

DISCOURSE XI. ARETE.

METHODIUS

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DISCOURSE XI. ARETE.

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CHAP. I. THE TRUE AND CHASTE VIRGINS FEW; CHASTITY A CONTEST; THEKLA CHIEF OF VIRGINS,

I do accept it, Theopatra related that Arete said, and approve of it all. For it is an excellent thing, even although you had not spoken so clearly, to take up and go through with earnestness those things which have been said, not to prepare a sweet entertainment for those who listen, but for correction, recollection, and abstinence. For whoever teaches that chastity is to be preferred and embraced first of all among my pursuits, rightly advises; which many think that they honour and cultivate, but which few, so to speak, really honour. For it is not one who has studied to restrain his flesh from the pleasure of carnal delight that cultivates chastity, if he do not keep in check the rest of the desires; but rather he dishonours it, and that in no small degree, by base lusts, exchanging pleasures for pleasures. Nor if he have strongly resisted the desires of the senses, but is lifted up with vainglory, and from this cause is able to repress the heats of burning lust, and reckon them all as nothing, can he be thought to honour chastity; for he dishonours it in that he is lifted up with pride, cleansing the outside of the cup and platter, that is, the flesh and the body, but injuring the heart by conceit and ambition. Nor when any one is conceited of riches is he desirous of honouring chastity; he dishonours it more than all, preferring a little gain to that to which nothing is comparable of those things that are in this life esteemed. For all riches and gold "in respect of it are as a little sand."(1) And neither does he who loves himself above measure, and eagerly considers that which is expedient for himself alone, regardless of the necessities of his neighbour, honour chastity, but he also dishonours it. For he who has repelled from himself charity, mercy, and humanity, is much inferior to those who honourably exercise chastity. Nor is it right, on the one hand, by the use of chastity to keep virginity, and, on the other hand, to pollute the soul by evil deeds and lust; nor here to profess purity and continence, and there to pollute it by indulgence in vices. Nor, again, here to declare that the things of this world bring no care to himself; there to be eager in procuring them, and in concern about them. But all the members are to be preserved intact and free from corruption; not only those which are sexual, but those members also which minister to the service of lusts. For it would be ridiculous to preserve the organs of generation pure, but not the tongue; or to preserve the tongue, but neither the eyesight, the ears, nor the hands; or lastly, to preserve these pure, but not the mind, defiling it with pride and anger.

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It is altogether necessary for him who has resolved that he will not err from the practice of chastity, to keep all his members and senses clean and under restraint, as is customary with the planks of ships, whose fastenings the ship-masters diligently join together, lest by any means the way and access may lie open for sin to pour itself into the mind. For great pursuits are liable to great falls, and evil is more opposed to that which is really good than to that which is not good. For many who thought that to repress vehement lascivious desires constituted chastity, neglecting other duties connected with it, failed also in this, and have brought blame(2) upon those endeavouring after it by the fight way, as you have proved who are a model in everything, leading a virgin life in deed and word. And now what that is which becomes a virgin state has been described.

And you all in my hearing having sufficiently contended in speaking, I pronounce victors and crown; but Thekla with a larger and thicker chaplet, as the chief of you, and as having shone with greater lustre than the rest.

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Theopatra said that Arete having said these things, commanded them all to rise, and, standing under the Agnos, to send up to the Lord in a becoming manner a hymn of thanksgiving; and that Thekla should begin and should lead the rest. And when they had stood up, she said that Thekla, standing in the midst of the virgins on the right of Arete, decorously sang; but the rest, standing together in a circle after the manner of a chorus, responded to her: "I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee."(3)

THEKLA. I. From above, O virgins, the sound of a noise that wakes the dead has come, bidding us all to meet the Bridegroom in white robes, and with torches towards the east. Arise, before the King enters within the gates.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 2. Fleeing from the sorrowful happiness of mortals, and having despised the luxuriant delights of life and its love, I desire to be protected under Thy life-giving arms, and to behold Thy beauty for ever, O blessed One.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 3. Leaving marriage and the beds of mortals and my golden home for Thee, O King, I have come in undefiled robes, in order that I might enter with Thee within Thy happy bridal chamber.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 4. Having escaped, O blessed One, from the innumerable enchanting wiles of the serpent, and, moreover, from the flame of fire, and from the mortal-destroying assaults of wild beasts, I await Thee from heaven.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 5. I forget my own country, O Lord, through desire of Thy grace.(1) I forget, also, the company of virgins, my fellows, the desire even of mother and of kindred, for Thou, O Christ, art all things to me.

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CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 6. Giver of life art Thou, O Christ. Hail, light that never sets, receive this praise. The company of virgins call upon Thee, Perfect Flower, Love, Joy, Prudence, Wisdom, Word.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 7. With open gates, O beautifully adorned Queen, admit us within thy chambers. O spotless, gloriously triumphant Bride, breathing beauty, we stand by Christ, robed as He is, celebrating thy happy nuptials, O youthful maiden.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 8. The virgins standing without the chamber,(2) with bitter tears and deep moans, wail and mournfully lament that their lamps are gone out, having failed to enter in due time the chamber of joy.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 9. For turning from the sacred way of life, unhappy ones, they have neglected to prepare sufficiency of oil for the path of life; bearing lamps whose bright light is dead, they groan from the inward recesses of their mind.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 10. Here are cups full of sweet nectar; let us drink, O virgins, for it is celestial drink, which the Bridegroom hath placed for those duly called to the wedding.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 11. Abel, clearly prefiguring Thy death,(3) O blessed One, with flowing blood, and eyes lifted up to heaven, said, Cruelly slain by a brother's hand, O Word, I pray Thee to receive me. CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 12. Thy valiant son Joseph,(4) O Word, won the greatest prize of virginity, when I a woman heated with desire forcibly drew him to an unlawful bed; but he giving no heed to her fled stripped, and crying aloud:

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 13. Jephthah offered his fresh slaughtered virgin daughter a sacrifice to God, like a lamb; and she, nobly fulfilling the type of Thy body, O blessed One, bravely cried:

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 14. Daring Judith,(5) by clever wiles having cut off the head of the leader of the foreign hosts, whom previously she had allured by her beautiful form, without polluting the limbs of her body, with a victor's shout said:

CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

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THEKLA. 15. Seeing the great beauty of Susanna, the two Judges, maddened with desire, said, O dear lady, we have come desiring secret intercourse with thee; but she with tremulous cries said: CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 16. It is far better for me to die than to betray my nuptials to you, O mad for women, and so to suffer the eternal justice of God in fiery vengeance. Save me now, O Christ, from these evils. CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 17. Thy Precursor, washing multitudes of men in flowing lustral water, unjustly by a wicked man, on account of his chastity, was led to slaughter; but as he stained the dust with his life–blood, he cried to Thee, O blessed One: CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee. THEKLA. 18. The parent of Thy life, that unspotted Grace⁽¹⁾ and undefiled Virgin, bearing in her womb without the ministry of man, by an immaculate conception,⁽²⁾ and who thus became suspected of having betrayed the marriage–bed, she, O blessed One, when pregnant, thus spoke: CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 19. Wishing to see Thy nuptial day, O blessed One, as many angels as Thou, O King, calledst from above, bearing the best gifts to Thee, came in unsullied robes: CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 20. In hymns, O blessed spouse of God, we attendants of the Bride honour Thee, O undefiled virgin Church of snow–white form, dark haired, chaste, spotless, beloved. CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 21. Corruption has fled, and the tearful pains of diseases; death has been taken away, all folly has perished, consuming mental grief is no more; for again the grace of the God–Christ has suddenly shone upon mortals. CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 22. Paradise is no longer bereft of mortals, for by divine decree he no longer dwells there as formerly, thrust out from thence when he was free from corruption, and from fear by the various wiles of the serpents, O blessed One. CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 23. Singing the new song, now the company of virgins attends thee towards the heavens, O Queen, all manifestly crowned with white lilies, and bearing in their hands bright lights. CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

THEKLA. 24. O blessed One, who inhabited the undefiled seats of heaven without beginning, who governed all things by everlasting power, O Father, with Thy Son, we are here, receive us also within the gates of life. CHORUS. I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee.

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EUBOULIOS. Deservedly, O Gregorion, has Thekla borne off the chief prize.

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GREGORION. Deservedly indeed.

EUBOULIOS. But what about the stranger Telmisiake?(3) Tell me, was she not listening from without? I wonder if she could keep silence on hearing of this banquet, and would not forthwith, as a bird flies to its food, listen to the things which were spoken.

GREGORION. The report is that she was present with Methodios(4) when he inquired respecting these things of Arete. But it is a good as well as a happy thing to have such a mistress and guide as Arete, that is virtue.

EUBOULIOS. But, Gregorion, which shall we say are the better, those who without lust govern concupiscence, or those who under the assaults of concupiscence continue pure?

GREGORION. For my part, I think those who are free from lust, for they have their mined undefiled, and are altogether uncorrupted, sinning in no respect.

EUBOULIOS. Well, I swear by chastity, and wisely, O Gregorion. But lest in any wise I hinder you, if I gainsay your words, it is that I may the better learn, and that no one hereafter may refute me.

GREGORION. Gainsay me as you will, you have my permission. For, Euboulios, I think that I know sufficient to teach you that he who is not concupiscent is better than he who is. If I cannot, then there is no one who can convince you.

EUBOULIOS. Bless me! I am glad that you answer me so magnanimously, and show how wealthy you are as regards wisdom.

GREGORION. A mere chatterer, so you seem to be, O Euboulios. EUBOULIOS. Why so?

GREGORION. Because you ask rather for the sake of amusement than of truth.

EUBOULIOS. Speak fair, I pray you, my good friend; for I greatly admire your wisdom and renown. I say this because, with reference to the things that many wise men often dispute among themselves, you say that you not only understand them, but also vaunt that you can teach another.

GREGORION. Now tell me truly whether it is a difficulty with you to receive the opinion, that they who are not concupiscent excel those who are concupiscent, and yet restrain themselves? or are you joking?

EUBOULIOS. How so, when I tell you that I do not know? But, come, tell me, O wisest lady, in what do the non-concupiscent and chaste excel the concupiscent who live chastely?

GREGORION. Because, in the first place, they have the soul itself pure, and the Holy Spirit always dwells in it, seeing that it is not distracted and disturbed by fancies and unrestrained thoughts, so as to pollute the mind. But they are in every way inaccessible to lust, both as to their flesh and to their heart, enjoying tranquillity from passions. But they who are allured from without, through the sense of sight, with fancies, and receiving lust flowing like a stream into the heart, are often not less polluted, even when they think that they contend and fight against pleasures, being vanquished in their mind.

EUBOULIOS. Shall we then say that they who serenely live and are not disturbed by lusts are pure?

GREGORION. Certainly, For these(1) are they whom God makes gods in the beatitudes; they I who believe in Him without doubt. And He says that they shall look upon God with confidence, because they bring in

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nothing that darkens or confuses the eye of the soul for the beholding of God; but all desire of things secular being eliminated, they not only, as I said, preserve the flesh pure from carnal connection, but even the heart, in which, especially, as in a temple, the Holy Spirit rests and dwells, is open to no unclean thoughts.

