

Religion of the Ancient Greeks

Compiled by Glen W. Chapman - January 2001

'Seven vowels tell My Name,-the Mighty God, The everlasting Father of mankind:
The immortal lyre am I, that guides the world, And leads the music of the circling spheres
(Jacobs, Greek Anthology, Vol. xii, p. 34)

But we ought to say of God, He is, and is in relation to no time, but in relation to eternity the motionless, and timeless, and changeless, in which is no " before" nor "after," nor future, nor past, nor elder nor younger: but being One He has filled the "Ever" with the one "Now " ; and is the sole self-dependent real " Being," having neither past nor future, without beginning and without end.

"Thus then ought we in worship to salute and address Him, or even indeed as some of the ancients did, **THOU ART ONE**. For the Deity is not many, as each of us is, a promiscuous assemblage of all kinds compounded of numberless differences arising in its conditions: but "being" must be One, just as One must be " being" : for otherness, as a differentia of "being" inclines towards a becoming of "not-being."

(Plutarch)

God then, as the old tradition says, holding the beginning and end and middle of all things that exist, passes straight through while traveling round in nature's course. Justice is ever His companion, taking vengeance on those who depart from the divine law and the man who is to be happy holds fast to her and follows on humbly in orderly array. But if any man lifted up by arrogance, or elated by riches or honours, or personal beauty, has his soul inflamed with youthfulness and folly combined with insolence, as feeling no need of a ruler or guide, but being competent even to guide others, he is left forsaken of God and when he is thus forsaken, and has also taken to himself others of like mind, he prances about and throws all things into confusion, and to many he seems to be somebody, but after no long time pays to justice no contemptible penalty, and brings utter destruction upon himself as well as on his family and city.

((Plato, Laws, iv, 715)

'Invoking the God who is the Ruler of all things that are and that shall be and Father and Lord of Him who is the Ruler and the Cause : Whom if we rightly study philosophy, we all shall know clearly as far as is possible for favoured mortals.

(Ps.- Plato)

For it is not at all becoming that the First God should be the Creator; also the First God must be regarded as the father of the God who is Creator of the world.

If then we were inquiring about the creative principle, and asserting that He who was pre-existent would thereby be preeminently fit for the work, this would have been a suitable commencement of our argument.

(Numenius)

Since Plato knew that the Creator alone was known among men, but that the First Mind, which is called Absolute Being, is altogether unknown among them, therefore he spoke in this way, just as if one were to say : The First Mind, my good sirs, is not that which you imagine, but another mind before it, more ancient and more divine.'

A pilot when driven along in mid ocean, sits high above the helm, and steers the ship by the tillers, but his eyes and mind are strained directly at the sky, looking at things aloft, as his course passes across the heaven above, while he sails upon the sea below. So also the Creator having bound matter together in harmony that it may neither break out nor slip away, is Himself seated above matter, as above a ship on the sea and in directing the harmony He Steers by the ideas, while instead of the sky He looks to the High God who attracts His eyes, and takes his judgment

from that contemplation, and His energy from that impulse.'

Numenius, *fragment 10*

'And then this then was the Word on whom as being eternal depended the existence of the things that were made, as Heracleitus also would maintain, and the same forsooth of whom as set in the rank and dignity of the beginning, the Barbarian maintains that He was with God and was God: through whom absolutely all things were made; in whom the living creature, and life, and being had their birth: and that He came down into bodies, and clothed Himself in flesh, and appeared as man, yet showing withal even then the majesty of His nature; aye, indeed, even after dissolution. He was restored to deity, and is a God, such as He was before He came down to dwell in the body, and the flesh, and Man.'

Amelius, *a Fragment*

I must explain it to you then in riddles, that if the tablet suffer any harm in the remote parts of sea or land, the reader may learn nothing. For the matter is thus : Around the King of the Universe are all things, and all are for His sake, and that is the cause of all things beautiful : and around the Second are the secondary things, and around the Third the tertiary. The soul of man therefore strains after them to learn what sort of things they are, looking upon the things akin to its own nature.'

