

THE SHRINE *of* WISDOM

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IBN GABIROL or AVICEBRON

I. HIS PREDECESSORS

Ibn Gabirol, known to the Mediæval Scholastics as Avicbron, is an important link in the Neo-Platonic succession, since it was through him that the more profound philosophy of Greece, long exiled in Asia, returned to Europe. In order that his position in the succession of philosophers may be realized, it will be necessary to consider his predecessors.

Neo-Platonism began at Alexandria with Ammonius Saccas (A.D. 175-242), the teacher of Plotinus (A.D. 205-270). The influence of these two minds has profoundly impressed itself upon the philosophic thought of subsequent ages. The former left no written works, and the latter is known only through writings collected and transcribed by Amelius (A.D. 246-269) and edited and brought into their final form by Porphyry (A.D. 233-304).

The Academy at Athens, founded by Plato about the year 390 B.C., and continued by a long line of his successors, became definitely Neo-Platonic in character towards the end of the fourth century through the succession of Plutarch of Athens to the Chair.

Plutarch was followed by Proclus (A.D. 410-485), perhaps the greatest of the Neo-Platonists; and by Simplicius and Damascius.

At the same time that Plutarch taught in Athens, Hypatia (A.D. 370-410), daughter of the mathematician and philosopher Theon, who had herself studied in Athens, was the leader of the Neo-Platonic school at Alexandria, attracting by her wisdom and charm many students, amongst whom was Synesius (A.D. 370-415) who afterwards became Bishop of Ptolemais, a number of whose letters to Hypatia still exists.*

A most important factor in the transmission of Neo-Platonism,

* *The Letters of Synesius*. Trans. by A. FitzGerald. Oxford. 1926.

and one which is often overlooked, is the manner in which the teachings came into Syria and Arabia.

Nestorius, a monk of Antioch, who was made Bishop of Constantinople in A.D. 428, based a number of his doctrines on Neo-Platonic principles. In A.D. 431 he came into conflict with orthodoxy, was proclaimed a heretic, and banished. His followers, however, were so sure of the validity of their tenets that they formed a new sect, the Nestorians, and spread over portions of Syria and Arabia, and in substantiation of their doctrine translated numerous Neo-Platonic writings into Syriac and Arabic. These were extensively used by the Arabian Philosophers, and many of them found their way, at the Moorish Conquest, into Spain.

In the year A.D. 529, the Platonic Academy at Athens, which had continued its activities for over nine hundred years, was closed by the Edict of Justinian, and the public teaching of the ancient philosophy was prohibited.

Shortly after this Damascius, who was the last to occupy the Chair of Plato, together with Simplicius and five other philosophers, emigrated to Persia to the court of King Chosroes, and although they subsequently returned to Athens the Academy was not revived, owing to the rigorous opposition of Justinian to the teaching of philosophy.

Although philosophy was suppressed in Greece, it flourished in its new home in Arabia; the first of the great Arabian Neo-Platonic philosophers being Al-Kindi, who was also renowned as a mathematician and physician.

The material which Al-Kindi found available for his study was that which had been translated into Arabic through the Syriac. It included the *Theological Elements* and other writings of Proclus, a Pythagorean treatise on Numbers, and a work known as the *Theology of Aristotle*, but which was in reality a transcription of the last three books of the *Enneads* of Plotinus.

Al-Kindi, being unsatisfied with translations so far removed from the originals, learned Greek, procured the necessary manuscripts, and translated Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and other writings into Arabic, elucidating them with his own commentaries. He also wrote several treatises of his own, of which that *On the Intellect* is considered to be the most original.

The next philosopher in the Arabian succession was Al-Farabi,

who was born at the end of the ninth century. He received his philosophical training at Baghdad. He was a very prolific writer, and his works include treatises on Metaphysics, Logic, and Music. In his teachings he closely followed the Neo-Platonists, affirming with them that the writings of Plato and Aristotle were essentially in accord, the differences being mainly in modes of expression and unimportant details.

Avicenna (A.D. 980-1037), who followed Al-Farabi and was his pupil, while still a young man edited a scientific encyclopædia. He made a special study not only of Philosophy, but also of Theology and Medicine. His *Canon*, which deals with the fundamental principles of healing, was for centuries the basis of medical instruction in Arabia.

The next in the succession was Avicebron, sometimes mentioned as Avencebrol, who is generally considered as one of the Arabian Neo-Platonists.

II. HIS LIFE

Solomon Ben Judah Ibn Gabirol, or in Arabic, Abu Ayyub Sulaiman Ibn Yaha Ibn Gabirol, known also as Avicebron, was a Spanish Jew, born in Malaga about A.D. 1020.

His father Judah, who was a scholar of some distinction, was a native of Cordova, but the parents had settled in Malaga prior to the birth of their son. While he was still very young, they moved to Saragossa, at that time a centre of Jewish culture in Spain, and shortly after this both parents died, leaving the orphan boy in the care of a guardian.

At this time Spain was under Moorish dominion, and Arabic was the language most generally known and spoken in the southern parts of the country. It is therefore not surprising that the inquiring mind of Ibn Gabirol should interest itself in the speculations of the Arabian Philosophers, nor that his principal works should be written in Arabic.

His very earliest compositions, however, were written in Hebrew, his native tongue, and it is recorded that he wrote several long and beautiful poems before he was sixteen years of age. In one of his poems he writes:

“From my youth have I laboured in the cause of wisdom, for her goal is joy-engendering.”

The names of his actual teachers are not recorded, but that he made a deep study of the Neo-Platonic writers of Arabia is evident from their obvious influence in his works.

On account of his very sensitive nature, he seemed unsuited for a life in the unsettled world of his time, but he was fortunate in finding patrons who appreciated his gifts and enabled him to devote himself to literary and philosophic pursuits.

He spent his life in the search for truth, investigating in turn philosophy, theology, ethics, and logic—in fact, with the exception of medicine, he was proficient in most of the known branches of learning of his day.

A correspondence has been suggested in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* between Gabirol and Philo. "Philo and Gabirol alike exercised a very considerable influence in extra-Jewish circles: Philo upon primitive Christianity, and Gabirol upon the Scholasticism of mediæval Christianity. Gabirol's service, in common with that of other Arabic and Jewish philosophers, in bringing the philosophy of Greece under the shelter of the Christian Church, was but a return for the service of the earlier Christian scholars, who had translated the chief works of Greek philosophy into Syriac and Arabic."

Ibn Gabirol died in Valentia, probably about the year A.D. 1070, although some authorities give the date as early as 1058.

It is important to remember that he was the first teacher of Neo-Platonism in Europe.

III. HIS WRITINGS

(1) The writings of Ibn Gabirol may be divided into two distinct classes: his poems, which he wrote in Hebrew, and his philosophical works, which were written in Arabic.

His poems number over three hundred, about half of which are secular and the other half religious: many of the latter have been incorporated in the Jewish Liturgy, especially that of the Spanish Jews.

