

Allegorical Interpretation, I

Philo of Alexandria

tr. C. D. Yonge translation

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Chapter I

“And the heaven and the earth and all their world was Completed.” Having previously related the creation of the mind and of sense, Moses now proceeds to describe the perfection which was brought about by them both. And he says that neither the indivisible mind nor the particular sensations received perfection, but only ideas, one the idea of the mind, the other of sensation. And, speaking symbolically, he calls the mind heaven, since the natures which can only be comprehended by the intellect are in heaven. And sensation he calls earth, because it is sensation which has obtained a corporeal and some what earthy constitution. The ornaments of the mind are all the incorporeal things, which are perceptible only by the intellect. Those of sensation are the corporeal things, and everything in short which is perceptible by the external senses.

Chapter II

“And on the sixth day God finished his work which he had made.” It would be a sign of great simplicity to think that the world was created in six days, or indeed at all in time; because all time is only the space of days and nights, and these things the motion of the sun as he passes over the earth and under the earth does necessarily make. But the sun is a portion of heaven, so that one must confess that time is a thing posterior to the world. Therefore it would be correctly said that the world was not created in time, but that time had its existence in consequence of the world. For it is the motion of the heaven that has displayed the nature

of time.

When, therefore, Moses says, "God completed his works on the sixth day," we must understand that he is speaking not of a number of days, but that he takes six as a perfect number. Since it is the first number which is equal in its parts, in the half, and the third and sixth parts, and since it is produced by the multiplication of two unequal factors, two and three. And the numbers two and three exceed the incorporeality which exists in the unit; because the number two is an image of matter being divided into two parts and dissected like matter. And the number three is an image of a solid body, because a solid can be divided according to a threefold division.

Not but what it is also akin to the motions of organic animals. For an organic body is naturally capable of motion in six directions, forward, backwards, upwards, downwards, to the right, and to the left. And at all events he desires to show that the races of mortal, and also of all the immortal beings, exist according to their appropriate numbers; measuring mortal beings, as I have said, by the number six, and the blessed and immortal beings by the number seven.

First, therefore, having desisted from the creation of mortal creatures on the seventh day, he began the formation of other and more divine beings.

Therefore the expression, "he caused to rest," is very appropriately employed here, not "he rested." For he makes things to rest which appear to be producing others, but which in reality do not effect anything; but he himself never ceases from creating. On which account Moses says, "He

caused to rest the things which he had begun." For all the things that are made by our arts when completed stand still and remain; but all those which are accomplished by the knowledge of God are moved at subsequent times. For their ends are the beginnings of other things; as, for instance, the end of day is the beginning of night. And in the same way we must look upon months and years when they come to an end as the beginning of those which are just about to follow them.

And so the generation of other things which are destroyed, and the destruction of others which are generated is completed, so that that is true which is said that —

Chapter IV

But nature delights in the number seven. For there are seven planets, going in continual opposition to the daily course of the heaven which always proceeds in the same direction. And likewise the constellation of the Bear is made up of seven stars, which constellation is the cause of communication and unity among men, and not merely of traffic. Again, the periodical changes of the moon, take place according to the number seven, that star having the greatest sympathy with the things on earth. And the changes which the moon works in the air, it perfects chiefly in accordance with its own configurations on each seventh day.

At all events, all mortal things, as I have said before, drawing their more divine nature from the heaven, are moved in a manner which tends to their preservation in

accordance with this number seven. For who is there who does not know that those infants who are born at the end of the seventh month are likely to live, but those who have taken a longer time, so as to have abided eight months in the womb, are for the most part abortive births?

And they say that man is a reasoning being in his first seven years, by which time he is a competent interpreter of ordinary nouns and verbs, making himself master of the faculty of speaking. And in his second period of seven years, he arrives at the perfection of his nature; and this perfection is the power of generating a being like himself; for at about the age of fourteen we are able to beget a creature resembling ourselves. Again, the third period of seven years is the termination of his growth; for up to the age of one and twenty years man keeps on increasing in size, and this time is called by many maturity.

Again, the irrational portion of the soul is divisible into seven portions; the five senses, and the organ of speech, and the power of generation.

Again, the motions of the body are seven; the six organic motions, and the rotatory motion. Also the entrails are seven — the stomach, the heart, the spleen, the liver, the lungs, and the two kidneys. In like manner the limbs of the body amount to an equal number — the head, the neck, the chest, the two hands, the belly, the two feet. Also the most important part of the animal, the face, is divisible according to a sevenfold division — the two eyes, and the two ears, and as many nostrils, and in the seventh place, the mouth.

Again, the secretions are seven — tears, mucus from the nose, saliva, the generative fluid, the two excremental discharges, and the sweat that proceeds from every part of the body. Moreover, in diseases the seventh day is the most critical period — and in women the catamenial purifications extend to the seventh day.

Chapter V

And the power of this number has extended also to the most useful of the arts — namely, to grammar. At all events, in grammar, the most excellent of the elements, and those which have the most powers, are the seven vowels. And likewise in music, the lyre with seven strings is nearly the best of all instruments; because the euharmonic principle which is the most dignified of all the principles of melody, is especially perceived in connection with it. Again, it happens that the tones of the voice are seven — the acute, the grave, the contracted, the aspirate, the lene, the long and the short sound.

The number seven is also the first number which is compounded of the perfect number, that is to say of six, and of the unit. And in some sense the numbers which are below ten are either generated by, or do themselves generate those numbers which are below ten, and the number ten itself. But the number seven neither generates any of the numbers below ten, nor is it generated by any of them. On which account the Pythagoreans compare this number to the Goddess always a virgin who was born without a mother, (i.e., Minerva.) because it was not generated by any other, and will not generate any other.

Chapter VI

“Accordingly, on the seventh day, God caused to rest from all his works which he had Made.” Now, the meaning of this sentence is something of this kind. God ceases from forming the races of mortal creatures when he begins to create the divine races, which are akin to the nature of the number seven. And the reference which is here contained to their moral character is of the following nature. When that reason which is holy in accordance with the number seven has entered into the soul the number six is then arrested, and all the mortal things which this number appears to make.