Plato *Epistle to Dionysus*

Let me then tell you for what cause the Creator formed a creation, and made this universe. He was good. And in one who is good no jealousy of anything ever finds place : and being free from jealousy He desired that all things should be made as like to Himself as possible.'

Plato, *Timaeus*, 29

'Have we then been right in speaking of one heaven, or was it more correct to say that there are many and infinite? One, if indeed it is to have been created according to the pattern. For that which includes the ideals of all living creatures whatsoever cannot possibly be second to another.'

Plato. *Timaeus*, 31

But that invisible and intelligible light is made an image of the Divine Word, which explained its origin; and it is a super-celestial star the source of the visible stars, which one would not be wrong in calling " universal light," from which sun and moon and the other planets and fixed stars draw their appropriate splendours in proportion to the power of each, while that unmingled and pure light becomes obscured, whenever it begins to turn in direction of the change from intelligible to sensible; for of the things subject to sense none is pure.

But when light came, and darkness yielded and retired, and bounds were set in the intervals between them namely evening and morning, there was at once completed, according to the necessary measure of time, that which the Creator rightly called " day," and not the first day but one day?, which it is called because of the singleness of the intelligible world, which has the

nature of unity.

'So then the incorporeal world was now complete, being founded in the divine Reason (Word); and, after the model thereof the sensible world was now to be produced in its perfection: so the Creator proceeded to make first that which was also the best of all its parts, namely the heaven, which He rightly named *the firmament*, as being corporeal. For body is by nature solid, because it is of three dimensions : and what other idea is there of a solid and a body, except extension in every direction :- Naturally therefore He called this the firmament, as contrasting the sensible and corporeal world with the intelligible and incorporeal.

But if in the present passage *the beginning* is not taken to be beginning in time, then the beginning according to number would naturally be signified, so that in *the beginning* God *created* would be equivalent to first He created the heaven.

For it becomes those who have made companionship with knowledge to desire to behold the true Being, but should they be unable, then at least to behold His image, the most holy Word....

But even if one be not as yet worthy to be called the son of God, let him strive earnestly to be adorned after the likeness of His first-begotten Word, who is the eldest of the Angels, and as an Archangel has many names.

'For He is called the Beginning, and the Name of God, and the Word, and the Man after God's image, and He who seeth Israel. For which cause I was induced a short time ago to praise the virtues of those who assert that we are all sons of one Man.

'For even if we have not yet become fit to be deemed children of God, yet surely we may be children of His eternal image, the most holy Word : for His eldest Word is the Image of God. I have, however, heard also one of the companions of Moses utter an oracle of this kind: Behold the man whose name is the **East**. A very strange appellation, if you suppose the man who is composed of body and soul to be meant: but if you mean that incorporeal Being who wears the divine form, you will fully acknowledge that the 'East' was happily given to Him as a most appropriate name: for the Universal Father made Him rise as His eldest Son, whom elsewhere He named "First-begotten." And indeed He that was begotten, imitating the ways of His Father, looked to His archetypal patterns in giving form to the various species.

(Plato. *Timaeus*)

'And having been created in this way ' (evidently the world is meant) it has been framed with a view to that which is apprehended by reason and thought and which is unchangeable. And if this be so, it necessarily follows that this world is an image of something. . . . For that contains in itself all intelligible beings, just as this world contains us.'

(Plato. *Timaeus*, 29)

'Anil again all that comes into existence must of necessity proceed from some cause for it is impossible for anything to have been generated without a cause.

(Plato, *Timaeus*, 28)

The whole heaven then or world, or by whatever other name it would most acceptably be called, so let us call it-we have first to ask a question concerning it, which it is assumed that one must ask on every subject at the outset-did it always exist, without any beginning of generation, or has it been generated and had some beginning?

