

Sallustius

On the Gods and the World

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I.

What the disciple should be; and concerning Common Conceptions

Those who wish to hear about the Gods should have been well guided from childhood, and not habituated to foolish beliefs. They should also be in disposition good and sensible, that they may properly attend to the teaching.

They ought also to know the common conceptions. Common conceptions are those to which all men agree as soon as they are asked; for instance, that all god [i.e. divinity] is good, free from passion, free from change. For whatever suffers change does so for the worse or the better; if for the worse, it is made bad; if for the better, it must have been bad at first.

II.

That god is unchanging, unbegotten, eternal, incorporeal, and not in space

Let the disciple be thus. Let the teachings be of the following sort. The essences of the Gods never came into existence (for that which always is never comes into existence; and that exists for ever which possesses primary force and by nature suffers nothing): neither do they consist of bodies; for even in bodies the powers are incorporeal. Neither are they contained by space; for that is a property of bodies. Neither are they separate from the first cause nor from one another, just as thoughts are not separate from mind nor acts of knowledge from the soul.

III.

Concerning myths; that they are divine, and why

We may well inquire, then, why the ancients forsook these doctrines and made use of myths. There is this first benefit from myths, that we have to search and do not have our minds idle.

That the myths are divine can be seen from those who have used them. Myths have been used by inspired poets, by the best of philosophers, by those who established the mysteries, and by the Gods themselves in oracles. But why the myths are divine it is the duty of philosophy to inquire. Since all existing things rejoice in that which is like them and reject that which is unlike, the stories about the Gods ought to be like the Gods, so that they may both be worthy of the divine essence and make the Gods well disposed to those who speak of them: which could only be done by means of myths.

Now the myths represent the Gods themselves and the goodness of the Gods - subject always to

the distinction of the speakable and the unspeakable, the revealed and the unrevealed, that which is clear and that which is hidden: since, just as the Gods have made the goods of sense common to all, but those of intellect only to the wise, so the myths state the existence of Gods to all, but who and what they are only to those who can understand.

They also represent the activities of the Gods. For one may call the world a myth, in which bodies and things are visible, but souls and minds hidden. Besides, to wish to teach the whole truth about the Gods to all produces contempt in the foolish, because they cannot understand, and lack of zeal in the good, whereas to conceal the truth by myths prevents the contempt of the foolish, and compels the good to practice philosophy.

But why have they put in the myths stories of adultery, robbery, father-binding, and all the other absurdity? Is not that perhaps a thing worthy of admiration, done so that by means of the visible absurdity the soul may immediately feel that the words are veils and believe the truth to be a mystery?

IV.

That the species of myth are five, with examples of each

Of myths some are theological, some physical, some psychic, and again some material, and some mixed from these last two. The theological are those myths which use no bodily form but contemplate the very essence of the Gods: e.g., Kronos swallowing his children. Since god is intellectual, and all intellect returns into itself, this myth expresses in allegory the essence of god.

Myths may be regarded physically when they express the activities of the Gods in the world: e.g., people before now have regarded Kronos as time, and calling the divisions of time his sons say that the sons are swallowed by the father.

The psychic way is to regard the activities of the soul itself; the soul's acts of thought, though they pass on to other objects, nevertheless remain inside their begetters.

The material and last is that which the Egyptians have mostly used, owing to their ignorance, believing material objects actually to be Gods, and so calling them: e.g., they call the earth Isis, moisture Osiris, heat Typhon, or again, water Kronos, the fruits of the earth Adonis, and wine Dionysus.

To say that these objects are sacred to the Gods, like various herbs and stones and animals, is possible to sensible men, but to say that they are Gods is the notion of madmen – except, perhaps, in the sense in which both the orb of the sun and the ray which comes from the orb are colloquially called “the sun”.

The mixed kind of myth may be seen in many instances: for example they say that in a banquet of the Gods Discord threw down a golden apple; the Goddesses contended for it, and were sent by Zeus to Paris to be judged. Paris saw Aphrodite to be beautiful and gave her the apple. Here the banquet signifies the hypercosmic powers of the Gods; that is why they are all together. The golden apple is the world, which being formed out of opposites, is naturally said to be “thrown by Discord”. The different Gods bestow different gifts upon the world, and are thus said to “contend for the apple”. And the soul which lives according to sense – for that is what Paris is – not seeing the other powers in the world but only beauty, declares that the apple belongs to Aphrodite.

