

On the Gods and the World

Sallustius



Chapter I. — What the Requisites are which an Auditor concerning the Gods ought to possess; and of Common Conceptions

It is requisite that those who are willing to hear concerning the gods should have been well informed from their childhood, and not nourished with foolish opinions. It is likewise necessary that they should be naturally prudent and good, that they may receive, and properly understand, the discourses which they hear. The knowledge likewise of common conceptions is necessary; but common conceptions are such things as all men, when interrogated, acknowledge to be indubitably certain; such as, that every god is good, without passivity, and free from all mutation; for every thing which is changed, is either changed into something better or into something worse: and if into something worse, it will become depraved, but if into something better, it must have been evil in the beginning.

Chapter II. — That a God is immutable, without Generation, eternal, incorporeal, and has no Subsistence in Place

And such are the requisites for an auditor of the gods. But the necessary discourses proceed as follows: the essences of the gods are neither generated; for eternal natures are without generation; and those beings are eternal who possess a first power, and are naturally void of passivity. Nor are their essences composed from bodies; for even the powers of bodies are incorporeal: nor are they comprehended in place; for this is the property of bodies: nor are they

separated from the first cause, or from each other; in the same manner as intellections are not separated from intellect, nor sciences from the soul.

Chapter III. — Concerning Fables; that these are divine, and on what Account they are so

On what account then the ancients, neglecting such discourses as these, employed fables, is a question not unworthy our investigation. And this indeed is the first utility arising from fables, that they excite us to inquiry, and do not suffer our cogitative power to remain in indolent rest. It will not be difficult therefore to show that fables are divine, from those by whom they are employed: for they are used by poets agitated by divinity, by the best of philosophers, and by such as disclose initiatory rites. In oracles also fables are employed by the gods; but why fables are divine is the part of philosophy to investigate. Since therefore all beings rejoice in similitude, and are averse from dissimilitude, it is necessary that discourses concerning the gods should be as similar to them as possible, that they may become worthy of their essence, and that they may render the gods propitious to those who discourse concerning them; all which can only be effected by fables. Fables therefore imitate the gods, according to effable and ineffable, unapparent and apparent, wise and ignorant; and this likewise extends to the goodness of the gods; for as the gods impart the goods of sensible natures in common to all things, but the goods resulting from intelligibles to the wise alone, so fables assert to all men that there are gods; but who they are, and of what kind, they alone manifest to such as are capable of so exalted a knowledge. In fables too, the energies of the gods are imitated; for the world may very properly be called a fable, since bodies, and the corporeal possessions which it contains, are apparent, but souls and intellects are occult and invisible. Besides, to inform all men of the truth concerning the gods, produces contempt in the unwise, from their incapacity of learning, and negligence in the studious; but concealing truth in fables, prevents the contempt of the former, and compels the latter to philosophize. But you will ask why adulteries, thefts, paternal bonds, and other unworthy actions are celebrated in fables? Nor is this unworthy of admiration, that where there is an apparent absurdity, the soul immediately conceiving these discourses to be concealments, may understand that the truth which they contain is to be involved in profound and occult silence.

Chapter IV. — That there are five Species of Fables; and Examples of each

Of fables, some are theological, others physical, others animastic, (or belonging to soul,) others material, and lastly, others mixed from these. Fables are theological which employ nothing corporeal, but speculate the very essences of the gods; such as the fable which asserts that Saturn devoured his children: for it obscurely intimates the nature of an intellectual god, since every intellect returns into itself. But we speculate fables physically when we speak concerning the energies of the gods about the world; as when considering Saturn the same as Time, and calling the parts of time the children of the universe, we assert that the children are devoured by their parents. But we employ fables in an animastic mode when we contemplate the energies of the soul; because the intellections of our souls, though by a discursive energy they proceed into other things, yet abide in their parents. Lastly, fables are material, such as the Egyptians ignorantly employ, considering and calling corporeal natures divinities; such as Isis, earth; Osiris, humidity; Typhon, heat: or again, denominating Saturn, water; Adonis, fruits; and Bacchus, wine. And, indeed, to assert that these are dedicated to the gods, in the same manner as herbs, stones, and animals, is the part of wise men; but to call them gods is alone the province of mad men; unless we speak in the same manner as when, from established custom, we call the orb of the Sun and its rays the Sun itself. But we may perceive the mixed kind of fables, as well in many other particulars, as in the fable which relates, that Discord at a banquet of the gods threw a golden apple, and that a dispute about it arising among the goddesses, they were sent by Jupiter to take the judgement of Paris, who, charmed with the beauty of Venus, gave her the apple in preference to the rest. For in this fable the banquet denotes the supermundane powers of the gods; and on this account they subsist in conjunction with each other: but the golden apple denotes the world, which, on account of its composition from contrary natures, is not improperly said to be thrown by Discord, or strife. But again, since different gifts are imparted to the world by different gods, they appear to contest with each other for the apple. And a soul living according to sense, (for this is Paris) not perceiving other powers in the universe, asserts that the contended apple subsists alone through the beauty of Venus. But of these species of fables, such as are theological belong to philosophers; the physical