'It has been generated for it is visible, and tangible, and has a body; and all such things are sensible : and all sensible things were shown to be apprehensible by opinion and generated. . But that which is generated must, we say, have been generated by some cause. It is a hard task, however, to discover the maker and 'artificer of this universe, and after discovering Him it is Impossible to speak of Him to all men... Thus therefore we. must say, according to probable reason, that this, world was in truth made through the providence of God a living being

endowed with soul and mind.'

(Plato. *Timaeus*, 28)

If there indeed this world is fair, and its Creator good, it is evident that He was looking to that pattern which is eternal. For the world is the fairest of things created, and He the best of causes.'

(Plato. *Timaeus*, 29)

'And He established a visible and tangible heaven: and for these reasons, and out of these elements such as I have described, being four in number, the body of the world was formed in harmony by due proportion, and gained from them a friendly union, so that having entered into unity with itself it became indissoluble by everything else except Him who bound it together.'

For there is a time when God Himself goes round with the universe, which He helps to guide and wheel; and there is a time when the revolutions having now completed their proper measure of time, He lets it go, and the universe, being a living creature and having received intelligence from Him who arranged it at first, revolves again of its own accord.'

(Plato, *Politicus*, 269)

So then time has come into existence together with the heaven, that having been produced together they may also be dissolved together, if there should ever be any dissolution of them.'

'Ye gods and sons of gods, the works whereof I am the Creator and Father are indissoluble save by my will.'

Therefore though all that is bound may be dissolved, yet only an evil being would wish to dissolve that which is well combined and in right condition. Wherefore also since ye have been created, though ye are not altogether immortal nor indissoluble, nevertheless ye shall not be dissolved, nor incur the fate of death, since in my will ye have found a still stronger and more valid bond than those by which ye were bound together at the time of your creation.

(Plato. *Timaeus*, 38)

'Such then being the reason and the thought of God in regard to the generation of time, in order that time might be brought into existence there have been created the sun and moon and five other bodies which are called planets, for distinguishing and preserving the numbers of time. And when He had made their bodies, God set them in their orbits...in order to define and preserve the reckonings of time: and, after having made their several bodies, God set them in the orbits traversed by the revolution of "the other," '

(Plato. *Timaeus*, 34)

Can we then mention any part of the soul that is more divine than that with which knowledge and wisdom have to do ?

We cannot.

'This then is the part of it like God and any one who by looking upon this has learned all that is divine, both God and wisdom, will thus get to know himself also most perfectly.

'It is evident.

'So then, just as there are mirrors clearer than the mirror in the eye, and purer and brighter, so God is something purer and brighter than the best that is in our soul.

'It seems so, Socrates.

'In looking then on God, we should be using that noblest mirror of man's nature also for looking into the virtue of the soul; and in this way should best see and learn to know ourselves.

Certainly;

May we then, said he, assume two kinds of existing things, one visible and the other invisible?

'Let us assume it, said he.

'And the invisible constant and immutable, but the visible never constant?

This also let us assume.

'Well then, said he, is not the one part of ourselves body, and the other soul?

'Exactly so, said he.

'To which class then should we say that the body is more like and more akin?

Oh, that is manifest to every one, said he; to the visible.

'And what of the soul? Is it visible or invisible?

'Not visible at any rate by men, Socrates.

'But we surely were speaking of the things that are visible or not visible to the nature of man; or was it, think you, to some other nature ?

'To man's nature.

'what do we say then about the soul? Is it visible or invisible?

'Invisible.

'Then it is unseen ?

'Yes.

'Soul then is more like the unseen than body is, and body like the visible ?

'It must certainly be so, Socrates.

'Well then, were we not also saying long ago, that whenever the soul uses the help of the body to examine anything, either by sight, or by hearing, or by any other sense (for this is what is meant by "the help of the body," to examine a thing by the help of senses, that then she is dragged by the body into the midst of these ever-changing objects, and loses her own way, and becomes confused, and giddy as if drunken, from trying to lay hold of things of this same kind?