Chapter VII

“And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.” God blesses the manners which are formed in accordance with the seventh and divine light, as being truly light, and immediately declares them holy. For that which is blessed, and that which is holy, are closely connected with one another. On this account he says, concerning him who has vowed a great vow, that “If a sudden change comes over him, and pollutes his mind, he shall no longer be Holy.” But the previous days were not taken into the calculation, as was natural. For those manners which are not holy are not counted, so that which is blessed is alone holy.

Correctly therefore, did Moses say that “God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it,” because on it he “caused to rest from all his works which he had begun to make.” And this is the reason why he who lives and conducts himself in accordance with the seventh and perfect light is blessed

and holy, since it is in accordance with his nature, that the creation of mortal beings was terminated. For the case is thus: when the light of virtue, which is brilliant and really divine, rises up, then the generation of the contrary nature is checked. And we have shown that God never desists from creating something, but that when he appears to do so he is only beginning the creation of something else; as being not only, the Creator, but also the Father of everything which exists.

Chapter VIII

“This is the book of the generation of heaven and earth, when they were Created.” This is perfect reason, which is put in motion in accordance with the number seven, being the beginning of the creation of that mind which was arranged according to the ideas, and also of the sensation arranged according to the ideas, and perceptible only by the intellect, if one can speak in such a manner. And Moses calls the word of God a book, in which it is come to pass that the formations of other things are written down and engraved.

But, lest you should imagine that the Deity does anything according to definite periods of time, while you should rather think that everything done by him is inscrutable in its nature, uncertain, unknown to, and incomprehensible by the race of mortal men. Moses adds the words, “when they were created,” not defining the time when by any exact limitation, for what has been made by the Author of all things has no limitation. And in this way the idea is excluded, that the universe was created in six days.

Chapter IX

“On which day God created the heaven and the earth, and every green herb of the field, before it appeared upon the earth, and all the grass of the field before it sprang up. For God did not rain upon the earth, and man did not exist to cultivate the earth.” This day Moses has previously called a book, since at least he describes the generation of both heaven and earth in each place. For by his most conspicuous and brilliant word, by one command, God makes both things: the idea of mind, which, speaking symbolically, he calls heaven, and the idea of sensation, which by a sign he named earth.

And he likens the idea of mind, and the idea of sensation to two fields; for the mind brings forth fruit, which consists in having intellectual perception; and sensation brings forth other fruits which consist in perceiving by the agency of the external senses. And what he says has the following meaning; — as there was a previously existing idea of the particular mind, and also of the indivisible minds to serve as an archetype and model for either; and also a pre-existent idea of particular sensation, being, so to say, a sort of seal which gave impressions of forms, so before particular things perceptible only by the intellect had any existence, there was a pre-existent abstract idea of what was perceptible only by intellect, by participation in which the other things also received their names; and before particular objects perceptible by the external senses, existed, there was also a generic something perceptible by the external senses, in accordance with a participation in which, the other things perceptible by the external senses were created.

By “the green herb of the field,” Moses means that portion of the mind which is perceptible only by intellect. For as in the field green things spring up and flourish, so also that which is perceptible only by the intellect is the fruit of the mind. Therefore, before the particular something perceptible only by intellect existed, God created the general something perceptible only by intellect, which also he correctly denominated the universe. For since the particular something perceptible only by intellect is incomplete, that is not the universe; but that which is generic is the universe, as being complete.

Chapter X

“And all the grass of the field,” he proceeds, “before it sprang up.” That is to say, before the particular things perceptible by the external senses sprang up, there existed the generic something perceptible by the external senses through the fore-knowledge of the Creator, which he again called “the universe.” And very naturally he likened the things perceptible by the external senses to grass. For as grass is the food of irrational animals, so also that which is perceptible by the external senses is assigned to the irrational portion of the soul. For why, when he has previously mentioned “the green herb of the field,” does he add also “and all the grass,” as if grass were not green at all? But the truth is, that by the green herb of the field, he means that which is perceptible by the intellect only, the budding forth of the mind. But grass means that which is perceptible by the external senses, that being likewise the produce of the irrational part of the soul.

“For God did not rain upon the earth, and man did not exist to cultivate the earth,” speaking in the strictest accordance with natural philosophy. For if God did not shed the perceptions of things subject to them, like rain upon the senses, in that case the mind too would not labour nor employ itself about sensation. For he himself would be unable to effect anything by himself, unless he were to pour forth, like rain or dew, colours upon the sight, and sounds upon the hearing, and flavour on the tastes, and on all the other senses, the things proper to produce the requisite effects.

But when God begins to rain sensation on the things perceptible by the external senses, then also the mind is perceived to act like the cultivator of fertile soil. But the idea of sensation, which he, speaking figuratively, has called the earth, is in no need of nourishment. But the nourishment of the senses, are the particular objects perceptible by the external senses; and these objects are bodies. But an idea is a thing different from bodies. Before, therefore, there existed any individual compound substances, God did not rain upon that idea of sensation to which he gave the name of the earth. And that means that he did not furnish it with any nourishment; for, indeed, it had altogether no need of any object perceptible by the external senses.

But when Moses says, “And man did not exist to cultivate the earth,” that means that the idea of intellect did not labour upon the idea of the sensations. For my intellect and yours work up the sensations by means of things perceptible by the external senses: but the idea of mind as

must be the case while there is no individual body connected with it does not work upon the idea of sensation. For if it did so work, it would of course work by means of objects, perceptible by the external senses. But there is no such object in ideas.

Chapter XI

“But a fountain went up upon the earth, and watered all the face of the earth.” He here calls the mind the fountain of the earth, and the sensations he calls the face of the earth, because there is the most suitable place in the whole body for them, with reference to their appropriate energies, a place that nature which foreknows everything, has assigned to them. And the mind waters the sensations like a fountain, sending appropriate streams over each. See now how all the powers of a living animal depend upon one another like a chain. For as the mind, and sensations, and the object perceptible by the external sense are three different things, the middle term is sensation; and the mind, and the object perceptible by the external sense, are the two extremes.