Theological myths suit philosophers, physical and psychic suit poets, mixed suit religious initiations, since every initiation aims at uniting us with the world and the Gods.

To take another myth, they say that the Mother of the Gods seeing Attis lying by the river Gallus fell in love with him, took him, crowned him with her cap of stars, and thereafter kept him with her. He fell in love with a nymph and left the Mother to live with her. For this the Mother of the Gods made Attis go mad and cut off his genital organs and leave them with the nymph, and then return and dwell with her.

Now the Mother of the Gods is the principle that generates life; that is why she is called Mother.

Attis is the creator of all things which are born and die; that is why he is said to have been found by the river Gallus. For Gallus signifies the Galaxy, or Milky Way, the point at which body subject to passion begins. Now as the primary gods make perfect the secondary, the Mother loves Attis and gives him celestial powers. That is what the cap means. Attis loves a nymph: the nymphs preside over generation, since all that is generated is fluid. But since the process of generation must be stopped somewhere, and not allowed to generate something worse than the worst, the creator who makes these things casts away his generative powers into the creation and is joined to the Gods again. Now these things never happened, but always are. And mind sees all things at once, but reason (or speech) expresses some first and others after. Thus, as the myth is in accord with the cosmos, we for that reason keep a festival imitating the cosmos, for how could we attain higher order?

And at first we ourselves, having fallen from heaven and living with the nymph, are in despondency, and abstain from corn and all rich and unclean food, for both are hostile to the soul. Then comes the cutting of the tree and the fast, as though we also were cutting off the further process of generation. After that the feeding on milk, as though we were being born again; after which come rejoicings and garlands and, as it were, a return up to the Gods.

The season of the ritual is evidence to the truth of these explanations. The rites are performed about the Vernal equinox, when the fruits of the earth are ceasing to be produced, and day is becoming longer than night, which applies well to spirits rising higher. (At least, the other equinox is in mythology the time of the rape of Kore, which is the descent of the souls.)

May these explanations of the myths find favour in the eyes of the Gods themselves and the souls of those who wrote the myths.

V.

On the First Cause

Next in order comes knowledge of the first cause and the subsequent orders of the Gods, then the nature of the world, the essence of intellect and of soul, then providence, fate, and fortune, then to see virtue and formed from them, and from what possible source evil came into the world.

Each of these subjects needs many long discussions; but there is perhaps no harm in stating them briefly, so that a disciple may not be completely ignorant about them.

It is proper to the first cause to be one - for unity precedes multitude - and to surpass all things in power and goodness. Consequently all things must partake of it. For owing to its power nothing else can hinder it, and owing to its goodness it will not hold itself apart.

If the first cause were soul, all things would possess soul. If it were mind, all things would possess mind. If it were being, all things would partake of being. And seeing this quality in all things, some men have thought that it was being. Now if things simply were, without being good, this argument would be true, but if things that are *are* because of their goodness, and partake in the good, the first thing must needs be both beyond-being and good. It is strong evidence of this that noble souls despise being for the sake of the good, when they face death for their country or friends or for the sake of virtue. - After this inexpressible country or friends or for the sake of virtue. - After this inexpressible power come the orders of the Gods.

VI.

On Gods Cosmic and Hypercosmic

Of the Gods some are of the world, cosmic, and some above the world, hypercosmic. By the cosmic I mean those who make the cosmos. Of the hypercosmic Gods some create essence, some

mind, and some soul. Thus they have three orders; all of which may be found in treatises on the subject.

Of the cosmic Gods some make the world be, others animate it, others harmonize it, consisting as it does of different elements; the fourth class keep it when harmonized.

These are four actions, each of which has a beginning, middle, and end, consequently there must be twelve Gods governing the world.