and animastic to poets; and the material and mixed to mystic rites (teletai): since the intention of all mystic ceremonies is to conjoin us with the world and the gods. But if it be requisite to relate another fable, we may employ the following with advantage. It is said that the mother of the gods perceiving Attis by the river Gallus, became in love with him, and having placed on him a starry hat, lived afterwards with him in intimate familiarity; but Attis falling in love with a Nymph, deserted the mother of the gods, and entered into association with the Nymph. Through this the mother of the gods caused Attis to become insane, who cutting off his genital parts, left them with the nymph, and then returned again to his pristine connection with the Goddess. The mother of the gods then is the vivific goddess, and on this account is called mother: but Attis is the Demiurgus of natures conversant with generation and corruption; and hence he is said to be found by the river Gallus; for Gallus denotes the Galaxy, or milky circle, from which a passive body descends to the earth. But since primary gods perfect such as are secondary, the mother of the gods falling in love with Attis imparts to him celestial powers; for this is the meaning of the starry hat. But Attis loves a nymph, and nymphs preside over generation; for every thing in generation flows. But because it is necessary that the flowing nature of generation should be stopped, lest something worse than the last of things should be produced; in order to accomplish this, the Demiurgus of generable and corruptible natures, sending prolific powers into the realms of generation, is again conjoined with the gods. But these things indeed never took place at any particular time, because they have a perpetuity of subsistence: and intellect contemplates all things as subsisting together; but discourse considers this thing as first, and that as second, in the order of existence. Hence, since a fable most aptly corresponds to the world, how is it possible that we, who are imitators of the world, can be more gracefully ornamented than by the assistance of fable? For through this we observe a festive Day. And, in the first place, we ourselves falling from the celestial regions, and associating with a nymph, the symbol of generation, live immersed in sorrow, abstaining from corn and other gross and sordid aliment; since every thing of this kind is contrary to the soul: afterwards, the incisions of a tree and fasting succeed, as if we would amputate from our nature all farther progress of generation: at length we employ the nutriment of milk, as if passing by this means into a state

of regeneration: and lastly, festivity and crowns, and a re-ascent, as it were, to the gods succeed. But the truth of all this is confirmed by the time in which these ceremonies take place; for they are performed about spring and the equinoctial period, when natures in generation cease to be any longer generated, and the days are more extended than the nights, because this period is accommodated to ascending souls. But the rape of Proserpine is fabled to have taken place about the opposite equinoctial; and this rape alludes to the descent of souls. And thus much concerning the mode of considering fables; to our discourse on which subject, may both the gods and the souls of the writers of fables be propitious.

Chapter V. — Concerning the first Cause

After this, it is requisite that we should know the first cause, and the orders of gods posterior to the first, together with the nature of the world, of intellect, soul, and essence; likewise that we should speculate providence, fate, and fortune, virtue and vice, and the good and evil forms of republics produced from these; and lastly, that we should consider from whence evil crept into the world. And though each of these requires many and very extended discourses, yet there is no reason why we may not discuss these subjects with brevity, lest mankind should be totally destitute of the knowledge they contain. It is necessary, then, that the first cause should be one; for the monad presides over all multitude, excelling all things in power and goodness, and on this account it is necessary that all things should participate of its nature; for nothing can hinder its energies through power, and it will not separate itself from any thing on account of the goodness which it possesses. But if the first cause were soul, all things would be animated; if intellect, all things would be intellectual; if essence, all things would participate of essence; which last some perceiving to subsist in all things, have taken occasion to denominate him essence. If then things had nothing besides being, and did not also possess goodness, this assertion would be true; but if beings subsist through goodness, and participate of the good, it is necessary that the first cause should be super-essential, and the good: but the truth of this is most eminently evinced in souls endued with virtue, and through good neglecting the care of their being, when they expose themselves to the most imminent dangers for their country or friends, or in the cause of virtue. But after this ineffable power the

orders of the gods succeed.

