

***De Decalogo (On the Decalogue), Excerpts***  
**Philo of Alexandria**  
**Translated by Yonge (1854-1855)**

I. I have in my former treatises set forth the lives of Moses and the other wise men down to his time, whom the sacred scriptures point out as the founders and leaders of our nation, and as its unwritten laws; I will now, as seems pointed out by the natural order of my subject, proceed to describe accurately the character of those laws which are recorded in writing, not omitting any allegorical meaning which may perchance be concealed beneath the plain language, from that natural love of more recondite and laborious knowledge which is accustomed to seek for what is obscure before, and in preference to, what is evident.<sup>2</sup> And to those who raise the question why the lawgiver gave his laws not in cities but in the deep desert, we must say, in the first place, that the generality of cities are full of unspeakable evils, and of acts of audacious impiety towards the Deity, and of injustice on the part of the citizens to one another;<sup>3</sup> for there is nothing which is wholly free from alloy, what is spurious getting the better of what is genuine, and what is plausible of what is true; which things in their nature are false, but which suggest plausible imaginations to the engendering of deceit in cities;<sup>4</sup> from whence also that most designing of all things, namely pride, is implanted, which some persons admire and worship, dignifying and making much of vain opinions, with golden crowns and purple robes, and numbers of servants and chariots, on which those men who are looked upon as fortunate and happy are borne aloft, sometimes harnessing mules or horses to their chariots, and sometimes even men, who bear their burdens on their necks, through the excess of the insolence of their masters, weighed down in soul even before they faint in body.

<sup>5</sup> II. Pride is also the cause of many other evils, such as insolence, arrogance, and impiety. And these are the beginnings of foreign and civil wars, allowing nothing whatever to rest in peace in any part, whether it be public or private, by sea or by land.<sup>6</sup> And why need I mention the offenses of such men against one another? For even divine things are neglected by pride, even though they are generally thought to be entitled to the highest honor. And what honor can there be where there is not truth also which has an honorable name and reality, since falsehood, on the other hand, is by nature devoid of honor;<sup>7</sup> and the neglect of divine things is evident to those who see clearly; for they, having fashioned an infinite variety of appearances by the arts of painting and sculpture, have surrounded them with temples and shrines, and have erected altars, and

adorned them with images and statues, and erections of that kind, giving celestial honors to all sorts of inanimate things, <sup>8</sup> and these men the sacred scriptures very felicitously liken to men born of a harlot. For as these men are inscribed as the children of all the lovers whom their mothers have had and call their fathers, from ignorance of the one who is by nature their real father, so also these men in cities, not knowing the truly and really existing and true God, have made deities of an innumerable host of false gods. <sup>9</sup> Then, as different beings were treated with divine honors by different nations, the diversity of opinions respecting the Supreme Being, begot also disputes about all kinds of other subjects; and it was from having a regard to these facts in the first place that Moses decided on giving his laws outside of the city. <sup>10</sup> He also considered this point, in the second place, that it is indispensable that the soul of the man who is about to receive sacred laws should be thoroughly cleansed and purified from all stains, however difficult to be washed out, which the promiscuous multitude of mixed men from all quarters has impregnated cities with; <sup>11</sup> and this is impossible to be effected unless the man dwells apart; and even then it cannot be done in a moment, but only at a much later period, when the impressions of ancient transgressions, originally deeply imprinted, have become by little and little fainter, and gradually become more and more dim, and at last totally effaced; <sup>12</sup> in this manner those who are skillful in the art of medicine, save their patients; for they do not think it advisable to give food before they have removed the causes of their diseases; for while the diseases remain, food is useless, being the pernicious materials of their sufferings.

<sup>13</sup> III. Very naturally therefore, having led his people from the injurious associations prevailing in the cities, into the desert, that he might purify their souls from their offenses he begun to bring them food for their minds; and what could this food be but divine laws and reasonings? <sup>14</sup> The third cause is this; as men who set out on a long voyage do not when they have embarked on board ship, and started from the harbor, then begin for the first time to prepare their masts, and cables, and rudders, but, while still remaining on the land, they make ready everything which can conduce to the success of their voyage; so in the same manner Moses did not think it fit that his people, after they had received their inheritances, and settled as inhabitants of their cities, should then seek laws in accordance with which they were to regulate their cities, but that, having previously prepared laws and constitutions, and being trained in those regulations, by which nations can be governed with safety, they should then be settled in their cities, being prepared at once to use the just regulations which were already prepared for them, in

unanimity and a complete participation in and proper distribution of those things which were fitting for each person.

<sup>15</sup> IV. And some persons say that there is also a fourth cause which is not inconsistent with, but as near as possible to the truth; for that, as it was necessary that a conviction should be implanted in the minds of men that these laws were not the inventions of men, but the most indubitable oracles of God, he on that account, led the people as far as possible from the cities into the deep wilderness, which was barren not only of all fruits that admitted of cultivation, <sup>16</sup> but even of wholesome water, in order that, when after having found themselves in want of necessary food, and expecting to be destroyed by hunger and thirst, they should on a sudden find themselves amid abundance of all necessary things, spontaneously springing up around them; the heaven itself raining down upon them food called manna, and as a seasoning delicacy to that meat an abundance of quails from the air; and the bitter water being sweetened so as to become drinkable, and the precipitous rock pouring forth springs of sweet water; then they might no longer look back upon the Nile with wonder, nor be in doubt as to whether those laws were the laws of God, having received a most manifest proof of the fact from the supplies by which they now found their scarcity relieved beyond all their previous expectations; <sup>17</sup> for they would see that he, who had given them a sufficiency of the means of life was now also giving them a means which should contribute to their living well; accordingly, to live at all required meat and drink which they found, though they had never prepared them; and towards living well, and in accordance with nature and decorum, they required laws and enactments, by which they were likely to be improved in their minds.

<sup>18</sup> V. These are the causes which may be advanced by probable conjecture, to explain the question which is raised on this point; for the true causes God alone knows. But having said what is fitting concerning these matters, I shall now proceed in regular order to discuss the laws themselves with accuracy and precision: first of all of necessity, mentioning this point, that of his laws God himself, without having need of any one else, thought fit to promulgate some by himself alone, and some he promulgated by the agency of his prophet Moses, whom he selected, by reason of his pre-eminent excellence, out of all men, as the most suitable man to be the interpreter of his will. <sup>19</sup> Now those which he delivered in his own person by himself alone, are both laws in general, and also the heads of particular laws; and those which he promulgated by the agency of his prophet are all referred to those others; <sup>20</sup> and I will explain each kind as well as I can.