EUBOULIOS. Stay now; for I think that from hence we shall the better go on to the discovery of what things are truly the best; and, tell me, do you call anyone a good pilot?

GREGORION. I certainly do.

EUBOULIOS. Whether is it he that saves his vessel in great and perplexing storms, or is it he who does so in a breathless calm?

GREGORION. He that does so in a great and perplexing storm.

EUBOULIOS. Shall we not then say that the soul, which is deluged with the surging waves of the passions, and yet does not, on that account, weary or grow faint, but direct her vessel that is, the flesh nobly into the port of chastity, is better and more estimable than he that navigates in calm weather?

GREGORION. We will say so.

EUBOULIOS. For to be prepared against the entrance of the gales of the Evil Spirit, and not to be cast away or overcome, but to refer all to Christ, and strongly to contend against pleasures, brings greater praise than he wins who lives a virgin life calmly and with ease.

GREGORION. It appears so.

EUBOULIOS. And what saith the Lord? Does He not seem to show that he who retains continence, though concupiscent, excels him who, having no concupiscence, leads a virgin life?

GREGORION. Where does He say so?

EUBOULIOS. Where, comparing a wise man to a house well founded, He declares him immoveable because he cannot be overthrown by rains, and floods, and winds; likening, as it would seem, these storms to lusts, but the immoveable and unshaken firmness of the soul in chastity to the rock. GREGORION. You appear to speak what is true.

EUBOULIOS. And what say you of the physician? Do you not call him the best who has been proved in great diseases, and has healed many patients? GREGORION. I do.

EUBOULIOS. But the one who has never at any time practised, nor ever had the sick in his hands, is he not still in all respects the inferior? GREGORION. Yes.

EUBOULIOS. Then we may certainly say that a soul which is contained by a concupiscent body, and which appeases with the medicaments of temperance the disorders arising from the heat of lusts, carries off the palm for healing, over one to whose lot it has fallen to govern aright a body which is free from lust.(2)

GREGORION. It must be allowed.

EUBOULIOS. And how is it in wrestling? Whether is the better wrestler he who has many and strong antagonists, and continually is contending without being worsted, or he who has no opponents?

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GREGORION. Manifestly he who wrestles.

EUBOULIOS. And, in wrestling, is not the athlete who contends the more experienced?

GREGORION. It must be granted.

EUBOULIOS. Therefore it is clear that he whose soul contends against the impulses of lust, and is not borne down by it, but draws back and sets himself in array against it, appears stronger than he who does not lust.(2)

GREGORION. True.

EUBOULIOS. What then? Does it not appear to you, Gregorion, that there is more courage in being valiant against the assaults of base desires? GREGORION. Yes, indeed. EUBOULIOS. Is not this courage the strength of virtue?

GREGORION. Plainly so. EUBOULIOS. Therefore, if endurance be the strength of virtue, is not the soul, which is troubled by lusts, and yet perseveres against them, stronger than that which is not so troubled?

GREGORION. Yes. EUBOULIOS. And if stronger, then better? GREGORION. Truly.

EUBOULIOS. Therefore the soul which is concupiscent, and exercises self-control, as appears from what has been said, is better than that which is not concupiscent, and exercises self-control.(1)

GREGORION. You speak truly, and I shall desire still more fully to discourse with you concerning these things. If, therefore, it pleases you, tomorrow I will come again to hear respecting them. Now, however, as you see, it is time to betake ourselves to the care of the outward man.

ELUCIDATIONS.

I.

(We here behold only shadows, etc., p. 335.)

SCHLEIERMACHER,(1) in commenting on Plato's Symposium, remarks: "Even natural birth (i.e., in Plato's system) was nothing but a reproduction of the same eternal form and idea. ... The whole discussion displays the gradation, not only from that pleasure which arises from the contemplation of personal beauty through that which every larger object, whether single or manifold, may occasion, to that immediate pleasure of which the source is in the Eternal Beauty," etc. Our author ennobles such theorizing by mounting up to the great I AM.

II.

(Christ Himself is the one who is born, p. 337.)

Wordsworth, and many others of the learned, sustain our author's comment on this passage.(2) So Aquinas, ad loc., Bede, and many others. Methodius is incorrectly represented as rejecting(3) the idea that "the woman" is the Blessed Virgin Mary, for no such idea existed for him to reject. He rejects the idea that the man-child is Christ; but that idea was connected with the supposition that the woman was the Church of the Hebrews bringing forth the Messiah. Gregory the Great regards the woman as the Christian Church. So Hippolytus:(4) "By the woman . . . is meant most manifestly the Church, endued with the Father's Word, whose brightness is above the sun," etc. Bossuet says candidly,(5) "C'est l'Eglise, tout eclatante de la lumiere de J. C.," etc.