Chapter VI. — Concerning the super-mundane and mundane Gods

But of the gods some are mundane and others super-mundane. I call those mundane who fabricate the world: but of the super-mundane, some produce essences, others intellect, and others soul; and on this account they are distinguished into three orders, in discourses concerning which orders, it is easy to discover all the gods. But of the mundane gods, some are the causes of the world's existence, others animate the world; others again harmonize it, thus composed from different natures; and others, lastly, guard and preserve it when harmonically arranged. And since these orders are four, and each consists from things first, middle, and last, it is necessary that the disposers of these should be twelve: hence Jupiter, Neptune, and Vulcan, fabricate the world; Ceres, Juno, and Diana, animate it; Mercury, Venus, and Apollo, harmonize it; and, lastly, Vesta, Minerva, and Mars, preside over it with a guarding power. But the truth of this may be seen in statues as in ænigmas: for Apollo harmonizes the lyre, Pallas is invested with arms, and Venus is naked; since harmony generates beauty, and beauty is not concealed in objects of sensible inspection. But since these gods primarily possess the world, it is necessary to consider the other gods as subsisting in these; as Bacchus in Jupiter, Esculapius in Apollo, and the Graces in Venus. We may likewise behold the orbs with which they are connected; i.e. Vesta with earth, Neptune with water, Juno with air, and Vulcan with fire. But the six superior gods we denominate from general custom; for we assume Apollo and Diana for the sun and moon; but we attribute the orb of Saturn to Ceres, æther to Pallas; and we assert that heaven is common to them all. The orders, therefore, powers, and spheres of the twelve gods, are thus unfolded by us, and celebrated as in a sacred hymn.

Chapter VII. — On the Nature and Perpetuity of the World

It is necessary that the world should be incorruptible and unbegotten: incorruptible, for this being corrupted, it must either produce one better, or one worse, or disordered confusion; but if by corruption it becomes worse, its

artificer must be evil, who thus changes it from better to worse; but if it becomes better, its artificer must be defective in power, because he did not fabricate it better at first; but if through corruption he changes it into the same state as before, he labours in vain. And it is not lawful to assert that he changes it into nothing but disorder and confusion: from all which it is sufficiently evident that the world is unbegotten: for if it be incapable of corruption, it is unbegotten; since every thing generated is also corrupted. We may likewise add, that since the world subsists through the goodness of divinity, it is necessary that divinity should always be good, and the world perpetually endure: just in the same manner as light is coexistent with the sun and fire, and the shadow with its forming body.

But of the bodies contained in the world, some imitate intellect, and revolve in a circle; but others soul, and are moved in a right line. And of those which are moved in a right line, fire and air, are impelled upwards, but water and earth downwards: but of those which revolve in a circle, the inerratic sphere commences its motion from the east, but the seven planets are carried in their orbits from the west. But of this there are many causes, among which the following is not the least; that if there was but one rapid period of the orbs, generation would be imperfect: but since there is a diversity of motion, it is also requisite that there should be a difference in the nature of bodies. It is, besides this, necessary that a celestial body should neither burn nor produce cold, nor generate any thing else which is the property of the four elements. But since the world is a sphere, which the zodiac evinces, and in every sphere the inferior part is the middle, for it is every way much distant from the surface; hence heavy bodies are impelled downwards, and are driven to the earth: and all these indeed the gods fabricate, intellect orderly disposes, and soul perpetually moves. And thus much concerning the gods.

