escape from the austere and stern life of the lovers of virtue, will again return to it, since it is not, as yet, able to receive the generic and imperishable excellencies of virtue, but can only touch the particular virtues, and such as are spoken of in species, in which it is sufficient to attain to mediocrity instead of extreme perfection.

But when Abram, instead of an inquirer into natural philosophy, became a wise man and a lover of God, having his name changed to Abraham, which being interpreted means the great father of sounds; for language when uttered sounds, and the father of language is the mind, which has attained to what is virtuous. And when Sarai instead of being my authority, had her name also changed to Sarah, the meaning of which is princess, and this change is equivalent to becoming generic and imperishable virtue, instead of virtue special and perishable:

then will arise the genus of happiness that is to say, Isaac; and he, when all the feminine Affections (the Greek text here is corrupt and unintelligible. I have followed the Latin translation of Mangey.) have ceased, and when the passion of joy and cheerfulness are dead, will eagerly pursue, not childish amusements, but divine objects; then too those elementary branches of instruction which bear the name of Agar, will be cast out, and their sophistical child will also be cast out, who is named Ishmael.

Chapter III

And they shall undergo eternal banishment, God himself confirming their expulsion, when he bids the wise man obey the word spoken by Sarah, and she urges him expressly to cast out the serving woman and her son; and it is good

to be guided by virtue, and especially so when it teaches such lessons as this, that the most perfect natures are very greatly different from the mediocre habits, and that wisdom is a wholly different thing from sophistry; for the one labours to devise what is persuasive for the establishment of a false opinion, which is pernicious to the soul, but wisdom, with long meditation on the truth by the knowledge of right reason, bring real advantage to the intellect.

Why then do we wonder if God once for all banished Adam, that is to say, the mind out of the district of the virtues, after he had once contracted folly, that incurable disease, and if he never permitted him again to return, when he also drives out and banishes from wisdom and from the wise man every sophist, and the mother of sophists, the teaching that is of elementary instruction, while he calls the names of wisdom and of the wise man Abraham, and Sarah.

Chapter IV

Then also, "The flaming sword and the cherubim have an abode allotted to them exactly in front of paradise." The expression, "in front," is used partly to convey the idea of a resisting enemy, and partly as suitable to the notion of judgment, as a person whose cause is being decided appears in front of his judge: partly also in a friendly sense, in order that they may be perceived, and may be considered in closer connection by reason of the more accurate view of them that is thus obtained, just as archetypal pictures and statues are placed in front of painters and statuary.

Now the first example of an enemy placed directly in front of one is derived from what is said in the case of Cain, that "he went out from the face of God, and dwelt in the land of Nod, in the front of Eden." Now Nod being interpreted means commotion, and Eden means delight. The one therefore is a symbol of wickedness agitating the soul, and the other of virtue which creates for the soul a state of tranquillity and happiness, not meaning by happiness that effeminate luxury which is derived from the indulgence of the irrational passion of pleasure, but a joy free from toil and free from hardship, which is enjoyed with great tranquillity.

And it follows of necessity that when the mind goes forth from any imagination of God, by which it would be good and expedient for it to be

supported, then immediately, after the fashion of a ship, which is tossed in the sea, when the winds oppose it with great violence, it is tossed about in every direction, having disturbance as it were for its country and its home, a thing which is the most contrary of all things to steadiness of soul, which is engendered by joy, which is a term synonymous with Eden.

Chapter V

Now of the kind of opposition of place which is connected with standing in front of a judge for judgment, we have an example in the case of the woman who has been suspected of having committed adultery. For, says Moses, “the priest shall cause the woman to stand in front of her lord, and she shall uncover her Head.” Let us now examine what he intends to show by this direction. It often happens that what ought to be done is not done, in the manner in which it ought to be done, and sometimes too that which is not proper is nevertheless done in a proper manner. For instance, when the return of a deposit is not made in an honest spirit, but is intended either to work the injury of him who receives it back again, or by way of a snare to bear out a denial in the case of another deposit of greater value, in that case a proper action is done in an improper manner.

On the other hand, for a physician not to tell the exact truth to a sick patient, when he has decided on purging him, or performing some operation with the knife or with the cautery for the benefit of the patient, lest if the sick man were to be moved too strongly by the anticipation of the suffering, he might refuse to submit to the cure, or through weakness of mind might despair of its succeeding; or in the case of a wise man giving false information to the enemy to secure the safety of his country, fearing lest through his speaking the truth the affairs of the adversaries should succeed, in this case an action which is not intrinsically right is done in a proper manner. In reference to which distinction Moses says, “to pursue what is just Justly,” as if it were possible also to pursue it unjustly, if at any time the judge who gives sentence does not decide in an honest spirit.

Since therefore what is said or done is openly notorious to all men, but since the intention, the consequence of which what is said is said, and what is done is done, is not notorious, but it is uncertain whether it be a sound and healthy

motive, or an unhealthy design, stained with numerous pollutions; and since no created being is capable of discerning the secret intention of an invisible mind, but God alone; in reference to this Moses says that “all secret things are known to the Lord God, but only such as are manifest are known to the creature.”

And therefore it is enjoined to the priest and prophet, that is to say to reason, “to place the soul in front of God, with the head Uncovered,” that is to say the soul must be laid bare as to its principal design, and the sentiments which it nourished must be revealed, in order that being brought before the judgment seat of the most accurate vision of the incorruptible God, it may be thoroughly examined as to all its concealed disguises, like a base coin, or, on the other hand, if it be found to be free from all participation in any kind of wickedness, it may wash away all the calumnies that have been uttered against its bringing him for a testimony to its purity, who is alone able to behold the soul naked.

Chapter VI

This, then, is the meaning of coming in front of one’s judge, when brought up for judgment. But the case of coming in front of any one which has a bearing upon connection or familiarity, may be illustrated by the example of the allwise Abraham. “For,” says Moses, “he was still standing in front of God.” And a proof of his familiarity is contained in the expression that “he came near to God, and spoke.” For it is fitting for one who has no connection with another to stand at a distance, and to be separated from him, but he who is connected with him should stand near to him.

And to stand, and to have an unchangeable mind comes very near to the power of God, since the Divinity is unchangeable, but that which is created is intrinsically and essentially changeable. Therefore, if any one, restraining the changeableness natural to all created things by his love of knowledge, has been able to put such violence on any thing as to cause it to stand firm, let him be sure that he has come near to the happiness of the Deity.

But God very appropriately assigns to the cherubim and to the flaming sword a city or abode in front of Paradise, not as to enemies about to oppose and to fight him, but rather as to near connections and friends, in order that in

consequence of a continued sight and contemplation of one another, the two powers might conceive an affection for one another, the all-bounteous God inspiring them with a winged and heavenly love.