VI. And first of all, I will speak of those which rather resemble heads of laws, of which in the first place one must at once admire the number, inasmuch as they are completed in the perfect number of the decade, which contains every variety of number, both those which are even, and those which are odd, and those which are even-odd [Liddell and Scott explain this as meaning such even numbers as become odd when divided, as 2, 6, 10, 14, etc.]; the even numbers being such as two, the odd numbers such as three, the even-odd such as five, it also comprehends all the varieties of the multiplication of numbers, and of those numbers which contain a whole number and a fraction, and of those which contain several fractional parts;<sup>21</sup> it comprehends likewise all the proportions; the arithmetical, which exceeds and is exceeded by an equal number: as in the case of the numbers one, and two, and three; and the geometrical, according to which, as the proportion of the first number is to the second, the same is the ratio of the second to the third, as is the case in the numbers one, two and four; and also in multiplication, which double, or treble, or in short multiply figures to any extent; also in those which are half as much again as the numbers first spoken of, or one third greater, and so on. It also contains the harmonic proportion, in accordance with which that number which is in the middle between two extremities, is exceeded by the one, and exceeds the other by an equal part; as is the case with the numbers three, four, and six.<sup>22</sup> The decade also contains the visible peculiar properties of the triangles, and squares, and other polygonal figures; also the peculiar properties of symphonic ratios, that of the diatessaron in proportion exceeding by one fourth, as is the ratio of four to three; that of fifths exceeding in the ratio of half as much again, as is the case with the proportion of three to two. Also, that of the diapason, where the proportion is precisely twofold, as is the ratio of two to one, or that of the double diapason, where the proportion is fourfold, as in the ratio of eight to two.<sup>23</sup> And it is in reference to this fact that the first philosophers appear to me to have affixed the names to things which they have given them. For they were wise men, and therefore they very speciously called the number ten the decade ('ten dekada'), as being that which received every thing ('hosanei dechada ousan'), from receiving ('tou dechesthai') and containing every kind of number, and ratio connected with number, and every proportion, and harmony, and symphony.

<sup>24</sup> VII. Moreover, at all events, in addition to what has been already said, any one may reasonably admire the decade for the following reason, that it contains within itself a nature which is at the same time devoid of intervals and capable of containing them. Now that nature which has no connection with intervals is beheld in a point alone; but

that which is capable of containing intervals is beheld under three appearances, a line, and a superficies, and a solid.<sup>25</sup> For that which is bounded by two points is a line; and that which has two dimensions or intervals is a superficies, the line being extended by the addition of breadth; and that which has three intervals is a solid, length and breadth having taken to themselves the addition of depth. And with these three nature is content; for she has not engendered more intervals or dimensions than these three.<sup>26</sup> And the archetypal numbers, which are the models of these three are, of the point the limit, of the line the number two, and of the superficies the number three, and of the solid the number four; the combination of which, that is to say of one, and two, and three, and four completes the decade, which displays other beauties also in addition to those which are visible.<sup>27</sup> For one may almost say that the whole infinity of numbers is measured by this one, because the boundaries which make it up are four, namely, one, two, three, and four; and an equal number of boundaries, corresponding to them in equal proportions, make up the number of a hundred out of decades; for ten, and twenty, and thirty, and forty produce a hundred. And in the same way one may produce the number of a thousand from hundreds, and that of a myriad from thousands.<sup>28</sup> And the unit, and the decade, and the century, and the thousand, are the four boundaries which generate the decade, which last number, besides what has been already said, displays also other differences of numbers, both the first, which is measured by the unit alone, of which an instance is found in the numbers three, or five, or seven; and the square which is the fourth power, which is an equally equal number. Also the cube, which is the eighth power, which is equally equal equally, and also the perfect number, the number six, which is made equal to its component parts, three, and two, and one.

<sup>29</sup> VIII. But what is the use now of enumerating the excellencies of the decade, which are infinite in number; treating our most important task as one of no importance, which is, indeed, of itself most all-sufficient, and worthy material for the study of those who devote themselves to mathematics? The other points we must pass over for the present; but perhaps it may not be out of place to mention one by way of example;<sup>30</sup> for those who have devoted themselves to the doctrines of philosophy say that what are called the categories in nature are ten only in number,-- quality, essence, quantity, relation, action, passion, possession, condition, and those two without which nothing can exist, time and place.<sup>31</sup> For there is nothing which is devoid of participation in these things; as, for instance, I partake of essence, borrowing of each one of the elements of which the whole world was made, that is to say, of earth and water, and air and fire, what is sufficient for my own existence.

I also partake of quality, inasmuch as I am a man; and of quantity, inasmuch as I am a man of such and such a size. I also partake of relation, when any one is on my right hand or on my left. Again, I am in action when I rub or burn any thing. I am in passion when I am cut or rubbed by any one else. I am discerned as a possessor, when I am clothed or equipped with anything. And I am seen in condition, when sitting still or lying down. And I am altogether in time and place, since not one of all the categories just mentioned can exist without both these things.

<sup>32</sup> IX. This, then, may be enough to say on these subjects; but it is necessary now to connect with these things what I am about to say, namely, that it was the Father of the universe who delivered these ten maxims, or oracles, or laws and enactments, as they truly are, to the whole assembled nation of men and women altogether. Did he then do so, uttering himself some kind of voice? Away! let not such an idea ever enter your mind; for God is not like a man, in need of a mouth, and of a tongue, and of a windpipe, <sup>33</sup> but as it seems to me, he at that time wrought a most conspicuous and evidently holy miracle, commanding an invisible sound to be created in the air, more marvellous than all the instruments that ever existed, attuned to perfect harmonies; and that not an inanimate one, nor yet, on the other hand, one that at all resembled any nature composed of soul and body; but rather it was a rational soul filled with clearness and distinctness, which fashioned the air and stretched it out and changed it into a kind of flaming fire, and so sounded forth so loud and articulate a voice like a breath passing through a trumpet, so that those who were at a great distance appeared to hear equally with those who were nearest to it. <sup>34</sup> For the voices of men, when they are spread over a very long distance, do naturally become weaker and weaker, so that those who are at a distance from them cannot arrive at a clear comprehension of them, but their understanding is gradually dimmed by the extension of the sound over a larger space, since the organs also by which it is extended are perishable. <sup>35</sup> But the power of God, breathing forth vigorously, aroused and excited a new kind of miraculous voice, and diffusing its sound in every direction, made the end more conspicuous at a distance than the beginning, implanting in the soul of each individual another hearing much superior to that which exists through the medium of the ears. For the one, being in some degree a slower kind of external sense, remains in a state of inactivity until it is struck by the air, and so put in motion. But the sense of the inspired mind outstrips that, going forth with the most rapid motion to meet what is said.

