

PHILO
Som. i 227-229

Yet there can be no cowering fear for the man who relies on the hope of the divine comradeship, to whom are addressed the words "I am the God who appeared to thee in the place of God." (Gen. 31:13) Surely a right noble cause of vaunting it is, for a soul that God deigns to show himself to and converse with it. And do not fail to mark the language used, but carefully inquire whether there are two Gods; for we read "I am the God that appeared to thee," not "in my place" but "in the place of God," as though it were another's. What then are we to say? He that is truly God is one, but those that are improperly so-called are more than one. Accordingly, the holy word in the present instance has indicated Him Who truly is God by means of the articles, saying "I am the God," while it omits the article when mentioning him who is improperly so called, saying "who appeared to thee in the place" not "of the God" but simply "of God."

Som. i 234-237. Loeb V 421-423

And the sacred word ever entertaining holier and more august conceptions of Him that is, yet at the same time longing to provide instruction and teaching for the life of those who lack wisdom, likened God to man, not however, to any particular man. For this reason it has ascribed to Him face, hands, feet, mouth, voice, wrath and indignation, and over and beyond these, weapons, entrances and exits, movements up and down and all ways, and in following this general principle in its language it is concerned not with truth, but with the profit accruing to its pupils. For some there are altogether dull in their natures, incapable of forming any conception whatever of God as without a body, people whom it is impossible to instruct otherwise than in this way, saying that as a man does so God arrives and departs, goes down and comes up, makes use of a voice, is displeased at wrongdoings, is inexorable in His anger, and in addition to all this has provided Himself with shafts and swords and all other instruments of vengeance against the unrighteous. For it is something to be thankful for if they can be taught self-control by the terror held over them by these means. Broadly speaking the lines taken throughout the Law are these two only, one that which keeps truth in view and so provides the thought "god is not as man" (Num. XXIII, 19), the other that which keeps in view the ways of thinking of the duller folk, of whom it is said, "The Lord God will chasten thee, as if man should chasten his son" (Dt. 8:5). Why then do we wonder any longer at His assuming the likeness of angels, seeing that for the succour of those that are in need he assumes the likeness of men? Accordingly, when He says, "I am the seen of thee in the place of God" (Gen. 31:13) understand that He occupied the place of an angel only so far as appeared, without changing with a view to the profit of him who was not yet capable of seeing the true God.

Quest. in Gen. ii, 62 Eusebius (P.E. VII, 13, 1)

(Gen. IX:6) Why does (Scripture) say, as if speaking of another God, "In the image of God He made man" and not "in His own image?"

Most excellently and veraciously this oracle was given by God. For nothing mortal can be made in the likeness of the Most High One and father of the universe but (only) in that of the second God, who is His logos. For it was right that the rational part of the human soul should be formed as an impression by the divine logos, since the pre-logos God is superior to every rational nature. But He who is above the logos exists in the best and in a special form--what thing that comes into being can rightfully bear His likeness? Moreover, Scripture wishes to

show that God most justly avenges the virtuous and decent men because they have certain kinship with His logos, of which the human mind is a likeness and image.

Conf. 95, (Loeb IV, 61).

But it is the special mark of those who serve the Existent that theirs are not the tasks of cupbearers or bakers or cooks or any other tasks of the earth. . .nor do they mould or fashion material forms like the brickmakers, but in their thoughts ascend to the heavenly height, setting before them Moses, the nature beloved of God, to lead the way. For then they shall behold the place, which, in fact, is the logos, where God stands, the never changing, never swerving and also what lies under His feet like "the work of a brick of sapphire, like the form of the firmament of the heaven" (Ex. 24:10) even the world of our senses, which he indicates in the mystery.

Mig. 174.

For as long as he falls short of perfection, he has the Divine Word as his leader, since there is an oracle which says, "Lo I send my messenger before thy face to guard thee in thy way, that he may bring you into the land which I have prepared for thee; give heed to him and hearken to him, disobey him not; for he will by no means withdraw from you. For My name is in him." (Ex. 23:20f)

Som. ii, 222.