Of the twenty books which are said to have been written by Ibn Gabirol on philosophical subjects only two remain: *The Improvement of Moral Qualities* and *The Fountain of Life* or *Fons Vitæ*.

In a class by itself is *A Choice of Pearls*, a collection of moral aphorisms which he is said to have edited.

When he was only nineteen years of age, Ibn Gabirol composed a Hebrew Grammar in poetic form consisting of four hundred verses entitled *Anak*. Only one hundred verses, however, are preserved, the remainder having been lost as early as the twelfth century.

The poem begins with an appeal to the student not to neglect the study of the Hebrew language, which he calls "the holy tongue"—an injunction which was evidently necessary in his times, living as he did in the midst of Arabic culture in Spain.

Gabirol assures his readers that the poetic form is used as best calculated to impress the principles of grammar on the memory.

(2) *The Choice of Pearls* was originally written in Arabic about the year 1040, its title being *Mukhtar-u-I-jawahir*. In the year 1167 it was translated into Hebrew by the Rabbi Jehuda ibn Tibbon, under the title of *Mibchar ha-Peninim*, and subsequently the Arabic original was lost.

It consists of Moral Aphorisms from Greek and Arabic sources. The following are typical selections:

Man's most estimable peculiarity is an inquiring mind.

The sage says, Wisdom is the means by which the wise thoroughly evince their gratitude towards their Creator.

He whom the Creator has endowed with wisdom will never be dismayed in trouble or distress; for the end of wisdom is peace and tranquillity.

Seek wisdom with the avidity with which thou wouldst search for hidden treasure.

Man without wisdom is like a house without a foundation.

The first step to wisdom is silence, the second attention, the third memory, the fourth application, and the fifth teaching others.

Silence is preferable to an untimely word.

Silence may be accompanied with one regret, speech with many.*

(3) *The Improvement of Moral Qualities*. This work, which was written in Arabic in 1045, is entitled *Islah-akblaq*.

It was translated into Hebrew by the Rabbi Jehuda ibn Tibbon in 1167 under the title of *Tiqqun Middoth han-Nepshesh*.

* For further extracts from this work see *Shrine of Wisdom* No. 49, page 32.

The aim of this work is to give an exposition of the moral endowments of the human Soul.

God has created all that subsists or exists and man is His masterpiece. His immortal Soul raises him above the creatures of nature, giving him equality with the Angels, and by cultivating his power for good he may even rise superior to them.

The question may then be asked: why do men differ one from another? And it may be answered: they differ in the manner in which they cultivate their Souls.

“In the measure in which man separates himself from baseness, so draws he near to God; and in the measure in which he draws near to baseness, so he separates himself from God.”

Man is a Microcosm of the Macrocosm, a Cosmos in miniature, and so he has within himself, at the outermost extension of his being, elements corresponding to the four elements of nature.

“God, Mighty and Exalted, has created the essence of the smaller world dependent upon the four elements. Moreover, God, exalted be He, equipped man with perfection of form and with every organ complete and not wanting in any respect, and He created him with five senses.”

A very suggestive illustration of the relation of the senses to ethics is given by correlating them with certain associated qualities. The qualities are alternately given as virtues and vices and, by indicating the manner whereby the latter may be converted into the former, Gabirol applies the principles of ethics to the lowest aspect of man's nature, thus linking it to the higher principles and ultimately to the Soul, in which virtues, as well as his body and faculties, are centred.

The work of the Soul is to bring her whole nature into right relationship with the Divine; but before this can be accomplished her potentialities must be actualized through the exercise of the virtues, as shown in the following table:—

<i>Sight</i>	<i>Hearing</i>	<i>Smell</i>
Pride	Love	Wrath
Meekness	Hate	Goodwill
Prudence	Mercy	Jealousy
Impudence	Cruelty	Wide-awakeness

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<i>Taste</i>	<i>Touch</i>
Joy	Liberality
Grief	Niggardliness
Tranquillity	Valour
Remorse	Cowardice

“It having been made clear (from the table) that all the qualities of the Soul are related to the five senses, let us now return to our first theme, the elucidation of which we have stated to be the purpose of this book. Seeing that most men are not sufficiently versed in the ruling of their qualities to enable them to regulate these according to ethical standards and a rational method, we have resolved to write a satisfactory treatise concerning this, which shall contain an account *in extenso* of the qualities, the ways in which to use them and the mode in which to bring about this improvement.”

The body of the book is a detailed working-out in twenty short chapters of the foregoing theme, based on the qualities given in the table.

(4) *Ketber Malkut (The Royal Crown)*. This is one of the longest and most important of Gabirol's poems. It is a hymn of praise to God, and attempts to portray His wondrous Attributes and Works. It forms part of the “Day of Atonement” Service of the Liturgy of the Spanish Jews.

The opening section which follows will give a conception of the work as a whole.

THE ROYAL CROWN

May all mankind be aided by my prayer
 And to the living God discern the path.
 For of His wonders I will sing the praise
 As briefly as befits so great a theme:
 In this my hymn behold “The Royal Crown.”

Wonderful are Thy works, O God, as testifies my Soul.
 Thine, O Lord, are the greatness, might, beauty, victory, and splendour.

Thine, O Lord, is the Kingdom. Thou art supreme over all.
 Thine is the Mysterious Omnipotence beyond our mind's grasp.

Within Thee is the hidden source of power, the mystery of the foundation.

Thine is the ineffable Name which even the wisest do not know;
 the world sustaining Power, the Light of hidden things.

Thine is Thy creatures' tender care.
Thine the rewarding of reverential awe.
Thine are the thought-transcending Mysteries.
Thine the inextinguishable Life.
Thine is the Throne of Thrones.
Thy habitation veiled in hidden height.
From Thy Light comes the shadow of existing things.
Thine the two worlds and the boundary between.
The one for deeds, the other for recompense.
Thine are the just rewards from mortals hidden.

Thou art the One, the beginning of numeration, and of every structure the foundation.

Thou art the One, and before the mystery of Thy Unity, the wisest are dumbfounded, for they can never fathom It.

Thou art the One, and Thy Unity can neither be lessened nor increased; It needeth naught nor is there residue.

Thou art the One, but not a unity that can be divided, for number and change do not apply to Thee.

Thou art the One, utterly beyond defining or imagination.

Thou art the One, beyond exaltation or fall

“For how could the One fall?”

Thou art, yet mayest Thou not be heard or seen. Neither do How, Wherefore or Whence apply to Thee.

Thou art, alone, no other bears Thee company.

Thou art, before time was, or space extended.

Thou art, but who can penetrate Thy Mystery?

“So deep, so deep, who can fathom It?”

Thou livest, but not in time's restrictions.

Thou livest, but not through soul and breath, for Thou ensoulest all.

Thou livest, but not in vanity as man doth, ending in dust and worms.

Thou livest, and he who solves Thy Mystery shall find eternal joy.

“He shall eat and live forever.”

Thou art great, but compared with Thy greatness all greatness is made humble, and every high quality is lacking.