Chapter VII

But we must now consider what the figurative allusions are which are enigmatically expressed in the mention of the cherubim and of the flaming sword which turned every way. May we not say that Moses here introduces under a figure an intimation of the revolutions of the whole heaven? For the spheres in heaven received a motion in opposite directions to one another, the one sphere receiving a fixed motion towards the right hand, but the sphere of the other side receiving a wandering motion towards the left.

But that outermost circle of what are called the fixed stars is one sphere, which also proceeds in a fixed periodical revolution from east to west. But the interior circle of the seven planets, whose course is at the same time compulsory and voluntary, has two motions, which are to a certain degree contrary to one another. And one of these motions is involuntary, like that of the planets. For they appear every day proceeding onwards from the east to the west. But their peculiar and voluntary motion is from west to east, according to which last motion we find that the periods of the seven planets have received their exact measure of time, moving on in an equal course, as the Sun, and Lucifer, and what is called Stilbon. For these three planets are of equal speed; but some of the others are unequal in point of time, but preserve a certain sort of relative proportion to one another and to the other three which have been mentioned.

Accordingly, by one of the cherubim is understood the extreme outermost circumference of the entire heaven, in which the fixed stars celebrate their truly divine dance, which always proceeds on similar principles and is always the same, without ever leaving the order which the Father, who created them, appointed for them in the world. But the other of the cherubim is the inner sphere which is contained within that previously mentioned, which God originally divided in two parts, and created seven orbits, bearing a certain definite proportion to one another, and he adapted each of the planets to one of these;

and then, having placed each of these stars in its proper orbit, like a driver in a chariot, he did not entrust the reins to any one of them, fearing that some inharmonious sort of management might be the result, but he made them all to depend upon himself, thinking that, by that arrangement, the character of their motion would be rendered most harmonious. For every thing which exists in combination with God is deserving of praise; but every thing which exists without him is faulty.

Chapter VIII

This, then, is one of the systems, according to which what is said of the cherubim may be understood allegorically. But we must suppose that the sword, consisting of flame and always turning in every direction, intimates their motion and the everlasting agitation of the entire heaven. And may we not say, according to another way of understanding this allegory, that the two cherubim are meant as symbols of each of the hemispheres? For they say that they stand face to face, inclining towards the mercy-seat; since the two hemispheres are also exactly opposite to one another, and incline towards the earth which is the centre of the whole universe, by which, also, they are kept apart from one another.

But the only one of all the parts of the world that stands firmly was most appropriately named Vesta(hestieμ, as standing (hestoμsa).) by the ancients, in order that there might be an excellently arranged revolution of the two hemispheres around some object firmly fixed in the middle. And the flaming sword is a symbol of the sun; for as he is a collection of an immense body of flame, he is the swiftest of all existing things, to such a degree that in one day he revolves round the whole world.

Chapter IX

I have also, on one occasion, heard a more ingenious train of reasoning from my own soul, which was accustomed frequently to be seized with a certain divine inspiration, even concerning matters which it could not explain even to itself; which now, if I am able to remember it accurately, I will relate. It told me that in the one living and true God there were two supreme and primary powers — goodness and authority; and that by his goodness he had created

every thing, and by his authority he governed all that he had created;

and that the third thing which was between the two, and had the effect of bringing them together was reason, for that it was owing to reason that God was both a ruler and good. Now, of this ruling authority and of this goodness, being two distinct powers, the cherubim were the symbols, but of reason the flaming sword was the symbol. For reason is a thing capable of rapid motion and impetuous, and especially the reason of the Creator of all things is so, inasmuch as it was before everything and passed by everything, and was conceived before everything, and appears in everything.

And do thou, O my mind, receive the impression of each of these cherubims unadulterated, that thus becoming thoroughly instructed about the ruling authority of the Creator of all things and about his goodness, thou mayest receive a happy inheritance; for immediately thou shalt understand the conjunction and combination of these imperishable powers, and learn in what respects God is good, his majesty arising from his sovereign power being all the time conspicuous; and in what he is powerful, his goodness, being equally the object of attention, that is this way thou mayest attain to the virtues which are engendered by these conceptions, namely, a love and a reverential awe of God, neither being uplifted to arrogance by any prosperity which may befall thee, having regard always to the greatness of the sovereignty of thy King; nor abjectly giving up hope of better things in the hour of unexpected misfortune, having regard, then, to the mercifulness of thy great and bounteous God.

And let the flaming sword teach thee that these things might be followed by a prompt and fiery reason combined with action, which never ceases being in motion with rapidity and energy to the selection of good objects, and the avoidance of all such as are evil.

Chapter X

Do you not see that even the wise Abraham, when he began to measure everything with a reference to God, and to leave nothing to the creature, took an imitation of the flaming sword, namely, "fire and a Sword," being eager to slay and to burn that mortal creature which was born of him, that so being raised on high it might soar up to God, the intellect being thus disentangled from the body.

Moses also represents Balaam, who is the symbol of a vain people, stripped of his arms, as a runaway and deserter, well knowing the war which it becomes the soul to carry on for the sake of knowledge; for he says to his ass, who is here a symbol of the irrational designs of life which every foolish man entertains, that "If I had had a sword, I should ere now have slain Thee." And great thanks are due to the Maker of all things, because he, knowing the struggles and resistance of folly, did not give to it the power of language, which would have been like giving a sword to a madman, in order that it might have no power to work great and iniquitous destruction among all whom it should meet with.

But the reproaches which Balaam utters are in some degree expressed by all those who are not purified, but are always talking foolishly, devoting themselves to the life of a merchant, or of a farmer, or to some other business, the object of which is to provide the things necessary for life. As long, indeed, as everything goes on prosperously with respect to each individual, he mounts his animal joyfully and rides on cheerfully, and holding the reins firmly he will by no means consent to let them go. And if any one advises him to dismount and to set bounds to his appetites, because of his inability to know what will befall him hereafter, he reproaches him with jealousy and envy, saying that he does not address him in this way out of good will.

But when any unexpected misfortune overtakes him, he then looks upon those who have given him warnings as good prophets and men able, above all others, to foresee the future, and lays the blame of his distress on what is absolutely the cause of no evil whatever, on agriculture, on commerce, or on any other pursuit which he may have thought fit to select for the purpose of making money.

Chapter XI

But these pursuits, although they are destitute of the organs of speech, will, nevertheless, through the medium of actions, utter a language clearer than any speech which proceeds from the tongue, and will say, "O you sycophant and false accuser, are not we the pursuits which you mounted upon holding your head high, as you might have mounted upon a beast of burden? And have we, by any insolence or obstinacy of ours, caused you any suffering? Behold

reason armed and standing in opposition to God, by whom all good and all bad fortune is brought to its accomplishment. Do you not see it?