Those who make the world are Zeus, Poseidon, and Hephaistos; those who animate it are Demeter, Hera, and Artemis; those who harmonize it are Apollo, Aphrodite, and Hermes; those who watch over it are Hestia, Athena, and Ares.

One can see secret suggestions of this in their images. Apollo tunes a lyre; Athena is armed; Aphrodite is naked (because harmony creates beauty, and beauty in things seen is not covered).

While these twelve in the primary sense possess the world, we should consider that the other Gods are contained in these. Dionysus in Zeus, for instance, Asklepios in Apollo, the Charites in Aphrodite.

We can also discern their various spheres: to Hestia belongs the earth, to Poseidon water, to Hera air, to Hephaistos fire. And the six superior spheres to the Gods to whom they are usually attributed. For Apollo and Artemis are to be taken for the Sun and Moon, the sphere of Kronos [*i.e.* Saturn] should be attributed to Demeter, the ether to Athena, while the heaven is common to all. Thus the orders, powers, and spheres of the twelve Gods have been explained and celebrated in hymns.

VII.

On the Nature of the World and its Eternity

The cosmos itself must of necessity be indestructible and uncreated. Indestructible because, suppose it destroyed: the only possibility is to make one better than this or worse or the same or a chaos. If worse, the power which out of the better makes the worse must be bad. If better, the maker who did not make the better at first must be imperfect in power. If the same, there will be no use in making it; if a chaos...it is impious even to hear such a thing suggested. These reasons would suffice to show that the world is also uncreated: for if not destroyed, neither is it created. Everything that is created is subject to destruction. And further, since the cosmos exists by the goodness of god, it follows that god must always be good and the world exist. Just as light coexists with the sun and with fire, and shadow coexists with a body.

Of the bodies in the cosmos, some imitate mind and move in orbits; some imitate soul and move in a straight line, fire and air upward, earth and water downward. Of those that move in orbits the fixed sphere goes from the east, the seven [planets] from the west. (This is so for various causes, especially lest the creation should be imperfect owing to the rapid circuit of the spheres.)

The movement being different, the nature of the bodies must also be different; hence the celestial body does not burn or freeze what it touches, or do anything else that pertains to the four elements.

And since the Cosmos is a sphere – the zodiac proves that – and in every sphere ‘down’ means ‘toward the centre’, for the centre is furthest distant from every point, and heavy things fall ‘down’ and fall to the earth.

All these things are made by the Gods, ordered by mind, moved by soul. About the Gods we have spoken already.

VIII.

On Mind and Soul, and that the latter is immortal

There is a certain force, less primary than being but more primary than the soul, which draws its existence from being and completes the soul as the sun completes the eyes. Of souls some are rational and immortal, some irrational and mortal. The former are derived from the first Gods, the latter from the secondary.

First, we must consider what soul is. It is, then, that by which the animate differs from the inanimate. The difference lies in motion, sensation, imagination, intelligence. Soul therefore, when irrational, is the life of sense and imagination; when rational, it is the life which controls sense and imagination and uses reason. The irrational soul depends on the affections of the body; it feels desire and anger irrationally. The rational soul both, with the help of reason, despises the body, and, fighting against the irrational soul, produces either virtue or vice, according as it is victorious or defeated.

It must be immortal, both because it knows the Gods (and nothing mortal knows what is immortal), it looks down upon human affairs as though it stood outside them, and like an unbodied thing, it is affected in the opposite way to the body. For while the body is young and fine, the soul blunders, but as the body grows old it attains its highest power. Again, every good soul uses mind; but no body can produce mind: for how should that which is without mind produce mind? Again, while the soul uses the body as an instrument, it is not in it; just as the engineer is not in his engines (although many engines move without being touched by any one). And if the soul is often made to err by the body, that is not surprising. For the arts cannot perform their work when their instruments are spoilt.

IX.

On Providence, Fate, and Fortune

This is enough to show the Providence of the Gods. For whence comes the ordering of the world, if there is no ordering power? And whence comes the fact that all things are for a purpose: e.g. irrational soul that there may be sensation, and rational that the earth may be set in order?