Thou art greater than all thought, more radiant than the starry heavens.

Thou art greater than greatness itself.

“And exalted beyond all blessing and praise.”

Thou art powerful, nor can Thy creatures emulate Thy power.

Thou art powerful, with a power that never decreases.

Thou art powerful, and from the might of Thy Omnipotence Thou pardonest.

Thou art powerful, yet is Thy mercy extended unto all.

“These are the mighty deeds which are from eternity.”

Thou art Light, and the eyes of the pure Soul shall behold Thee, but iniquity veileth Thee from men’s eyes.

Thou art That Light, hidden in this world, which a higher world revealeth.

“On the Mountain of the Lord It shall be seen.”

Light of Eternity, the eye of the Intellect ardently longeth for Thee.

“Yet only a part shall it see, the Whole it may not behold.”

Thou art the Lord of Lords, all beings are Thy witnesses and servants; nor is Thy Glory dimmed because some turn from Thee, for all are drawn to Thee; but some are like the blind who go astray upon the straightest road, and falling into pit and snare, labour in vain, and yet imagine they have attained their goal. But Thy clear-eyed servants are undeviating, neither turning to the right nor left until they reach Thy Courts.

Thou art God, supporting all things by Thy Divinity, and uniting all creatures in Thy Unity, and yet Thy Divinity and Thy Unity are undistinguishable, for both are one Mystery; for although the Names are varied,

“Yet They hasten to one Place.”

Thou art Wise, and Thy Wisdom is the Fountain of Eternal Life which floweth from Thee.

Beside Thy Wisdom all human knowledge is as folly.

Thou art Wise prior to all beginnings, Wisdom was with Thee as a Master Workman.

Thou art Wise with a Wisdom Which was never learned from any but Thyself.

The sections which follow show the Cosmos as the creation of God. Gabirol unfolds the scheme of creation, and the elements of which it is constituted. He deals with them as the spheres of the seven planets, the Zodiac, the Primum Mobile, and lastly the Empyrean, ten in all.

The concluding sections of the work are penitential in character, showing that it is only by a total self-abnegation that man may approach the Great Father of all.

(5) *Fons Vitæ* or *The Fountain of Life*. This book which Ibn Gabirol wrote under the name of Avicbron is his most important work and the one which has had the greatest influence upon the scholars who followed him.

The exact date of its composition is not known, but it is probably a mature work of the later part of his life.

It was written in Arabic, its title being *Yanbu al-Hayat*, but it became much better known through the Latin translation, entitled *Fons Vitæ*, which was made in the year 1150 by Dominicus Gundisalvi, Archdeacon of Segovia, assisted by the Jewish physician, Johannes Hispalensis, who had become converted to Christianity.

Numerous early Latin manuscript copies of this work exist, some of which bear other titles, namely: *De Materia et Forma* and *De Materia Universalis*, but the work in each case is the same.

At a later date the *Fons Vitæ* was translated from Latin into Hebrew by Shem Tob Falaquera (1225–1290) under the title of *Mekor Hayyim*, but even then it was not known that the author was a Jew. Nowhere in the work are to be found quotations from either the Old Testament or the Talmud, whereas *The Improvement of Moral Qualities* abounds with references to them. The Mediæval Scholastics speak of Avicbron as an Arab, and sometimes even as a Christian, and Giordano Bruno refers to him as “The Moor Avicbron.”

It was not until 1846 that the identity of Avicbron, the Arabian philosopher, with Ibn Gabirol, the Jewish poet, was discovered by Solomon Munk during research work carried out amongst the manuscripts in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris. Munk published the results of his discoveries in *Literaturblatt des Orients*, and gave other details in his *Mélanges de Philosophie Juive et Arabe*, published in Paris in 1859.

The *Fons Vitæ* is written in the form of a dialogue between a master and his disciple—a form much in favour in mediæval times—and is divided into five books as follows:—

Book I. Treats of Universal Matter and Universal Form and their relationship in physical substances.

Book II. Treats of the Substance which sustains the corporeality of the Universe (to which the Categories apply).

Book III. Treats of “Simple Substances.”

Book IV. Treats of these Simple Substances as constituted of Form and Matter.

Book V. Treats of the general consideration of Universal Matter and Universal Form.

The mode of presenting his philosophy from the standpoint of Substance, as is done in this work, may appear to many as tending to materialize the Divine, but such is not really the case, for Avicbron's conception of the Primal Substance is at the opposite pole to corporeal matter, and he presents some very sublime teachings regarding the Supreme, or Divine Unity, as he designates God.

Much of this work shows the influence of Aristotle, particularly the method of dealing with the subject from the standpoint of Substance. It is also evident that many exceedingly fine passages wherein the mystical ascent of the Soul is described were inspired by the writings of Plotinus, while the conception of the emanation from the One of the Principles which constitute a hierarchy of substances, every principle depending upon that prior to itself, is likewise derived from Plotinus.

Avicbron postulates that the primary desire of man should be to obtain Wisdom, and in the *Fons Vitae* he outlines the means to this end, dealing therein with all that is in terms of Substance, Form and Matter, as follows:—

(1) The Divine Unity considered as the First Substance is unknowable, the One above number, in Whom Form and Matter subsist only analogically and essentially. He imparts form and matter to all below Himself. The Divine Unity does not, however, act immediately upon lower natures, since He subsists in exempt transcendency.

(2) The Divine Will is the mediating Power through which the One is immanent in the many, by means of Which, in an ultimate sense, Form is impressed upon Matter.

With the Divine Will Avicbron associates the Creative Word or Logos, affirming that Divine Power never decreases, and that Creation does not take place in time, but is eternal.

(3) The Field of Divine Operations, where everything is composed of Form and Matter in varying degrees of density.

Avicbron gives a description of the Intelligible World which agrees largely with that of Plotinus, and contrasts it with the sensible world which is fabricated in its likeness.

The different modes of subsistence of the Principles intermediate between the Intelligible and the sensible are given in hierarchical order. These Principles are Intellect, Soul, and Nature, each of which is a unity partaking in its own distinctive degree

and manner of Form and Matter, all depending ultimately upon the Divine Unity, but each depending proximately upon the principle prior to itself, and each receiving through its own immediate principle that which it is adapted to receive.

It should be understood that Form and Matter, as subsisting in the highest sense in Being, are not the form and matter of the manifested world, but the Subjective Principles of which the latter are the outermost manifestation.

Avicbron continually insists on the Universality of Matter. The Universe is produced by the impress of Form upon the pre-existing Universal Matter, only the Divine being exempt from this participation.

Everything that exists has a common substantial element. This element cannot be the form, since this is always changing, and it is in the form of an object that its peculiarity and difference from other objects consist; it must therefore be matter, that is, matter in the most general sense (*Materia Universalis*), of which corporeal and metaphysical matter are two species.

Thus it will be seen that according to Avicbron, Matter, or *Materia*, is the basis upon which all manifested things rest, and his treatment of this subject constitutes his most original contribution to philosophy.