Why, then, do you reproach us now, when you formerly had no fault to find with us, while your affairs were proceeding prosperously? For we are the same as we were before, having changed nothing of our nature, not the slightest jot. But you are now applying tests which have no soundness in them, and in consequence are unreasonably violent against us; for if you had understood from the beginning that it is not the pursuits which you follow that are the causes of your participation in good or in evil, but rather the divine reason, which is the helmsman and governor of the universe, then you would more easily have borne the events which have befallen you, ceasing to bring false accusations against us, and to attribute to us effects which we are unable to produce.

“If therefore this reason now again, putting an end to that strife, and dispersing the sad and desponding ideas which arise from it, should promise you tranquillity of life, you will then again, with cheerfulness and joy, give us your right hand though we shall be like what we are now. But we are neither puffed up by your friendly favour, nor do we think it of great importance if you are angry with us; for we know that we are not the causes of either good or evil fortune, not even if you believe that we are, unless indeed you attribute to the sea the cause of sailors making favourable voyages, or of the shipwrecks which at times befall them, and not rather to the variations of the winds, which blow at one time gently, and at another with the most violent impetuosity; for as all water is by its own nature tranquil,

accordingly, when a favourable gale blows upon the stern of a ship, every rope is bent, and the ship is in full sail, conveying the mariners to the harbour; but when on a sudden the wind changes to the opposite direction, and blows against the head of the vessel, it then raises a heavy swell and great disturbance in the water, and upsets the ship and the sea, which was in no respect the cause of what has happened is blamed for it, though it notoriously is either calm or stormy according to the gentleness or violence of the winds.”

By all these considerations I think it has been abundantly shown, that nature has made reason the most powerful coadjutor of man, and has made him, how is able to make a proper use of it, happy and truly rational; but him

who has not this faculty, she has rendered irrational and unhappy.

Chapter XII

“And Adam knew his wife, and she conceived and brought forth Cain; and she said I have gotten a man by means of the Lord; and he caused her also to bring forth Abel his Brother.” These men, to whose virtue the Jewish legislation bears testimony, he does not represent as knowing their wives, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and if there are any others of like zeal with them;

for since we say, that woman is to be understood symbolically as the outward sense, and since knowledge consists in alienation from the outward sense and from the body, it is plain that the lovers of wisdom must repudiate the outward sense rather than choose it, and is not this quite natural? for they who live with these men are in name indeed wives, but in fact virtues. Sarah is princess and guide, Rebecca is perseverance in what is good; Leah again is virtue, fainting and weary at the long continuance of exertion, which every foolish man declines, and avoids, and repudiates; and Zipporah, the wife of Moses, is virtue, mounting up from earth to heaven, and arriving at a just comprehension of the divine and blessed virtues which exist there, and she is called a bird.

But that we may describe the conception and the parturition of virtues, let the superstitious either stop their ears, or else let them depart; for we are about to teach those initiated persons who are worthy of the knowledge of the most sacred mysteries, the whole nature of such divine and secret ordinances. And those who are thus worthy are they who, with all modesty, practise genuine piety, of that sort which scorns to disguise itself under any false colours. But we will not act the part of hierophant or expounder of sacred mysteries to those who are afflicted with the incurable disease of pride of language and quibbling expressions, and juggling tricks of manners, and who measure sanctity and holiness by no other standard.

Chapter XIII

But we must begin our explanation of these mysteries in this way. A husband unites with his wife, and the male human being with the female

human being in a union which tends to the generation of children, in strict accordance with and obedience to nature. But it is not lawful for virtues, which are the parents of many perfect things, to associate with a mortal husband. But they, without having received the power of generation from any other being, will never be able by themselves alone to conceive any thing.

Who, then, is it who sows good seed in them, except the Father of the universe, the uncreated God, he who is the parent of all things? This, therefore, is the being who sows, and presently he bestows his own offspring, which he himself did sow; for God creates nothing for himself, inasmuch as he is in need of nothing, but he creates every thing for him who is able to take it.

And I will bring forward as a competent witness in proof of what I have said, the most holy Moses. For he introduces Sarah as conceiving a son when God beheld her by himself; but he represents her as bringing forth her son, not to him who beheld her then, but to him who was eager to attain to wisdom, and his name is called Abraham.

And he teaches the same lesson more plainly in the case of Leah, where he says that "God opened her Womb." But to open the womb is the especial business of the husband. And she having conceived, brought forth, not to God, for he alone is sufficient and all-abundant for himself, but to him who underwent labour for the sake of that which is good, namely, for Jacob; so that in this instance virtue received the divine seed from the great Cause of all things, but brought forth her offspring to one of her lovers, who deserved to be preferred to all her other Suitors.

Again, when the all-wise Isaac addressed his supplications to God, Rebecca, who is perseverance, became pregnant by the agency of him who received the supplication; but Moses, who received Zipporah, that is to say, winged and sublime virtue, without any supplication or entreaty on his part, found that she conceived by no mortal man.

Chapter XIV

Now I bid ye, initiated men, who are purified, as to your ears, to receive these things, as mysteries which are really sacred, in your inmost souls; and reveal them not to any one who is of the number of the uninitiated, but guard them as a sacred treasure, laying them up in your own hearts, not in a

storehouse in which are gold and silver, perishable substances, but in that treasurehouse in which the most excellent of all the possessions in the world does lie, the knowledge namely of the great first Cause, and of virtue, and in the third place, of the generation of them both. And if ever you meet with any one who has been properly initiated, cling to that man affectionately and adhere to him, that if he has learnt any more recent mystery he may not conceal it from you before you have learnt to comprehend it thoroughly.

For I myself, having been initiated in the great mysteries by Moses, the friend of God, nevertheless, when subsequently I beheld Jeremiah the prophet, and learnt that he was not only initiated into the sacred mysteries, but was also a competent hierophant or expounder of them, did not hesitate to become his pupil. And he, like a man very much under the influence of inspiration, uttered an oracle in the character of God, speaking in this manner to most peaceful virtue: "Hast thou not called me as thy house, and thy father, and the husband of thy Virginity?" showing by this expression most manifestly that God is both a house, the incorporeal abode of incorporeal ideas, and the Father of all things, inasmuch as it is he who has created them; and the husband of wisdom, sowing for the race of mankind the seed of happiness in good and virgin soil. For it is fitting for God to converse with an unpolluted and untouched and pure nature, in truth and reality virgin, in a different manner from that in which we converse with such.

For the association of men, with a view to the procreation of children, makes virgins women. But when God begins to associate with the soul, he makes that which was previously woman now again virgin. Since banishing and destroying all the degenerate appetites unbecoming a human being, by which it had been made effeminate, he introduces in their stead genuine, and perfect, and unadulterated virtues; therefore, he will not converse with Sarah before all the habits, such as other women have, have left her, (genesis 18:11.) and till she has returned into the class of pure virgins.