But the mind is unable to work; that is to say, to energize according to sensation, unless God rains upon and irrigates the object perceptible by the external senses, nor is there any advantage from the object perceptible to the external sense when watered, unless the mind, like a fountain, extending itself as far as the sensation, puts it in motion when it is quiet, and leads it on to a comprehension of the subject. So that the mind, and the object perceptible by the external senses, are always endeavouring to reciprocate with one another, the one the being subject to the

sensations as a kind of material would be, and the mind stirring up the sensations toward the external object, as a workman would do, in order to create an appetite.

For a living animal is superior to that which is not a living animal in two points, imagination and appetite. Accordingly, imagination consists in the approach of the external object striking the mind by means of the sensations. And appetite is the brother of imagination, according to the intensive power of the mind, which the mind keeps on the stretch, by means of the sensation, and so touches the subject matter, and comes over to it, being eager to arrive at and comprehend it.

Chapter XII

“And God created man, taking a lump of clay from the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life: and man became a living soul.” The races of men are twofold; for one is the heavenly man, and the other the earthly man. Now the heavenly man, as being born in the image of God, has no participation in any corruptible or earthlike essence. But the earthly man is made of loose material, which he calls a lump of clay. On which account he says, not that the heavenly man was made, but that he was fashioned according to the image of God; but the earthly man he calls a thing made, and not begotten by the maker.

And we must consider that the man who was formed of earth, means the mind which is to be infused into the body, but which has not yet been so infused. And this mind would be really earthly and corruptible, if it were not that God had breathed into it the spirit of genuine life; for then it “exists,”

and is no longer made into a soul; and its soul is not inactive, and incapable of proper formation, but a really intellectual and living one. "For man," says Moses, "became a living soul."

Chapter XIII

But some one may ask, why God thought an earth-born mind, which was wholly devoted to the body, worthy of divine inspiration, and yet did not treat the one made after his own idea and image in the same manner. In the second place he may ask, what is the meaning of the expression "breathed into." And thirdly, why he breathed into his face: fourthly also, why, since he knew the name of the Spirit when he says, "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the Waters," he now speaks of breath, and not of the Spirit.

Now in reply to the first question we must say this one thing; God being very munificent gives his good things to all men, even to those who are not perfect; inviting them to a participation and rivalry in virtue, and at the same time displaying his abundant riches, and showing that it is sufficient for those also who will not be greatly benefited by it; and he also shows this in the most evident manner possible in other cases; for when he rains on the sea, and when he raises up fountains in desert places, and waters shallow and rough and unproductive land, making the rivers to overflow with floods, what else is he doing but displaying the great abundance of his riches and of his goodness? This is the cause why he has created no soul in such a condition as to be wholly barren of good, even if the employment of

that good be beyond the reach of some people.

We must also give a second reason, which is this: Moses wished to represent all the actions of the Deity as just — therefore a man who had not had a real life breathed into him, but who was ignorant of virtue, when he was chastised for the sins which he had committed would say that he was punished unjustly, in that it was only through ignorance of what was good that he had erred respecting it; and that he was to blame who had not breathed any proper wisdom into him; and perhaps he will even say, that he has absolutely committed no offence whatever; since some people affirm that actions done involuntarily and in ignorance have not the nature of offences.

Now the expression “breathed into” is equivalent to “inspired,” or “gave life to” things inanimate: for let us take care that we are never filled with such absurdity as to think that God employs the organs of the mouth or nostrils for the purpose of breathing into anything; for God is not only devoid of peculiar qualities, but he is likewise not of the form of man, and the use of these words shows some more secret mystery of nature;

for there must be three things, that which breathes in, that which receives what is breathed in, and that which is breathed in. Now that which breathes in is God, that which receives what is breathed in is the mind, and that which is breathed in is the spirit. What then is collected from these three things? A union of the three takes place, through God extending the power, which proceeds from himself through the spirit, which is the middle term, as far as the subject. Why does he do this, except that we may thus derive a

proper notion of him?

Since how could the soul have perceived God if he had not inspired it, and touched it according to his power? For human intellect would not have dared to mount up to such a height as to lay claim to the nature of God, if God himself had not drawn it up to himself, as far as it was possible for the mind of man to be drawn up, and if he had not formed it according to those powers which can be comprehended.

And God breathed into man's face both physically and morally. Physically, when he placed the senses in the face: and this portion of the body above all others is vivified and inspired; and morally, in this manner, as the face is the dominant portion of the body, so also is the mind the dominant portion of the soul. It is into this alone that God breathes; but the other parts, the sensations, the power of speech, and the power of generation, he does not think worthy of his breath, for they are inferior in power.

By what then were these subordinate parts inspired? beyond all question by the mind; for of the qualities which the mind has received from God, it gives a share to the irrational portion of the soul, so that the mind is vivified by God, and the irrational part of the soul by the mind; for the mind is as it were a god to the irrational part of the soul, for which reason Moses did not hesitate to call it "the god of Pharaoh."

For of all created things some are created by God, and through him: some not indeed by God, but yet through him: and the rest have their existence both by him and through him. At all events Moses as he proceeds says, that God

planted a paradise, and among the best things as made both by God and through God, is the mind. But the irrational part of the soul was made indeed by God but not through God, but through the reasoning power which bears rule and sovereignty in the soul;

and Moses has used the word “breath,” not “spirit,” as there is a difference between the two words; for spirit is conceived of according to strength, and intensity, and power; but breath is a gentle and moderate kind of breeze and exhalation; therefore the mind, which was created in accordance with the image and idea of God, may be justly said to partake in his spirit, for its reasoning has strength: but that which is derived from matter is only a partaker in a thin and very light air, being as it were a sort of exhalation, such as arises from spices; for they, although they be preserved intact, and are not exposed to fire or fumigation, do nevertheless emit a certain fragrance.

Chapter XIV

“And God planted a paradise in Eden, in the east: and there he placed the man whom he had Formed:” for he called that divine and heavenly wisdom by many names; and he made it manifest that it had many appellations; for he called it the beginning, and the image, and the sight of God. And now he exhibits the wisdom which is conversant about the things of the earth (as being an imitation of this archetypal wisdom), in the plantation of this Paradise. For let not such impiety ever occupy our thoughts as for us to suppose that God cultivates the land and plants paradises, since if we were to do so, we should be presently raising the

question of why he does so: for it could not be that he might provide himself with pleasant places of recreation and pastime, or with amusement.