Chapter VIII. — Concerning Intellect and Soul; and that Soul is immortal

But there is a certain power subordinate to essence, but prior to soul; from essence indeed deriving its being, but perfecting soul, in the same manner as the sun perfects corporeal sight. And of souls some are rational and immortal, but others irrational and immortal; and the first of these are produced from

the first, but the second from the second orders of Gods. But, in the first place, let us investigate the definition of soul. Soul then is that by which animated natures differ from such as are inanimate; but they differ through motion, sense, phantasy, and intelligence. The irrational soul therefore is sensitive and phantastic life; but the rational soul is that which rules over sense and phantasy, and uses reason in its energies. And the irrational soul indeed is subservient to the corporeal passions; for it desires without reason, and is inflamed with anger: but the rational soul through the assistance of reason despises the body, and contending with the irrational soul, when it conquers, produces virtue, but when it is conquered, vice. But it is necessary that the rational soul should be immortal, because it knows the gods; for nothing mortal knows that which is immortal. Besides this, it despises human concerns, as foreign from its nature, and has a disposition contrary to bodies, as being itself incorporeal. Add too, that when the body with which a soul is connected is beautiful and young, then the soul is oppressed and its vigour diminished; but when this grows old, the soul revives, and increases in strength and vigour. And every worthy soul uses intellect; but intellect is not generated by body; for how can things destitute of intellect generate intellect? But employing the body as an instrument, it does not subsist in body: in the same manner as no artificer of machines subsists in his machines; and yet many of these, without any one touching them, are moved from place to place. But we ought not to wonder if the rational soul is often led astray by the body; for arts themselves when their instruments are damaged are incapable of operation.

Chapter IX. — Concerning Providence, Fate, and Fortune

From hence also we may perceive the providence of the gods; for how could order be inserted in the world if there be no one who distributes it in order? From whence too could all things be produced for the sake of something; as, for instance, the irrational soul that there might be sense; the rational, that the earth might be adorned? From natural effects likewise we may perceive the operations of providence: for it has constructed the eyes of a diaphanous nature for the purpose of seeing; but the nostrils above the mouth, that we might distinguish disagreeable smells: and of the teeth, the middle are fashioned sharp, for the purpose of cutting, but those situated in the more interior part of the mouth are broad, for the purpose of bruising the aliment in

pieces. And thus we may perceive in all things, that nothing is constructed without reason and design. But since so much providence is displayed in the last of things, it is impossible that it should not subsist in such as are first: besides, divinations, and the healing of bodies, take place from the beneficent providence of the gods. And it is necessary to believe that a similar concern about the world is exerted by the gods, without either expecting reward, or enduring labour in the exertion; but that as bodies endued with power, produce essentially, or by their very essence, that which they produce; as the sun illuminates and heats by that which he is alone; so the providence of the gods, by a much greater reason, without labour and difficulty to itself, confers good on the subjects of its providential exertions. So that by this means the objections of the Epicureans against providence are dissolved: for, say they, that which is divine is neither the cause of molestation to itself nor to others. And such is the incorporeal providence of the gods about bodies and souls. But the beneficent exertion of the gods resulting from, and subsisting in, bodies, is different from the former, and is called fate, because its series is more apparent in bodies; and for the sake of which also the mathematical art was invented. That human affairs therefore, and particularly a corporeal nature, are not only directed by the gods, but from divine bodies also, is highly consonant to reason and truth; and hence reason dictates, that health and sickness, prosperous and adverse fortune, proceed from these according to every one's particular deserts. But to refer injustice and crimes committed through lasciviousness and wantonness to fate, leaves us indeed good, but the gods evil and base: unless some one should endeavour to remove this consequence, by replying, that every thing which the world contains, and whatever has a natural subsistence, is good, but that the nature which is badly nourished, or which is of a more imbecile condition, changes the good proceeding from fate into something worse; just as the sun, though it is good itself, becomes noxious to the blear-eyed and feverish. For on what account do the Massagetæ devour their parents, the Hebrews use circumcision, and the Persians preserve their nobility? But how can astrologers call Saturn and Mars noxious, and yet again celebrate these planets as beneficent, by asserting that philosophy, kingdoms, and military command, are their gifts? If they assign triangles and squares as the cause, it is absurd that human virtue should everywhere remain the same, but that the gods should be subject to mutation from