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Now, note the progress of corruption, one fable engendering another. The text of Gen. iii. 15, contrary to the Hebrew, the Seventy, the Syriac, and the Vulgate itself, in the best MSS., is made to read, "She shall bruise thy head," etc. The "woman," therefore, becomes the Mother of our Lord, and the "great red dragon" (of verse 3), from which the woman "fled into the wilderness," is next represented as under her feet (where the moon appears in the sacred narrative); and then the Immaculate Conception of her Holy Seed is transferred back to the mother of Mary, who is indecently discussed, and affirmed to have been blest with an "Immaculate Conception" when, in the ordinary process of nature, she was made the mother of the Virgin. So, then, the bull Ineffabilis comes forth, eighteen hundred years after the event,(6) with the announcement that what thousands of saints and many bishops of Rome have denounced as a fable must be received by all Christians on peril of eternal damnation.(7) The worst of it all is the fact, that, as the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God has heretofore been the only "Immaculate Conception" known to the faith of Christendom, thousands now imagine that this is what was only so lately set forth, and what we must therefore renounce as false. CONCERNING FREE-WILL.(1)

ORTHODOXUS. The old man of Ithaca, according to the legend of the Greeks, when he wished to hear the song of the Sirens, on account of the charm of their voluptuous voice, sailed to Sicily in bonds, and stopped up the ears of his companions; not that he grudged them the hearing, or desired to load himself with bonds, but because the consequence of those singers' music to those who heard it was death. For such, in the opinion of the Greeks, are the charms of the Sirens. Now I am not within hearing of any such song as this; nor have I any desire to hear the Sirens who chant men's dirges, and whose silence is more profitable to men than their voice; but I pray to enjoy the pleasure of a divine voice, which, though it be often heard, I long to hear again; not that I am overcome with the charm of a voluptuous voice, but I am being taught divine mysteries, and expect as the result, not death but eternal salvation. For the singers are not the deadly Sirens of the Greeks, but a divine choir of prophets, with whom there is no need to stop the ears of one's companions, nor to load one's-self with bonds, in fear of the penalty of hearing. For, in the one case, the hearer, with the entrance of the voice, ceases to live; in the other, the more he hears, the better life will he enjoy, being led onwards by a divine Spirit. Let every one come, then, and hear the divine song without any fear. There are not with us the Sirens from the shore of Sicily, nor the bonds of Ulysses, nor the wax poured melting into men's ears; but a loosening of all bonds, and liberty to listen to every one that approaches. For it is worthy of us to hear such a song as this; and to hear such singers as these, seems to me to be a thing to be prayed for. But if one wishes to hear the choir of the apostles as well, he will find the same harmony of song. For the others sang beforehand the divine plan in a mystical manner; but these sing an interpretation of what has been mystically announced by the former. Oh, concordant harmony, composed by the Divine Spirit! Oh, the comeliness of those who sing of the mysteries of God? Oh, that I also may join in these songs in my prayer. Let us then also sing the like song, and raise the hymn to the Holy Father, glorifying in the Spirit Jesus, who is in His bosom.(2)

Shun not, man, a spiritual hymn, nor be ill-disposed to listen to it. Death belongs not to it; a story of salvation is our song. Already I seem to taste better enjoyments, as I discourse on such subjects as these; and especially when there is before me such a flowering meadow, that is to say, our assembly of those who unite in singing and hearing the divine mysteries. Wherefore I dare to ask you to listen to me with ears free from all envy, without imitating the jealousy of Cain, or persecuting your brother, like Esau,(4) or approving the brethren of Joseph,(5) because they, hated their brother on account of his words; but differing far from all these, insomuch that each of you is used to speak the mind of his neighbour. And, on this account, there is no evil jealousy among you, as ye have undertaken to supply your brother's deficiencies. O noble audience, and venerable company, and spiritual food! That I may ever have a right to share in such pleasures, be this my prayer!

VALENTINIAN. As I was walking yesterday evening, my friend, along the shore of the sea, and was gazing on it somewhat intently, I saw an extraordinary instance of divine power, and a work of art produced by wise science, if at least such a thing may be called a work of art. For as that verse of Homer(6) says,

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"As when two adverse winds blowing from Thrace, Boreas and Zephyrus, the fishy deep Vex sudden, all around, the sable flood High curled, flings forth the salt weed on the shore;"

So it seemed to me to have happened yesterday. For I saw waves very like mountain-tops, and, so to speak, reaching up to heaven itself. Whence I expected nothing else but that the whole land would be deluged, and I began to form in my mind a place of escape, and a Noah's ark. But it was not as I thought; for, just as the sea rose to a crest, it broke up again into itself, without overstepping its own limits, having, so to speak, a feeling of awe for a divine decree.⁽¹⁾ And as oftentimes a servant, compelled by his master to do something against his will, obeys the command through fear, while he dares not say a word of what he suffers in his unwillingness to do it, but, full of rage, mutters to himself, somewhat so it appeared to me that the sea, as if enraged and confining its awe within itself, kept itself under, as not willing to let its Master perceive its anger.

On these occurrences I began to gaze in silence, and wished to measure in my mind the heaven and its sphere. I began to inquire whence it rises and where it sets; also what sort of motion it had whether a progressive one, that is to say, one from place to place, or a revolving one; and, besides, how its movement is continued. And, of a truth, it seemed worth while to inquire also about the sun, what is the manner of his being set in the heaven; also what is the orbit he traverses; also whither it is that, after a short time, he retires; and why it is that even he does not go out of his proper course: but he, too, as one may say, is observing a commandment of a higher power, and appears with us just when he is allowed to do so, and departs as if he were called away.

So, as I was investigating these things, I saw that the sunshine was departing, and the daylight failing, and that immediately darkness came on; and the sun was succeeded by the moon, who, at her first rising, was not of full size, but after advancing in her course presented a larger appearance. And I did not cease inquiring about her also, but examined the cause of her waning and waxing, and why it is that she, too, observes the revolution of days; and it seemed to me from all this that there is a divine government anti power controlling the whole, which we may justly call God.