Let not such fabulous nonsense ever enter our minds; for even the whole world would not be a worthy place or habitation for God, since he is a place to himself, and he himself is full of himself, and he himself is sufficient for himself, filling up and surrounding everything else which is deficient in any respect, or deserted, or empty; but he himself is surrounded by nothing else, as being himself one and the universe.

God therefore sows and implants terrestrial virtue in the human race, being an imitation and representation of the heavenly virtue. For, pitying our race, and seeing that it is exposed to abundant and innumerable evils, he firmly planted terrestrial virtue as an assistant against and warderoff of the diseases of the soul; being, as I have said before, an imitation of the heavenly and archetypal wisdom which he calls by various names. Now virtue is called a paradise metaphorically, and the appropriate place for the paradise is Eden; and this means luxury: and the most appropriate field for virtue is peace, and ease, and joy; in which real luxury especially consists.

Moreover, the plantation of this paradise is represented in the east; for right reason never sets, and is never extinguished, but it is its nature to be always rising. And as I imagine, the rising sun fills the darkness of the air with light, so also does virtue when it has arisen in the soul, irradiate its mist and dissipate the dense darkness.

“And there,” says Moses, “he placed the man whom he had formed:” for God being good, and having formed our race for virtue, as his work which was most akin to himself, places the mind in virtue, evidently in order that it, like a good husband, may cultivate and attend to nothing else except virtue.

Chapter XV

And some one may ask here, why, since it is a pious action to imitate the works of God, it is forbidden to me to plant a grove near the altar, and yet God plants a paradise? For Moses says, “You shall not plant a grove for yourself; you shall not make for yourself any tree which is near the altar of the Lord your God.” What then are we to say? That it is right for God to plant and to build up the virtues in the soul.

But the selfish and atheistical mind, thinking itself equal with God while it appears to be doing something, is found in reality to be rather suffering. And though God sows and plants good things in the soul, the mind which says, “I plant,” is acting impiously. You shall not plant therefore where God is planting: but if, O mind, you fix plants in the soul, take care to plant only such trees as bear fruit, and not a grove; for in a grove there are trees of a character to bear cultivation, and also wild trees. But to plant vice, which is unproductive in the soul, along with cultivated and fertile virtue, is the act of a doublenatured and confused leprosy.

If, however, you bring into the same place things which ought not to be mingled together, you must separate and disjoin them from the pure and incorrupt nature which is

accustomed to make blameless offerings to God; and this is his altar; for it is inconsistent with this to say that there is any such thing as a work of the soul, when all things are referred to God, and to mingle barren things with those which are productive; for this would be faulty: but they are blameless things which are offered to God.

If therefore you transgress any one of these laws, O soul! you will be injuring yourself, not God. On this account God says, "You shall not plant for yourself:" for no one works for God, and especially what is evil does not. And again, Moses adds: "You shall not make for yourself." And in another place he says, "You shall not make gods of silver with me, and you shall not make gods of gold for yourselves." For he who conceives either that God has any distinctive quality, or that he is not one, or that he is not uncreated and imperishable, or that he is not unchangeable, injures himself and not God. "For you shall not make them for yourselves," is what he says. For we must conceive that God is free from distinctive qualities, and imperishable, and unchangeable; and he who does not conceive thus of him is filling his own soul with false and atheistical opinions.

Do you not see that — even though God were to conduct us to virtue, and though when we had been thus conducted we were to plant no tree which was barren, but only such as produce fruit, he would still command us to purify its impurity, that is to say, the appearing to plant. For he here orders us to cut away vain opinions; and vain opinions are a thing impure by nature.

Chapter XVI

“And the man whom he had formed,” Moses says, “God placed in the Paradise,” for the present only. Who, then, is he in reference to whom he subsequently says that “The Lord God took the man whom he had formed, and placed him in the Paradise to cultivate it and to guard It.” Must not this man who was created according to the image and idea of God have been a different man from the other, so that two men must have been introduced into the Paradise together, the one a fictitious man, and the other modelled after the image of God?

Therefore, the man modelled after the idea of God, is perceived not only amid the planting of the virtues, but, besides this, he is their cultivator and guardian; that is to say, he is mindful of the things which he has heard and practised. But the man who is factitious, neither cultivates the virtues, nor guards them, but is only introduced into opinions by the abundant liberality of God, being on the point of immediately becoming an exile from virtue.

Therefore, he calls that man whom he only places in Paradise, factitious; but him whom he appoints to be its cultivator and guardian he calls not factitious, but “the man whom he had made.” And him he takes, but the other he casts out. And him whom he takes he thinks worthy of three things, of which goodness of nature especially consists: namely, expertness, perseverance, and memory. Now, expertness is his position in Paradise; memory is the guarding and preservation of holy opinions; perseverance is the effecting of what is good, the performance of virtuous actions. But the factitious mind neither remembers what is good, nor does it, but is only expert, and nothing more; on

which account, after it has been placed in Paradise, in a short time afterwards it runs away, and is cast out.

Chapter XVII

“And God caused to rise out of the earth every tree which is pleasant to the sight and good for food, and the tree of life he raised in the middle of the Paradise, and also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” He here gives a sketch of the trees of virtue which he plants in the soul. And these are the particular virtues, and the energies in accordance with them, and the good and successful actions, and the things which by the philosophers are called fitting;

these are the plants of the Paradise. Nevertheless, he describes the characteristics of these same trees, showing that that which is desirable to be beheld is likewise most excellent to be enjoyed. For of the arts some are theoretical and not practical, such as geometry and astronomy. Some, again, are practical and not theoretical, such as the art of the architect, of the smith, and all those which are called mechanical arts. But virtue is both theoretical and practical; for it takes in theory, since the road which leads to it is philosophy in three of its parts — the reasoning, and the moral, and the physical part. It also includes action; for virtue is art conversant about the whole of life; and in life all actions are exhibited.

Still, although it takes in both theory and practice, nevertheless it is most excellent in each particular. For the theory of virtue is thoroughly excellent, and its practice and observation is a worthy object to contend for. On which account Moses says that the tree was pleasant to the sight,

which is a symbol of theoretical excellence; and likewise good for food, which is a token of useful and practical good.