<sup>36</sup> X. This, then, may be enough to say about the divine voice. But a person may very reasonably raise the question on what account it happened, when there were so vast a number of myriads of men collected into one place that Moses chose to deliver each of the ten commandments in such a form as if they had been addressed not to many persons but to one, saying:-- Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not kill. [Exodus 20:13.] And giving the other commandments in the same form. <sup>37</sup> We must say, therefore that he is desirous here to teach that most excellent lesson to those who read the sacred scriptures, that each separate individual by himself when he is an observer of the law and obedient to God, is of equal estimation with a whole nation, be it ever so populous, or I might rather say, with all the nations upon earth. And if I were to think fit I might proceed further and say, with all the world; <sup>38</sup> because in another passage of the scriptures God, praising a certain just man, says, "I am thy God." [Genesis 17:1.] But the same being was also the God of the world; so that all those who are subject to him are arranged according to the same classification, and, if they be equally pleasing to the supreme Governor of them all, they partake of an equal acceptance and honor. <sup>39</sup> And, secondly, we must say that any one addressing himself to an assembly in common as to a multitude is not bound to speak as if he were conversing with a single individual, but sometimes he commands or forbids a thing in a particular manner in such a way that whatever he commands does at once appear requisite to be done by every one who hears him, and does also seem to be commanded to the whole collective multitude together; for the man who receives an admonition as if addressed to himself personally is more inclined to obey it; but he who hears it as if it were only directed to him in common with others is, to a certain degree, rendered deaf to it, making the multitude a kind of veil and excuse for his obstinacy. <sup>40</sup> A third view of the question is, that no king or tyrant may ever despise an obscure private individual, from being full of insolence and haughty pride; but that such an one, coming as a pupil to the school of the sacred laws, may relax his eyebrows, unlearning his self-opinionativeness, and yielding rather to true reason. <sup>41</sup> For if the uncreated, and immortal, and everlasting God, who is in need of nothing and who is the maker of the universe, and the benefactor and King of kings, and God of gods, cannot endure to overlook even the meanest of human beings, but has thought even such worthy of being banqueted in sacred oracles and laws, as if he were about to give him a love-feast, and to prepare for him alone a banquet for the refreshing and expanding of his soul instructed in the divine will and in the manner in which the great ceremonies ought to be performed, how can it be right for me, who am a mere mortal, to hold my

head up high and to allow myself to be puffed up, behaving with insolence to my equals whose fortunes may, perhaps, not be equal to mine, but whose relationship to me is equal and complete, inasmuch as they are set down as the children of one mother, the common nature of all men?<sup>42</sup> I will, therefore, behave myself in an affable, and courteous, and conciliatory manner to all men, even if I should obtain the dominion over the whole earth and the whole sea, and especially to those who are in the greatest difficulties and of the least reputation, and who are destitute of all assistance from kindred of their own, to those who are orphaned of either or of both their parents, to women who have experienced widowhood, and to old men who have either never had any children at all, or who have lost at an early age those who have been born to them;<sup>43</sup> for, inasmuch as I myself am a man, I will not think it right to cherish a pompous and tragedian-like dignity of manner, but I will keep myself within my nature, not transgressing its boundaries, but accustoming my mind to bear human events with complacency and equanimity. Not only because of the unforeseen changes by which things of one character assume a different appearance, both in the case of those in prosperity and of those who are in adversity, but also because it is becoming, even if prosperity were to remain unaltered and unshaken that a man should not forget himself. For these reasons it appears to me to have been that God expressed his oracular commandments in the singular number, as if they were directed to a single individual.

<sup>44</sup> XI. And, moreover, as was natural, he filled the whole place with miraculous signs and works, with noises of thunder too great for the hearing to support, and with the most radiant brilliancy of flashes of lightning, and with the sound of an invisible trumpet extending to a great distance, and with the march of a cloud, which, like a pillar, had its foundation fixed firmly on the earth, but raised the rest of its body even to the height of heaven; and, last of all, by the impetuosity of a heavenly fire, which overshadowed everything around with a dense smoke. For it was fitting that, when the power of God came among them, none of the parts of the world should be quiet, but that everything should be put in motion to minister to his service.<sup>45</sup> And the people stood by, having kept themselves clean from all connection with women, and having abstained from all pleasures, except those which arise from a participation in necessary food, having been purifying themselves with baths and ablutions for three days, and having washed their garments and being all clothed in the purest white robes, and standing on tiptoe and pricking up their ears, in compliance with the exhortations of Moses, who had forewarned them to prepare for the solemn assembly; for he knew that such would take place, when he, having been summoned up alone, gave

forth the prophetic commands of God.<sup>46</sup> And a voice sounded forth from out of the midst of the fire which had flowed from heaven, a most marvellous and awful voice, the flame being endowed with articulate speech in a language familiar to the hearers, which expressed its words with such clearness and distinctness that the people seemed rather to be seeing than hearing it.<sup>47</sup> And the law testifies to the accuracy of my statement, where it is written, “And all the people beheld the voice most evidently.” For the truth is that the voice of men is calculated to be heard; but that of God to be really and truly seen. Why is this? Because all that God says are not words, but actions which the eyes determine on before the ears.<sup>48</sup> It is, therefore, with great beauty, and also with a proper sense of what is consistent with the dignity of God, that the voice is said to have come forth out of the fire; for the oracles of God are accurately understood and tested like gold by the fire.<sup>49</sup> And God also intimates to us something of this kind by a figure. Since the property of fire is partly to give light, and partly to burn, those who think fit to show themselves obedient to the sacred commands shall live for ever and ever as in a light which is never darkened, having his laws themselves as stars giving light in their soul. But all those who are stubborn and disobedient are for ever inflamed, and burnt, and consumed by their internal appetites, which, like flame, will destroy all the life of those who possess them.

<sup>50</sup> XII. These, then, were the things which it was necessary to explain beforehand. But now we must turn to the commands themselves, and investigate everything which is marked by especial importance or difference in them. Now God divided them, being ten, as they are, into two tables of five each, which he engraved on two pillars. And the first five have the precedence and pre-eminence in honor; but the second five have an inferior place assigned to them. But both the tables are beautiful and advantageous to life, opening to men wrought and level roads kept within limits by one end, so as to secure the unwavering and secure progress of that soul which is continually desiring what is most excellent.<sup>51</sup> Now the most excellent five were of this character, they related to the monarchial principle on which the world is governed; to images and statues, and in short to all erections of any kind made by hand; to the duty of not taking the name of God in vain; to that of keeping the holy seventh day in a manner worthy of its holiness; to paying honor to parents both separately to each, and commonly to both. So that of the one table the beginning is the God and Father and Creator of the universe; and the end are one’s parents, who imitate his nature, and so generate the particular individuals. And the other table of five contains all the prohibitions against adulteries, and murder, and theft, and false witness,