diversity of places. But that nobility or ignobility of parents may be predicted from the stars, shows that they do not produce all things, but only signify some, by their different situations and aspects; for how can things which subsisted prior to generation be produced from generation? As therefore providence and fate subsist about nations and cities, as likewise about every individual of human kind, so also fortune, about which it is now requisite to speak. Fortune, therefore, must be considered as a power of the gods, disposing things differently from each other, and happening contrary to expectation, to beneficent purposes; and on this account it is proper that cities should celebrate this goddess in common; since every city is composed from different particulars. But this goddess holds her dominion in sublunary concerns, since every thing fortuitous is excluded from the regions above the moon. But if the evil enjoy prosperous fortune, and the worthy are oppressed with want, there is nothing wonderful in such a dispensation; for the former consider riches as all things, but they are despised by the latter. And besides this, prosperous events do not diminish the depravity of the evil; but virtue is alone sufficient to the good.

Chapter X. — Concerning Virtue and Vice

But in discoursing on the soul it is requisite to speak of virtue and vice; for while the irrational soul proceeding into bodies immediately produces anger and desire, the rational soul presiding over these, causes the whole soul to receive a tripartite division, viz. into reason, anger, and desire. But the virtue of reason is prudence; of anger, fortitude; of desire, temperance; and of the whole soul, justice. For it is requisite that reason should judge what is fit and becoming; that anger, listening to the persuasions of reason, should despise things apparently horrible; and that desire should pursue that which is attended with reason, and not that which is apparently pleasant. And when the parts of the soul are in this condition, a just life is the result: for justice respecting possessions is but a small part of virtue. Hence in well-educated men you will perceive all these in amicable conjunction; but in the uncultivated, one is bold and unjust; another prudent and intemperate; all which you cannot call virtues, because they are destitute of reason, imperfect, and belong to certain irrational animals. But vice is to be considered from contraries; for the vice of reason is folly; of anger, fear; of desire, intemperance;

and of the whole soul, injustice. But virtues are produced from an upright polity, and from a well-ordered education and instruction; but vices from an opposite process.

Chapter XI. — Concerning a good and depraved Polity

But the forms of polities are produced according to the triple division of the soul; for the rulers are assimilated to reason, the soldiers to anger, and the common people to desire. Hence, when all things are administered according to reason, and he who is the best of all men possesses dominion, then a kingdom is produced: but when, from reason and anger in conjunction, more than one hold the reins of government, an aristocracy is produced: but where government is carried on through desire, and honours subsist with a view to possessions, such a polity is called a timocracy; and that polity which takes place in opposition to a kingdom is called a tyranny; for the former administers every thing, but the latter nothing, according to reason. But an oligarchy, or the dominion of the few, is contrary to an aristocracy; because in the former, not the best, but a few only, and those the worst, govern the city. And lastly, a democracy is opposed to a timocracy; because in the former, not such as abound in riches, but the multitude alone, is the ruler of all things.

Chapter XII. — From whence Evils originate; and that there is not a Nature of Evil

But how came evil into the world, since the gods are good, and the producing causes of all things? And, in the first place, we ought to assert that since the gods are good, and the authors of all things, there is not any nature of evil, but that it is produced by the absence of good; just as darkness is of itself nothing, but is produced by the privation of light. But if evil has any subsistence, it must necessarily subsist either in the gods or in intellects, in souls or in bodies: but it cannot subsist in the gods, since every god is good. And if any one should say that intellect is evil, he must at the same time assert that intellect is deprived of intellect: but if soul, he must affirm that soul is worse than body; for every body, considered according to itself, is without evil. But if they assert that evil subsists from soul and body conjoined, it will certainly be absurd, that things which separately considered are not evil, should become evil from their