Chapter XVIII

But the tree of life is that most general virtue which some people call goodness; from which the particular virtues are derived, and of which they are composed. And it is on this account that it is placed in the centre of the Paradise; having the most comprehensive place of all, in order that, like a king, it may be guarded by the trees on each side of it. But some say that it is the heart that is meant by the tree of life; since that is the cause of life, and since that has its position in the middle of the body, as being, according to them, the dominant part of the body. But these men ought to be made aware that they are expounding a doctrine which has more reference to medical than to natural science. But we, as has been said before, affirm that by the tree of life is meant the most general virtue.

And of this tree Moses expressly says, that it is placed in the middle of the paradise; but as to the other tree, that namely of the knowledge of good and evil, he has not specified whether it is within or outside of the Paradise; but after he has used the following expression, “and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” he says no more, not mentioning where it is placed, in order that any one who is uninitiated in the principles of natural philosophy, may not be made to marvel at his knowledge.

What then must we say? That this tree is both in the Paradise and also out of it. As to its essence, indeed, in it; but as to its power, out of it. How so? The dominant portion

of us is capable of receiving everything, and resembles wax, which is capable of receiving every impression, whether good or bad. In reference to which fact, that supplanter Jacob makes a confession where he says, "all these things were made for Me." For the unspeakable formations and impression of all the things in the universe, are all borne forward into, and comprehended by the soul, which is only one. When, therefore that receives the impression of perfect virtue, it has become the tree of life; but when it has received the impression of vice, it has then become the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and vice and all evil have been banished from the divine company. Therefore the dominant power which has received it is in the Paradise according to its essence; for there is in it that characteristic of virtue, which is akin to the Paradise. But again, according to its power it is not in it, because the form of virtue is inconsistent with the divine operations;

and what I here say, any one may understand in this manner. At this moment, the dominant part is in my body, according to its essence, but according to its power it is in Italy, or Sicily, when it applies its consideration to those countries, and in heaven when it is contemplating the heaven. On which principle it often happens that some persons who are in profane places, according to their essence, are in the most sacred places, thinking of those things which relate to virtue. And again, others who are in the temples of the gods, and profane in their minds, from the fact of their minds receiving a change for the worse, and evil impressions; so that vice is neither in the Paradise, nor not in it. For it is possible that it may be in it according to its essence, but it is not possible that it should be according

to its power.

Chapter XIX

“And a river goes forth out of Eden to water the Paradise. From thence it is separated into four heads: the name of the one is Pheison. That is the one which encircles the whole land of Evilat. There is the country where there is gold, and the gold of that land is good. There also are the carbuncle and the sapphire stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon; this is that which encircles the whole land of Ethiopia. And the third river is the Tigris. This is the river which flows in front of the Assyrians. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.” In these words Moses intends to sketch out the particular virtues. And they also are four in number, prudence, temperance, courage, and justice. Now the greatest river from which the four branches flow off, is generic virtue, which we have already called goodness; and the four branches are the same number of virtues.

Generic virtue, therefore, derives its beginning from Eden, which is the wisdom of God; which rejoices and exults, and triumphs, being delighted at and honoured on account of nothing else, except its Father, God, and the four particular virtues, are branches from the generic virtue, which like a river waters all the good actions of each, with an abundant stream of benefits.

Let us examine the expressions of the writer: “A river,” says he, “goes forth out of Eden, to water the Paradise.” This river is generic goodness; and this issues forth out of the Eden of the wisdom of God, and that is the word of God. For it is according to the word of God, that generic virtue

was created. And generic virtue waters the Paradise: that is to say, it waters the particular virtues. But it does not derive its beginnings from any principle of locality, but from a principle of preeminence. For each of the virtues is really and truly a ruler and a queen. And the expression, “is separated,” is equivalent to “is marked off by fixed boundaries;” since wisdom appoints them settled limits with reference to what is to be done. Courage with respect to what is to be endured; temperance with reference to what is to be chosen; and justice in respect of what is to be distributed.

Chapter XX

“The name of one river is Pheison. This is that river which encircles all the land of Evilat; there is the country where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; there also are the carbuncle and the sapphire stone.” One of the four virtues is prudence, which Moses here calls Pheison: because the soul abstains, (pheisoæn from pheidomai, to spare, or abstain from.) from, and guards against, acts of iniquity. And it meanders in a circle, and flows all round the land of Evilat; that is to say, it preserves a mild, and gentle, and favourable constitution. And as of all fusible essences, the most excellent and the most illustrious is gold, so also the virtue of the soul which enjoys the highest reputation, is prudence.

And when he uses the expression, “that is the country where there is gold,” he is not speaking geographically, that is, where gold exists, but that is the country in which that valuable possession exists, brilliant as gold, tried in the fire,

and valuable, namely, prudence. And this is confessed to be the most valuable possession of God.

Chapter XXI

“And the name of the second river is Gihon. This is that which encircles all the land of Ethiopia.” Under the symbol of this river courage is intended. For the name of Gihon being interpreted means chest, or an animal which attacks with its horns; each of which interpretations is emblematical of courage. For courage has its abode about the chest, where also is the seat of the heart, and where man is prepared to defend himself. For courage is the knowledge of what is to be withstood, and of what is not to be withstood, and of what is indifferent. And it encircles and surrounds Ethiopia, making demonstrations of war against it; and the name of Ethiopia, being interpreted, means humiliation. And cowardice is a humiliating thing; but courage is adverse to humiliation and to cowardice.

“And the third river is the Tigris; this is that which flows in front of Assyria.” The third virtue is temperance, which resolutely opposes that kind of pleasure which appears to be the directress of human infirmity. For the translation of the name Assyrians in the Greek tongue is euthynontes, (directors). And he has likened desire to a tiger, which is the most untameable of beasts; it being desire about which temperance is conversant.