And thereupon I began to praise the Creator, as I saw the earth fast fixed, and living creatures in such variety, and the blossoms of plants with their many hues. But my mind did not rest upon these things alone; but thereupon I began to inquire whence they have their origin whether from some source eternally co-existent with God, or from Himself alone, none co-existing with Him; for that He has made nothing out of that which has no existence appeared to me the right view to take, unless my reason were altogether untrustworthy. For it is the nature of things which come into being to derive their origin from what is already existing. And it seemed to me that it might be said with equal truth, that nothing is eternally co-existent with God distinct from Himself, but that whatever exists has its origin from Him, and I was persuaded of this .also by the undeniable disposition of the elements, and by the orderly arrangement of nature about them.

So, with some such thoughts of the fair order of things, I returned home. But on the day following, that is today, as I came I saw two beings of the same race I mean men striking and abusing one another; and another, again, wishing to strip his neighbour. And now some began to venture upon a more terrible deed; for one stripped a corpse, and exposed again to the light of day a body that had been once hidden in the earth, and treated a form like his own with such insult as to leave the corpse to be food for dogs; while another bared his sword, and attacked a man like himself. And he wanted to procure safety by flight; but the other ceased not from pursuing, nor would control his anger. And why should I say more? It is enough that he attacked him, and at once smote him with his sword. So the wounded man became a sup pliant to his fellow, and spread out his hands in supplication, and was willing to give up his clothing, and only made a claim for life. But the other did not subdue his anger, nor pity his fellowman, nor would he see his own image in the being before him; but, like a wild beast, made preparations with his sword for feeding upon him. And now he was even putting his mouth to the body so like his own, such was the extent of his rage. And there was to be

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seen one man suffering injurious treatment, and another forthwith stripping him, and not even covering with earth the body which he denuded of clothing. But, in addition to these, there was another who, robbing others of their marriage rights, wanted to insult his neighbour's wife, and urged her to turn to unlawful embraces, not wishing her husband to be father to a child of his own.

After that I began to believe the tragedies, and thought that the dinner of Thyestes had really taken place; and believed in the unlawful lust of Oinomaos, nor doubted of the strife in which brother drew the sword on brother.

So, after beholding such things as these, I began to inquire whence they arise, and what is their origin, and who is the author of such devices against men, whence came their discovery, and who is the teacher of them. Now to dare to say that God was the author of these things was impossible; for surely it could not even be said that they have from Him their substance, or their existence. For how were it possible to entertain these thoughts of God? For He is good, and the Creator of what is excellent, and to Him belongs nothing bad. Nay, it is His nature to take no pleasure in such things; but He forbids their production, and rejects those who delight in them, but admits into His presence those who avoid them. And how could it be anything but absurd to call God the maker of these things of which He disapproves? For He would not wish them not to be, if He had first been their creator; and He wishes those who approach Him to be imitators of Him.

Wherefore it seemed to me unreasonable to attribute these things to God, or to speak of them as having sprung from Him; though it must certainly be granted that it is possible for something to come into existence out of what has no existence, in case He made what is evil. For He who brought them into existence out of non-existence would not reduce them to the loss of it. And again, it must be said that there was once a time when God took pleasure in evil things, which now is not the case. Wherefore it seems to me impossible to say this of God. For it is unsuitable to His nature to attach this to Him. Wherefore it seemed to me that there is co-existent with Him somewhat which has the name of matter, from which He formed existing things, distinguishing between them with wise art, and arranging them in a fair order, from which also evil things seem to have come into being. For as this matter was without quality or form, and, besides this, was borne about without order, and was untouched by divine art, God bore no grudge against it, nor left it to be continually thus borne about, but began to work upon it, and wished to separate its best parts from its worst, and thus made all that it was fitting for God to make out of it; but so much of it as was like lees, so to speak, this being unfitted for being made into anything, He left as it was, since it was of no use to Him; and from this it seems to me that what is evil has now streamed down among men. This seemed to me the right view to take of these things. But, my friend, if you think that anything I have said is wrong, mention it, for I exceedingly desire to hear about these things.

ORTHODOXUS. I appreciate your readiness, my friend, and applaud your zeal about the subject; and as for the opinion which you have expressed respecting existing things, to the effect that God made them out of some underlying substance, I do not altogether find fault with it. For, truly, the origin of evil is a subject that has called out opinions from many men.(1) Before you and me, no doubt, there have been many able men who have made the most searching inquiry into the matter. And some of them expressed the same opinion as you did, but others again represented God as the creator of these things, fearing to allow the existence of substance as coeval with Him; while the former, from fear of saying that God was the author of evil, thought fit to represent matter as coeval with Him.(2) And it was the fate of both of these to fail to speak rightly on the subject, in consequence of their fear of God not being in agreement with an accurate knowledge of the truth.

But others declined to inquire about such a question at all, on the ground that such an inquiry is endless. As for me, however, my connection with you in friendship does not allow me to decline the subject of inquiry, especially when you announce your own purpose, that you are not swayed by prejudice, although you had your opinion about the condition of things derived from your conjectures, but say that you are confirmed in a

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desire of knowing the truth.

Wherefore I will willingly turn to the discussion of the question. But I wish this companion of mine here to listen to our conversation.(3) For, indeed, he seems to have much the same opinions about these things as you have, wherefore I wish that you should both have a share in the discussion. For whatever I should say to you, situated as you are, I shall say just as much to him. If, then, you are indulgent enough to think I speak truly on this great subject, give an answer to each question I ask; for the result of this will be that you will gain a knowledge of the truth, and I shall not carry on my discussion with you at random.