conjunction with each other. But if any one should say that dæmons are evil, we reply, that if they possess their power from the gods they will not be evil; but if from something else, then gods will not be the authors of all things: and if the gods do not produce all things, either they are willing but not able, or they are able but not willing; but neither of these can be ascribed with any propriety to a god. And from hence it is manifest that there is nothing in the world naturally evil; but about the energies of men, and of these not all, nor yet always, evil appears. Indeed, if men were guilty through evil itself, nature herself would be evil; but if he who commits adultery considers the adultery as evil, but the pleasure connected with it as good; if he who is guilty of homicide considers the slaughter as evil, but the riches resulting from the deed as good; and if he who brings destruction on his enemies considers the destruction as evil, but taking revenge on an enemy as good; and souls are by this means guilty; hence evils will be produced through goodness, just as while light is absent darkness is produced, which at the same time has no subsistence in the nature of things. The soul therefore becomes guilty because it desires good, but it wanders about good because it is not the first essence. But that it may not wander, and that when it does so, proper remedies may be applied, and it may be restored, many things have been produced by the gods; for arts and sciences, virtues and prayers, sacrifices and initiations, laws and polities, judgements and punishments, were invented for the purpose of preventing souls from falling into guilt; and even when they depart from the present body, expiatory gods and dæmons purify them from guilt.

Chapter XIII. — After what Manner Things perpetual are said to be generated

Concerning the gods therefore, the world, and human affairs, what has been said may be sufficient for such as are not able to be led upwards through the assistance of philosophy, and yet do not possess incurable souls. It now remains that we speak concerning natures which were never generated nor separated from one another; since we have already observed, that secondary are produced from primary natures. Every thing which is generated is either generated by art, or by nature, or according to power. It is necessary therefore that every thing operating according to nature or art should be prior to the things produced; but that things operating according to power, should have

their productions co-existent with themselves; since they likewise possess an inseparable power: just as the sun produces light co-existent with itself; fire, heat; and snow, coldness. If therefore the gods produced the world by art, they would not cause it simply to be, but to be in some particular manner; for all art produces form. From whence therefore does the world derive its being? If from nature, since nature in fabricating imparts something of itself to its productions, and the gods are incorporeal, it is necessary that the world (the offspring of the gods) should be incorporeal. But if any one says that the gods are corporeal, from whence does the power of incorporeals originate? And besides, if this be admitted, the world being corrupted, its artificer also must necessarily be corrupted, on the hypothesis that he operates according to nature. It remains therefore that the gods produced the world by power alone; but every thing generated by power, subsists together with the cause containing this power: and hence productions of this kind cannot be destroyed unless the producing cause is deprived of power. So that those who subject the world to corruption, plainly deny that there are gods; or if they assert that there are gods, they deprive divinity of power. He therefore who produced all things through power, caused all things to be co-existent with himself. And since this power is the greatest possible, not only men and animals were produced, but also gods and dæmons. And as much as the first god differs from our nature, by so much is it necessary that there should be more powers situated between us and him; for all natures which are much distant from each other possess a multitude of connecting mediums.

Chapter XIV. — How the Gods who are immutable are said to be angry and appeased

But if any one thinking agreeable to reason and truth, that the gods are immutable, doubts how they rejoice in the good, but are averse from the evil; and how they become angry with the guilty, but are rendered propitious by proper cultivation; we reply, that divinity neither rejoices; for that which rejoices is also influenced by sorrow: nor is angry; for anger is a passion: nor is appeased with gifts; for then he would be influenced by delight. Nor is it lawful that a divine nature should be well or ill affected from human concerns; for the divinities are perpetually good and profitable, but are never noxious, and ever subsist in the same uniform mode of being. But we, when we are

good, are conjoined with the gods through similitude; but when evil, we are separated from them through dissimilitude. And while we live according to virtue, we partake of the gods, but when we become evil we cause them to become our enemies; not that they are angry, but because guilt prevents us from receiving the illuminations of the gods, and subjects us to the power of avenging dæmons. But if we obtain pardon of our guilt through prayers and sacrifices, we neither appease nor cause any mutation to take place in the gods; but by methods of this kind, and by our conversion to a divine nature, we apply a remedy to our vices, and again become partakers of the goodness of the gods. So that it is the same thing to assert that divinity is turned from the evil, as to say that the sun is concealed from those who are deprived of sight.