And Moses too gives his testimony to the unchangeability of the deity when he says: "They saw the place where the God of Israel stood" (Ex. 24:10) for by the standing or establishment he indicated his immutability. But indeed so vast in its excess is the stability of the deity that He imparts to chosen natures a share of His steadfastness to be their richest possession. For instance, he says of His covenant filled with his bounties, the highest law and principle, that is, which rules existent things that this God image shall be firmly planted with just souls on its pedestals.

Mut. 23, 24 (Loeb, V, 155).

So then He is shown to be the Lord of the foolish in that He holds over them the terrors that are proper to a sovereign. Of those who are on the way to betterment he is called in scripture, God, as in the present passage. "I am God" or "I am thy God, increase and multiply." (Gen. 35:11) Of the perfect he is both Lord and God, as in the Decalogue, "I am the Lord thy God" (Ex 20:2) and elsewhere, "The Lord God of our fathers" (Dt. 4:1) for it is His will that the wicked man should be under His sway as his Lord, and thus with awe and groaning feel the fear of the Master hanging over him; that the man of progress should be benefitted by Him as God and through the one he remains free from lapses, through the other he is most surely God's man.

Mut. 29-31, V 159.

Akin to these two is the creative power called God because through this the Father, who is its begetter and contriver, made the universe; so that "I am thy God" is equivalent to "I am thy maker and artificer." And the greatest gift we can have is to have Him for our architect, who was also the architect of the whole world, for He did not form the soul of the bad, since wickedness is at enmity with Him, and in framing the soul which is the intermediate stage he did not serve as the sole agent according to the holiest man, Moses, since such a soul would surely admit like wax, the different qualities of noble and base. And therefore we read "Let us make man after our image" (Gen. 1:26), so that according as the wax received the bad or the

noble impress it should appear to be the handiwork of others or of Him who is the framer of the noble and the good alone.

Quest. in Ex.

What is the meaning of the words, "They appeared to God in the place and they ate and drank." (Ex. 24:11b) Having attained to the face of the Father, they do not remain in any mortal place at all, for all such (places) are profane and polluted, but they send and make a migration to a holy and divine place which is called by another name, logos. Being in this place through the steward they see the master in a lofty and clear manner, envisioning God with the keen-sighted eyes of the mind. . (39)

or again:

Ex. 24:12a What is the meaning of the words, "Come up to Me to the mountain and be there? This signifies that a holy soul is divinized by ascending not to the air to the ether or to heaven (which is higher than all) but to a region above the heavens, and beyond the world where there is no place but God. And He determines the stability of the removal by saying "be there (thus demonstrating the placelessness and the unchanging habitation of the divine place. . .)"

prophet owning to desire of knowledge lifts his eyes above the whole universe and becomes a seeker regarding its Creator, asking of what sort this Being is so difficult to see, so difficult to conjecture. Is He a body or incorporeal, or something exalted above these? Is He a single Nature, a Monad as it were?¹ Or a composite Being? What among all that exists? and seeing that this is a problem hard to pursue, hard to take in by thought, he prays that he may learn from God Himself what God is: for he had no hope of being able to ascertain this from another, from one of those that are inferior to Him. Nevertheless he did not succeed in finding anything by search respecting the essence of Him that Is. For he is told 'What is behind Me thou shalt see, but my face thou shalt by no Means see' (Ex. xxxiii. 23). For it amply suffices the wise man to come to a knowledge of all that follows on after God and in His wake, but the man that wishes to set his gaze upon the Supreme Essence, before he sees Him will be blinded by the rays that beam forth all round Him.

On Flight and Finding, 161-6 (v, p. 97 ff.)