Chapter XV

But it is, perhaps, possible that in some cases a virgin soul may be polluted by intemperate passions, and so become impure. On which account the sacred oracle has been cautious, calling God the husband, not of a virgin, for a virgin

is subject to change and to mortality, but of virginity; of an idea, that is to say, which is always existing in the same principles and in the same manner. For as all things endowed with distinctive qualities are by nature liable to origination and to destruction, so those archetypal powers, which are the makers of those particular things, have received an imperishable inheritance in their turn.

Therefore is it seemly that the uncreated and unchangeable God should ever sow the ideas of immortal and virgin virtues in a woman who is transformed into the appearance of virginity? Why, then, O soul, since it is right for you to dwell as a virgin in the house of God, and to cleave to wisdom, do you stand aloof from these things, and rather embrace the outward sense, which makes you effeminate and pollutes you? Therefore, you shall bring forth an offspring altogether polluted and altogether destructive, the fratricidal and accursed Cain, a possession not to be sought after; for the name Cain being interpreted means possession.

Chapter XVI

And one may wonder at the kind of narration which the Jewish lawgiver frequently employs in many instances, where he departs from the usual style. For after giving the history of those parents of the human race who were created out of the earth, he begins to relate the story of the first-born of human parents, concerning whom he says absolutely nothing, as if he had already frequently mentioned his name, and were not now bringing it forward for the first time. Accordingly, he simply says that “she brought forth Cain.” What sort of being was he, O writer; and what have you ever said about him before of either great or small importance?

And yet you are not ignorant of the importance of a proper application of names. For before this time, as you proceed in your history, you show this, when speaking in reference to the same person you say, “And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and brought forth a son, and she called his name Seth.” Therefore it was much more necessary in the case of the first-born, who was the beginning of the generation of men from one another, to display the nature of him who was thus conceived and born, in the first place showing that he was a male child, and secondly mentioning his peculiar name, Cain.

Since, therefore, it was not owing to inexperience or to ignorance of according to what persons he ought to give names, that he appears to have discarded his usual practice in the case of Cain, we must now consider on what account he thus named those who were born of our first parents, rather mentioning the name in an incidental way than actually giving it. And the cause, as it appears to me, according to the best conjecture that I can form, is this.

Chapter XVII

All the rest of the human race gives names to things which are different from the things themselves, so that the thing which we see is one thing, but the name which we give it is another; but in the history of Moses the names which he affixes to things are the most conspicuous energies of the things themselves, so that the thing itself is at once of necessity its name, and is in no respect different from the name which is imposed on it. And you may learn this more clearly from the previous example which I have mentioned.

When the mind which is in us, and let it be called Adam, meeting with the outward sense, according to which all living creatures appear to exist (and that is called Eve), having conceived a desire for connection, is associated with this outward sense, that one conceives as in a net, and hunts after the external object of outward sense naturally. For by means of the eyes it arrives at a conception of colour, by the ears it conceives sound, by the nostrils it arrives at a conception of smells, of flavours by the organs of taste, and of all substance by those of touch; and having thus conceived it becomes pregnant, and immediately it is in labour, and brings forth the greatest of all the evils of the soul, namely, vain opinion, for it conceives an opinion that everything that it has seen, that it has heard, that it has tasted, that it has smelled, or that it has touched, belongs to itself, and to looks upon itself as the inventor and creator of them all.

Chapter XVIII

And there is nothing unnatural in its receiving this impression, for there was a time once when the mind had no conversation with the outward sense, and had no outward sense, being very far removed from all things which were

gregarious and in the habit of associating together, and itself resembling those solitary animals which feed by themselves. Accordingly as at that time it was classed by itself it did not touch any body, inasmuch as it had no organ in itself by which to take hold of external objects, but it was blind, and devoid of power, not being such a being as most people call a person when they see any one deprived of his eyes, for such a person is destitute of only one external sense, and has great and abundant vigour in the others.

But this mind, being curtailed of all the faculties which are derived from the outward senses, and being really powerless, being but the half of a perfect soul, destitute of the faculty by which it might naturally be able to conceive bodies, being but a garment of itself, deprived of its kindred organs, and as such unfortunately is wholly deprived of these organs of the external senses on which it might rely as on a staff, and by which it might have been able to support itself when tottering. From which cause a great darkness is spread over all bodies, so that nothing can be visible through it; for there was no outward sense by which things could be distinguished.

God therefore, wishing to give it the faculty of comprehending not only incorporeal but also solid bodies, filled up the entire soul, attaching a second portion to that which he had already created, which he called appellatively woman, and by an especial name Eve, intimating the outward sense by a metaphorical expression.

Chapter XIX

And she, the first moment that she was born, pours forth abundant light in a flood into the mind through each of her subordinate parts, as through so many holes, and having dissipated the previously existing mist, enabled it like a master to discern the natures of bodies at a distance and with perfect clearness; and the mind being now irradiated with light, as if the beams of the sun had suddenly shone upon it after night, or as if it had just arisen from a deep sleep, or as if it had been to see a blind man suddenly restored to sight, came at once upon all the things with which creation was concerned, heaven, and earth, and water, and air, and plants, and animals, and their habits, and distinctive qualities, and faculties, and dispositions, and movements, and energies, and actions, and changes, and ends; and some things he saw, and some thing he

heard, and some he tasted, and some he smelled, and some he touched; and towards some he felt an inclination as they were productive of pleasure, and to some he felt aversion inasmuch as they caused pain.

Having therefore looked around it on all sides, and having contemplated itself and its own faculties, it ventured to utter the same boast that Alexander the king of the Macedonians did, for they say that he, when he determined to lay claim to the supreme dominion over Europe and Asia, stood in a suitable place, and looking around him upon every thing, said, "All things on this side and all things on that side are mine," displaying thus the emptiness of soul truly childish and infantine and foolish, and not at all royal.

But the mind, having first laid a claim to the faculties of the outward sense, and by means of them having conceived every idea of bodily substance, became filled with unreasonable pride and was puffed up, so as to think everything in the world its own property, and that nothing at all belonged to any one else.

Chapter XX

This is that disposition in us which Moses characterised when he gave Cain his name, a name which being interpreted means possession, Cain himself being full of all folly or rather of all impiety; for instead of thinking that all possession belonged to God, he conceived that they all belonged to himself, though he was not only not able to possess even himself steadily, but he did not even know of what essence he consisted; but nevertheless he placed confidence in the outward senses, as being competent to attain the objects perceivable only by them. Let him tell us therefore how he will be able to avoid seeing wrongly, or being mistaken as to his hearing, or to escape even in any other of these outward senses.