The extracts from the *Fons Vitæ* which follow will give an indication of the scope and importance of the work. They are from the French Version by Munk (see Bibliography) and contain many valuable and illuminating teachings from which the student may derive much benefit, and which clearly indicates that Avicbron was imbued with the principles and spirit of Neo-Platonism.

EXTRACTS FROM AVICEBRON'S *FONS VITÆ*

I. THE DIVINE AS THE CAUSE OF ALL

BOOK V, SECT. 68.

The First Substance (Blessed be He!) subsists in an exempt manner, distinct from everything else. It follows then that from Him proceeds a Substance which subsists in a different manner, namely, Universal Matter, together with Universal Form. This is a necessary progression.

BOOK I, SECT. 3.

There subsist in Being but three things, namely, Matter together with Form, the First Substance (God), and the Divine Will which is intermediate between these two extremes.

The reason why only these three subsist is that there can be no effect without a cause, and that there must be an intermediary between these two.

The Cause is the First Substance; the effect is the Form with Matter; and the intermediary between the two is the Divine Will.

BOOK IV, SECT. 33.

If the Divine Will is an Efficient Cause, It has within Its essence all forms, for it is certain that the form of every effect subsists within its cause, or rather the effect is in the cause through the form which is there. All things subsist in the essence of the Divine Will inasmuch as they are the effects of the Divine Will.

BOOK V, SECT. 62.

The reason why it is said that the Most High Creator is found everywhere is because the Divine Will, which is His Power, imparts Itself to all things, and nothing is without It, since through It everything exists and is sustained.

BOOK V, SECT. 19.

You must know that the Divine Will possesses this Primary Form in a dynamic manner in relation to the object of Its activity, but in a static manner in Its causal aspect. For things in the realms Above are not such as they are in the lower realms. The forms are more perfect in causes than in effects, for they are reflected, as it were, from the causes into the effects. From this it follows that the Form in the Divine Will has the greatest possible perfection and order; and all forms must be more perfect in proportion to their nearness to the Divine Will.

II. THE SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL UNIVERSE AND THEIR INTER-RELATION

BOOK II, SECT. 25.

Remember the principle that has been laid down, namely, that the lower, visible world is in the image of the higher, invisible world.

BOOK IV, SECT. 4.

The proof that Superior Natures are reflected in inferior

natures is that the higher give to the lower their names and definitions. Further, Intellect abstracts forms from corporeal things, and in that is implied the proof that the forms impressed upon corporeal substances emanate from simple substances.
BOOK V, SECT. 26.

As the Form descends into corporeality it becomes progressively more perceptible to sense, as, for example, colour, which among forms is most perceptible to the senses. Figure is less apparent than colour, corporeality less than figure, substance less than corporeality, Nature less than substance, the Soul less than Nature, and Intellect is less apparent than Soul. The reason is that the First Form united to First Matter is spiritual and unific, while the last form is corporeal and composite. Between the two extremes are the intermediate degrees which connect and unite them. Now the nearer the form is to the First Spiritual Form the more intangible and unapparent it is, while the nearer it is to the corporeal form the more dense and visible it is.
BOOK II, SECT. 28.

The manner in which universal corporeal substance resides within Spiritual Substance can be compared to the manner in which the body has its residence in the Soul: just as the Soul contains the body and sustains it, so the Universal Spiritual Substance contains the universal body of the corporeal world and sustains it; and just as the Soul is distinct from the body, and is connected with it without physical contact, so Spiritual Substance is distinct from the body of the corporeal world, and is connected with it without physical contact.
BOOK V, SECT. 52.

The aspiration to the First Creator and the turning towards Him are common to all things, but differ in degree according as they are nearer to Him or further from Him.

III. THE HUMAN SOUL: THE NEED FOR TRUE KNOWLEDGE AS A MEANS TO UNION WITH THE DIVINE

BOOK I, SECT. 1.

The Intellect is the best part of the human being: the first object of man's search should be knowledge. The knowledge which should above all be sought is the knowledge of himself, and in order to achieve this he must know those things which

are not himself. At the same time he must seek to know the Final Cause through Which he *is*, for by so doing he will attain to supreme happiness, because the existence of man has a final Cause, all things being subject to the Will of the Supreme Being.
BOOK V, SECT. 65.

You will now ask me, "Why is the Soul without knowledge, and in need of teaching in order to recollect (the forms which are within it)?" You must know that the Soul is created possessing true knowledge, hence it has in itself the knowledge proper to its true nature. But when the Soul unites itself to body it withdraws itself, through this mingling and union with sensible things, from the reception of the impressions of the essential knowledge which remains concealed within itself: for the darkness of body covers the Soul and obscures its own light. The Soul is then like a mirror unevenly covered with a thick substance.
BOOK I, SECT. 2.

By knowledge and its application the Soul tends to the Above; for knowledge brings with it the necessity for practical application. This withdraws the Soul from the evils which corrupt it, and leads it back to its own nature and essence.

BOOK V, SECT. 55.

To ascend to the First Supreme Substance is impossible; but it is possible, though difficult, to ascend to That Which is nearest to This Substance.

BOOK III, SECT. 37.

In general it can be said that if you wish to know Simple Substances and the manner in which your own essence can penetrate and embrace Them, you must raise your thought towards the Highest Intelligible, purge and purify it from the stains of sensible attachments, free yourself from bondage to natural desires, and through the power of your Intellect you must mount as close as possible to the Reality of Intelligible Substance. This can be done in the measure in which you shed, as it were, sensible coverings and become as if ignorant of them. Then your being will embrace the whole corporeal world, which you will place, so to speak, in a corner of your Soul, because you will realize how small the sensible world is in comparison with the Intelligible World. Then Spiritual Substances will unveil and unfold themselves to your vision, and you will see Them around and above you, and it will seem as though they were your own

essence. Then you will know that you are one with Them because you will be freed from the fetters of corporeal substance; and, above all, you will know that you are wholly united to Them, and that there is no difference between you and Them, because your essence is united to Their essence, and your form to Their form. And if you ascend to the different ranks of Intelligible Substances you will find corporeal bodies in comparison extremely small and insignificant, and you will see the whole corporeal world as if floating upon Them like a vessel on the sea or a bird in the air.

BOOK III, SECT. 19.

The Intellect and the Soul know all things: that is to say, the form of the things known subsists in Soul and in Intellect; hence the form of everything subsists in Intellect and in the Soul.

BOOK III, SECT. 26.

If it is said that all sensible forms subsist in the form of the Soul, it must be understood that all forms are united in the form of the Soul itself, that is to say that the form of the Soul by its nature and being is an essence which contains the essence of all forms, united in the idea of form.

BOOK V, SECT. 21.