VALENTINIAN. I am ready to do as you say; and therefore be quite ready to ask those questions from which you think I may be able to gain an accurate knowledge of this important subject. For the object which I have set before myself is not the base one of gaining a victory, but that of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the truth. Wherefore apply yourself to the rest of the discussion.

ORTHODOXUS. Well, then, I do not suppose you are ignorant that it is impossible for two uncreated things to exist together, although you seem to have expressed nearly as much as this in an earlier part of the conversation. Assuredly we must of necessity say one of two things: either that God is separate from matter, or, on the other hand, that He is inseparable from it. If, then, one would say that they are united, he will say that that which is uncreated is one only, for each of the things spoken of will be a part of the other; and as they are parts of each other, there will not be two uncreated things, but one composed of different elements. For we do not, because a man has different members, break him up into many beings. But, as the demands of reason require, we say that a single being, man, of many parts, has been created by God. So it is necessary, if God be not separate from matter, to say that that which is uncreated is one only; but if one shall say that He is separate, there must necessarily be something intermediate between the two, which makes their separation evident. For it is impossible to estimate the distance of one thing from another, unless there be something else with which the distance between them may be compared. And this holds good, not only as far as the instance before us, but also to any number of others. For the argument which we advanced in the case of two uncreated things would of necessity be of equal force, were the uncreated things granted to be three in number. For I should ask also respecting them, whether they are separate from each other, or, on the other hand, are united each to its neighbour. For if any one resolve to say that they are united, he will be told the same as before; if, again, that they are separate, he will not escape the necessary existence of that which separates them.

If, then, any one were to say that there is a third account which might fitly be given of uncreated things, namely, that neither is God separate from matter, nor, again, are they united as part of a whole; but that God is locally situate in matter, and matter in God, he must be told as the consequence,(1) that if we say that God is placed in matter, we must of necessity say that He is contained within limits, and circumscribed by matter. But then He must, equally with matter, be carried about without order. And that He rests not, nor remains by Himself, is a necessary result of that in which He is being carried, now this way, and now that. And besides this, we must say that God was in worse case still.

For if matter were once without order, and He, determining to change it for the better, put it into order, there was a time when God was in that which had no order. And I might fairly ask this question also, whether God filled matter completely, or existed in some part of it. For if one resolve to say that God was in some part of matter, how far smaller than matter does he make Him; that is, if a part of it contained God altogether. But if he were to say that He is in all of it, and is extended through the whole of matter, he must tell us how He wrought upon it. For we must say that there was a sort of contraction of God, which being effected, He wrought upon that from which He was withdrawn, or else that He wrought in union with matter, without having a place of withdrawal. But if any one say that matter is in God, there is equal need of inquiry, namely, whether it is by His being separated from Himself, and as creatures exist in the air, by His being divided and parted for the reception of the beings that are in Him; or whether it is locally situated, that is to say, as water

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in land; for if we were to say, as in the air, we must say that God is divisible; but if, as water in earth, since matter was without order and arrangement, and besides, contained what was evil, we must say, that in God were to be found the disorderly and the evil. Now this seems to me an unbecoming conclusion, nay, more a dangerous one. For you wish for the existence of matter, that you may avoid saying that God is the author of evil; and, determining to avoid this, you say that He is the receptacle of evil. If, then, under the supposition that matter is separate from created substances, you had said that it is uncreated, I should have said much about it, to prove that it is impossible for it to be uncreated; but since you say that the question of the origin of evil is the cause of this supposition, it therefore seems to me right to proceed to inquire into this. For when it is clearly stated how evil exists, and that it is not possible to say that God is the cause of evil, because of matter being subject to Him, it seems to me to destroy such a supposition, to remark, that if God created the qualities which did not exist, He equally created the substances.(2) Do you say then, that there co-exists with God matter without qualities out of which He formed the beginning of this world? VALENTINIAN. So I think. ORTHODOXUS. If, then, matter had no qualities, and the world were produced by God, and qualities exist in the world, then God is the maker of qualities? VALENTINIAN. It is so. ORTHODOXUS. Now, as I heard you say some time ago that it is impossible for anything to come into being out of that which has no existence, answer my question: Do you think that the qualities of the world were not produced out of any existing qualities? VALENTINIAN. I do. ORTHODOXUS. And that they are something distinct from substances? VALENTINIAN. Yes.

ORTHODOXUS. If, then, qualities were neither made by God out of any ready at hand, nor derive their existence from substances, because they are not substances. we must say that they were produced by God out of what had no existence. Wherefore I thought you spoke extravagantly in saying that it was impossible to suppose that anything was produced by God out of what did not exist.

But let our discussion of this matter stand thus. For truly we see among ourselves men making things out of what does not exist, although they seem for the most part to be making them with something. As, for instance, we may have an example in the case of architects; for they truly do not make cities out of cities, nor in like manner temples out of temples.(1)

But if, because substances underlie these things, you think that the builders make them out of what does exist, you are mistaken in your calculation. For it is not the substance which makes the city or the temples, but art applied to substance. And this art is not produced out of some art which lies in the substances themselves, but from that which is not in them.

But you seem likely to meet me with this argument: that the artificer makes the art which is connected with the substance out of the art which he has. Now I think it is a good reply to this to say, that in man it is not produced from any art lying beneath; for it is not to be granted that substance by itself is art. For art is in the class of accidents, and is one of the things that have an existence only when they are employed about some substance. For man will exist even without the art of building, but it will have no existence unless man be previously in being. Whence we must say that it is in the nature of things for arts to be produced in men out of what has no existence. If, then, we have shown that this is so in the case of men, why was it improper to say that God is able to make not only qualities, but also substances, out of that which has no existence? For as it appears possible for something to be produced out of what exists not, it is evident that this is the case with substances. To return to the question of evil. Do you think evil comes under the head of substances, or of qualities of substances? VALENTINIAN. Of qualities.