'Quite so.

'But whenever she is contemplating anything by herself alone, she passes at once into yonder world, to the pure, and eternal, and immortal, and unchangeable. and there and with that world she ever communes as one of kindred nature, whenever she can be alone, and have opportunity; and so she has rest from her wandering, and with that world she is constant and unchangeable, as trying to lay hold of things of this same kind. And this condition of the soul is called thoughtfulness.

'Very nobly and truly spoken~ Socrates, said he.

'To which class then does it now seem to you, from both our former and our present arguments, that the soul is more like and more akin?

'Every one, I think. Socrates, said he, even the most stupid, would from this method of inquiry agree that soul is in every way much more like to that which is ever constant than to that which is not.

And what of the body?

More like the other.

'Look at it then again in this way; that, when soul and body 'are combined in one, nature orders the body to serve and to obey, and the soul to rule and to govern. Now in these respects again which of the two seems to you to be like the divine, and which like the mortal? Do you not think that the divine is naturally fitted to rule and to lead, and the mortal to be ruled and to serve?

'I think so.

'To which of the two then is the soul like?

'Evidently, Socrates, the soul is like the divine, and the body like the mortal.

Consider then, Cebes, said he, whether from all that has been said we obtain these results: that soul is most like the divine, and immortal, and intelligible, and uniform, and indissoluble, and ever unchangeable and self-consistent; and the body on the other hand most like the human, and mortal, and unintelligible, and multiform, and dissoluble, and never consistent with itself.

'Have we anything else to say against this, my dear Cebes, to show that it is not so?

'We have not.

'Well then? This being so, is it not a property of body to be quickly dissolved, but of soul on the other hand to be altogether indissoluble, or nearly so.

'Do you then observe, that after a man is dead, the body, the part of him which is visible and lies in the visible world, and is called a corpse, the property of which is to be dissolved, and decomposed, and scattered by the winds, does not at once suffer any change of this kind, but remains for a considerable time-if the man die with his body in a vigorous state and at a vigorous time of life, for a very considerable time indeed. For when the body has shrunk and been embalmed, like those who were embalmed in Egypt, it remains almost entire an incredible time. And even if the body be decayed, some parts of it, bones and sinews and all such parts, are nevertheless, so to say, immortal, are they not.'

Yes.

But then the soul, the unseen, that has passed to another place like herself, noble, and pure, and unseen, the true Hades, to the presence of the good and wise God, whither, if it be God's will, my own soul is presently to go-is then, I say, this soul of ours, such as she is and so endowed by nature, on being released from the body, immediately scattered to the winds and lost, as most men say?

'Far from it, my dear Cebes and Simmias; but the truth is much rather this. If the soul is pure when released, drawing nothing of the body after her, as she never during this life had any communication with it willingly, but shrank from it, and was gathered up into herself, as making this her constant study, and this is nothing else than practicing true philosophy, and preparing in reality to die cheerfully, -Or would not this be a preparation for death?

'Certainly.

'In this condition then the soul departs to that world which is like herself, the unseen, the divine, and deathless, and wise:

and on arriving there she finds ready for her a happy existence, released from error, and folly, and fears, and wild desires, and all other human ills, and, as they say of the initiated, she truly passes the rest of her time with the gods. Is it thus, Cebes, that we ought to speak, or otherwise?

'Thus assuredly, said Cebes.

'But, I suppose, if when she departs from the body she is polluted and impure, from being in constant communion with the body, and cherishing it, and loving it, and having been so bewitched by it, I mean by its desires and pleasures, as to think that nothing else is true except the corporeal, just what a man might touch, and see, and eat, and drink, and use for his lusts-but accustomed to hate and fear and shun what to the eyes is dark and invisible, but intelligible to thought and attainable by philosophy-in this condition then do you suppose that a soul will depart pure in herself and unalloyed?