Chapter XV. — Why we honour the Gods, who are not indigent of any thing

From hence we are presented with a solution of the doubts concerning sacrifices and other particulars relative to the cultivation of divinity; for that which is divine is not indigent of any thing. But the honours which we pay to the gods, are performed for the sake of our advantage: and since the providence of the gods is every where extended, a certain habitude, or fitness, is all that is requisite in order to receive their beneficent communications. But all habitude is produced through imitation and similitude; and hence temples imitate the heavens, but altars the earth; statues resemble life, and on this account they are similar to animals; and prayers imitate that which is intellectual; but characters, superior ineffable powers; herbs and stones resemble matter; and animals which are sacrificed, the irrational life of our souls. But from all these nothing happens to the gods beyond what they already possess; for what accession can be made to a divine nature? But a conjunction with our souls and the gods is by this means produced.

Chapter XVI. — Concerning Sacrifices and other Honours which are of no Advantage to the Gods, but are useful to Men

But I think it will be proper to add a few things concerning sacrifices. And, in the first place, since we possess every thing from the gods, and it is but just to offer the first fruits of gifts to the givers; hence, of our possessions we offer the

first fruits through consecrated gifts; of our bodies, through ornaments; and of our life, through sacrifices. Besides, without sacrifices prayers are words only; but accompanied with sacrifices they become animated words; and words indeed corroborating life, but life animating the words. Add too that the felicity of every thing is its proper perfection; but the proper perfection is conjunction with its cause: and on this account we pray that we may be conjoined with the gods. Since therefore life primarily subsists in the gods, and there is also a certain human life, but the latter desires to be united with the former, a medium is required; for natures much distant from each other cannot be conjoined without a medium; and it is necessary that the medium should be similar to the connecting natures. Life therefore must necessarily be the medium of life; and hence men of the present day, that are happy, and all the ancients, have sacrificed animals; and this indeed not rashly, but in a manner accommodated to every god, with many other ceremonies respecting the cultivation of divinity. And thus much concerning sacrifices and the worship of the gods.

Chapter XVII. — That the World is naturally incorruptible

That the gods will never destroy the world has been already asserted; but the order of discourse requires that we should now prove that it is naturally incorruptible; for whatever is corrupted is either corrupted from itself or from some other nature. If therefore the world is corrupted from itself, fire must necessarily burn itself, and water consume itself by dryness: but if the world may be corrupted by another, it must either be from body or from that which is incorporeal. But it is impossible that this can be effected from that which is incorporeal; for incorporeals, such as nature and soul, preserve corporeal substances; and nothing is destroyed by that which naturally preserves. But if the world may be corrupted by body, it must either be from the bodies which exist at present, or from others. And if from the bodies existing at present, either those which move in a circle must destroy those moving in a right line, or those moving in a right line, such as circularly revolve. But nothing moving in a circle has a corruptible nature; for why do we never see any thing of this kind corrupted? And things proceeding in a right line cannot reach those revolving in an orb; for if this were possible, why have they never been able to accomplish this to the present day? But neither can the natures which are

moved in a right line be destroyed by each other; for the corruption of one is the generation of the other; and this is not destruction, but mutation alone. But if the world may be corrupted by other bodies than those which it contains, it is impossible to tell from whence these bodies were generated, or in what place they at present exist. Besides, whatever is corrupted, is either corrupted in form or matter; but form is figure, and matter is body. And when forms are corrupted, but the matter remains, then we perceive that something else is generated: but if matter may be corrupted, how comes it to pass that it has not failed in so great a number of years? But if, instead of the corrupted, the natures of others are produced, they are either generated from beings or from non-beings; and if from beings, since these remain perpetually, matter also must be eternal: but if beings (or the things which are) suffer corruption, the authors of this hypothesis must assert, that not only the world, but all things, will be corrupted. But if matter is generated from non-beings, in the first place, it is impossible that any thing can be generated from non-beings: and even if this were possible, and matter could be thus produced, as long as non-being subsists matter would continue in existence; and non-beings can never be destroyed. And if they say that matter is without form, in the first place, why does this happen not according to a part, but to the whole world? And in the next place, bodies themselves would not be destroyed, but only their beauty. Besides, whatever is corrupted is either dissolved into the natures from which it consists, or vanishes into non-entity; but if it be dissolved into the natures from which it is composed, others again will be produced: for on what account was it produced at first? But if beings pass into that which is not, what should hinder this from happening to divinity itself? If power prevents, it is not the property of power to preserve itself alone: and, by a similar reason, it is impossible that being should be generated from non-beings, and that they should vanish into non-entity. Likewise it is necessary that the world, if it may be corrupted, should either be corrupted according or contrary to nature. But if it may be corrupted according to nature, then, on account of its past and present continuance in being, it would possess that which is contrary, prior to that which is agreeable, to nature; but if contrary to nature, then it is requisite that there should be some other nature which may change the nature of the world; and which is no where apparent. Besides, whatever is capable of being naturally corrupted, we also are able to