'MANIFEST THYSELF TO ME'

So unceasingly does Moses yearn to see God and to be seen by Him, that he implores Him to reveal clearly His own nature (Ex. xxxiii. 13), which is hard to divine, hoping thus to obtain at length a view free from all falsehood, and to exchange doubt and uncertainty for a most assured confidence. Nor will he abate the intensity of his desire, but although he is aware that he is enamoured of an object which entails a hard quest, nay, which is out of reach, he will nevertheless struggle on with no relaxation of his earnest endeavour, but honestly and resolutely enlisting all his faculties to co-operate for the attainment of his object. So see him enter into the thick darkness where God was (Ex. xx. 21), that is into conceptions regarding the Existing Being that belong to the unapproachable region where there are no material forms. For the Cause

¹ On the Monad see p. 63, n. 2.

of all is not in the thick darkness, nor locally in any place at all, but high above both place and time. For He has placed all creation under His control, and is contained by nothing, but transcends all. But though transcending and being beyond what He has made, none the less He filled the universe with Himself; for He has caused His powers to extend themselves throughout the Universe to its outmost bounds, and in accordance with the laws of harmonies has knit each part to each. When therefore the God-loving soul probes the question of the essence of the Existent Being, he enters on a quest of that which is beyond matter and beyond sight. And out of this quest there accrues to him a vast boon, namely to apprehend that the God of real Being is apprehensible by no one, and to see precisely this, that He is incapable of being seen. But the holy Guide seems to me even before he began this search to have discerned its futility. That he did so is evident from his imploring the Existent One to be His own Interpreter and reveal His own Nature. He says 'Manifest thyself to me' (Ex. xxxiii. 13), showing quite clearly by so saying that there is not a single created being capable of attaining by his own efforts the knowledge of the God Who verily exists. This must be borne in mind if we are to understand what we read about Abraham, how, on reaching the place of which God has told him, he looked up on the third day and 'seeketh the place from afar' (Gen. xxii. 3 ff.). What place? The one which he had reached? And how can it be far off if he is already there? It may be that what we are told under a figure is to this effect. The wise man is ever longing to discern the Ruler of the Universe. As he journeys along the path that takes him through knowledge and wisdom, he comes into contact first with divine words, and with these he makes a preliminary stay, and though he had meant to go the remainder of the way, he comes to a stop. For the eyes of his understanding have been opened, and he sees perfectly clearly that he has engaged in the chase of a quarry hard to capture, which always eludes its pursuers and is off to a distance leaving them ever so far behind. Rightly does he reflect

that all the fleetest things under the sky would be seen standing still, if their motion were compared with that of the sun and moon and the other heavenly bodies. And yet (he ponders) all heaven is God's handiwork, and that which makes it ever ahead of the things made it follows, then, that not only other things with which we are familiar, but that whose movement surpasses them all in swiftness, the mind, would come short of the apprehension of the First Cause by an immeasurable distance. But the strangest thing of all is, that whereas the heavenly bodies as they go past moving objects are themselves in motion, God who outstrips them all is motionless. Yea, we aver that remaining the same He is at once close to us and far from us. He takes hold of us by those forming and chastening powers which are so close to each one of us; and yet He has driven created being far away from His essential Nature, so that we cannot touch it even with the pure spiritual contact of the understanding.

On the Posterity of Cain, 13-20 (II, p. 335 ff.)

THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING

(a) Moses entered into the darkness where God was, that is into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things. Thus he beheld what is hidden from the sight of the mortal nature, and, in himself and his life displayed for all to see, he has set before us, like some well-wrought picture, a piece of work beautiful and godlike, a model for those who are willing to copy it. Happy are they who imprint that image in their souls.

The Life of Moses, I, 158 (VI, p. 358 ff.)

(b) Moses entered into the darkness (Ex. xx. 21), the invisible region, and there abode, initiated into the most sacred mysteries. And he came to be not only an initiate, but the hierophant of rites and teacher of divine things which he will expound to those whose ears have been purified.