ORTHODOXUS. But matter was found to be without quality or form? VALENTINIAN. It was.

ORTHODOXUS. Well, then, the connection of these names with substance is owing to its accidents. For murder is not a substance, nor is any other evil; but the substance receives a cognate name from putting it into practice. For a man is not (spoken of as) murder, but by committing it he receives the derived name of

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murderer, without being himself murder; and, to speak concisely, no other evil is a substance; but by practising any evil, it can be called evil. Similarly consider, if you imagine anything else to be the cause of evil to men, that it too is evil by reason of its acting by them, and suggesting the committal of evil. For a man is evil in consequence of his actions. For he is said to be evil, because he is the doer of evil. Now what a man does, is not the man himself, but his activity, and it is from his actions that he receives the title of evil. For if we were to say that he is that which he does, and he commits murders, adulteries, and such-like, he will be all these. Now if he is these, then when they are produced he has an existence, but when they are not, he too ceases to be. Now these things are produced by men. Men then will be the authors of them, and the causes of their existing or not existing. But if each man is evil in consequence of what he practises, and what he practises has an origin, he also made a beginning in evil, and evil too had a beginning. Now if this is the case, no one is without a beginning in evil, nor are evil things without an origin.

VALENTINIAN. Well, my friend, you seem to me to have argued sufficiently against the other side. For you appeared to draw right conclusions from the premises which we granted to the discussion. For truly if matter is without qualities, then God is the maker of qualities; and if evils are qualities, God will be the author of evils. But it seems to me false to say that matter is without qualities; for it cannot be said respecting any substance that it is without qualities. But indeed, in the very act of saying that it is without qualities, you declare that it has a quality, by describing the character of matter, which is a kind of quality. Therefore, if you please, begin the discussion from the beginning; for it seems to me that matter never began to have qualities. For such being the case, I assert, my friend, that evil arises from its emanation. ORTHODOXUS. If matter were possessed of qualities from eternity, of what will God be the creator? For if we say substances, we speak of them as pre-existing; if, again, we say qualities, these too are declared to have an existence. Since, then, both substances and qualities exist, it seems to me superfluous to call God a creator. But answer me a question. In what way do you say that God was a creator? Was it by changing the existence of those substances into non-existence, or by changing the qualities while He preserved the substances?

VALENTINIAN. I think that there was no change of the substances, but only of the qualities; and in respect to these we call God a creator. And just as if one might chance to say that a house was made of stones, it cannot be said of them that they do not still continue stones in substance, because they are called a house; for I affirm that the house is made by the quality of construction. So I think that God, while substance remained, produced a change of its qualities, by reason of which I say that this world was made by God.

Orthodoxus. Do you think, too, that evil is among the qualities of substances? Valentinian. I do.

Orthodoxus. And were these qualities in matter from the first, or had they a beginning?

Valentinian. I say that these qualities were eternally co-existent with matter.

Orthodoxus. But do you not say that God has made a change in the qualities? Valentinian. I do say this. Orthodoxus. For the better? Valentinian. I think so. Orthodoxus. If, then, evil is among the qualities of matter, and its qualities were changed by God for the better, the inquiry must be made whence evil arose. For either all of them, being evil, underwent a change for the better, or some of them being evil, and some not, the evil ones were not changed for the better; but the rest, as far as they were found superior, were changed by God for the sake of order.

Valentinian. That is the opinion I held from the beginning.

Orthodoxus. How, then, do you say it was that He left the qualities of evil as they were? Was it that He was able to do away with them, or that, though He wished to do so, He was unable? For if you say that He was able, but disinclined to do so, He must be the author of these things; because, while He had power to bring evil to an end, He allowed it to remain as it was, especially when He had begun to work upon matter. For if

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He had had nothing at all to do with matter, He would not have been the author of what He allowed to remain. But since He works upon a part of it, and leaves a part of it to itself, while He has power to change it for the better, I think He is the author of evil, since He left part of matter in its vileness. He wrought then for the ruin of a part; and, in this respect, it seems to me that this part was chiefly injured by His arranging it in matter, so that it became partaker of evil. For before matter was put in order, it was without the perception of evil; but now each of its parts has the capacity of perceiving evil. Now, take an example in the case of man. Previously to becoming a living creature, he was insensible to evil; but from the time when he is fashioned by God into the form of man, he gains the perception of approaching evil. So this act of God, which you say was done for the benefit of matter, is found to have happened to it rather for the worse. But if you say that God was not able to stop evil, does the impossibility result from His being naturally weak, or from His being overcome by fear, and in subjection to some more powerful being? See which of these you would like to attribute to the almighty and good God. But, again, answer me about matter. Is matter simple or compound? For if matter be simple and uniform, and the universe compound, and composed of different substances, it is impossible to say that it is made of matter, because compound things cannot be composed of one pure and simple ingredient. For composition indicates the mixture of several simple things. But if, on the other hand, you say that matter is compound, it has been entirely composed of simple elements, and they were once each separately simple, and by their composition matter was produced; for compound things derive their composition from simple things. So there was once a time when matter did not exist that is to say, before the combination of the simple elements. But if there was once a time when matter did not exist, and there was never a time when what is uncreated did not exist, then matter is not uncreated. And from this it follows that there are many things which are uncreated. For if God were uncreated, and the simple elements of which matter was composed were uncreated, the number of the uncreated would be more than two. But to omit inquiring what are the simple elements, matter or form for this would be followed by many absurdities let me ask, do you think that nothing that exists is contrary to itself? Valentinian. I do. Orthodoxus. Yet water is contrary to fire, and darkness to light, and heat to cold, and moisture to dryness. Valentinian. I think it is.