and covetousness.<sup>52</sup> But we must consider, with all the accuracy possible, each of these oracles separately, not looking upon any one of them as superfluous. Now the best beginning of all living beings is God, and of all virtues, piety. And we must, therefore, speak of these two principles in the first place. There is an error of no small importance which has taken possession of the greater portion of mankind concerning a subject which was likely by itself, or, at least, above all other subjects, to have been fixed with the greatest correctness and truth in the mind of every one;<sup>53</sup> for some nations have made divinities of the four elements, earth and water, and air and fire. Others, of the sun and moon, and of the other planets and fixed stars. Others, again, of the whole world. And they have all invented different appellations, all of them false, for these false gods put out of sight that most supreme and most ancient of all, the Creator, the ruler of the great city, the general of the invincible army, the pilot who always guides everything to its preservation;<sup>54</sup> for they call the earth Proserpine, and Ceres, and Pluto. And the sea they call Neptune, inventing besides a number of marine deities as subservient to him, and vast companies of attendants, both male and female. The air they call Juno; fire, Vulcan; and the sun, Apollo; the moon, Diana; and the evening star, Venus; Lucifer, they call Mercury;<sup>55</sup> and to every one of the stars they have affixed names and given them to the inventors of fables, who have woven together cleverly-contrived imaginations to deceive the ear, and have appeared to have been themselves the ingenious inventors of these names thus given.<sup>56</sup> Again, in their descriptions, they divided the heaven into two parts, each one hemisphere, the one being above the earth and the other under the earth, which they called the Dioscuri [Sons of Jupiter, i.e., Castor and Pollux]; inventing, besides, a marvellous story concerning their living on alternate days.<sup>57</sup> For, as the heaven is everlasting revolving, in a circle without any cessation or interruption, it follows of necessity that each of the hemispheres must every day be in a different position from that which it was in the day before, everything being turned upside down as far as appearance goes, at least; for, in point of fact, there is no such thing as any uppermost or undermost in a spherical figure. And this expression is only used with reference to our own formation and position; that which is over our head being called uppermost, and that which is in the opposite direction being called undermost.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, to one who understands how to apply himself to philosophy in a genuine, honest spirit, and who lays claim to a guiltless and pure piety, God gives that most beautiful and holy commandment, that he shall not believe that any one of the parts of the world is its own master, for it has been created; and the fact of having been created implies a liability to destruction, even though the thing

created may be made immortal by the providence of the Creator; and there was a time once when it had no existence, but it is impiety to say that there was a previous time when God did not exist, and that he was born at some time, and that he does not endure for ever.

<sup>59</sup> XIII. But some persons indulge in such foolish notions respecting their judgments on these points, that they not only look upon the things which have been mentioned above as gods, but as each separate one of them as the greatest and first of gods, either because they are really ignorant of the true living God, from their nature being uninstructed, or else because they have no desire to learn, because they believe that there is no cause of things invisible, and appreciable only by the intellect, apart from the objects of the external senses, and this too, though the most distinct possible proof is close at hand;<sup>60</sup> for though, as it is owing to the soul that they live, and form designs, and do everything which is done in human life, they nevertheless have never been able to behold their soul with their eyes, nor would they be able if they were to strive with all imaginable eagerness, wishing to see it as the most beautiful possible of all images or appearances, from a sight of which they might, by a sort of comparison, derive a notion of the uncreated and everlasting God, who rules and guides the whole world in such a way as to secure its preservation, being himself invisible.<sup>61</sup> As, therefore, if any one were to assign the honors of the great king to his satraps and viceroys, he would appear to be not only the most ignorant and senseless of men, but also the most fool-hardy, giving to slaves what belongs to the master; in the same manner, let the man who honors the Creator, with the same honors as those with which he regards the creature, know that he is of all men the most foolish and the most unjust, in giving equal things to unequal persons, and that too not in such a way as to do honor to the inferior, but only to take it from the superior.<sup>62</sup> There are again some who exceed in impiety, not giving the Creator and the creature even equal honor, but assigning to the latter all honor, and respect, and reverence, and to the former nothing at all, not thinking him worthy of even the common respect of being recollected; for they forget him whom alone they should recollect, aiming, like demented and miserable men as they are, at attaining to an intentional forgetfulness.<sup>63</sup> Some men again are so possessed with an insolent and free-spoken madness, that they make an open display of the impiety which dwells in their hearts, and venture to blaspheme the Deity, whetting an evil-speaking tongue, and desiring, at the same time, to vex the pious, who immediately feel an indescribable and irreconcilable affliction, which enters in at their ears and pervades the whole soul; for this is the great engine of impious men, by which alone they bridle those who love God, as they think it better at the

moment to preserve silence, for the sake of not provoking their wickedness further.

<sup>64</sup> XIV. Let us, therefore, reject all such impious dishonesty, and not worship those who are our brothers by nature, even though they may have received a purer and more immortal essence than ourselves (for all created things are brothers to one another, inasmuch as they are created; since the Father of them all is one, the Creator of the universe); but let us rather, with our mind and reason, and with all our strength, gird ourselves up vigorously and energetically to the service of that Being who is uncreated and everlasting, and the maker of the universe, never shrinking or turning aside from it, nor yielding to a desire of pleasing the multitude, by which even those who might be saved are often destroyed.

<sup>65</sup> Let us, therefore, fix deeply in ourselves this first commandment as the most sacred of all commandments, to think that there is but one God, the most highest, and to honor him alone; and let not the polytheistical doctrine ever even touch the ears of any man who is accustomed to seek for the truth, with purity and sincerity of heart; <sup>66</sup> for those who are ministers and servants of the sun, and of the moon, and of all the host of heaven, or of it in all its integrity or of its principal parts, are in grievous error; (how can they fail to be, when they honor the subjects instead of the prince?) but still they sin less grievously than the others, who have fashioned stocks, and stones, and silver, and gold, and similar materials according to their own pleasure, making images, and statues, and all kinds of other things wrought by the hand; the workmanship in which, whether by statuary, or painter, or artisan, has done great injury to the life of man, having filled the whole habitable world. <sup>67</sup> For they have cut away the most beautiful support of the soul, namely the proper conception of the ever-living God; and therefore, like ships without ballast, they are tossed about in every direction for ever, being borne in every direction, so as never once to reach the haven, and never to be able to anchor firmly in truth, being blind respecting that which is worth seeing, and the only object as to which it is absolutely necessary to be sharp-sighted; <sup>68</sup> and such men appear to me to have a more miserable life than those who are deprived of their bodily sight; for these latter have either been injured without their own consent, or else have endured some terrible disease of the eyes, or else have been plotted against by their enemies; but those others by their own deliberate intention, have not only dimmed the eye of their soul, but have even chosen utterly to discard it; <sup>69</sup> on which account pity is bestowed on the one class as unfortunate, but the other class are justly punished as being wicked, who in conjunction with others have not chosen to recognize that fact which even an infant child would understand, namely, that the Creator is better

than the creature; for he is both more ancient in point of time, and is also in a manner the father of that which he has made. He is also superior in power, for the agent is more glorious than the patient. <sup>70</sup> And though it would be proper, if they had not committed sins, to deify the painters and statuaries themselves with exceeding honors, they have left them in obscurity, giving them no advantage, but have looked upon the figures which have been made, or the pictures which have been painted by them, as gods; <sup>71</sup> and these artists have often grown old in poverty and obscurity, dying, worn out by incessant misfortunes, while the things which they have fabricated, are made splendid with purple, and gold, and all sorts of costly splendor which wealth can furnish, and are worshipped not only by freemen but even by men of noble birth, and of the greatest personal strength and beauty. For the race of priests is scrutinized with the greatest rigor and minuteness, to see whether they are without blemish, and to see whether the whole combination of the parts of their bodies is entire and perfect; <sup>72</sup> and these are not the worst points of all, bad as they are: but this is entirely intolerable, for I have known before now, some of the very men who have made the things, praying and sacrificing to the very things which have been made by them, when it would have been more to their purpose to worship either of their own hands, or, if they feared the reproach of self-conceit, and therefore did not choose to do that, at all events to worship their anvils, and hammers, and graving tools, and compasses, and other instruments, by means of which the materials have been fashioned into shape.