destroy; but no one has ever destroyed or changed the circular body of the world; while, on the other hand, we can change, but cannot destroy, an elementary body. And, lastly, whatever may be corrupted is changed and grows old by time; but through such an extended succession of ages, the world has remained without mutation. And having said thus much to those who require on this subject stronger demonstrations, we earnestly supplicate the world to be propitious to our undertaking.

Chapter XVIII. — Why Sacrifices are performed; and that Divinity cannot be injured

But impiety, which invades some places of the earth, and which will often subsist in future, ought not to give any disturbance to the worthy mind; for things of this kind do not affect, nor can religious honours be of any advantage to, the gods; and the soul, from its middle nature, is not always able to pursue that which is right. Nor can the whole world participate in a similar manner of the providence of the gods; but some of its parts enjoy this eternally and others according to time; some possess this primarily and others in a secondary degree: just as the head perceives from all the senses, but the whole body from one alone. And on this account, as it appears to me, those who instituted festive days, appointed also such as are inauspicious; during which some particulars belonging to sacred rites are omitted, and others are shut up; but such things as expiate the imbecillity of our nature deprive certain particulars of their peculiar ornament. Besides it is not improbable that impiety is a species of punishment; for those who have known, and at the same time despised the gods, we may reasonably suppose will, in another life, be deprived of the knowledge of their nature. And those who have honoured their proper sovereigns as gods, shall be cut off from the divinities, as the punishment of their impiety.

Chapter XIX. — Why Offenders are not immediately punished

Nor ought we to wonder if not only offenders of this kind, but likewise others, are not immediately punished for their guilt; for there are not only dæmons who punish offending souls, but souls also inflict punishment on themselves; and it is not proper that such as are calculated, through the

enormity of their guilt, to suffer for the whole of time, should be punished in a small part of time. Besides it is requisite that there should be such a thing as human virtue: but if the guilty were immediately punished, men, from being just through fear, would no longer be virtuous. But souls are punished on their departure from the present body; some by wandering about this part of the earth, others in certain of its hot and cold regions, and others are tormented by avenging dæmons. But universally the rational soul suffers punishment in conjunction with the irrational soul, the partner of its guilt; and through this that shadowy body derives its subsistence, which is beheld about sepulchres, and especially about the tombs of such as have lived an abandoned life.

Chapter XX. — Concerning the Transmigration of Souls; and how rational are said to be carried in irrational Natures

But the transmigrations of souls, if they take place into such as are rational, then they become the souls of particular bodies; if into such as are irrational, they follow externally, in the same manner as our presiding dæmons attend us in their beneficent operations; for the rational part never becomes the soul of the irrational nature. But the truth of transmigration is evinced by the circumstances which take place from the birth of individuals; for why are some born blind, others imbecil, and others with a vicious soul? And besides, since souls are naturally adapted to perform their peculiar employments in bodies, it is not proper that when they have once deserted them they should remain indolent for ever; for if souls did not return again into bodies, it is necessary that either they should be infinite in number, or that others should be continually produced by the divinity. But there can be nothing actually infinite in the world; for that which is infinite can never exist in that which is finite. But neither is it possible that others can be produced; for every thing in which something new may be generated is necessarily imperfect; but it is requisite that the world should be perfect, because it is produced from a perfect nature.

Chapter XXI. — That both in this Life, and when they depart from it, the good will be happy

But souls that live according to virtue shall, in other respects, be happy; and when separated from the irrational nature, and purified from all body, shall be conjoined with the gods, and govern the whole world, together with the deities by whom it was produced. And, indeed, though nothing of this kind should happen to the soul, yet virtue herself, and the pleasure and glory resulting from virtue, together with a life free from sorrow, and subjection to others, would be sufficient to produce felicity in those who chose, and are able to pursue, a life wholly conformable to virtue itself.