But one can deduce the same result from the evidences of providence in nature: e.g., the eyes have been made transparent with a view to seeing; the nostrils are above the mouth to distinguish bad-smelling foods; the front teeth are sharp to cut food, the back teeth broad to grind it. And we find every part of every object arranged on a similar principle. It is impossible that there should be so much providence in the last details, and none in the first principles. Then the arts of prophecy and of healing, which are part of the cosmos, come of the good providence of the Gods.

All this care for the world, we must believe, is taken by the Gods without any act of will or labour. As bodies which possess some power produce their effects by merely existing: e.g. the sun gives light and heat by merely existing; so, and far more so, the providence of the Gods acts without effort to itself and for the good of the objects of its forethought. This solves the problems of the Epicureans, who argue that what is divine neither has trouble itself nor gives trouble to others.

The incorporeal providence of the Gods, both for bodies and for souls, is of this sort; but that which is of bodies and in bodies is different from this, and is called fate, Heimarmene, because the chain of causes (*heirmos*) is more visible in the case of bodies; and it is for dealing with this fate that the science of Mathematic has been discovered.

Therefore, to believe that human things, especially their material constitution, are ordered not only by celestial beings but by the celestial bodies is a reasonable and true belief. Reason shows that health and sickness, good fortune and bad fortune, arise according to our deserts from that source.

But to attribute men's acts of injustice and lust to fate, is to make ourselves good and the Gods bad. Unless by chance a man meant by such a statement that in general all things are for the good of the world and for those who are in a natural state, but that bad education or weakness of nature changes the goods of Fate for the worse. Just as it happens that the Sun, which is good for all, may be injurious to persons with ophthalmia or fever. Else why do the Massagetæ eat their fathers, the Hebrews practice circumcision, and the Persians preserve rules of rank? Why do astrologers, while calling Saturn and Mars "malignant" proceed to make them good, attributing to them philosophy and royalty, generalships and treasures? And if they are going to talk of triangles and squares, it is absurd that Gods should change their natures according to their position in space, while human virtue remains the same everywhere. Also the fact that the stars predict high or low rank for the father of the person whose horoscope is taken, teaches that they do not always make things happen but sometimes only indicate things. For how could things which preceded the birth depend upon the birth?

Further, as there is providence and fate concerned with nations and cities, and also concerned with each individual, so there is also fortune, which should next be treated. That power of the Gods which orders for the good things which are not uniform, and which happen contrary to expectation, is commonly called Fortune, and it is for this reason that the Goddess is especially worshipped in public by cities; for every city consists of elements which are not uniform. Fortune has power beneath the moon, since above the moon no single thing can happen by fortune.

If fortune makes a wicked man prosperous and a good man poor, there is no need to wonder. For the wicked regard wealth as everything, the good as nothing. And the good fortune of the bad cannot take away their badness, while virtue alone will be enough for the good.

X.

Concerning Virtue and Vice

The doctrine of virtue and vice depends on that of the soul. When the irrational soul enters into the body and immediately produces fight and desire, the rational soul, put in authority over all these, makes the soul tripartite, composed of reason, fight, and desire. Virtue in the region of reason is wisdom, in the region of fight is courage, in the region of desire is temperance; the virtue of the whole soul is righteousness. It is for reason to judge what is right, for fight in obedience to reason to despise things that appear terrible, for desire to pursue not the apparently desirable, but, that which is with reason desirable. When these things are so, we have a righteous life; for righteousness in matters of property is but a small part of virtue. And thus we shall find all four virtues in properly trained men, but among the untrained one may be brave and unjust, another temperate and stupid, another prudent and unprincipled. Indeed, these qualities should not be called virtues when they are devoid of reason and imperfect and found in irrational beings. Vice should be regarded as consisting of the opposite elements. In reason it is folly, in fight, cowardice, in desire, intemperance, in the whole soul, unrighteousness.

The virtues are produced by the right social organization and by good rearing and education, the vices by the opposite.

XI.

Concerning right and wrong Social Organization

Constitutions also depend on the tripartite nature of the soul. The rulers are analogous to reason, the soldiers to fight, the common folk to desires.

