

The Seventeenth Book

To Asclepius, to be Truly Wise

1. Because my Son Tat, in thy absence, would needs learn the Nature of the things that are: He would not suffer me to give over (as coming very young to the knowledge of every individual) till I was forced to discourse to him many things at large, that his contemplation might from point to point, be more easy and successful.
2. But to thee I have thought good to write in few words, choosing out the principal heads of the things then spoken, and to interpret them more mystically, because thou hast, both more years, and more knowledge of Nature.
3. All things that appear, were made, and are made.
4. Those things that are made, are not made by themselves, but by another.
5. And there are many things made, but especially all things that appear, and which are different, and not like.
6. If the things that be made and done, be made and done by another, there must be one that must make, and do them; and he unmade, and more ancient than the things that are made.
7. For I affirm the things that are made, to be made by another; and it is impossible, that of the things that are made any should be more ancient than all, but only that which is not made.
8. He is stronger, and One, and only knowing all things indeed, as not having any thing more ancient than himself.
9. For he bears rule, both over multitude, and greatness, and the diversity of the things that are made, and the continuity of the Facture and of the Operation.

10. Moreover, the things that are made, are visible, but he is invisible; and for this cause, he maketh them, that he may be visible; and therefore he makes them always.

11. Thus it is fit to understand and understanding to admire and admiring to think thy self happy, that knowest thy natural Father.

12. For what is sweeter than a Natural Father?

13. Who therefore is this, or how shall we know him?

14. Or is it just to ascribe unto him alone, the Title and Appellation of God, or of the Maker, or of the Father, or of all Three? That of God because of his Power; the Maker because of his Working and Operation; and the Father, because of his Goodness.

15. For Power is different from the things that are made, but Act or Operation, in that all things are made.

16. Wherefore, letting go all much and vain talking, we must understand these two things, That Which is Made, and Him Which is the Maker; for there is nothing in the middle, between these Two, nor is there any third.

17. Therefore understanding All things, remember these Two; and think that these are All things, putting nothing into doubt; neither of the things above, nor of the things below; neither of things changeable, nor things that are in darkness or secret.

18. For All things, are but two Things, That which Maketh, and that which is Made, and the One of them cannot depart, or be divided from the Other.

19. For neither is it possible that the maker should be without the thing made, for either of them is the self-same thing; therefore cannot the One of them be separated from the other, no more than a thing can be separated from itself.

20. For if he that makes be nothing else, but that which makes alone, Simple, Uncompounded, it is of necessity, that he makes the same

thing to himself, to whom it is the Generation of him that maketh to be also All that is made.

21. For that which is generated or made, must necessarily be generated or made by another, but without the Maker that which is made, neither is made, nor is; for the one of them without the other, hath lost his proper Nature by the privation of the other.

22. So if these Two be confessed, That which maketh, and that which is made, then they are One in Union, this going before, and that following.

23. And that which goeth before, is, God the Maker, and that which follows is, that which is made, be it what it will.

24. And let no man be afraid because of the variety of things that are made or done, lest he should cast an aspersion of baseness, or infamy upon God, for it is the only Glory of him to do, or make All things.

25. And this making, or facture is as it were the Body of God, and to him that maketh or doth, there is nothing evil, or filthy to be imputed, or There is Nothing thought Evil or Filthy.

26. For these are Passions that follow Generation as Rust doth Copper, or as Excrements do the Body.

27. But neither did the Copper-smith make the Rust, nor the Maker the Filth, nor God the Evilness.

28. But the vicissitude of Generation doth make them, as it were to blossom out; and for this cause did make Change to be, as one should say, The Purgation of Generation.

29. Moreover, is it lawful for the same Painter to make both Heaven, and the Gods, and the Earth, and the Sea, and Men, and brute Beasts, and inanimate Things, and Trees; and is it impossible for God to make these things? O the great madness, and ignorance of men in things that concern God!

30. For men that think so, suffer that which is most ridiculous of all; for professing to bless and praise God yet in not ascribing to him the making or doing of All things, they know him not.

31. And besides their not knowing him, they are extremely impious against him, attributing unto him Passions, as Pride, or Oversight, or Weakness, or Ignorance, or Envy.

32. For if he do not make or do all things, he is either proud or not able, or ignorant, or envious, which is impious to affirm.

33. For God hath only one Passion, namely Good and he that is good is neither proud, nor impotent, nor the rest, but God is Good itself.

34. For Good is all power, to do or make all things, and every thing that is made, is made by God, that is by the Good and that can make or do all things.

35. See then how he maketh all things, and how the things are done, that are done, and if thou wilt learn, thou mayest see an Image thereof, very beautiful, and like.

36. Look upon the Husbandman, how he casteth Seeds into the Earth, here Wheat, there Barley, and elsewhere some other Seeds.

37. Look upon the same Man, planting a Vine, or an Apple-Tree, or a Fig-Tree, or some other Tree.

38. So doth God in Heaven sow Immortality, in the Earth Change in the whole Life, and Motion.

39. And these things are not many, but few, and easily numbered for they are all but four, God and Generation, in which are all things.