The grouping of many and diverse forms into one general unity is only impossible when each occupies a position in space; but when they do not occupy space their collection into one is not impossible. Now since the forms unified in the Form of Intellect are not divided, but are united in its substance, and since the substance of Intellect is an unmixed unity, it is clear that these forms do not occupy space, but that they and the region in which they subsist are one. And on this account the substance of the Intellect is unlimited in action and in comprehension, for in its unity which is its essence it contains all things unitively and essentially.

BOOK V, SECT. 27.

The proof that spiritual Forms are immanent in corporeal forms is that the Soul, which pervades the whole body by means of its faculties (powers), is able to unite itself through each of its powers with the corresponding forms. For the Soul distinguishes first the forms of quality and quantity from the form of corporeal substance, then it distinguishes the form of corporeal substance from that of Nature, then the form of Nature from that of Soul,

the form of Soul from that of Intellect, and the form of Intellect from that of the First Substance. The man who truly understands the difference between these forms, and who can perfectly distinguish these substances one from the other, has reached the highest summit of knowledge and of joy.

BOOK V, SECT. 74.

If you ask by what means this sublime realization (of union with the Divine) may be attained, I answer that you must withdraw yourself from (the attachment to) sensible things, give yourself to Intelligible things, and unite yourself to the Good; for if you do this, He will enlighten you and bless you, for He is the Source of all good. Blessed and exalted be He! Amen.

(End of *Fons Vitæ*)

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MYSTIC VERSE

Still is the might of Truth, as it has been:
 Lodged in the few, obeyed, and yet unseen.
 Reared on lone heights and rare,
 His saints their watch-flame bear,
 And the mad world sees the wide-circling blaze,
 Vain-searching whence it streams, and how to
 quench its blaze. —Keble

When I look back upon my former race
 Seasons I see, at which the Inward Ray
 More brightly burned, or guided some new way;
 And next I mark, 'twas trial did convey,
 Or grief or pain, or strange eventful day,
 To my tormented soul such larger grace.
 So now, whene'er in journeying on, I feel
 The shadow of the Providential Hand,
 Deep breathless stirrings shoot across my breast,
 Searching to know what He will now reveal,
 What sin uncloak, what stricter rule command,
 And guiding me to work His full behest. —Ibid.

Prisoner of Hope thou art—look up and sing
 In hope of promised Spring. —Ibid.

Take from our hearts, O Lord,
 Suspicion, anger, heat, dispute,
 All that can injure charity
 And spoil the love of brothers.
—Thomas à Kempis.

Thou knowest what is fit for each,
 Why one has less, another more;
 Not ours to question this, but Thine,
 With Whom each man's deserts are strictly watched.
—Ibid.

THE SHRINE OF WISDOM
EXTRACTS FROM THE TREATISE
TEN DOUBTS CONCERNING PROVIDENCE

BY PROCLUS

Translated by THOMAS TAYLOR

PART V*

8. After this, let us consider in the eighth place, a doubt which is very widely diffused, and occasions many to oppose the subsistence of Providence, namely, why punishments do not immediately follow the commission of crimes, but this happens some time after, or even after a great lapse of time. For offenders will be corrected in a much greater degree when they are immediately punished than if the punishment is deferred for so long a time that they forget for what they were punished. And, indeed, they are excited to murmur at Providence, in consequence of feeling the punishment, but forgetting the offence which they had committed, in the same manner as he is affected who suffers for the crimes of others a long time after they have been committed. In answer to this we may say that the implanted root of wickedness causes the same energies to take place in consequence of continuing inflexible by punishment, just as the earth, bearing thorns, though the shoots are a thousand times cut off, still produces the like. Providence, therefore, waits for an appropriate time, not such as may be pleasing to the vulgar, but such as it knows will contribute to the health of Souls and will instruct many by endurance. For together with the Gods, says Plato, Fate and Time govern all things, whether it be requisite that some good should be imparted, or that there should be a purification from something contrary to good. The cure of Souls, indeed, which is called *dike* (or justice), is a greater art than all external medicinal arts; for the cure of the Soul may be said to be a divine thing, the evil which is in it being more various than that which is in bodies. In the next place vice is a punishment to itself, and the most grievous injury the Soul can sustain. Precipitate anger, also, is not a good dispenser of punishments. Plato once, being about to chastise a slave, was seen holding his hand in an elevated

* For Parts I, II, III, and IV, see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 49-52.

position for some time and, being asked why he did so, said that he was punishing his own impetuous anger. Archytas said to his servants in a field, who had not done what he had ordered them to do, and expected to be punished for their negligence, "It is well for you that I am angry." And Theano said to one of her servants, "If I were not angry, I would chastise you." Among the Egyptians there was a law that a pregnant woman who was judged worthy of death should not be put to death till she was delivered. Is it, therefore, wonderful that Providence should for a time spare those who are deserving of death, but are able to perform not trifling, but illustrious actions, till they have accomplished them? If Themistocles had been immediately punished for what he did as a young man, who would have delivered Athens from the Persian evils? Who, also, would have explained the Pythian oracle? If Dionysius had perished in the beginning of his tyranny, who would have freed Sicily, which was thought to be irremediably lost, from the Chalcedonians? If the punishment of Periander had not been deferred for a long time, who would have freed the pleasant island of Leucadia? Who would have liberated Anaxorium from its adversaries? To which may be added that the time of deferred punishment seems long to our feeble vision, but is nothing to the eye of Providence, just as the place, also, in which we live and carry about these bodies is perfectly small for the punishment of great offences; but there are many and indescribable places of retribution in the infernal regions, and severe torments for the offenders that are there. On account of the magnitude of the punishments, likewise, the whole of them are not inflicted at once. Souls, also, are naturally adapted to feel remorse, which is the forerunner of their greater sufferings. For they say that Apollodorus the tyrant saw himself in a dream scourged and boiled by certain persons, and his heart exclaiming from the cauldron, "I am the cause of these thy torments!" But Ptolemy, who was surnamed *Thunder*, thought in a dream that he was called to judgment by Seleucus, and that vultures and wolves sat there as his judges. Such are the preludes to the vicious of impending punishment.

9. After this, let us consider how the crimes of other persons, as, for instance, of parents or ancestors, are punished in their posterity. For that certain persons are said to have suffered punishment for the crimes of their ancestors, both revelations and

the mysteries manifest, and certain liberating Gods are said to purify from them. In answer to this it may be said, in the first place, that every city and every race is one organic unity, in a much greater degree than every man, and is more immortal and sacred. For one tutelary Deity presides over a city as over one organism, and likewise over the whole of one race; and there is one common period to a city, and also to a generation, comprehending in one boundary the life and death of each, as if one nature pervaded through the whole city and every individual that it contains. And hence, one common nature extending through a whole city and a whole race makes each to be one. If, therefore, as we have shown, every city and each race of men is a certain unity, why is it wonderful that the crimes of progenitors should be punished in their posterity? And the life of cities being one, has a retribution in after times for the better or worse deeds which it performed in prior times. For Providence not only rewards or punishes each of us for what we have done at another time, but considers a city as one, and a race as one; the first agents also not being neglected. For Providence existing, it is not lawful that anything should be neglected. There is also a co-passivity of posterity with their ancestors, for the former have a reference to the latter as to a summit or leading monad, being generated from and having a common life and nature together with them; and hence, on account of them they are deservedly honoured or punished.