Where all things are done according to reason and the best man in the nation rules, it is a kingdom; where more than one rule according to reason and fight, it is an aristocracy; where the government is according to desire and offices depend on money, that constitution is called a timocracy. The contraries are: to kingdom, tyranny, for kingdom does all things with the guidance of reason and tyranny nothing; to aristocracy, oligarchy, when not the best people but a few of the worst are rulers; to timocracy, democracy, when not the rich but the common folk possess the whole power.

XII.

The origin of evil things; and that there is no positive evil

The Gods being good and making all things, how do evils exist in the world? Or perhaps it is better first to state the fact that, the Gods being good and making all things, there is no positive evil, it only comes by absence of good; just as darkness itself does not exist, but only comes about by absence of light.

If evil exists it must exist either in Gods or minds or souls or bodies. It does not exist in any God, for all god is good. If anyone speaks of a 'bad mind' he means a mind without mind. If of a bad soul, he will make the soul inferior to body, for no body in itself is evil. If he says that evil is made up of soul and body together, it is absurd that separately they should not be evil, but joined should create evil.

Suppose it is said that there are evil spirits: - if they have their power from the Gods, they cannot be evil; if from elsewhere, the Gods do not make all things. If they do not make all things, then either they wish to or cannot, or they can and do not wish; neither of which is consistent with the idea of god. We may see, therefore, from these arguments, that there is no positive evil in the world.

It is in the activities of men that the evils appear, and that not of all men nor always. And as to these, if men sinned for the sake of evil, nature itself would be evil. But if the adulterer thinks his adultery bad but his pleasure good, and the murderer thinks the murder bad but the money he gets by it good, and the man who does evil to an enemy thinks that to do evil is bad but to punish his enemy good, and if the soul commits all its sins in that way, then the evils are done for the sake of goodness. (In the same way, because in a given place light does not exist, there comes darkness, which has no positive existence.) The soul sins therefore because, while aiming at good, it makes mistakes about the good, because it is not primary essence. And we see many things done by the Gods to prevent it from making mistakes and to heal it when it has made them. Arts and sciences, curses and prayers, sacrifices and initiations, laws and constitutions, judgements and punishments, all came into existence for the sake of preventing souls from sinning; and when they are gone forth from the body, Gods and spirits of purification cleanse them of their sins.

XIII.

How things eternal are said to be made

Concerning the Gods and the world and human things this account will suffice for those who are not able to go through the whole course of philosophy but yet have not souls beyond help.

It remains to explain how these objects were never made and are never separated one from another, since we ourselves have said above that the secondary substances were 'made' by the first.

Everything made is made either by art or by a physical process or according to some power. Now in art or nature the maker must needs be prior to the made: but the maker, according to power, constitutes the made absolutely together with itself, since its power is inseparable from it; as the sun makes light, fire makes heat, snow makes cold.

Now if the Gods make the world by art, they do not make it be, they make it be such as it is. For all art makes the form of the object. What therefore makes it to be?

If by a physical process, how in that case can the maker help giving part of himself to the made? As the Gods are incorporeal, the world ought to be incorporeal too. If it were argued that the Gods were bodies, then where would the power of incorporeal things come from? And if we were to admit it, it would follow that when the world decays, its maker must be decaying too, if he is a maker by physical process.

If the Gods make the world neither by art nor by physical process, it only remains that they make it by power. Everything so made subsists together with that which possesses the power. Neither can things so made be destroyed, except the power of the maker be taken away: so that those who believe in the destruction of the world, either deny the existence of the Gods, or, while admitting it, deny God's power.

Therefore he who makes all things by his own power makes all things subsist together with himself. And since his power is the greatest power he must needs be the maker not only of men and animals, but of Gods, men, and spirits. And the further removed the first God is from our nature, the more powers there must be between us and him. For all things that are very far apart have many intermediate points between them.

XIV.

In what sense, though the Gods never change, they are said to be made angry and appeased

If any one thinks the doctrine of the unchangeableness of the Gods is reasonable and true, and then wonders how it is that they rejoice in the good and reject the bad, are angry with sinners and become propitious when appeased, the answer is as follows: god does not rejoice - for that which rejoices also grieves; nor is he angered - for to be angered is a passion; nor is he appeased by gifts - if he were, he would be conquered by pleasure.