<sup>73</sup> XV. And yet it is well for us, speaking with all proper freedom, to say to those who have shown themselves so devoid of sense; “My good men, the best of all prayers, and the end, and proper object of happiness, is to attain to a likeness to God. <sup>74</sup> Do you therefore pray to become like those erections of yours, that so you may reap the most supreme happiness, neither seeing with your eyes, nor hearing with your ears, nor respiring, nor smelling with your nostrils, nor speaking, nor tasting with your mouth, nor taking, nor giving, nor doing anything with your hands, nor walking with your feet, nor doing anything at all with any one of your members, but being as it were confined and guarded in the temple, as if in a prison, and day and night continually imbibing the steam from the sacrifices offered up; for this is the only one good thing which can be attributed to any kind of building or erection.” <sup>75</sup> But I think that when they hear these things, they will be indignant, as if they were listening not to prayers, but to curses, and that they will take refuge in such defense as chance may furnish them with, bringing retaliatory accusations; which may be the greatest proof of the manifest and undesirable impiety of those men, who look upon those beings as gods,

to whom they themselves would never wish to have their own natures assimilated.

<sup>76</sup> XVI. Let no one therefore of those beings who are endowed with souls, worship any thing that is devoid of a soul; for it would be one of the most absurd things possible for the works of nature to be diverted to the service of those things which are made by hand; and against Egypt, not only is that common accusation brought, to which the whole country is liable, but another charge also, which is of a more special character, and with great fitness; for besides falling down to statues, and images they have also introduced irrational animals, to the honors due to the gods, such as bulls, and rams, and goats, inventing some prodigious fiction with regard to each of them; <sup>77</sup> and as to these particular animals, they have indeed some reason for what they do, for they are the most domestic, and the most useful to life. The bull, as a plougher, draws furrows for the reception of the seed, and is again the most powerful of all animals to thresh the corn out when it is necessary to purify it of the chaff; the ram gives us the most beautiful garments for the coverings of our persons; for if our bodies were naked, they would easily be destroyed either through heat, or though intense cold, caused at one time by the blaze of the sun, and at another by the cooling of the air. <sup>78</sup> But as it is they go beyond these animals, and select the most fierce, and untameable of all wild animals, honoring lions, and crocodiles, and of reptiles the poisonous asp, with temples, and sacred precincts, and sacrifices, and assemblies in their honor, and solemn processions, and things of that kind. For if they were to seek out in both elements, among all the things given to man for his use by God, searching through earth and water, they would never find any animal on the land more savage than the lion, or any aquatic animal more fierce than the crocodile, both which creatures they honor and worship; <sup>79</sup> they have also deified many other animals, dogs, ichneumons, wolves, birds, ibises, and hawks, and even fish, taking sometimes the whole, and sometimes only a part; and what can be more ridiculous than this conduct? <sup>80</sup> And, accordingly, the first foreigners who arrived in Egypt were quite worn out with laughing at and ridiculing these superstitions, till their minds had become impregnated with the conceit of the natives; but all those who have tasted of right instruction, are amazed and struck with consternation, at their system of ennobling things which are not noble, and pity those who give into it, thinking the men, as is very natural, more miserable than even the objects which they honor, since they in their souls are changed into those very animals, so as to appear to be merely brutes in human form, now returning to their original nature. <sup>81</sup> Therefore, God, removing out of his sacred legislation all such impious deification of undeserving objects, has invited men to

the honor of the one true and living God; not indeed that he has any need himself to be honored; for being all-sufficient for himself, he has no need of any one else; but he has done so, because he wished to lead the race of mankind, hitherto wandering about in trackless deserts, into a road from which they should not stray, that so by following nature it might find the best end of all things, namely, the knowledge of the true and living God, who is the first and most perfect of all good things; from whom, as from a fountain, all particular blessings are showered upon the world, and upon the things and people in it.

<sup>82</sup> XVII. Having now spoken of the second commandment to the best of our ability, let us proceed to investigate the one which follows with accuracy, as is pointed out by the order in which they come. The next commandment is, “not to take the name of God in vain.” Now the principle on which this order or arrangement proceeds is very plain to those who are gifted with acute mental vision; for the name is always subsequent in order to the subject of which it is the name; being like the shadow which follows the body. <sup>83</sup> Having, therefore, previously spoken of the existence of God, and also of the honor to be paid to the everlasting God; he then, following the natural order of connection proceeds to command what is becoming in respect of his name; for the errors of men with respect to this point are manifold and various, and assume many different characters. <sup>84</sup> That being which is the most beautiful, and the most beneficial to human life, and suitable to rational nature, swears not itself, because truth on every point is so innate within him that his bare word is accounted an oath. Next to not swearing at all, the second best thing is to keep one’s oath; for by the mere fact of swearing at all, the swearer shows that there is some suspicion of his not being trustworthy. <sup>85</sup> Let a man, therefore, be dilatory, and slow if there is any chance that by delay he may be able to avoid the necessity of taking an oath at all; but if necessity compels him to swear, then he must consider with no superficial attention, every one of the subjects, or parts of the subject, before him; for it is not a matter of slight importance, though from its frequency it is not regarded as it ought to be. <sup>86</sup> For an oath is the calling of God to give his testimony concerning the matters which are in doubt; and it is a most impious thing to invoke God to be witness to a lie. Come now, if you please, and with your reason look into the mind of the man who is about to swear to a falsehood; and you will see that it is not tranquil, but full of disorder and confusion, accusing itself, and enduring all kinds of insolence and evil speaking; <sup>87</sup> for the conscience which dwells in, and never leaves the soul of each individual, not being accustomed to admit into itself any wicked thing, preserves its own nature always such as to hate evil, and to love virtue, being itself at

the same time an accuser and a judge; being roused as an accuser it blames, impeaches, and is hostile; and again as a judge it teaches, admonishes, and recommends the accused to change his ways, and if he be able to persuade him, he is with joy reconciled to him, but if he be not able to do so, then he wages an endless and implacable war against him, never quitting him neither by day, nor by night, but pricking him, and inflicting incurable wounds on him, until he destroys his miserable and accursed life.

<sup>88</sup> XVIII. “What sayest thou?” I should say to the perjured man, “will you dare to go to any one of your own acquaintances and say, My friend, come and bear witness for me that you have seen and heard, and been present at a whole catalogue of things which you have neither seen, nor heard? I think not; for that would be an act of incurable insanity; <sup>89</sup> with what face can you while sober, and while appearing to be master of yourself look upon your friend, and say, By reason of our acquaintance and companionship, act unjustly, violate the law, commit impiety for my sake; for it is plain that if he heard such a request, he would quickly renounce that companionship which you now believe to exist, reproaching himself for having ever had any friendship at all with a man of such a character as you, and would flee from you, as from a savage, and maddened, wild beast. <sup>90</sup> “Will you then, without shame call upon God, the father and sovereign of the world, to give his testimony in favor of those things, to witness which you will not venture even to bring your friend? And if you do so, will you do it knowing that he sees everything and hears everything, or not knowing this fact? <sup>91</sup> If you know it not you are an atheist, and atheism is the beginning of all iniquity, and, in addition to your atheism, you are also adding the wickedness of an oath, by swearing by him who in your opinion is not attending to you, nor paying any regard to human affairs. But if you are well assured that he does exert his providence in respect of such matters, still you are not free from the charge of excessive impiety, saying to God, if not with your mouth and tongue, still at all events with your conscience: Bear false witness for me, aid me in my wickedness, assist me in my impiety. I have but one hope of preserving a fair reputation among men, namely by concealing the truth; be thou wicked for another’s sake, you who are the better, for the sake of one who is worse; you who are God, the most excellent of all beings, for the sake of a man, and that too a wicked one.