On the Giants, 54 (II, p. 473)

ON GOD'S POWERS

(a) We must now examine what is symbolized by the Cherubim and the sword of flame which turns every way (Gen. iii. 24) . . . A higher thought (on this question) comes from a voice in my own soul, which oftentimes is god-possessed and divines where it does not know. This thought I will record in words if I can. The voice told me that while God is indeed one, His highest and chiefest powers are two, even goodness and sovereignty. Through His goodness He begat all that is, through His sovereignty He rules what He has begotten. And in the midst between the two there is a third which unites them, Reason (the Logos), for it is through reason that God is both ruler and good. Of these two potencies sovereignty and goodness the Cherubim are symbols, as the fiery sword is the symbol of the Logos. For exceeding swift and of burning heat is reason and chiefly so the reason of the (Great) Cause, for it alone preceded and outran all things, conceived before them all, manifest above them all.

O then, my mind, admit the image unalloyed of the two Cherubim, that having learnt its clear lesson of the sovereignty and beneficence of the Cause, thou mayest reap the fruits of a happy lot. For straightway thou shalt understand how these unmixed potencies are mingled and united, how, where God is good, yet the glory of His sovereignty is seen amid the beneficence, how, where He is sovereign, through the sovereignty the beneficence still appears. Thus thou mayest gain the virtues begotten of these potencies, a cheerful courage and a reverent awe towards God. When things are well with thee, the majesty of the sovereign king will keep thee from high thoughts. When thou sufferest what thou wouldest not, thou wilt not despair of betterment, remembering the loving-kindness of the great and bountiful God.

On the Cherubim, 21, 29 (II, pp. 21, 25)

(b) The purest and most prophetic mind receives knowledge and understanding of God not from himself, for the

mind is not great enough to compass His magnitude, but from His primary and guardian Powers. One must be content with the fact that beams are borne from these in the soul, so that one may be able to perceive the Elder and Brighter by means of the secondary illumination.

Questions and Answers to Exodus, II, p. 67

(translation from the Greek fragment, after E. R. Goodenough. *By Light, Light*. New Haven, 1939, p. 26).

(c) Oh Mind, receive the uncounterfeited impression in order that as you are instructed concerning the Rulership and Goodness of the Cause you may win the blessed heritage and may at once know as well the blending and mixture of the supreme Powers. In these Powers together (*sc.* Rulership and Goodness), God is good by the fact that His dignity as ruler is made manifest, while He rules by the fact that his goodness is made manifest. This is all so in order that you may possess the virtues that arise from them, love and piety towards God, and that in your contact with these you may not, by exalting yourself, suffer because of the greatness of the Rulership of the King, and similarly you may not, by despairing of your better hopes, experience what is undesirable through the kindness of the great and bountiful God.

Fragment from a lost work, translation from Greek after Goodenough. *By Light, Light*, p. 35.

V

THE MYSTIC WAY

THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE MIND

'GOD led Abraham forth abroad and said, Look up to heaven and count the stars' (Gen. xv. 5). . . . He led forth the mind to the outermost bound. For what advantage would it have been for it to leave the body behind and take refuge in sense-perception? What gain in renouncing sense-perception and taking shelter under the uttered word? For it behoves the mind that would be led forth and let go free to withdraw itself from the influence of everything, the needs of the body, the organs of sense, specious arguments, the plausibilities of reasoning, last of all itself. For this reason he glories elsewhere saying 'The Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, who took me out of my father's house' (Gen. xxiv. 7); for it is not possible that he whose abode is in the body and the mortal race should attain to being with God; this is possible only for him whom God rescues out of the prison. . . . When the soul in all utterances and all actions has attained to perfect sincerity and godlikeness, the voices of the senses cease and all those abominable sounds that used to vex it. For the visible calls and summons the sense of sight to itself, and the voice calls the sense of hearing, and the perfume that of smell, and all round the object of sense invites the sense to itself. But all these cease when the mind goes forth from the city of the soul and finds in God the spring and aim of its own doings and intents. . . . For everyone that sought the Lord went out to it.¹ Right finely is this said. For if thou art seeking God, O mind, go out from thyself and seek diligently; but if thou remainest amid the heavy encumbrances of the body or the self-conceits with which the understanding is familiar, though thou mayest have the semblance of a seeker, not thine is the quest for the

¹ Philo had before referred to Gen. xxiv. 63 (on Isaac), Ex. ix. 29 (on Moses) and Num. xx. 25 (on Aaron).

things of God. But whether thou wilt find God when thou seekest is uncertain, for to many He has not manifested Himself, but their zeal has been without success all along. And yet the mere seeking by itself is sufficient to make us partakers of good things, for it always is the case that endeavours after noble things, even if they fail to attain their object, gladden in their very course those who make them.