And in truth it is inevitable that these errors should continually befall every one of us, even if we should happen to be endowed with the most accurately constructed organs possible; for it is difficult, or I might rather say impossible, for any one completely to avoid the natural blemishes and involuntary errors which arise, since the efficient causes of erroneous opinions are innumerable, both within us and around us, and outside of us, and since they are to be found in every mortal creature, man, therefore, very improperly conceives

every thing to belong to himself, however proud he may be, and however high he may carry his head.

Chapter XXI

And Laban, who relied greatly on his distinctive qualities, appears to me to have afforded great amusement to Jacob, who was beyond all other men, a clear-sighted contemplator of the nature, which was free from any such qualities, when he ventured to say to him that, “My daughter, and my sons, and my cattle, and all that you see, belong to me and to my Daughters.”(genesis 31:43.) For adding the word “my” to each of these articles, he never ceases from speaking and boasting about himself.

Your daughters now, tell me — and they are the arts and sciences of the soul — do you say that your daughters are your own property? How so? In the first place did you not receive them from the mind which taught them? in the second place it is naturally possible for you to lose these also, as you might lose anything else, either forgetting them through the greatness of your other cares, or through severe and lasting sicknesses of body, or because of the incurable disease which is at all events destined for those who grow old, namely old age, or through ten thousand other accidents, the number of which it is impossible to calculate.

And what will you say about the sons? — and the sons are the reasonings which take place in portions of the soul, — if you pronounce that the sons belong to you, are you speaking reasonably, or are you downright mad for thinking so? For melancholic thoughts, and follies, and frenzies of the mind, and untrustworthy conjectures, and false ideas about things, and empty attractions of the mind, resembling dreams, and bringing with them convulsive agitation, and the disease which is innate in the soul, namely forgetfulness, and many other things beyond those that I have mentioned, take away the stability of your master-like authority, and show that these are the possession of some one else and not of you.

Again, what will you say about the cattle? Now the cattle are the outward senses, for the outward sense is something unreasonable and brutish, like cattle, will you dare to call the cattle your property? Tell me when you see erroneously, when you constantly hear erroneously, when you at one time

think sweet flavours brackish, and at others look upon bitter flavours as sweet, when you in fact, in respect of every single one of these outward senses, are in the habit of being mistaken more frequently than you come to a correct decision, do you not blush? and if so, will you give yourself airs, and boast yourself as if you employed all the faculties and energies of the soul in such a way as never to err or to be mistaken.

Chapter XXII

But if you were to become changed, and to become possessed of the senses which you ought to have, you would then affirm that everything was the property of God, not of yourself, all conceptions, all knowledge, all art, all speculation, all particular reasonings, all the outward senses, and all the energies of the soul, whether exerted by them or without them; and if you leave yourself throughout the whole of your life without any instructor, and without any teaching, you will be a slave for ever to harsh mistresses, such as vain opinions, appetites, pleasures, acts of injustice, follies, and erroneous conceptions;

“For if,” says Moses, “the servant shall answer and say, I am content with my master, and with my wife, and with my children, I will not depart and be free, then, being brought before the judgment-seat of God,” and, having him for his judge, he shall securely have what he asked, “having first had his ear bored Through,” that he may not hear the words of God about freedom of soul.

For it is a sign of a mind which is as it were rejected from the sacred contest and wholly discarded, and of reasoning faculties wholly childish and deficient, to make a boast of the mind being contented, and of thinking one’s mind one’s own lord and benefactor, and to boast of being very sufficiently pleased with the outward senses, and of thinking them one’s own property, and the greatest of all good things, and their offspring with them; the offspring of the mind being to comprehend, to reason, to discriminate, to will, to conjecture; and the offspring of the outward sense being to see, to hear, to taste, to smell, to touch, in short to feel.

Chapter XXIII

It follows inevitably that he who is held in bondage by these two masters can never enjoy even a dream of freedom; for it is only by a flight and complete escape from them that we arrive at a state of freedom from fear. But there is another man besides him, who is so taken up with himself, who makes an exhibition of insanity, and says that even if any one were to take his possessions away from him he would gain a victory over him, like a man contending for his own property. "For," says he, "I will pursue and will take captive; I will divide the spoil; I will satisfy my soul, and I will slay with my sword; my right hand shall obtain the Mastery."

To whom I would say, Thou hast forgotten, fool, that every one who thinks himself at his birth born to be a persecutor, is persecuted; for diseases, and old age, and death, with all the rest of the multitude of calamities incurred, voluntarily and involuntarily, agitate and harass and persecute every one of us; and he who thinks to take captive or to subdue is himself taken captive and subdued; and he who expects to carry off the spoil, and who arranges a distribution of the booty, is defeated, and becomes subject to the enemies who have defeated him, receiving emptiness instead of abundance, and slavery for his soul instead of mastership, and being slain instead of slaying, and forcibly suffering himself all that he had designed to do to others.

For such a man was truly the enemy of reason which establishes the truth, and of nature herself, setting up a claim to everything which was done as his own, and remembering not one of the things which happened to him while he was suffering, as if he had escaped all the evils which could arise from any source whatever.

Chapter XXIV

For, says he, the enemy has said, "I will pursue and take captive." Who, then, could be a more determined enemy to the soul than he who out of arrogance appropriate the especial attributes of the Deity to himself? Now it is an especial attribute of God to create, and this faculty it is impious to ascribe to any created being.

But the special property of the created being is to suffer; and he who has previously considered how akin to and inevitable for man this is, will easily endure everything that befalls him, however grievous it may be. But if he

thinks that it is inconsistent with his destiny, then, if he be oppressed with any very terrible calamity, he will suffer the punishment of Sisyphus, not being able to raise his head, not even ever so little, but being exposed to all sorts of evils coming upon him and overwhelming him, and meeting them all with submission and non-resistance, the passions of a degenerate and unmanly soul; for he ought rather to have endured with patience; still, however, resisting and striving against calamity, strengthening his mind, and raising a bulwark against sorrow by his own patience and fortitude, which are the most powerful of virtues.

For as to be shaved is an operation of a twofold nature, as in the one case the creature shaved is either the active agent and the passive subject; and in the other case, he does nothing but yield and submit to the barber: for a sheep is shorn either of his whole hide, or of that which is called the pillow; doing nothing of itself, but only suffering at the hands of another. But man cooperates with the barber, and puts himself in the proper attitude, and makes himself convenient, mingling the characters of the subject and the agent.

So also in the case of beating, that may happen either to a servant who has committed offences worthy of stripes, or to a freeman who is stretched on the wheel as a punishment for wickedness, or to some inanimate thing; for stones and trees are beaten, and gold and silver, and whatever material is wrought in a forge, or is cut in two.