'By no means, said he.'

(Ps-Plato. *Alcibiades*, I, 133)

'THESE things, then said I, are nothing in number nor in greatness in comparison with those other rewards which await each of them after death. And you ought to hear them, in order that each may receive in full what is due to be told to them by our argument.

'You may speak, said he, as to one who will not find the story too long. but listen all the more gladly.

'But indeed, said I, it is not the story of Alcinous that I am going to tell you, but that of a brave man Er the son of Armenius, a Pamphylian by birth, who was killed in battle, and when the dead were gathered up after ten days in a state of putrefaction, his body was taken up undecayed and carried home to be buried, and on the twelfth day when laid on the funeral pile, he came back to life, and after his revival told what he had seen in the other world.

And he said that when his soul had departed from his body, it travelled with many others, until they came to a certain wonderful place, in which were two chasms in the earth close to each other, and others opposite to them in the heaven above.

'And between them there sat judges, who, after they had decided each case, commanded the just to proceed by the way on the right hand leading upward through the heaven, having hung around them on their breast the records of the judgments given, and the unjust by the way leading downwards on the left, these also having on their backs the records of all their deeds.

'And when he himself came forward, they said that he must be the messenger to mankind of what was done there, and they commanded him to hear and see everything in that place.'

Plato, *Politicus*, 272

'Such being the nature of these regions, as soon as the dead have arrived at the place to which each is conveyed by his genius, first of all they undergo a trial, both those who have lived good and holy and just lives, and those who have not. And those who are found to have led tolerable lives proceed to Acheron, and embarking on such vessels as there are for them, they arrive on board these at the lake; and there they dwell, and by undergoing purification and suffering punishment for their evil deeds they are absolved from any wrongs they have committed, or receive rewards for their good deeds, each according to his deserts. But any who are found to be incurable by reason of the greatness of their sins, having either perpetrated many great acts of sacrilege, or many nefarious and lawless murders, or any other crimes of this kind-these are hurled by their appropriate doom into Tartarus, whence they never come forth.

But those who are found to have committed sins which are great though not incurable, as for instance if in anger they have done any violence to father or mother, and passed the rest of their life in penitence, or have committed homicide in any other similar way, these must also be thrown into Tartarus

'But any who are found to have been preeminent in holiness of life-these are they who are set free and delivered from these regions here on earth, as from prison-houses, and attain to the pure dwelling place above, and make their abode upon the upper earth. And of this same class those who have fully purified themselves by philosophy live entirely free from troubles for all time to come, and attain to habitations still fairer than these, which it is neither easy to describe, nor does the time suffice at present.

(Plato, *Phaedo*, 113)

'(There was a law) that he who had lived a just and holy life should depart after death to the Islands of the Blessed, and dwell in perfect happiness beyond the reach of all evils. But the man who had lived an unjust and ungodly life must go away to the prison-house of vengeance and punishment, which they call Tartarus.'

And again a little farther On:

'Next they must be stripped of all these wrappings and so tried, for their judgment must be after death. The judge also must be naked, that is to say, dead, examining by his very soul the very soul of each immediately after death, when it is bereft of all its kindred, and has left all that apparel behind on earth, in order that the judgment may be just.'

And afterwards he adds:

'This, Callicles, is what I have heard and believe to be true, and from these stories I gather the following conclusion: death, as it seems to me, is nothing else than the separation from each other of two things, the soul and the body.

(Plato, *Gorgias*, 523)

'That mankind has often been destroyed by floods and diseases and many other calamities, in which only some small portion Of the human race was left.

'Certainly every one thinks all this very probable.

'Come then, let us consider one of the many destructions, namely this which was caused by the flood.

'What point are we to observe in regard to it ?