It is impious to suppose that the divine is affected for good or ill by human things. The Gods are always good and always do good and never harm, being always in the same state and like themselves. The truth simply is that, when we are good, we are joined to the Gods by our likeness to live according to virtue we cling to the Gods, and when we become evil we make the Gods our enemies - not because they are angered against us, but because our sins prevent the light of the Gods from shining upon us, and put us in communion with spirits of punishment. And if by prayers and sacrifices we find forgiveness of sins, we do not appease or change the Gods, but by what we do and by our turning toward the divine we heal our own badness and so enjoy again the goodness of the Gods. To say that god turns away from the evil is like saying that the sun hides himself from the blind.

XV.

Why we give worship to the Gods when they need nothing

This solves the question about sacrifices and other rites performed to the Gods. The divine itself is without needs, and the worship is paid for our own benefit. The providence of the Gods reaches everywhere and needs only some congruity for its reception. All congruity comes about by representation and likeness; for which reason the temples are made in representation of heaven, the altar of earth, the images of life (that is why they are made like living things), the prayers of the element of thought, the mystic letters of the unspeakable celestial forces, the herbs and stones of matter, and the sacrificial animals of the irrational life in us.

From all these things the Gods gain nothing; what gain could there be to God? It is we who gain some communion with them.

XVI.

Concerning sacrifices and other worships, that we benefit man by them, but not the Gods

I think it well to add some remarks about sacrifices. In the first place, since we have received everything from the Gods, and it is right to pay the giver some tithe of his gifts, we pay such a tithe of possessions in votive offering, of bodies in gifts of (hair and) adornment, and of life in sacrifices. Then secondly, prayers without sacrifices are only words, with sacrifices they are live words; the word gives meaning to the life, while the life animates the word. Thirdly, the happiness of every object is its own perfection; and perfection for each is communion with its own cause. For this reason we pray for communion with the Gods. Since, therefore, the first life is the life of the Gods, but human life is also life of a kind, and human life wishes for communion with divine life, a mean term is needed. For things very far apart cannot have communion without a mean term, and the mean term must be like the things joined; therefore the mean term between life and life must be life. That is why men sacrifice animals; only the rich do so now, but in old days everybody did, and that not indiscriminately, but giving the suitable offerings to each god together with a great deal of other worship. Enough of this subject.

XVII.

That the World is by nature Eternal

We have shown above that the Gods will not destroy the world. It remains to show that its nature is indestructible.

Everything that is destroyed is either destroyed by itself or by something else. If the world is destroyed by itself, fire must needs burn of itself and water dry itself. If by something else, it must be either by a body or by something incorporeal. By something incorporeal is impossible; for incorporeal things preserve bodies – nature, for instance, and soul – and nothing is destroyed by a cause whose nature is to preserve it. If it is destroyed by some body, it must be either by those which exist or by others.

If by those which exist: then either those moving in a straight line must be destroyed by those that revolve, or vice versa. But those that revolve have no destructive nature; else, why do we never see anything destroyed from that cause? Nor yet can those which are moving straight touch the others; else, why have they never been able to do so yet?

But neither can those moving straight be destroyed by one another: for the destruction of one is the creation of another; and that is not to be destroyed but to change.

But if the world is to be destroyed by other bodies than these it is impossible to say where such bodies are or whence they are to arise.

Again, everything destroyed is destroyed either in form or matter. (Form is the shape of a thing, matter is the body.) Now if the form is destroyed and the matter remains, we see other things come into being. If matter is destroyed, how is it that the supply has not failed in all these years?

If when matter is destroyed other matter takes its place, the new matter must come either from something that is or from something that is not. If from that-which-is, as long as that-which-is always remains, matter always remains. But if that-which-is is destroyed, such a theory means that not the world only but everything in the universe is destroyed.

If again matter comes from that-which-is-not: in the first place, it is impossible for anything to

come from that which is not; but suppose it to happen, and that matter did arise from that which is not; then, as long as there are things which are not, matter will exist. For I presume there can never be an end of things which are not.