And to be beaten, also happens to athletes who contend in boxing, or in the pancratium for victory and crowns. The boxer parries blows which are aimed at him with one of his hands, and stooping his neck on this side and on that side, guards against being struck; and very often he stands on tiptoe, and raises himself as high as he can, or else he stoops and contracts himself on the other hand, and compels his antagonist to waste his blows on the empty air, very nearly as if he were fighting with a shadow. But the servant or the brass, doing nothing in return, is subjected to the will of the other party, suffering at his hands whatever he pleases:

let us therefore never admit the influence of this passion, neither in our body, nor, what is of much greater importance, in our soul; but let us rather admit that feeling which suffers in return, since it is inevitable that that which is mortal must suffer; so that we may not, like effeminate persons, broken in

spirit, dissolute, and falling to pieces before our time, be weak through the utter prostration and relaxation of the powers of the soul, but rather that, being invigorated in the nerves and tone of our minds, we may be able to bear cheerfully and easily the rush of such calamities as may be impending over us.

Since therefore it has been proved, that no mortal is positively and assuredly the master of anything whatever (and they who are called masters are so in appearance only, and are not called so in truth), it follows of necessity, that as there is a subject and a slave, so there must also be a ruler and lord in the universe, and he must be the true real ruler and lord, the one God, to whom it was becoming to say, that "All things belong to him."

Chapter XXV

And let us now consider with what magnificent fitness and with what divine majesty he speaks of these things. Let us consider the expression, "All things are mine," and "all things" mean as he says, "gifts, and offerings, and fruits of labour, which, on watching carefully, he will bring to me on the days of my Festivals." Showing, very manifestly, that of all existing things some are thought worthy of moderate grace which is called an offering, and some of that higher grace which is called by the appropriate name of a free gift. And these things again are of such a nature that they are able, not only to bring forth virtues as their fruit, but that good fruit and eatable does actually pervade the whole of them, by which alone the soul of him who loves contemplation is supported;

and he who has learnt this lesson, and who is able to keep and preserve these things in his mind, will bring to God a faultless and most excellent offering, namely faith, on the festivals, which are not feasts of mortal things; for he has assigned feasts also to himself, laying down this as the most inevitable doctrine to those who are revellers in philosophy.

And the doctrine is this: God alone keeps festival in reality, for he alone rejoices, he alone is delighted, he alone feels cheerfulness, and to him alone is it given, to pass an existence of perfect peace unmixed with war. He is free from all pain, and free from all fear; he has no participation in any evils, he yields to no one, he suffers no sorrow, he knows no fatigue, he is full of unalloyed happiness; his nature is entirely perfect, or rather God is himself the

perfection, and completion, and boundary of happiness, partaking of nothing else by which he can be rendered better, but giving to every individual thing a portion of what is suited to it, from the fountain of good, namely, from himself; for the beautiful things in the world would never have been such as they are, if they had not been made after an archetypal pattern, which was really beautiful, the uncreate, and blessed, and imperishable model of all things.

Chapter XXVI

And on this account too Moses calls the sabbath, which name being interpreted means “rest,” “the sabbath of God.” Touching upon the necessary principles of natural philosophy, not of the philosophy of men, in many parts of his law, for that among existing things which rests, if one must tell the truth, is one thing only, God. And by “rest” I do not mean “inaction” (since that which is by its nature energetic, that which is the cause of all things, can never desist from doing what is most excellent), but I mean an energy completely free from labour, without any feeling of suffering, and with the most perfect ease;

for one may say, without impropriety, that the sun and the moon, and the entire heaven, and the whole world labour, inasmuch as they are not endowed with independent power, and are continually in a state of motion and agitation, and the most undeniable proofs of their labour are the yearly seasons; for these things, which have the greatest tendency in the whole heaven to keep things together, vary their motions, making their revolutions at one time northern, at another time southern, and at other times different from both.

The air, again, being sometimes warmed and sometimes cooled, and being capable of every sort of change, is easily proved to labour by the variations to which we feel that it is subject, since the most general cause of change is fatigue, and it would be folly to enter into any long detail about terrestrial or aquatic animals, dwelling at any length upon their general or particular changes; for these animals very naturally are liable to weakness in a much greater degree than those sublime objects, inasmuch as they partake to the greatest extent of the lowest, that is of earthly essence.

Since therefore it is naturally the case that things, which are changed, are changed in consequence of fatigue, and since God is subject to no variation and to no change, he must also by nature be free from fatigue, and that, which has no participation in weakness, even though it moves everything, cannot possibly cease to enjoy rest for ever. So that rest is the appropriate attribute of God alone.

For come, if you please, and contemplate with me the much celebrated festive assemblies of men. As for those which among the barbarian and Grecian nations have been established in compliance with fabulous fictions, all tending to no other object than to excite vain pride in various nations, they may be all passed over, for the entire life of a man would not be long enough to make an accurate and thorough investigation of all the absurdities which existed in each of those festivals. But with a due regard to our time, we will mention a few points in the most important of them, as a specimen of the whole.

In every festival then and assembly among men, the following are the most remarkable and celebrated points, security, relaxation, truce, drunkenness, deep drinking, revelling, luxury, amusement, music at the doors, banquets lasting through the night, unseemly pleasures, wedding feasts during the day, violent acts of insolence, practices of intemperance, indulgence of folly, pursuits of shameful things, an utter destruction and renunciation of what is good, wakefulness during the night for the indulgence of immoderate appetites, sleep by day when it is the proper time to be awake, a turning upside down of the laws of nature.

At such a time virtue is ridiculed as a mischievous thing, and vice is caught at as something advantageous. Then actions that ought to be done are held in no honour, and such as ought not to be done are esteemed. Then music and philosophy and all education, the really divine images of the divine soul, are reduced to silence, and such practices as are panders and pimps of pleasure to the belly, and the parts adjacent to the belly, are alone allowed to raise their voice.

Chapter XXVIII

Such are the festivals of those who call themselves happy men, and even while they confine their unseemly conduct within their houses and unconsecrated places, they appear to me to be less guilty. But when, like the rush of a torrent carrying everything away with it, their indecency approaches and insults the most holy temples, it immediately overtakes all that there is sacred in them, performing unhallowed sacrifices, offering victims which ought not to be sacrificed, and prayers such as should never be accomplished; celebrating impious mysteries, and profane rites, displaying a bastard piety, an adulterated holiness, an impure purity, a falsified truth, a debauched service of God.

And besides all this, they wash their bodies with baths and purifications, but they neither desire nor endeavour to wash off the passions of their souls, by which their whole life is polluted; and they are eager to flock to the temples in white garments, clothes in robes without spot or stain, but they feel no shame at bringing a polluted mind up to the very inmost shrine.