Allegorical Interpretation, III, 39-48 (I, pp. 327-33)

THE FLIGHT FROM THE BODY

Depart out of the earthly matter that encompasses thee: escape, man, from the foul prison-house thy body, with all thy might and main, and from the pleasures and lusts that act as its jailers; every terror that can vex and hurt them, leave none of them unused; menace the enemy with them all united and combined. Depart also out of sense-perception thy kin. For at present thou hast made a loan of thyself to each sense, and art become the property of others, a portion of the goods of those who have borrowed thee, and hast thrown away the good thing that was thine own. Yes, thou knowest, even though all men should hold their peace, how eyes draw thee, and ears, and the whole crowd of thine kinsfolk, towards what they themselves love. But if thou desire to recover the self that thou hast lent and to have thine own possession about thee, letting no portion of them be alienated and fall into other hands, thou shalt claim instead a happy life, enjoying in perpetuity the benefit and pleasure derived from good things not foreign to thee but thine own.

On the Migration of Abraham, 9-11 (IV, p. 137 ff.)

ON INSPIRATION

The harvest of spontaneous good things is called 'Release', inasmuch as the Mind is released from the working out of its own projects,¹ and is, we may say, emancipated from

¹ An allusion to the ordinance of Ex. xxxiii, 11, by which in the Sabbatical year the land (here compared with the mind) is to be left fallow.

self-chosen tasks, by reason of the abundance of the rain and ceaseless shower of blessings. And these are of a most marvellous nature and passing fair. For the offspring of the soul's own travail are for the most part poor abortions, things untimely born; but those which God waters with the snow of heaven come to the birth perfect, complete and peerless. I feel no shame in recording my own experience, a thing I know from its having happened to me a thousand times. On some occasions, after making up my mind to follow the usual course of writing on philosophical tenets, and knowing definitely the substance of what I was to set down I have found my understanding incapable of giving birth to a single idea, and have given it up without accomplishing anything, reviling my understanding for its self-conceit, and filled with amazement at the might of Him that is to Whom is due the opening and closing of the soul-wombs.¹ On other occasions, I have approached my work empty and suddenly become full, the ideas falling in a shower from above and being sown invisibly, so that under the influence of the Divine possession I have been filled with corybantic frenzy and been unconscious of anything, place, persons present, myself, words spoken, lines written. For I obtained language, ideas, an enjoyment of light, keenest vision, pellucid distinctness of objects, such as might be received through the eyes as the result of clearest shewing.

On the Migration of Abraham, 32-5 (IV, p. 151)

ON ECSTASY

(a) 'He who shall come out of thee', Scripture says, 'shall be thy heir' (Gen. xv. 4). Therefore, my soul, if thou feelest any yearning to inherit the good things of God, leave not only thy land, that is the body, thy kinsfolk, that is the senses, thy father's house (Gen. xii. 1), that is speech, but be a fugitive from thyself also and issue forth from thyself. Like persons possessed and corybants, be filled with inspired frenzy, even as the prophets are inspired. For it is the mind which is under

¹ A Biblical image, see Gen. xx. 18 and often.