<sup>92</sup> XIX. But there are also some people who, without any idea of acquiring gain, do from a bad habit incessantly and inconsiderately swear upon every occasion, even when there is nothing at all about which any doubt is raised, as if they were desirous to fill up the deficiency of their

argument with oaths, as if it would not be better to cut their conversation short, or I might rather say to utter nothing at all, but to preserve entire silence, for from a frequency of oaths arises a habit of perjury and impiety. <sup>93</sup> On which account the man who is going to take an oath ought to investigate everything with care and exceeding accuracy, considering whether the subject is of serious importance, and whether it has really taken place, and whether, if it has, he has comprehended it properly; and considering himself, also, whether he is pure in soul, and body, and tongue, having the first free from all violation of the law, the second from all defilement, and the last from all blasphemy. For it is an impiety for any disgraceful words to be uttered by that mouth by which the most sacred name is also mentioned. <sup>94</sup> Let him also consider whether the place and the time are suitable; for before now I have known some persons, in profane and impure places (in which it is not fitting that mention should be made of either their father or their mother, or of even any old man among their kindred who may have lived a virtuous life), swearing, and stringing together whole sentences full of oaths, using the name of God with all the variety of titles which belong to him, when they should not, out of sheer impiety. <sup>95</sup> And let him who pays but little heed to what has been said here know, in the first place, that he is impure and defiled; and, in the second place, that the most terrible punishments are constantly lying in wait for him; that justice who keeps her eye upon all human affairs, being implacable and inflexible towards all enormities of such a character; and, when she does not think fit to inflict her punishments at once, still exacting satisfaction with abundant usury whenever the opportunity seems to offer in combination with the general advantage.

<sup>96</sup> XX. The fourth commandment has reference to the sacred seventh day, that it may be passed in a sacred and holy manner. Now some states keep the holy festival only once in the month, counting from the new moon, as a day sacred to God; but the nation of the Jews keep every seventh day regularly, after each interval of six days; <sup>97</sup> and there is an account of events recorded in the history of the creation of the world, comprising a sufficient relation of the cause of this ordinance; for the sacred historian says, that the world was created in six days, and that on the seventh day God desisted from his works, and began to contemplate what he had so beautifully created; <sup>98</sup> therefore, he commanded the beings also who were destined to live in this state, to imitate God in this particular also, as well as in all others, applying themselves to their works for six days, but desisting from them and philosophizing on the seventh day, and devoting their leisure to the contemplation of the things of nature, and considering whether in the preceding six days they have done anything which has not been holy, bringing their conduct before the

judgment-seat of the soul, and subjecting it to a scrutiny, and making themselves give an account of all the things which they have said or done; the laws sitting by as assessors and joint inquirers, in order to the correcting of such errors as have been committed through carelessness, and to the guarding against any similar offenses being hereafter repeated.

<sup>99</sup> But God, on one occasion, employed the six days for the completion of the world, though he had no need of any length of time for such a purpose; but each man, as partaking of a mortal nature, and as being in need of ten thousand things for the unavoidable necessities of life, ought not to hesitate, even to the end of his life, to provide himself with all requisites, always allowing himself an interval of rest on the sacred seventh day.<sup>100</sup> Is it not a most beautiful recommendation, and one most admirably adapted to the perfecting of, and leading man to, every virtue, and above all to piety? The commandment, in effect says: Always imitate God; let that one period of seven days in which God created the world, be to you a complete example of the way in which you are to obey the law, and an all-sufficient model for your actions. Moreover, the seventh day is also an example from which you may learn the propriety of studying philosophy; as on that day, it is said, God beheld the works which he had made; so that you also may yourself contemplate the works of nature, and all the separate circumstances which contribute towards happiness.<sup>101</sup> Let us not pass by such a model of the most excellent ways of life, the practical and the contemplative; but let us always keep our eyes fixed upon it, and stamp a visible image and representation of it on our own minds, making our mortal nature resemble, as far as possible, his immortal one, in respect of saying and doing what is proper. And in what sense it is said that the world was made by God in six days, who never wants time at all to make anything, has been already explained in other passages where we have treated of allegories.

<sup>102</sup> XXI. Now, those who have applied themselves to mathematical studies, fully explain the precedence and pre-eminence to which the number seven is entitled among all existing things, tracing it out with great care and exceeding minuteness and accuracy; for among numbers seven is the virgin number, the nature which has no mother, that which is most nearly related to the unit, the foundation of all numbers; the idea of the planets, just as the unit is of the immovable sphere; for of the unit and the number seven consists the incorporeal heaven, the model of the visible heaven, and the heaven is made up of indivisible and divisible nature.<sup>103</sup> Now, indivisible nature has assigned to it the first, and highest, and immovable circumference, which the unit inspects and overlooks; but the divisible nature has received that circumference which is inferior both in power and in arrangement, which the number seven inspects,

which, being divided into six parts, has produced what are called the seven planets;<sup>104</sup> not indeed that any of the heavenly bodies do really wander ('peplanetai'), inasmuch as they all enjoy a divine, and happy, and blessed nature, to all of which characteristics a freedom from wandering is most closely akin: at all events, they always preserve a kind of identity in a constantly similar motion, and pass a long eternity without ever admitting any change or variation whatever. But because they revolve in a manner contrary to the indivisible and outermost sphere, they have been named planets ('planetes'), though without any strict propriety, by men speaking at random, who have by such language attributed their own propensity to wander to the heavenly bodies, which, in fact, never quit that position in the divine lamp in which they have been originally placed.<sup>105</sup> For all these reasons, and more besides, the number seven is honored. But there is no one cause on account of which it has received its precedence so completely, as because it is by its means that the Creator and Father of the universe is most especially made manifest; for the mind beholds God in this as in a mirror, acting, and creating the world, and managing the whole universe.