And if any one of the beasts, to be sacrificed, is found to be not perfect and entire, it is driven out of the sacred precincts, and is not allowed to be brought to the altar, even though all these corporeal imperfections are quite involuntary on its part; but though they may themselves be wounded in their souls by sensible diseases, which the invincible power of wickedness has inflicted on them, or though, I might rather say, they are mutilated and curtailed of their fairest proportions, of prudence, and courage, and justice, piety, and of all the other virtues which the human race is naturally formed to possess, and although too they have contracted all this pollution and mutilation of their own free will, they nevertheless dare to perform sacrifices, thinking that the eye of God sees external objects alone, when the sun co-operates and throws light upon them, and that it cannot discern what is invisible in preference to what is visible, using itself as its own light.

For the eye of the living God does not need any other light to enable him to perceive things, but being himself archetypal light he pours forth innumerable rays, not one of which is capable of being comprehended by the outward sense, but they are all only intelligible to the intellect; in consequence of which God alone uses them who is only comprehensible to the intellect, and nothing that has any portion in creation uses them at all; for that which has been created is perceptible to the outward senses, but that nature which is only

perceptible to the intellect cannot be comprehended by the outward sense.

Chapter XXIX

Since, therefore, he thus invisibly enters into this region of the soul, let us prepare that place in the best way the case admits of, to be an abode worthy of God; for if we do not, he, without our being aware of it, will quit us and migrate to some other habitation, which shall appear to him to be more excellently provided.

For if when we are about to receive kings, we prepare our houses to wear a more magnificent appearance, neglecting nothing which may give them ornament, but using every thing in a liberal and unsparing manner, having for our object that they shall have an abode pleasant to them, and in all respects suitable to their majesty; what sort of habitation ought we to prepare for the King of kings, for God the ruler of the whole universe, condescending in his mercy and lovingkindness for man to visit the beings whom he has created, and to come down from the borders of heaven to the lowest regions of the earth, for the purpose of benefiting our race?

Shall we prepare him a house of stone or of wooden materials? Away! such an idea is not holy even to utter; for not even if the whole earth were to change its nature and to become on a sudden gold, or something more valuable than gold, and if it were then to be wholly consumed by the skill of workmen, who should make it into porticoes and vestibules, and chambers, and precincts, and temples — not even then could it be a place worthy for his feet to tread upon, but a pious soul is his fitting abode.

Chapter XXX

If therefore we call the invisible soul the terrestrial habitation of the invisible God, we shall be speaking justly and according to reason; but that the house may be firm and beautiful, let a good disposition and knowledge be laid as its foundations, and on these foundations let the virtues be built up in union with good actions, and let the ornaments of the front be the due comprehension of the encyclical branches of elementary instruction;

for from goodness of disposition arise skill, perseverance, memory; and from knowledge arise learning and attention, as the roots of a tree which is about to bring forth eatable fruit, and without which it is impossible to bring the intellect to perfection.

But by the virtues, and by actions in accordance with them, a firm and strong foundation for a lasting building is secured, in order that anything which may endeavour to separate and alienate the soul from honesty and make it such another haunt, may be powerless against so strong a defence,

and by means of the study of the encyclical branches of elementary education, the things requisite for the ornament of the soul are provided; for as whitewashing, and paintings, and tablets, and the arrangement of costly stones, by which men decorate not merely the walls, but even the lower parts of their houses, and all other such things as these do not contribute to strength, but only give pleasure to those who live in the house;

so the knowledge of the encyclical accomplishments decorates the whole habitation of the soul, while grammar investigates the principles of poetry and follows up the history of ancient events, and geometry labours at equalities according to analogy, and endeavours to remedy whatever in us is deficient in rhythm or in moderation, or in harmony, by giving us rhythm, and moderation, and harmony, by means of a polished system of music; and rhetoric aims at giving us acuteness in everything, and at properly adapting all proper interpretations to everything, claiming for itself the control of all intensesness and all the vehement affections, and again of all relaxations and pleasures, with great freedom of speech, and a successful application of the organs of language and voice.

Chapter XXXI

Such a house then being prepared in the race of mankind, all things on earth will be filled with good hopes, expecting the return of the powers of God; and they will come, bringing laws from heaven, and bonds, for the purpose of sanctifying the hallowing it, according to the command of their Father; then becoming the associates and constant companions of these souls which love virtue, they sow in them the genus of happiness: as they gave to the wise Abraham his son Isaac as the most perfect proof of their gratitude for the

hospitality which they experienced from him.

And the purified intellect rejoices in nothing more than in confessing that it has for its master him who is the Lord of all; for to be the servant of God is the greatest boast, and is more honourable, not only than freedom, but even than riches or dominion, or than anything which the race of mankind is eager for.

And of the supreme authority of the living God, the sacred scripture is a true witness, which speaks thus: "And the land shall not be sold for ever; for all the earth is mine, because ye are all strangers and sojourners in my Sight." Does not the scripture here most manifestly show that all things belong to God by virtue of possession,

but to created things only inasmuch as they have the use of them? For, says God, nothing shall be permanently sold to any one of all created beings, since there is one being to whom the possession of the universe does permanently and surely belong; for God has given the use of all created things to all men, not having made any one of those things which are only in part perfect, so as to have absolutely no need of anything else,

in order that, being desirous to obtain that of which it has need, it may of necessity unite itself to that which is able to supply it, and that other may in its turn unite with it, and both may thus combine with one another; for thus, the two combining and mingling together, and like a lyre which is composed of dissimilar sounds, coming into one combination and symphony, must of necessity sound together, while all things giving and receiving in turn contribute to the completion and perfection of the universal world.

In this way inanimate things combine with those which have life, irrational things with those endowed with reason, trees with men, and men with plants, things untameable with those which are tame, and domestic animals with savage ones, the male with the female, and the female with the male; in short, terrestrial animals with such as live in the water, aquatic creatures with those whose home is in the air, and flying animals with any of these described above. And besides all those things, earth with heaven, and heaven with earth, air with water, and water with air. And again the intermediate natures with one another, and with these at their extremities, and the extremities too form an attachment to the intermediate natures and to one another.

So again winter feels a need of summer, and summer of winter, spring of both, and autumn of spring, and each of these seasons of each other season; and, so to say, everything has a need and want of everything else. So that the whole universe of which all these are parts, namely the world, is clearly a complete work, worthy of its Maker.

Chapter XXXII

Thus, therefore, putting all these things together, God appropriated the dominion over them all to himself, but the use and enjoyment of themselves and of each other he allowed to those who are subject to him; for we have the complete use of our own faculties and of everything which affects us: I therefore, consisting of soul and body, and appearing to have a mind, and reason, and outward sense, find that not one of all these things is my own property.