Orthodoxus. If, then, nothing that exists is contrary to itself, and these are contrary to one another, they will not be one and the same matter no, nor formed from one and the same matter. But, again, I wish to ask, do you think that the parts of a thing are not destructive of one another? Valentinian. I do.

Orthodoxus. And that fire and water, and the rest likewise, are parts of matter? Valentinian. I hold them to be so.

Orthodoxus. Why, then, do you not think that water is destructive of fire, and light of darkness, and so on with the rest? Valentinian. I do.

Orthodoxus. Then, if parts of a thing are not destructive of one another, and these are found to be so, they will not be parts of the same thing. But if they are not parts of the same thing, they will not be parts of one and the same matter. And, indeed, they will not be matter either, because nothing that exists is destructive of itself. And this being the case with the contraries, it is shown that they are not matter. This is enough on the subject of matter.

Now we must come to the examination of evils, and must necessarily inquire into the evils among men. As to these, are they forms of the principle of evil, or parts of it? If forms, evil will not have a separate existence distinct from them, because the species are to be sought for in the forms, and underlie them. But if this is the case, evil has an origin. For its forms are shown to have an origin such as murder, and adultery, and the like. But if you will have them to be parts of some principle of evil, and they have an origin, it also must have an origin. For those things whose parts have an origin, are of necessity originated likewise. For the whole consists of parts. And the whole will not exist if the parts do not, though there may be some parts, even if the whole be not there.

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Now there is nothing existing of which one part is originated, and another part not. But if I were even to grant this, then there was a time when evil was not complete, namely, before matter was wrought by God. And it attains completeness when man is produced by God; for man is the maker of the parts of evil. And from this it follows that the cause of evil being complete, is God the Creator, which it is impious to say. But if you say that evil is neither of the things supposed, but is the doing of something evil, you declare that it has an origin. For the doing of a thing makes the beginning of its existence. And besides this, you have nothing further to pronounce evil. For what other action have you to point out as such, except what happens among men? Now, it has been already shown that he who acts is not evil according to his being, but in accordance with his evil doing.

Because there is nothing evil by nature, but it is by use that evil things become such. So I say, says he, that man was made with a free-will, not as if there were already evil in existence, which he had the power of choosing if he wished, but on account of his capacity of obeying or disobeying God.

For this was the meaning of the gift of Free Will. And man after his creation receives a commandment from God; and from this at once rises evil, for he does not obey the divine command; and this alone is evil, namely, disobedience, which had a beginning.

For man(1) received power, and enslaved himself, not because he was overpowered by the irresistible tendencies of his nature, nor because the capacity with which he was gifted deprived him of what was better for him; for it was for the sake of this that I say he was endowed with it (but he received the power above mentioned), in order that he may obtain an addition to what he already possesses, which accrues to him from the Superior Being in consequence of his obedience, and is demanded as a debt from his Maker. For I say that man was made not for destruction, but for better things. For if he were made as any of the elements, or those things which render a similar service to God, he would cease to receive a reward befitting deliberate choice, and would be like an instrument of the maker; and it would be unreasonable for him to suffer blame for his wrong-doings, for the real author of them is the one by whom he is used. But man did not understand better things, since he did not know the author (of his existence), but only the object for which he was made. I say therefore that God, purposing thus to honour man, and to grant him an understanding of better things, has given him the power of being able to do what he wishes, and commends the employment of his power for better things; not that He deprives him again of free-will, but wishes to deprive him again of free-will, but wishes to point out the better way. For the power is present with him, and he receives the commandment; but God exhorts him to turn his power of choice to better things. For as a father exhorts his son, who has power to learn his lessons, to give more attention to them inasmuch as, while he points out this as the better course, he does not deprive his son of the power which he possessed, even if he be not inclined to learn willingly; so I do not think that God, while He urges on man to obey His commands, deprives him of the power of purposing and withholding obedience. For He points out the cause of His giving this advice, in that He does not deprive him of the power. But He gives commands, in order that man may be able to enjoy better things. For this is the consequence of obeying the commands of God. So that He does not give commands in order to take away the power which He has given, but in order that a better gift may be bestowed, as to one worthy of attaining greater things, in return for his having rendered obedience to God, while he had power to withhold it. I say that man was made with free-will, not as if there were already existing some evil, which he had the power of choosing if he wished, . . . but that the power of obeying and disobeying God is the only cause.(2)

For this was the object to be obtained by free-will. And man after his creation receives a commandment from God, and from this at once rises evil; for he does not obey the divine command, and this alone is evil, namely, disobedience, which had a beginning. For no one has it in his power to say that it is without an origin, when its author had an origin. But you will be sure to ask whence arose this disobedience. It is clearly recorded in Holy Scripture, by which I am enabled to say that man was not made by God in this condition, but that he has come to it by some teaching. For man did not receive such a nature as this. For if it were the case that his nature was such, this would not have come upon him by teaching. Now one says in Holy Writ,

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that "man has learnt (evil)." (1) I say, then, that disobedience to God is taught. For this alone is evil which is produced in opposition to the purpose of God, for man would not learn evil by itself. He, then, who teaches evil is the Serpent.

For my part, I said that the beginning of evil was envy, and that it arose from man's being distinguished by God with higher honour. Now evil is disobedience to the commandment of God.