Chapter XXII

It is worth while therefore to raise the question why courage has been spoken of as the second virtue, and

temperance as the third, and prudence as the first; and why Moses has not also explained the course of action of the other virtues. Now we must understand that our soul is divided into three parts, and that it has one portion which is conversant about reason; another which is subject to passion; and another which is that in which the desires are conceived. And we find that the proper place and abode of the reasoning part of the soul, is the head; of the passionate part, the chest; and of the part in which the desires are conceived, the stomach. And we find that appropriate virtues are adapted to each of these parts. To the rational part, prudence; in it is the office of reason, to have a knowledge of what one might, and of what one ought not to do. And the virtue of the passionate part of the soul is courage: and of the appetitive part, temperance. For it is through temperance that we remedy and cure the appetites.

For as the head is the principle and uppermost part of the animal, and the chest the next highest, and the liver the third, in point both of importance and of position; so in the soul again, the first is the rational part, the second the passionate part, and the third the appetitive part. In the same way again of the virtues; the first is that which is conversant about the first portion of the soul, which is the reasoning portion, and which at the same time has its abode in the head of the body; in short it is prudence. And the second of the virtues is courage, because it is conversant about the second portion of the soul, namely, about passion, and has its abode in the second portion of the body, namely, in the chest. And the third virtue is temperance, which is placed in the stomach which is the third portion of the body, and it is conversant about the appetitive part, which has

been allotted the third part of the soul, as being its subject matter.

Chapter XXIII

“And the fourth river,” continues Moses, “is the river Euphrates.” And this name Euphrates means fertility; and symbolically taken, it is the fourth virtue, namely, justice, which is most truly a productive virtue, and one which gladdens the intellect. When therefore does this happen? When the three parts of the soul are all in harmony with one another; and harmony among them is in reality the predominance of the most important; as for instance, when the two inferior parts, the passionate and the appetitive part, are disposed to yield to the superior part, then justice exists. For it is just that the better portion should rule at all times, and in all places, and that the inferior part should be ruled. Now the rational part is the better part, and the appetitive and the passionate parts are the inferior ones.

But when, on the contrary, passion and appetite get riotous and disobey the reins, and by the violence of their impetuosity throw off and disregard the charioteer, that is to say reason, and when each of these passions get hold of the reins themselves, then there is injustice. For it is inevitable, that through any ignorance or vice of the charioteer, the chariot must be borne down over precipices, and must fall into the abyss; just as it must be saved when the charioteer is endowed with skill and virtue.

Chapter XXIV

Again, let us look at the subject in this way also. Pheison, being interpreted, is the change of the mouth; and Evilat means bringing forth, and by these two names prudence is signified. For people in general think a man prudent who is an inventor of sophistical expressions, and clever at explaining that which he has conceived in the mind. But Moses considered such an one a man fond of words, but by no means a prudent man. For in the changing of the mouth, that is to say of the power of speaking and explaining one's ideas, prudence is seen. And prudence is not a certain degree of acuteness in speech, but ability which is beheld in deeds and in serious actions.

And prudence surrounds Evilat, which is in travail, as it were with a wall, in order to besiege it and destroy it. And "bringing forth," is an especially appropriate name for folly, because the foolish mind, being always desirous of what is unattainable, is at all times in travail. When it is desirous of money it is in labour, also when it thirsts for glory, or when it is covetous of pleasure, or of any thing else.

But, though always in labour, it never brings forth. For the soul of the worthless man is not calculated by nature to bring any thing to perfection which is likely to live. But every thing which it appears to bring forth is found to be abortive and immature. "Eating up the half of its flesh, and being like a death of the Soul." On which account that holy word Aaron entreats the pious Moses, who was beloved by God, to heal the leprosy of Miriam, in order that her soul might not be occupied in the labour of bringing forth evil things. And in consequence he says: "Let her not become like unto death, as an abortion proceeding out of the womb

of her mother, and let her not devour the half of her own Flesh."

Chapter XXV

"That," says Moses, "is the country, where there is gold." He does not say that that is the only place where there is gold, but simply that is the country where there is gold. For prudence which he likened to gold, being of a nature free from deceit, and pure, and tried in the fire, and thoroughly tested, and honourable, exists there in the wisdom of God. And being there, it is not a possession of wisdom, but something belonging to the God who is its creator and owner, whose work and possession this wisdom likewise is.

"And the gold of that land is good." Is there, then, any other gold which is not good? Beyond all doubt; for the nature of prudence is twofold, there being one prudence general, and another particular. Therefore, the prudence that is in me, being particular prudence, is not good; for when I perish that also will perish together with me; but general or universal prudence, the abode of which is the wisdom of God and the house of God, is good; for it is imperishable itself, and dwells in an imperishable habitation.

Chapter XXVI

"There also is the carbuncle and the emerald." The two beings endowed with distinctive qualities, the prudent man and the man who acts prudently, differ from one another; one of them existing according to prudence, and the other acting wisely according to the rules of wisdom. For it is on

account of these two beings thus endowed with distinctive qualities God implanted prudence and virtue in the earth-born man. For what would have been the use of it, if there had been no reasoning powers in existence to receive it, and to give impressions of its form? So that virtue is very properly conjoined with prudence, and the prudent man is rightly joined with him who displays prudence in his actions; the two being like two precious stones.

And may not they be Judah and Issachar? For the man who puts in practice the prudence of God confesses himself to be bound to feel gratitude, and to feel it towards him who has given him what is good without grudging; and he also does honourable and virtuous actions. Accordingly Judah is the symbol of a man who makes this confession "in respect of whom Leah ceased from child-Bearing." But Issachar is the symbol of the man who does good actions, "For he put Forth his shoulder to labour and became a man tilling the earth." With respect to whom Moses says, hire is in his soul after he has been sown and planted, so that his labour is not imperfect, but is rather crowned and honoured with a reward by God.

And that he is making mention of these things, he shows when speaking on other subjects; when describing the garment, which reached to the feet he says, "And thou shalt weave in it sets of stones in four rows. The row of stones shall be the sardine stone, the topaz, and the emerald are the first row." Reuben, Simeon, and Levi are here meant. "And the second row," he says, "are the carbuncle and the Sapphire." And the sapphire is the same as the green stone. And in the carbuncle was inscribed the name of Judah, for

he was the fourth son: and in the sapphire the name of Issachar.