For where was my body before my birth? and where will it go when I am departed? And what becomes of the differences of age of that being which at present appears to exist? Where is now the infant? — where the child? — where the boy? — where the youth just arriving at the age of puberty? — where the young man? — where is he now whose beard is just budding, the vigorous and perfect man? Whence came the soul, and whither will it go? and how long will it remain with us? and what is its essence, or what may we speak of as such? Moreover, when did we acquire it? Was it before our birth? — But then we ourselves did not exist. Shall we have it after our death? — But then we shall not exist, we who are now a combination of distinctive qualities in combination with our bodies; but rather we shall then be hastening to a regeneration, becoming in combination with incorporeal beings:

and now, when we are alive we are governed rather than governing, and we are understood ourselves rather than understanding anything else; for our soul understands us without being understood by us, and it imposes commands upon us which we are necessitated to obey, as servants are compelled to obey a mistress; and whenever it chooses to abandon us and to depart to the Ruler of all things, it will depart, leaving our house destitute of life. And even if we attempt to compel it to remain, it will disappear; for its nature is composed of unsubstantial parts, such as afford no handle to the body.

Chapter XXXIII

But the mind is my peculiar place of abode. Is this the language of the mistaken conjecturer, of the former of erroneous opinions, of the man out of his mind, of the fool, of him who is found to be destitute of his senses through a trance, or through melancholy, or from old age? Will any one then say, reason is my possession, or the organs of voice are my possession? Has not a very slight pretext of disease disabled the voice? has it now sewn up the mouths of even very eloquent men? Has not an expectation of danger, when it has come upon men, rendered myriads speechless?

And in truth I am not found to be the governor of the outward senses, or perhaps I may even turn out to be their slave, following where they lead me, to colours, to shapes, to sounds, to smells, to flavours, or to other kinds of substances. By all which I think it is shown that we have the use of possessions which in reality belong to others, and that neither glory, nor riches, nor honours, nor authority, nor anything else which concerns our bodies or souls is really our own, nor indeed even life itself.

But having the use of these things, if we are judicious and prudent, we shall take care of them as possessions of God, being well aware beforehand that it is the law, that the master, whenever he pleases, may reclaim his own property. For by these considerations we shall diminish our grief for the deprivation of such things. But now, men in general, thinking that every thing is really their own property, are in a moment afflicted with extraordinary grief at the absence or loss of any thing.

It is, therefore, not only true, but a thing also which most especially tends to consolation, to consider that the world and all the things in the world are the works and the property of him who created them. And his own work, he who is its real possessor, gives to others, because he has no need of it himself. But he who uses it has no property in it, because there is one Lord and master of all things, who says most truly, "All the earth is mine," a saying which is equivalent to — every created thing is mine; and "he are all strangers and sojourners in my sight."

Chapter XXXIV

For all mortals, being compared with one another, are looked upon as natives of the soil, and nobly born persons, all enjoying equal honours, and equal rank; but by God they are looked upon as strangers and sojourners; for each of us has come into this world as to a new city, in which he had no share before his birth, and having come into it he dwells here, until he has completed the period of life allotted to him.

At the same time, also, this doctrine of exceeding wisdom is introduced, that the Lord God is the only real citizen, and that every created being is but a stranger and a sojourner. But those who are called citizens are called so rather in consequence of a slight misapplication of the name than in strict truth. And it is a sufficient gift to wise men — if considered comparatively with the only true citizen, God — for them to have the rank of strangers and sojourners. With respect to foolish men, of them there is absolutely no one who is a stranger or sojourner in the city of God, but such an one is found to be utterly an exile. And this is implied in what he said besides as a most authoritative doctrine, “The land shall not be utterly sold away.” Nor did God add “by whom,” in order that from that point being passed over in silence, he who was not wholly uninitiated in natural philosophy, might be benefited in respect of knowledge.

Therefore, if you consider the matter, you will find that all men, and especially those who have been alluded to as giving gratuitously, sell rather than give; and that they, who we fancy are receiving favours, are, in reality, purchasing the benefits which they derive; for they who give, hoping to receive a requital, such as praise or honour, and seeking for a return of the favour which they are conferring, under the specious name of a gift, are, in reality, making a bargain. Since it is usual, for those who sell, to receive a price in return for what they part with; but they who, receiving presents, feel anxiety to make a return for them, and make such a return in due season, they in reality perform the part of purchasers; for as they know how to receive, so also do they know how to requite.

But God distributes his good things, not like a seller vending his wares at a high price, but he is inclined to make presents of everything, pouring forth the inexhaustible fountains of his graces, and never desiring any return; for he has no need of anything, nor is there any created being competent to give him a suitable gift in return.

Chapter XXXV

As all things then are confessed to be the possessions of God, and proved to be so by sound reasonings and testimonies, which cannot possibly be convicted of bearing false witness, for they are the sacred oracles which Moses has recorded in the Holy Scriptures that bear witness; we must deprecate that mind which fancied that that which originated in a meeting with the outward sense was his own property, and which called it Cain, and said, "I have gotten a man by means of God," in this also greatly erring. But in what did he err?

Because God was the cause, not the instrument; and what was born was created indeed through the agency of some instrument, but was by all means called into existence by the great first cause; for many things must co-operate in the origination of anything; by whom, from what, by means of what, and why? Now he by whom a thing originates is the cause; that from which a thing is made is the material; that by means of which it was made is the instrument; and why, is the object.

For come now, suppose any one should say, what things must meet together, that any house or city may be made? Must there not be a builder, and stones, and timber, and tools? What then is the builder, but the cause by whom the house or city is built? And what are the stones and timber, but the materials of which the buildings is made? And what are the tools, but the things by means of which it is made?

And for what reason is it built, except to serve as a shelter and protection? This is the object. Now passing on from these particular buildings, consider the greatest house or city, namely, this world, for you will find that God is the cause of it, by whom it was made. That the materials are the four elements, of which it is composed; that the instrument is the word of God, by means of which it was made; and the object of the building you will find to be the display of the goodness of the Creator. This is the discriminating opinion of men fond of truth, who desire to attain to true and sound knowledge; but they who say that they have gotten anything by means of God, conceive that the cause is the instrument, the Creator namely, and the instrument the cause, namely, the human mind.

And all sound reason would reproach Joseph for saying, "That the true interpretation of the dreams would be found out by means of God;" for he

should have said, that owing to him, as the cause indeed, would be the unfolding and accurate understanding of those things which were obscure; for we are the instruments by whom the particular energies are developed, both in our states of tension and of relaxation; but the Creator is “he who gives the blow which sets in motion” the faculties of body and soul, by whom all things are moved.

Those then who are unable to distinguish between the differences of things must be instructed as ignorant; but those who, from a contentious spirit, invert the orders of the things signified, must be avoided as disputations; but those who, after an accurate investigation into the phaenomena which present themselves to them, assign its proper place to each of the objects discovered, must be praised as men who have attained to a true philosophy, and are void of error.

For Moses says to those who fear lest they should be destroyed by the wicked man, who is pursuing them with all his host, “Stand still, and see the salvation which is from the Lord, and which he will work for You;” teaching them that salvation is effected, not by means of God, but by him as the direct cause.