the divine afflatus, and no longer in its own keeping, but is stirred to its depths and maddened by heavenward yearning, drawn by the truly existent and pulled upward thereto, with truth to lead the way and remove all obstacles before its feet, that its path may be smooth to tread—such is the mind, which has this inheritance. To that mind I say, 'Fear not to tell us the story of thy departure from the first three. For to those who have been taught to give ear to the things of the mind, thou ever repeatest the tale.' 'I migrated from the body', she answers, 'when I had ceased to regard the flesh; from sense, when I came to view all the objects of sense as having no true existence, when I denounced its standards of judgement as spurious and corrupt and steeped in false opinion, and its judgements as equipped to ensnare and deceive and ravish truth away from its place in the heart of nature; from speech, when I sentenced it to long speechlessness, in spite of all its self-exaltation and self-pride. Great indeed was its audacity, that it should attempt the impossible task to use shadows to point me to substances, words to point me to facts. And, amid all its blunders, it chattered and gushed about, unable to present with clear expression the distinctions in things. . . . Thus through experience, as a foolish child learns, I learnt that the better course was to quit all these three, yet dedicate and attribute the faculties of each to God, who compacts the body in its bodily form, who equips the senses to perceive, and extends to speech the power of speaking.' Such is the mind's confession, and to it I reply, 'even as thou hast quitted the others, quit thyself, depart from thyself'. And what does this 'departing' mean? It means 'do not lay up a treasure for thyself, thy gifts of thinking, purposing, apprehending, but bring them and dedicate them to Him Who is the source of accurate thinking and unerring apprehension.'

Who is the Heir? 69-74 (IV, p. 317 ff.)

(b) Admirably does Moses describe the inspired (Abraham) when he says 'about sunset there fell on him an ecstasy'¹

¹ The Hebrew word means 'deep sleep', but the Greek translation allows the above explanation.

(Gen. xv, 12). 'Sun' is his name under a figure for our mind. For what the reasoning faculty is in us, the sun is in the world, since both of them are light-bringers, one sending forth to the whole world the light which our senses perceive, the other shedding mental rays upon ourselves through the medium of apprehension. So while the radiance of the mind is still all around us, when it pours as it were a noonday beam into the whole soul, we are self-contained, not possessed. But when it comes to its setting, naturally ecstasy and divine possession and madness fall upon us. For when the light of God shines, the human light sets; when the divine light sets, the human dawns and rises. This is what regularly befalls the fellowship of the prophets. The mind is evicted at the arrival of the divine Spirit, but when that departs the mind returns to its tenancy. Mortal and immortal may not share the same home. And therefore the setting of reason and the darkness which surround it produce ecstasy and inspired frenzy. To connect what is coming with what is here written he says 'it was said to Abraham' (Gen. xv. 13). For indeed the prophet even when he seems to be speaking, really holds his peace, and his organs of speech, mouth and tongue, are wholly in the employ of Another, to show forth what He wills. Unseen by us that Other beats on the chords with the skill of a master-hand and makes them instruments of sweet music, laden with every harmony.

Who is the Heir? 263-6 (IV, p. 417 ff.)

ON PROPHETISM

No pronouncement of a prophet is ever his own; he is an interpreter prompted by Another in all his utterances, when knowing not what he does, he is filled with inspiration, as the reason withdraws and surrenders the citadel of the soul to a new visitor and tenant, the Divine Spirit which plays upon the vocal organism and raises sounds from it, which clearly express its prophetic message.

On the Special Laws, iv, 49 (VIII, p. 37 ff.)

ON GRACE

Samuel's name means 'appointed or ordered to God', and Hannah, his mother, means 'grace'. For without divine grace it is impossible either to leave the ranks of mortality, or to stay for ever among the immortal. Now when grace fills the soul, that soul thereby rejoices and smiles and dances, for it is possessed and inspired, so that to many of the unenlightened it may seem to be drunken, crazy and beside itself. And therefore she is addressed . . . in these words: 'How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee' (1 Sam. i. 14). For with the God-possessed not only is the soul wont to be stirred and goaded as it were into ecstasy but the body also is flushed and fiery, warmed by the overflowing joy within which passes on the sensation to the outer man, and thus many of the foolish are deceived and suppose that the sober are drunk. Though, indeed, it is true that these sober ones are drunk in a sense, for all good things are united in the strong wine on which they feast, and they receive the loving-cup from perfect virtue. . . . Fitly, then, does she answer the reckless one who thinks to mock her stern and austere life, 'I . . . have drunk no wine or strong drink, and I will pour out my soul before the Lord' (1 Sam. i. 15). How vast is the boldness of the soul which is filled with the gracious gifts of God! . . . what else was meant by these words but 'I will consecrate all my soul to him, I will loosen all the chains that bound it tight, which the empty aims and desires of mortal life had fastened upon it; I will send it abroad, extend and diffuse it, so that it shall touch the bounds of the All, and hasten to that most glorious and loveliest of visions—the Vision of the Uncreated'?