Why then as he had called the sapphire the green stone, did he not also speak of the red stone? Because Judah, as the type of a disposition inclined to confession, is a being immaterial and incorporeal. For the very name of confession (exomologeæseoæs) shows that it is a thing external to (ektos) himself. For when the mind is beside itself, and bears itself upward to God, as the laughter of Isaac did, then it makes a confession to him who alone has a real being. But as long as it considers itself as the cause of something, it is a long way from yielding to God, and confession to him. For this very act of confessing ought to be considered as being the work not of the soul, but of God who teaches it this feeling of gratitude. Accordingly Judah, who practises confession, is an immaterial being.

But Issachar who came forth out of labour is in need of corporeal matter; since if it were otherwise how could a studious man read without his eyes? And how could any one hear words exhorting him to any cause, if he were not endowed with hearing? And how could he obtain meat and drink without a belly, and without a wonder working art exercised towards it? And it is on this account that he was likened to a precious stone.

Moreover the colours of the two are different. For the colour of a coal when on fire is akin to that of the man who is inclined to confession: for he is inflamed by gratitude to God, and he is intoxicated with a certain sober intoxication: but the colour of the green stone is more appropriate to the man who is still labouring: for those who are devoted to

constant labour are pale on account of the wearing nature of toil, and also by reason of their fear that perhaps they may not attain to such an end of their wish as is desired in their prayers.

Chapter XXVII

And it is worth while to raise the question why the two rivers the Pheison and the Gihon encircle certain countries, the one surrounding Evilat, and the other Ethiopia, while neither of the other rivers is represented as encompassing any country. The Tigris is indeed said to flow in front of the land of the Assyrians, but the Euphrates is not mentioned in connection with any country whatever. And yet in real truth the Euphrates does both encircle some countries, and has several also in front of it. But the truth is that the sacred writer is here speaking not of the river, but of the correction of manners.

It is necessary therefore to say that prudence and courage are able to raise a wall and a circle of fortification against the opposite evils, folly, and cowardice; and to take them captives: for both of them are powerless and easy to be taken. For the foolish man is easily to be defeated by the prudent one; and the coward falls before the valiant man. But temperance is unable to surround appetite and pleasure; for they are formidable adversaries and hard to be subdued. Do you not see that even the most temperate men are compelled by the necessities of their mortal body to seek meat and drink; and it is in those things that the pleasures of the belly have their existence. We must be content therefore to oppose and contend with the genus

appetite.

And it is on this account that the river Tigris is represented as flowing in front of the Assyrians, that is to say temperance is in front of or arrayed against pleasure. But justice, according to which the river Euphrates is represented, neither besieges any one, nor draws lines of circumvallation round any one, nor opposes any one; — why so? Because justice is conversant about the distribution of things according to merit, and does not take the part either of accuser or of defendant, but acts as a judge. As therefore a judge does not desire beforehand to defeat any one, nor to oppose and make war upon any one; but delivers his own opinion and judges, deciding for the right, so also justice, not being the adversary of any one, distributes its due to every thing.

Chapter XXVIII

“And the Lord God took the man whom he had made and placed him in the Paradise, to cultivate and to guard it.” The man whom God made differs from the factitious man, as I have said before. For the factitious mind is somewhat earthly; but the created mind is purer and more immaterial, having no participation in any perishable matter, but having received a purer and more simple constitution.

Accordingly God takes this pure mind, not permitting it to proceed out of itself, and after he has taken it, he places it among the virtues which are firmly rooted and budding well, that it may cultivate and guard them. For many men who were originally pratisers of virtue, when they come to the end fall off; but he to whom God gives lasting knowledge

is also endowed by him with both qualities, namely with the disposition to cultivate the virtues, and the resolution never to desert them, but always to minister to and guard every one of them. So Moses here uses the expression “cultivate” as equivalent to “act,” and the word “guard” instead of “remember.”

Chapter XXIX

“And the Lord God commanded Adam, saying, Of every tree that is in the Paradise thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ye shall not eat; but in the day on which ye eat of it ye shall die the death.” A question may arise here to what kind of Adam he gave this command and who, this Adam was. For Moses has not made any mention of him before; but now is the first time that he has named him. Are we then to think that he is desirous to supply you with the name of the factitious man? “And he calls him,” continues Moses, “Earth.” For this is the interpretation of the name of Adam. Accordingly, when you hear the name Adam, you must think that he is an earthly and perishable being; for he is made according to an image, being not earthly but heavenly.

But we must inquire how it was that after he had given names to all the other animals, he did not give one also to himself. What then are we to say about this? The mind which is in each of us is able to comprehend all other things, but has not the capability of understanding itself. For as the eye sees all other things, but cannot see itself, so also the mind perceives the nature of other things but cannot understand itself. For if it does, let it tell us what it

is, or what kind of thing it is, whether it is a spirit, or blood, or fire, or air, or any other substance: or even only so much whether it is a substance at all, or something incorporeal. Are not those men then simple who speculate on the essence of God? For how can they who are ignorant of the nature of the essence of their own soul, have any accurate knowledge of the soul of the universe? For the soul of the universe is according to our definition, — God.

Chapter XXX

It is therefore very natural that Adam, that is to say the mind, when he was giving names to and displaying his comprehension of the other animals, did not give a name to himself, because he was ignorant of himself and of his own nature. A command indeed is given to man, but not to the man created according to the image and idea of God; for that being is possessed of virtue without any need of exhortation, by his own instinctive nature, but this other would not have wisdom if it had not been taught to him:

and these three things are different, command, prohibition, and recommendation. For prohibition is conversant about errors, and is directed to bad men, but command is conversant about things rightly done; recommendation again is addressed to men of intermediate character, neither bad nor good. For such a one does not sin so that any one has any need to direct prohibition to him, nor does he do right in every case in accordance with the injunction of right reason. But he is in need of recommendation, which teaches him to abstain from what is evil, and exhorts him to aim at what is good.

Therefore there is no need of addressing either command, or prohibition, or recommendation to the man who is perfect, and made according to the image of God; For the perfect man requires none of these things; but there is a necessity of addressing both command and prohibition to the wicked man, and recommendation and instruction to the ignorant man. Just as the perfect grammarian or perfect musician has need of no instruction in the matters which belong to his art, but the man whose theories on such subjects are imperfect stands in need of certain rules, as it were, which contain in themselves commands and prohibitions, and he who is only learning the art requires instruction.