All the first delinquents suffer punishment for their crimes, and through these something occultly passes to their co-passive posterity. Nor do these suffer unjustly, but from a similitude of life, similar things are allotted to them by Providence, which punishes or rewards Souls according to desert, and through a similitude of life punishes some on account of others, as if cutting off a certain malignant root of a plant which it could easily antecedently perceive. For a sting is congenial to scorpions, and venom to vipers. But there is a power in the universe which knows this prior to the percussion. After the same manner, therefore, Providence, perceiving in Souls iniquity congenial to that of their ancestors, punishes them for it, though they may not have committed the same crimes; previously destroying the similar evil in those who possess it, as a malady may be stayed from growing to an epilepsy. It must be granted that these things

are known by *the One* of Providence which knows all things, by an antecedent knowledge. The similitude, however, becomes evident through this: that it is seen to extend to them punishments correspondent to the crimes which their ancestors committed. But I well know that I have discussed elsewhere these particulars.

10. I shall, therefore, put an end to these doubts by adding as a colophon, as it is said, a tenth inquiry. For Providence, by this its much celebrated Unity, knowing and reducing all things to good, how are Angels and Daemons said to energize providentially and, if you are willing, Heroes, likewise, and Souls governing the world in conjunction with them and the Gods? For it is requisite that we should define what the nature is of their providential energy since it is not, like that of the Gods, characterized by *the One*, if we admit that an Angel, a Daemon, a Soul, and a Hero, are not the same with Deity. For the hyparxis of every God, as I have before said, subsists according to *the One*, and this One is prior to Intellect, and is the same with *the Good*, from Which also it proceeds. But unities or goodnesses are twofold, which *the Good* Itself produces, being the cause of both, and being one in a more transcendent degree. And of these unities, some, indeed, are self-perfect, but others are distributed in their participants. For *the One* and *the Good* have a triple subsistence; namely, either according to cause as, for instance, the First Good, since This is from Itself the Cause of every good and of all unities; or according to hyparxis, for thus every God is one and good; or according to participation as, for instance, *the One* and *the Good* which subsists in beings, on account of which every essence is united, and every God is boniform, though He is a unity. The unity, however, of self-perfect natures does not belong to anything else, but pertains to itself only. But every Intellect and every Soul participates of a certain one. For the one which Soul, and also the one which Intellect participates, possess *a transcendency of union*. Thus likewise, one all-perfect Intellect is the cause of all intellects. But of the intellects which proceed from It, some are self-perfect, each being partially that which the all-perfect Intellect is totally; one possessing the partial according to a certain thing, but another according to something else. This, also, being distributed into some other of the forms contained in all-perfect Intellect, but that being an illumination from these intellects in intellectual Souls; on which account, also, these Souls are said

to be intellectual according to participation, and tend upward to the First Intellect. And all Souls, indeed, have the self-motive nature in common; but those which participate of Intellect universally possess intelligence. If, therefore, we direct our attention to the First Soul, and the twofold souls that proceed from It, we shall perceive that some of them are essential and separable from bodies, but others are illuminations in bodies, derived from essential Souls.* For that which is animated is so through the participation of a certain Soul, which someone† calls *entelechia*, and which may be denominated *an animated bond*.

Hence there is a number proceeding from each of the principal hypostases, namely from Soul, Intellect, and *the Good*. But this number is twofold, the one consisting of self-perfect essences, but the other of illuminations proceeding from these self-perfect beings into subordinate natures.‡ Hence, too, though Angels and Daemons are neither Gods nor unities simply—and the like is true of Heroes, of Souls superior to ours, and also of ours—yet they participate of certain unities and are profoundly united. And the first of these illuminations are those which are suspended from the Gods Themselves; the second in order are suspended from the first; the third from the second; and the fourth, which is our order, is suspended from illuminations which rank as the third. For in us also there is inherent a certain occult vestige of *the One*, which is more divine than our Intellect, and in which the Soul, perfecting and establishing herself, becomes divine, and lives, as far as it is possible for this to be accomplished by her, a divine life. All the Gods, therefore, energize providentially. But Angels, Daemons, and Heroes, in consequence of possessing a certain seed, as it were, of the *One*, exert a providential energy; not so far as they are vital or intelligent—for it is the province of Soul to move and of Intellect to know, and the former characteristic property exists in all Souls, and the latter in all intellects—but they energize providentially through *the One* which they contain. For according to that through which they imitate the Gods, they provide for all things. But if all the Gods primarily exert a providential energy because they are primarily good, but

* For a demonstration of what is here said by Proclus about Intellect, see my translation of his *Theological Elements*.—T.T.

† Aristotle in his *Treatise on the Soul*.

‡ Proposition 64, *Theological Elements*.

Souls, after these, when they are established in unity, energize divinely and provide for other things, together with the Gods, and the genera which transcend our nature—if this be the case, the providential energies of Souls do not consist in reasonings conjectural of futurity, like those of human political characters, but in illuminations in *the One* of the Soul derived from the Gods. Hence, being surrounded with the transcendently united splendour of Deity, they see that which is in time untemporally, that which is divisible indivisibly, and everything which is in place unlocally; and they energize not from themselves, but from the powers by which they are illuminated. And Souls, indeed, are sometimes affected in this manner, but the above-mentioned energy is always present with Angels, Daemons, and Heroes. On this account, likewise, they providentially attend to subordinate natures in a more excellent manner than if they energized according to ratiocination, not in a way similar to their productions, but perceiving all things according to *the One* and causally, without any diminution of providential energy. These powers, therefore, differ, as we have said, from Souls, by always attending to the objects of their care; but they differ from the Gods, of Whom they are the attendants, by not energizing providentially according to the whole of themselves, but according to their most divine part, by which they are conjoined with the Gods Themselves. For of the Gods, each is a Unity; but of these powers, each possesses through participation a transcendency of union. Hence, each having something else besides unity, imitates through unity the Divinity prior to itself and from which it is suspended; but by something else it lives according to another energy. And the summit of the essence of each is according to *the One*; but *being* subsists in each according to that which is not one (but united). This, however, being known, other particulars which have been mentioned concerning Providence may be adapted to Daemons and Heroes in a secondary degree, except that in these also, in the same manner as in the Divinities, unity has in some of them a more total, but in others a more partial power. The ineffable Principle of things, however, as It is more excellent than every power, so likewise It transcends Providence. But if someone should dare to assert that It providentially attends to all things, it must be said that this is in no other way than as being the Object of desire to all things, and as

That for the sake of Which all things subsist, and as the Cause of Providence. For the Providential Energies of the Gods, and of all the beings posterior to the Gods, are on account of good; and this both things themselves manifest, and also Plato, as we have said in the beginning of this discussion.