<sup>106</sup> XXII. And after this commandment relating to the seventh day he gives the fifth, which concerns the honor to be paid to parents, giving it a position on the confines of the two tables of five commandments each; for being the concluding one of the first table, in which the most sacred duties to the Deity are enjoined, it has also some connection with the second table which comprehends the obligations towards our fellow creatures;<sup>107</sup> and the cause of this, I imagine, is as follows: The nature of one's parents appears to be something on the confines between immortal and mortal essences. Of mortal essence, on account of their relationship to men and also to other animals, and likewise of the perishable nature of the body. And of immortal essence, by reason of the similarity of the act of generation to God the Father of the universe.<sup>108</sup> But it has often happened that men have attached themselves to one of these divisions, and have seemed to neglect the other; for being filled with a sincere love for piety, they have renounced all other occupations and considerations, and have devoted the whole of their lives to the service of God.<sup>109</sup> But they who have thought that beyond their duties to their fellow men there was no such thing as goodness, have clung solely to their fellowship with and to the society of men, and, being wholly occupied by a love of the society of men, have invited all men to an equal participation in all their good things, laboring at the same time to the best of their power to alleviate all their disasters.<sup>110</sup> Now, one may properly call both these latter, these philanthropic men, and also the former class, the lovers of God, but half perfect in virtue; for those only are perfect who have a

good reputation in both points: but those who do not attend to their duties towards men so as to rejoice with them at their common blessings, or to grieve with them at events of a contrary character, and who yet do not devote themselves to piety and holiness towards God, may be thought to have changed into the nature of wild beasts, the very pre-eminence among whom, in point of ferocity, those are entitled to who neglect their parents, being hostile to both the divisions of virtue above mentioned, namely, piety towards God, and their duty towards men.

<sup>111</sup> XXIII. Let them, then, not be ignorant that they are convicted before the two tribunals which are the only ones which exist in nature, of impiety as regards their duty towards God, as not worshipping those who have introduced beings who do not exist into existence, and who, in this respect, have imitated God; and as regards their duty towards men, of misanthropy and cruelty. <sup>112</sup> For to whom else will those men do good who neglect their nearest relations and those who have bestowed the greatest gifts upon them, some of which are of so great a character that they do not admit of any requital? For how can he who has been begotten by a parent, in requital again beget his parents, since nature has bestowed on parents this especial endowment in respect of their children, which can never be requited or recompensed? On which account it is becoming to a man to feel exceeding indignation when people, because they are unable to make a full return for the benefits which they have received, do not choose to make the very slightest; <sup>113</sup> to whom I might say, with perfect propriety, that wild beasts even must be made tame towards men; and, indeed, I have frequently known instances of lions being domesticated, and bears and leopards, and made gentle, not only to those who feed them, by reason of their gratitude for necessaries, but also to others, on account, in my opinion, of their resemblance to their feeders. For it is always well that what is worse should follow what is better, from a hope of deriving improvement; <sup>114</sup> but in this case I shall be constrained to use an entirely opposite language. You who are men, are imitators of some wild beasts. Even the beasts have learnt and know how to requite with service those who have done them service. Dogs who keep the house will defend their masters, and encounter death for their sakes when any danger suddenly overtakes them. And they say that the dogs employed among flocks of sheep will fight on behalf of the flocks, and endure till they either obtain the victory or meet with death, for the sake of protecting the shepherds themselves from injury. <sup>115</sup> Is it not then the most shameful of all shameful things for a man, in respect of the requital of favors, to be left behind by a dog, for that being, which of all others is the most gentle, to be outrun by the most audacious of beasts? But if we will not be taught by the land animals, let us go across to the

nature of the winged birds which traverse the air, and learn what we have need of from them. <sup>116</sup> In the case of storks the old birds remain in their nests because they are unable to fly; but their children, I had very nearly said, traverse the whole of earth and sea, and from all quarters provide their parents with what is necessary for them. <sup>117</sup> And so they, living in a tranquillity worthy of their time of life, enjoy all abundance, and pass their old age in luxury; while their children make light of all the hardships they undergo to furnish them with the means of support, under the influence both of piety and also of the expectation that they also in their old age will receive the same treatment from their descendants; and so they now discharge the indispensable debt which they owe their parents, knowing that in proper time, they will themselves receive what they are now bestowing. And there are also others who are unable to support themselves, for children are no more able to do so at the commencement of their existence than their parents are at the end of their lives. On which account the children, having while young been fed in accordance with the spontaneous promptings of nature, now with joy do in return support the old age of their parents. <sup>118</sup> Is it not right, then, after these examples, that men who neglect their parents should cover their faces from shame, and reproach themselves for disregarding those things which they ought to have cared for alone, or in preference to any thing else whatever? And this too, when they would not have been so much conferring benefits as requiring them? For the children have nothing of their own which does not belong to the parents, who have either bestowed it upon them from their own substance, or have enabled them to acquire it by supplying them with the means. <sup>119</sup> And have then these men within the borders of their souls piety and holiness, the chiefs of all the virtues? No; rather they have driven them beyond their borders, and forced them into exile; for parents are the servants of God for the propagation of children, and he who dishonors the servant dishonors also the master. <sup>120</sup> But some persons, who are rather audacious, magnify the title of parents, saying that the father and mother are evident gods, inasmuch as they imitate the uncreated God in their production of living animals, limiting, however, their assertion in this way, that the one is the God of the whole world, but the others only of those children whom they have begotten. And it is impossible that the invisible God can be piously worshipped by those people who behave with impiety towards those who are visible and near to them.

[121-153 continue expounding on the remaining five commandments]

<sup>154</sup> XXIX. However, enough of these matters. Still we must not be ignorant of this fact either, that the ten commandments are the heads of

all the particular and special laws which are recorded throughout all the history of the giving of the law related in the sacred scriptures.<sup>155</sup> The first law is the fountain of all those concerning the government of one supreme Ruler, and they show that there is one first cause of the world, one Ruler and King, who guides and governs the universe in such a way as conduces to its preservation, having banished from the pure essence of heaven all oligarchy and aristocracy, those treacherous forms of government which arise among wicked men, as the offspring of disorder and covetousness.<sup>156</sup> And the second commandment is the summary of all those laws which can possibly be enacted, about all the things made by hands, such as images and statues, and, in short, erections of any kind, of which the painters' and statuariers' arts are pernicious creators, for that commandment forbids such images to be made, and prohibits the cleaving to any of the fabulous inventions about the marriage of gods and the birth of gods, and the number of indescribable and painful calamities which are represented to have ensued from both such circumstances.<sup>157</sup> By the third commandment he restrains people from taking oaths, and limits the objects for which one may swear, defining when and where it may be lawful, and who may swear, and how the swearer ought to be disposed, both in his soul and body, and many other minute particulars, concerning those who keep their oaths, and the contrary.