On Drunkenness, 144 ff. (III, p. 395 ff.)

DELIGHT IN GOD

The name of 'Eden' means 'luxuriance', symbol of a soul whose eyesight is perfect, disporting itself in virtues, leaping and skipping by reason of abundance of great joy, having set

before it, as an enjoyment outweighing thousands of those that men deem sweetest, the worship and service of the Only Wise. One, after taking a sheer draught of this bright joy, a member indeed of Moses' fellowship, not found among the indifferent, spake aloud in hymns of praise, and addressing his own mind cried, 'Delight in the Lord' (Ps. xxxvii. 4), moved by the utterance to an ecstasy of the love that is heavenly and Divine, filled with loathing for those interminable bouts of softness and debauchery amid the seeming and so-called good things of mankind, while his whole mind is snatched up in holy frenzy by a Divine possession, and he finds his gladness in God alone.

Noah's Work as a Planter, 38-9 (III, p. 231)

ON VISION

If we close the eye of our soul and either will not take the trouble or have not the power to regain our sight, do thou thyself, O Sacred Guide, be our prompter and preside over our steps and never tire of anointing our eyes, until conducting us to the hidden light of hallowed words thou display to us the fast-locked loveliness invisible to the uninitiate. Thee it beseeems to do this; but all ye souls which have tasted divine loves, rising up as it were out of a deep sleep and dispelling the mist, hasten towards the sight to which all eyes are drawn; put away the heavy-footed lingering of hesitation, that you may take in all that the Master of the contests has prepared in your behoof, for you to see and hear.

On Dreams, 164-5 (v, p. 383)

THE THEOPHANY ON SINAI

It was natural that the place should be the scene of all that was wonderful, claps of thunder louder than the ears could hold, flashes of lightning of surpassing brightness, the sound of an invisible trumpet reaching to the greatest distance, the descent of a cloud which like a pillar stood with its foot planted on the earth, while the rest of its body extended to the height of the

upper air, the rush of heaven-sent fire which shrouded all around in dense smoke. For when the power of God arrives, needs must be that no part of the world should remain inactive, but all move together to do Him service. Near by stood the people. . . . Then from the midst of the fire that streamed from heaven there sounded forth to their utter amazement a voice, for the flame became articulate speech in the language familiar to the audience, and so clearly and distinctly were the words formed by it that they seemed to see rather than hear them. What I say is vouched for by the law in which it is written, 'All the people saw the voice' (Ex. xx. 18), a phrase fraught with much meaning, for it is the case that the voice of men is audible, but the voice of God truly visible. Why so? Because whatever God says is not words but deeds, which are judged by the eyes rather than the ears. Admirable, too, and worthy of the Godhead, is the saying that the voice proceeded from the fire, for the oracles of God have been refined and assayed as gold is by fire. And it conveys, too, symbolically, some such meaning as this: since it is the nature of fire both to give light and to burn, those who resolve to be obedient to the divine utterances will live for ever as in unclouded light with the laws themselves as stars illuminating their souls, while all who are rebellious will continue to be burnt, aye, and burnt to ashes, by their inward lusts, which like a flame will ravage the whole life of those in whom they dwell.

On the Decalogue, 44-9 (VII, p. 29 ff.)