Very naturally, therefore, does God at present address commands and recommendations to the earthly mind, which is neither bad nor good, but of an intermediate character. And recommendation is employed in the two names, in that of the Lord and of God. For the Lord God commanded that if man obeyed his recommendations, he should be thought worthy of receiving benefits from God; but if he rejected his warnings, he should then be cast out to destruction by the Lord, as his Master and one who had authority over him.

On which account, when he is driven out of Paradise, Moses repeats the same names; for he says, "And the Lord God sent him forth out of the Paradise of happiness, to till the ground from which he had been Taken." That, since the Lord had laid his commands on him as his Master, and God as his Benefactor, he might now, in both these characters, chastise him for having disobeyed them; for thus, by the same power by which he had exhorted him does he also

banish him, now that he is disobedient.

Chapter XXXI

And the recommendations that he addresses to him are as follows: "Of every tree that is in the Paradise thou mayest freely Eat." He exhorts the soul of man to derive advantage not from one tree alone nor from one single virtue, but from all the virtues; for eating is a symbol of the nourishment of the soul, and the soul is nourished by the reception of good things, and by the doing of praiseworthy actions.

And Moses not only says, "thou mayest eat," but he adds "freely," also; that is to say, having ground and prepared your food, not like an ordinary individual, but like a wrestler, you shall thus acquire strength and vigour. For the trainers recommend the wrestlers not to cut up their food by biting large pieces off, but to masticate it slowly, in order that it may contribute to their strength; for I and an athlete are fed in different manners. For I feed merely for the purpose of living, but the wrestler feeds for the purpose of acquiring flesh and deriving strength from it; on which account one of his rules of training and exercise is to masticate his food. This is the meaning of the expression, "Thou mayest freely eat."

Again let us endeavour to give a still more accurate explanation of it. To honour one's parents is a nourishing and cherishing thing. But the good and the wicked honour them in different manners. For the one does it out of habit, as men eat who do not eat freely, but who merely eat. When, then, do they also eat freely? When having investigated and developed the causes of things they form a

voluntary judgment that this is good, and the causes of their eating freely, that is to say, of their honouring their parents in a proper spirit, is — they became our parents; they nourished us; they instructed us; they have been the causes of all good things to us. Again, to honour the living God is spoken of symbolically as to eat. But to eat “freely,” is when it is done with a proper explanation of the whole matter, and a correct assignment of the causes of it.

Chapter XXXII

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he shall not eat.” Therefore this tree is not in the Paradise. For God encourages them to eat of every tree that is in the Paradise. But when he forbids them to eat of this tree, it is plain that it is not in the Paradise; and this is in accordance with natural philosophy. For it is there in its essence, as I have said before, and it is not there in its power. For as in wax there are potentially many seals, but in actual fact only one which has been carved on it, so also in the soul, which resembles wax, all impressions whatever are contained potentially; but in really one single characteristic which is stamped upon it has possession of it; until it is effaced by some other which makes a deeper and more conspicuous impression.

Again, this, also, may be made the subject of a question. When God recommends men to eat of every tree in the Paradise, he is addressing his exhortation to one individual: but when he forbids him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he is speaking to him as to many. For in the one case he says, “Thou mayest freely eat of all;” but in the

second instance, "Ye shall not eat;" and "In the day in which ye shall eat," not "thou shalt eat;" and "Ye shall die," not "Thou shalt die."

We must, therefore, say this, — that the first good is rare, imparted to but few; but the evil is comprehensive. On this account it is a hard matter to find one single man wise and faithful, but the number of bad men is beyond all computation. Very appropriately, therefore, God does not address his exhortation to nourish one's self amid the virtues, to one individual, but he encourages many to abstain from extravagant wickedness; for innumerable men are addicted to it.

In the second place, for the due comprehension and adoption of virtue man requires one thing alone, namely reason. But the body not only does not co-operate in it at all, but rather impedes the progress of the reason towards it. For it may be almost called the peculiar task of wisdom to alienate itself from the body and form the corporeal appetites. But for the enjoyment of evil it is not only necessary for a man to have mind in some degree, but also senses, and reason, and a body.

For the bad man has need of all these things for the completion of his own wickedness. Since how will he be able to divulge the sacred mysteries unless he has the organ of voice? And how will he be able to indulge in pleasures if he be deprived of the belly and the organs of sensation? Very properly, therefore, does Moses address reason alone on the subject of the acquisition of virtue, for reason is, as I have said before, the only thing of which there is need for the establishment of virtue. But for indulgence in vice a man

requires many things — soul, and reason, and the external senses of the body; for it is through all these organs that vice is exhibited.

Chapter XXXIII

Accordingly God says, “In the day in which ye eat of it ye shall die the death.” And yet, though they have eaten of it, they not only do not die, but they even beget children, and are the causes of life to other beings besides themselves. What, then, are we to say? Surely that death is of two kinds; the one being the death of the man, the other the peculiar death of the soul — now the death of the man is the separation of his soul from his body, but the death of the soul is the destruction of virtue and the admission of vice;

and consequently God calls that not merely “to die,” but “to die the death;” showing that he is speaking not of common death, but of that peculiar and especial death which is the death of the soul, buried in its passions and in all kinds of evil. And we may almost say that one kind of death is opposed to the other kind. For the one is the separation of what was previously existing in combination, namely, of body and soul. But this other death, on the contrary, is a combination of them both, the inferior one, the body, having the predominance, and the superior one, the soul, being made subject to it.

When, therefore, God says, “to die the death,” you must remark that he is speaking of that death which is inflicted as punishment, and not of that which exists by the original ordinance of nature. The natural death is that one by which the soul is separated from the body. But the one which is

inflicted as a punishment, is when the soul dies according to the life of virtue, and lives only according to the life of vice.

Well, therefore, did Heraclitus say this, following the doctrine of Moses; for he says, "We are living according to the death of those men; and we have died according to their life." As if he had said, Now, when we are alive, we are so though our soul is dead and buried in our body, as if in a tomb. But if it were to die, then our soul would live according to its proper life, being released from the evil and dead body to which it is bound.