SEED THOUGHTS

Since it is He Who hath wholly made me, wholly renewed me, He also willeth that the throne of His glory should not be moved or disquieted for any cause whatever, for He judgeth that nothing in the whole world could be worthy or powerful enough to oppress or destroy the temple of His truth.

And He also willeth that we have leisure for Him and keep solemn festival with Him, exercising great command over ourselves and over all things that might disturb us. . . .

He desireth also that beyond and through all things we should often gaze at the face of Wisdom, of Truth, of Justice and of the Peace of God, that is to say, after the measure of our littleness, and in order that we may free ourselves from all things, however turbulently they may happen. For however many troubles and hindrances there may be on all sides, yet there remaineth always a glorious path very wide and straight which passeth through the midst of all tribulations.

In this path we learn to rise above all hindrances, not by turning aside or by fleeing from them; but by a full, spiritual, strengthened gaze, while we remain in all things at rest with the very changeless Truth.

—*Gerlac Petersen.*

And in company with Him we endure whatever happens to us, whether the cause be outward or inward things. There, then, shall our light rise in darkness and our darkness shall be as noonday. There we shall possess God and God will possess us in that most obscure knowledge in which all things that can come to us from without shall be unable to touch us. There are we hidden in the secret of the Presence of the Lord. —*Ibid.*

AN ACCOUNT OF MATTER

[Collected from the writings of Plotinus by Thomas Taylor, and given in his edition of the *Metaphysics of Aristotle*, p. 154.]

[In reading the following description of matter it is necessary to note the sense in which the term is here used, for different writers have employed it in various ways, some considering it as the receptacle of forms in general, and others as synonymous with being or substance. The term is here used as representing the receptacle or subject of material forms, in distinction to being, which is the subjective principle subsisting all created things.]

That it is necessary there should be some general subject in bodies, the receptacle of every form, is sufficiently evinced by the continual mutations of corporeal qualities; since nothing that is transmuted is entirely destroyed, and no being is produced from that which does not exist. Hence a change arises from the departure of one quality and the accession of another; the subject matter always remaining, which receives a constant succession of generative forms. This general subject which is called the first matter, in order to distinguish it from that matter which is the object of sense, has the same proportion to whatever is fashioned from it as silence to sound, as darkness to light, and as body rude and misshapen to some artificial form which it may afterwards possess. Thus the formless air admits the harmony of sound; and thus darkness which is neither suffused with colour, nor diversified with form, becomes the subject of both. And as body, considered mathematically, is bounded by superficies which possessing only length and breadth cannot be body; so body considered physically, or with respect to its internal constitution, is everywhere bounded in the supreme part of its essence by form, and in the lowest part by matter, which is no longer a composite, but is entirely denuded of form. For as, in an ascending series of causes, it is necessary to arrive at something which is the first Cause of all, and which even transcends every perfection of being; so, in a descending series of subjects, it is equally necessary to stop at some general subject, the lowest in the order of things, and of which every perfection of being is denied.

Form therefore has reference to the quality and figure of bodies, and matter pertains to the subject; and this because it is destitute of form and without bound. This general receptacle, then, which

is said to be void of quality cannot be body. For since it is necessary simply to refer matter to all things in common, we must not attribute to its nature any thing which is perceived in the genera of sensible beings. Hence, besides denying to matter other qualities, such as colours, heat, and cold, we must neither ascribe to it lightness nor weight, neither rarity nor density, neither figure nor magnitude. For magnitude itself is different from the subject which is great, and figure itself cannot be the same with that which is figured. And matter can then only be void of all form when it is considered as nothing composite, but as simple and unitive. But it may be asked, after what manner can we apprehend a thing which is destitute of magnitude? Shall we say in the same manner as we perceive the indefinite itself? For if similitude is in a certain respect apprehended by the similar, the indefinite must be perceived by the indefinite itself. Reason, indeed, by a discursive procession around the indefinite may become defined; but the intuition of the indefinite becomes an indefinite perception. Hence the phantasm of matter is not legitimate but spurious: for, as Plato says, matter is only to be perceived by an adulterated reason. In short, what darkness, the subject of all visible colours, is to the eye, that matter is to the Soul; so that the Soul by abstracting whatever in the genera of sensible beings is, as it were, of a luminous nature and, being incapable of bounding what remains, becomes similar to the eye fixed in the depth of darkness. But is the formless nature of matter by this means perceived? Perhaps it is beheld as something destitute of figure, colour, and light, as possessing no magnitude, and bounded by no form. Nor must we suppose that when the Soul understands nothing she is affected in the same manner as when she beholds the darkness of matter. For when she understands nothing, she affirms nothing, or rather is passive to nothing; but her perception of a formless subject is dark and shadowy. When, therefore, in any composite substance she receives the subject together with its inherent properties, if she analyses and separates the attendant forms and qualities, she slenderly perceives as something slender the residue which reason leaves, beholds obscurity obscurely, and understands, as it were, without intellection. And because matter itself is never destitute of form, but continually receives a variety of supervening forms, hence the Soul quickly invests it with form, not enduring any

longer its dark infinity, as if fearing lest it should rush beyond the order of things, and impatient of longer abode in the region of perfect non-entity.

This being the case, matter is incorporeal; for body is something posterior and a composite, and form, in conjunction with something else, makes body. For it is assigned to the genus of the incorporeal because both being and matter are different from bodies. But since matter is neither Soul, nor Intellect, nor form, nor reason, nor bound (for it is a certain infinity*), nor power (for what can it do?), but falls below all these, it cannot properly receive the appellation of being, but may be justly called non-being. Yet not as motion is non-being, or rest is non-being, but it is true non-entity, the image and phantasm of bulk, and the desire of subsistence; abiding, indeed, yet not in permanency, of itself invisible, and flying from him who wishes to perceive it. Likewise, when someone does not perceive it, then it is passing into existence, but is not seen by him who strives to behold it. In itself, too, contraries always appear; the small and the great, the less and the more, the deficient and the transcendent. So that it is an image, neither able to abide, nor yet to fly away. For neither has it power even to effect this, since it received no strength from Intellect, but was generated in the defect of all being. Hence whatever it announces itself to be is false†; so that if it appears to be something great it is small, if something more it is less; and the being which presents itself in the imagination of it is non-being. It is, therefore, as it were, a flying mockery; and in consequence of this whatever appears to be generated in it is itself a mockery, being nothing more in reality than an image in an image; just as in the case of a mirror, where a thing itself is situated in one place and its resemblance in another, and which is apparently filled, and is apparently all things, yet possesses nothing. But the things which enter into and depart from matter are imitations and resemblances of beings, flowing about a formless resemblance; and in consequence of becoming visible through its formless nature they appear, indeed, to effect something in it, but effect nothing. For they are evanescent and imbecile, and have no repercussive power. And as this also is the

* Since it is indefinite, and therefore without boundary, it cannot strictly be called finite.