THE REFORMATION OF MAN

'Ye shall eat the old and older yet, but also bear out the old from the face of the new' (Lev. xxvi. 10). The meaning is this. We must not indeed reject any learning that has grown grey through time, nay, we should make it our aim to read the writings of the sages and listen to proverbs and old-world stories from the lips of those who know antiquity, and ever seek for knowledge about the men and deeds of old. For truly it is sweet to leave nothing unknown. Yet when God causes

the young shoots of self-inspired wisdom to spring up within the soul, the knowledge that comes from teaching must straightway be abolished and swept off. Ay, even of itself it will subside and ebb away. God's scholar, God's pupil, God's disciple, call him by whatever name you will, cannot any more suffer the guidance of men.

On the Sacrifices of Abel, 79 (II, p. 155)

THE DEATH OF MOSES

Afterwards the time came when he (Moses) had to make his pilgrimage from earth to heaven (*cf.* Deut. xxxiii and xxxiv), and leave this mortal life for immortality, summoned thither by the Father Who resolved his twofold nature of soul and body into a single unit, transforming his whole being into mind, pure as the sunlight. Then, indeed, we find him possessed by the spirit, no longer uttering general truths to the whole nation but prophesying to each tribe in particular the things which were to be and hereafter must come to pass. Some of these have already taken place, others are still looked for, since confidence in the future is assured by fulfilment in the past. It was very fitting that persons so different in the history of their birth, particularly in their descent on the mother's side and in the manifold varieties of their thoughts and aims and the endless diversities of their practices and habits of life, should receive as a sort of legacy a suitable apportionment of oracles and inspired sayings. This was indeed wonderful, but most wonderful of all is the conclusion of the Holy Scriptures, which stands to the whole law-book as the head to the living creature; for when he (Moses) was already being exalted and stood at the very barrier, ready at the signal to direct his upward flight to heaven, the divine spirit fell upon him and he prophesied with discernment while still alive the story of his own death;¹ told ere the end how the end came; told how he was buried with none present, surely by no mortal hands but by immortal

¹ As Moses composed the whole Pentateuch, he also wrote down before his departure the last lines describing his own death.

powers; how also he was not laid to rest in the tomb of his forefathers but was given a monument of special dignity which no man has ever seen; how all the nation wept and mourned for him a whole month and made open display, private and public, of their sorrow, in memory of his vast benevolence and watchful care for each one of them and for all. Such, as recorded in the Holy Scriptures, was the . . . end of Moses, King, law-giver, high priest, prophet.

Life of Moses, II, 288-91 (VI, p. 593 ff.)

THE SOUL AND HER GOD

VI

THE SOUL AND HER GOD

'THE CITY OF GOD'

THERE is a psalm which runs thus: 'The strong current of the river makes glad the city of God' (Ps. xlvi (xlv). 4). . . . God's city is the name in one sense for the world which has received the whole bowl, wherein the divine draught is mixed, and feasted thereon and exultingly taken for its possession the gladness which remains for all time never to be removed or quenched. In another sense he uses this name for the soul of the Sage, in which God is said to walk as in a city. For 'I will walk in you', he says, 'and will be your God' (Lev. xxvi. 12). And, when the happy soul holds out the sacred goblet of its own reason, who is it that pours into it the holy cupfuls of true gladness, but the Word (Logos), the Cup-bearer of God and Master of the feast, who is also none other than the draught which he pours—his own self free from all dilution, the delight, the sweetening, the exhilaration, the merriment, the ambrosian drug (to take for our own use the poet's terms) whose medicine gives joy and gladness? Now the city of God is called in the Hebrew Jerusalem and its name when translated is 'vision of peace'.¹ Therefore, do not seek for the city of the Existent among the regions of the earth, since it is not wrought of wood or stone, but in a soul, in which there is no warring, whose sight is keen, which has set before it as its aim to live in contemplation and peace. For what grander or holier house could we find for God in the whole range of existence than the vision-seeking mind, the mind which is eager to sell all things and never even in its dreams has a wish for faction or turmoil? I hear once more the voice of the invisible spirit, the familiar secret tenant, saying, 'Friend, it would seem that there is a matter great and precious of which thou knowest nothing, and this I will ungrudgingly show thee, for many other well-timed lessons have I given thee. Know them, good friend, that

¹ This is, of course, an artificial etymology.