<sup>158</sup> XXX. And the fourth commandment, the one about the seventh day, we must not look upon in any other light than as a summary of all the laws relating to festivals, and of all the purificatory rites enjoined to be observed on each of them. But the service appointed for them was one of holy ablutions, and prayers deserving to be heard, and perfect sacrifices.<sup>159</sup> And in speaking of the seventh here, I mean both that which is combined with the number six, the most generative of all numbers, and also that which, without being combined with the number six, is added to it, being made to resemble the unit, each of which numbers is reckoned among the festivals; for the lawgiver refers to the term, the sacred festival of the new moon, which the people give notice of with trumpets, and the day of fasting, on which abstinence from all meats and drinks is enjoined, which the Hebrews call, in their native language, pascha, on which the whole nation sacrifices, each individual among them, not waiting for the priests, since on this occasion the law has given, for one especial day in every year, a priesthood to the whole nation, so that each private individual slays his own victim on this day.<sup>160</sup> And also the day on which is offered the sheaf of corn, as an offering of gratitude for the fertility and productiveness of the plain, as exhibited in the fullness of the ears of corn. And the day of pentecost, which is numbered from this day by seven portions of seven days, in which it is

the custom to offer up loaves, which are truly called the loaves of the first fruits, since, in fact, they are the first fruits of the productions and crops of eatable grain, which God has given to mankind, as the most tractable of all his creatures.<sup>161</sup> But to the seventh day of the week he has assigned the greatest festivals, those of the longest duration, at the periods of the equinox both vernal and autumnal in each year; appointing two festivals for these two epochs, each lasting seven days; the one which takes place in the spring being for the perfection of what is being sown, and the one which falls in autumn being a feast of thanksgiving for the bringing home of all the fruits which the trees have produced. And seven days have very appropriately been appointed to the seventh month of each equinox, so that each month might receive an especial honor of one sacred day of festival, for the purpose of refreshing and cheering the mind with its holiday.<sup>162</sup> There are also other laws brought forward, enacted with great wisdom and excellence, conducing to the production of gentleness and fellowship among men, and inviting them to simplicity and equality; of these some have reference to that which is called the sabbatical year, in which it is expressly commanded that the people shall leave the whole land uncultivated, neither sowing, nor ploughing, nor preserving the trees, nor doing any other of the works which relate to agriculture;<sup>163</sup> for God thought the land, both the champaign and the mountainous country, after it had been laboring for six years in the production of crops, and the yearly yielding of its expected fruits, worthy of some relaxation, for the sake of recovering its breath as it were, and that, becoming free again, if one may say so, it might exert the spontaneous riches of its own nature.<sup>164</sup> There are also other laws about the fiftieth year, in which what has been enumerated above is performed in the most complete manner; and, what is the most important thing of all, the restitution is made of the different portions of land to those families which originally received them, a transaction full of humanity and equity.

<sup>165</sup> XXXI. And the fifth commandment, that about the honor due to parents, conceals under its brief expression, many very important and necessary laws, some enacted as applicable to old and young men, some as bearing on the relations existing between rulers and subjects, others concerning benefactors and those who have received benefits, others affecting slaves and masters;<sup>166</sup> for parents belong to the superior class of all these divisions just mentioned, the class, I mean, of elders, of rulers, of benefactors, and of masters; and children are in the inferior class, in which are ranked the younger people, the subjects, those who have received benefits, and slaves.<sup>167</sup> There are also many other commandments given, some to the young, admonishing them to receive

gladly the admonitions of old age; others to the old, bidding them take care of the young; some to subjects, enjoining them to show obedience to their rulers; others to the rulers, commanding them to consult for the advantage of those who are under their authority; some to those who have received benefits, recommending them a requital of the favors which have been conferred on them; others to those who have set the example of beneficence, bidding them not to exact a strict restitution as if they were usurers; some to servants, encouraging them to show an affectionate service towards their masters, others to the masters recommending them to practice that gentleness and mildness towards their slaves, by which the inequality of their respective conditions is in some degree equalized.

<sup>168</sup> XXXII. The first table of five, then, is completed in these commandments, exhibiting a comprehensive character; but of the special and particular laws the number is very great. Of the second table, the first commandment is that against adulterers, under which many other commands are conveyed by implication, such as that against seducers, that against practicers of unnatural crimes, that against all who live in debauchery, that against all men who indulge in illicit and incontinent connections; <sup>169</sup> but the lawgiver has set down all the different species of such intemperance, not for the sake of exhibiting its manifold, and diverse, and ever-changing varieties, but in order to cause those who live in an unseemly manner to show most evident signs of depression and shame, drinking in with their ears all the reproaches heaped together which they incur, and which may well make them blush. <sup>170</sup> The second brief commandment, the prohibition of slaying men, is that under which are implied all those necessary and most universally advantageous laws, relating to acts of violence, to insults, to assaults, to wounds, to mutilation. <sup>171</sup> The third, that which forbids stealing, is the one under cover of which are enacted all the regulations which have been laid down, respecting the repudiation of debts, and those who deny what has been deposited with them, and who form unhallowed partnerships, and indulge in shameless acts of rapine, and, in short, in any kind of covetousness by which some persons are induced, either openly or secretly to appropriate the possessions of others. <sup>172</sup> The fourth, that which is concerning the duty of not bearing false witness, is one under which many other prohibitions are conveyed, such as that of not deceiving, of not bringing false accusations, of not co-operating with those who are committing sin, of not making a pretense of good faith a cloak for faithlessness; for all which objects suitable laws have been enacted. <sup>173</sup> The fifth is that which cuts off desire, the fountain of all iniquity, from which flow all the most unlawful actions, whether of

individuals or of states, whether important or trivial, whether sacred or profane, whether they relate to one's life and soul, or to what are called external things; for, as I have said before, nothing ever escapes desire, but, like a fire in a wood, it proceeds onward, consuming and destroying everything; <sup>174</sup> and there are a great many subordinate sins, which are prohibited likewise under this commandment, for the sake of correcting those persons who cheerfully receive admonitions, and of chastising those stubborn people who devote their whole lives to the indulgence of passion.

<sup>175</sup> XXXIII. I have now spoken in this manner, at sufficient length, concerning the second table of five commandments, which make up the whole number of ten, which God himself promulgated with the dignity befitting their holy character; for it was suitable to his own nature to promulgate in his own person the heads and principles of all particular laws, but to send forth the particular and special laws by the most perfect of the prophets, whom he selected for his pre-eminent excellence, and filled with his divine spirit, and then appointed to be the interpreter of his holy oracles. <sup>176</sup> After having explained these matters, let us now proceed to relate the cause for which God, having pronounced these ten commandments or laws, in simple injunctions and prohibitions, appointed no punishment for those who should violate them, as lawgivers usually do. The reason is this: he was God, and being so he was at once the good Lord, the cause of good alone, and of no evil; <sup>177</sup> therefore, thinking it most appropriate to his own nature to deliver saving commands unalloyed, and partaking of no punishment, so that no one yielding to a foolish counsellor might accidentally choose what is best, but might do so from wise consideration and of his own deliberate purpose, he did not think fit to give his oracles to mankind in connection with any denunciation of punishment; not because he meant to give immunity to transgressors, but because he knew that justice was sitting by him, and surveying all human affairs, and that she would never rest, as being by nature a hater of evil and looking upon the chastisement of sinners as her own most appropriate task. <sup>178</sup> For it is proper for all the ministers and lieutenants of God, just as for generals in war, to put in practice severe punishments against those deserters, who forsake the ranks of the just one; but it becomes the great King, that general safety should be ascribed to him, as preserving the universe in peace, and giving at all times, to all people, in all riches and abundance, all the blessings of peace: for, in truth, God is the president of peace, but his subordinate ministers are the chiefs of war.