† Compared with the Truth and Reality of First Principles.

case with matter, they pervade without dividing it, like images in water, or as if anyone should introduce forms into that which is a vacuum. Indeed, if the things beheld in matter were such as the forms whence they are derived, it might be said that matter is passive* to their reception. But now since the things which are represented are different from those which are seen in its dark receptacle, we may from hence also learn that its passion is false, since that which is seen within is false, and possesses no similitude to that whence it originates.† As these representations, therefore, are imbecile and false, and fall into that which is false, so as to resemble images in water, or in a mirror, or in a dream, they necessarily permit matter to remain impassive; though in the particulars just now adduced there is a certain similitude between the phantasms beheld within and their originals.

In short, as Simplicius well observes (in Arist. Phys., p. 50, b.), matter, according to the Pythagoreans and Plato, is nothing else than the permutation and vicissitude of sensible forms with respect to Intelligibles; since from thence they verge downwards and extend to perfect non-entity, or the last of things—that is to matter itself. Hence, says he, because dregs and matter are always the last of things, the Egyptians assert that matter, which they enigmatically name water, is the dregs of the first life, subsisting as a certain mire or mud, the receptacle of generated and sensible natures; and which is not any definite form, but a certain constitution of subsistence, in the same manner as that which is indivisible, immaterial, and true being, is a constitution of an intelligible nature.

Such, then, being the true condition of matter, and such the shadowy nature of the forms which she contains, Plotinus beautifully observes that *Being*, properly so-called, is neither body, nor is subject to corporeal affections; but body and its properties belong to the region of non-entity. But you will ask, says he, how is it possible that visible matter should possess no real being; that matter which contains stones and mountains, the solid earth, and bodies which mutually resist; since bodies which impel each other confess by their collision the reality of their existence? You

* Plotinus also demonstrates that any nature which is truly passive to another nature is modified by it, but since matter in itself is unaffected by the accession of forms, it is not truly passive.

† Because that from which it originates is self-sufficient.

will likewise ask after what manner things which neither strike against nor resist each other, which neither externally act, nor internally suffer, nor are in any respect the objects of sight, namely, Soul and Intellect, are to be reckoned true and real beings. We reply that, on the contrary, things more massive are more sluggish and inert, as is evident in bulky masses of earth; but whatever is less ponderous is more moveable and alert, and the more elevated the more moveable. Hence fire, the most moveable of all the elements, flies in a manner from a corporeal nature. Besides, as it appears to me, whatever is more sufficient to itself disturbs others less and brings less inconvenience; but such things as are more ponderous and terrene, unable from their defect of being to raise themselves on high, and becoming debile and languid, strike and oppress surrounding bodies by their falling ruin and sluggish weight; since it is evident that bodies destitute of life fall with molestation on any proximate substance, and more vehemently impel and pain whatever is endued with sense. On the contrary, animated beings, as participating more of real being, inflict the less injury on bodies by their impact the more of being they possess. Hence motion, which is a kind of life or Soul, or an imitation of life in bodies, is more present with whatever is less massive; as if more of body was necessarily produced where a defect of being happens in a greater degree.

Again, it will more manifestly appear from passivity that whatever is greater in mass is more passive; earth in a greater degree than the other elements and the rest in a similar proportion. For some things when divided suddenly return to their former union when no obstacle prevents their conjunction; but from the dividing of a terrene body the separated portions always remain separate, as if destitute of natural vigour, and without any inherent desire of union and consent. Hence they are ready, by every trifling impulse, to remain as they are impelled; to rush from the embraces of bound, and hasten into multitude and non-entity. So that whatever becomes corporeal in an eminent degree, as rapidly falling into non-entity, has but little power of recalling itself into one. And on this account ponderous and at the same time vehement concussions are attended with ruin, when by mutual rushing one thing impels another. And this we think a sufficient confutation of the opinion of those who place being

only in the genus of body, persuaded by the testimony of impulses and concussions, and the phantasms perceived through the senses, which testify that sense alone is the standard of truth. Such as these are affected in a manner similar to those in a dream, who imagine that the perceptions of sleep are true. For sense is the employment only of the dormant Soul: since as much of the Soul as is merged in body, so much of it sleeps. But true elevation and true vigilance consist in a resurrection from, and not with, the dull mass of body. For indeed a resurrection with body is only a transmigration from sleep to sleep, and from dream to dream, like a man passing in the dark from bed to bed. But that elevation is perfectly true which entirely rises from the dead weight of bodies: for these, possessing a nature repugnant to Soul, possess something opposite to essence. And this is further evident from their generation and their continual flowing and decay; properties entirely foreign from the nature of being, substantial and real.

SEED THOUGHT

THE Will is not a made thing, which is made out of something, or that came out of some different State, into a State of Will. But the free Will of Man is a true and real Birth from the free, eternal, uncreate Will of God, which willeth to have a creaturely Offspring of itself, or to see itself in a creaturely State. And therefore the Will of Man hath the Nature of Divine Freedom; hath the Nature of Eternity, and the Nature of Omnipotence in it; because it is what it is, and hath what it hath, as a Spark, a Ray, a genuine Birth of the eternal, free, omnipotent Will of God. And therefore, as the will of God is superior to, and ruleth over all Nature; so the Will of Man, derived from the Will of God, is superior to, and ruleth over his own Nature. And thence it is, that as to itself, and so far as his own Nature reacheth, it hath the Freedom and Omnipotence of that Will from which it is descended; and can have or receive nothing, but what itself doth, and worketh, in and to itself.

—*William Law.*

JEWELS

Every morning compose your Soul for a tranquil day, and all through it be careful often to recall your resolution and bring yourself back to it, so to say. . . . Above all do not be discouraged; be patient; wait; strive to attain a calm gentle spirit.

—*St. Francis de Sales.*

Wherever any superior virtue is said to descend, we imply not that it leaves its own height to come down to us, but draws us up to itself; its descending to us is our ascending to it; otherwise such conjunction would be the imperfection of the virtue, not the perfection of him who receives it.

—*Iamblichus.*

Never let us be discouraged with ourselves, it is not when we are conscious of our faults that we are most wicked; on the contrary we are less so, we see by a brighter light: and let us remember, for our consolation, that we never perceive our sins till we begin to cure them.

—*Fénélon.*

Having borne a little chastening, the righteous shall receive great good;

Because God made trial of them, and found them worthy of Himself.

As gold in the furnace He proved them,

And as a whole burnt offering He accepted them.

—*The Wisdom of Solomon.*

Joy in heart, with sweetness in soul of the Saviour of heaven in hope is the highest health. And my life abides in love, and lightsomeness frees my thought. I fear nothing that may work me woe, so much do I know of weal. It were no wonder if death were dear when I might see Him that I seek. But now it is withheld from me and it behoves me to live here till He will release me. Seek and learn from this counsel, and thou wilt not err. Love makes me speak and joy makes me talk. See that thou dost lead thy life in lightsomeness, and keep heaviness away. Let not sadness sit with thee; but in the gladness of God make thou evermore thy glee.

—*Richard Rolle.*