If they say that matter formless: in the first place, why does this happen to the world as a whole when it does not happen to any part? Secondly, by this hypothesis they do not destroy the being of bodies but only their beauty.

Further, everything destroyed is either resolved into the elements from which it came, or else vanishes into not-being. If things are resolved into the elements from which they came, then there will be others: else how did they come into being at all? If that-which-is is to depart into not-being, what prevents that happening to god himself? (Which is absurd.) Or if god's power prevents that, it is not a mark of power to be able to save nothing but oneself. And it is equally impossible for that-which-is to come out of nothing and to depart into nothing.

Again, if the world is destroyed, it must needs either be destroyed according to nature or against nature. Against nature is impossible, for that which is against nature is not stronger than nature. If according to nature, there must be another nature which changes the nature of the world: which does not appear.

Again, anything that is naturally destructible we can ourselves destroy. But no one has ever destroyed or altered the round body of the world. And the elements, though they can be changed, cannot be destroyed. Again, everything destructible is changed by time and grows old. But the world through all these years has remained utterly unchanged.

Having said so much for the help of those who feel the need of very strong demonstration, I pray the world himself to be gracious to me.

XVIII.

Why there are rejections of god, and that god is not injured

Nor need the fact that rejections of god have taken place in certain parts of the earth and will often take place hereafter, disturb the mind of the wise: both because these things do not affect the Gods, just as we saw that worship did not benefit them; and because the soul, being of middle essence, cannot be always right; and because the whole world cannot enjoy the providence of the Gods equally, but some parts may partake of it eternally, some at certain times, some in the primal manner, some in the secondary. Just as the head enjoys all the senses, but the rest of the body only one.

For this reason, it seems, those who ordained festivals ordained also forbidden days, in which some temples lay idle, some were shut, some had their adornments removed, in expiation of the weakness of our nature.

It is not unlikely, too, that the rejection of god is a kind of punishment: we may well believe that those who knew the Gods and neglected them in one life may in another life be deprived of the knowledge of them altogether. Also those who have worshipped their own kings as gods have deserved as their punishment to lose all knowledge of god.

XIX.

Why sinners are not punished at once

There is no need to be surprised if neither these sins nor yet others bring immediate punishment upon sinners. For it is not only spirits who punish the evil, the soul brings itself to judgement: and also it is not right for those who endure for ever to attain everything in a short time: and also, there is

need of human virtue. If punishment followed instantly upon sin, men would act justly from fear and have no virtue.

Souls are punished when they have gone forth from the body, some wandering among us, some going to hot or cold places of the earth, some harassed by spirits. Under all circumstances they suffer with the irrational part of their nature, with which they also sinned. For its sake there subsists that shadowy body which is seen about graves, especially the graves of evil livers.

XX.

On Transmigration of Souls, and how Souls are said to migrate into brute beasts

If the transmigration of a soul takes place into a rational being, it simply becomes the soul of that body. But if the soul migrates into a brute beast, it follows the body outside, as a guardian spirit follows a man. For there could never be a rational soul in an irrational being.

The transmigration of souls can be proved from the congenital afflictions of persons. For why are some born blind, others paralytic, others with some sickness in the soul itself? Again, it is the natural duty of souls to do their work in the body; are we to suppose that when once they leave the body they spend all eternity in idleness? Again, if the souls did not again enter into bodies, they must either be infinite in number or god must constantly be making new ones. But there is nothing infinite in the world; for in a finite whole there cannot be an infinite part. Neither can others be made; for everything in which something new goes on being created, must be imperfect. And the world, being made by a perfect author, ought naturally to be perfect.

XXI.

That the Good are happy, both living and dead

Souls that have lived in virtue are in general happy, and when separated from the irrational part of their nature, and made clean from all matter, have communion with the gods and join them in the governing of the whole world. Yet even if none of this happiness fell to their lot, virtue itself, and the joy and glory of virtue, and the life that is subject to no grief and no master are enough to make happy those who have set themselves to live according to virtue and have achieved it.