'That those who escaped the destruction at that time would be chiefly mountain-shepherds, small sparks of the human race preserved on the hill-tops.

(Plato, *Laws*, 677)

'The fact that the course of the world at one time is guided in the direction of its present revolution, and at another time in the opposite direction.

'How then?

'This change we must believe to be the greatest and most complete of all variations in the heavenly motions.

'It seems so indeed.

We must suppose therefore that very great changes Occur at that time to us who dwell under the heaven.

This too is probable.

'But do we not know that animal nature ill endures many great and various changes occurring at the' same time?

For when the period of all these events was completed, and change was to take place, and moreover the earth-born race had now all perished, each soul having fulfilled all its generations, and fallen into the earth for as many sowings as were appointed for each, then at length the pilot of the universe let go, as it were, the handle of the rudder, and withdrew into his own watch-tower, and Fate and an innate desire began to turn the course of the world hack again.

So all the gods who locally share the government of the chief divinity, as soon as they learnt what was going on, let go in turn the portions of the world belonging to their charge. And the world turning back and clashing together, as having received an opposite impulse from before and from behind, was mightily convulsed in itself, and wrought another destruction of animals of all kinds. 'And after this in long process of time the world ceasing from tumults and confusion and convulsions welcomed a calm, and entered in orderly array upon its own accustomed course, having charge and control over itself and all things in it.'

'Wherefore God, who had first set the world in order, when at length he saw that it was in helpless strait, being anxious that it should not be shattered in the confusion of the storm, and sink down into the infinite gulf of disorder, again takes His seat at the helm, and having turned back what had suffered harm and dissolution into the former circuit appointed by Himself, He arranges and restores it, and endows it with immortality and perpetual youth. Here then the story of the end of all things is told.'

'Very great destruction therefore of all other animals necessarily occurs at that time, and moreover very little of the human race survives. And with regard to these survivors, among man other marvelous and strange effects which occur the greatest is this, which also follows immediately upon the reversal of the motion of the universe at the time when the revolution opposite to that which is at present established takes place'

(Plato, *Politicus*)

Chaos Versus Eternity

Diodorus of Sicily, a Greek historian who lived in the first century before the Christian era, stated that the ancient Greeks held for the most part one of "two opinions."

Now as regards the first origin of mankind two opinions have arisen among the best authorities both on nature and on history. One group, which takes the position that the universe did not come into being *and* will not decay, has declared that the race of men also has existed

from eternity, there having never been a time when men were first begotten; the other group, however, which holds that the universe came into being and will decay, has declared that, like it, men had their first origin at a definite time.

When in the beginning, as their account runs, the universe was being formed, both heaven and earth were indistinguishable in appearance, since their elements were intermingled: then, when their bodies separated from one another, the universe took on in all its parts the ordered form in which it is now seen: the air set up a continual motion, and the fiery element in it gathered into the highest regions, since anything of such a nature moves upward by reason of its lightness (and it is for this reason that the sun and the multitude of other stars became involved in the universal whirl): while all that was mud like and thick and contained an admixture of moisture sank because of its weight into one place; and as this continually turned about upon itself and became compressed, out of the wet it formed the sea, and out of what was firmer, the land, it first of all became firm, and then, since its surface was in a ferment because of the warmth, portions of the wet swelled up in masses in many places, and in these pustules covered with delicate membranes made their appearance. Such a phenomenon can be seen even yet in swamps and marshy places whenever, the ground having become cold, the air suddenly and without *any* gradual change becomes intensely warm. And while the wet was being impregnated with life by reason of the warmth in the manner described, by night the living things forthwith received their nourishment from the mist that fell from the enveloping air, and by day were made solid by the intense heat; and finally, when the embryos had attained their full development and the membranes had been thoroughly heated and broken open, there was produced every form of animal life. Of these, such as had partaken of the most warmth set off to the higher regions, having become winged, and such as retained an earthy consistency came to be numbered in the class of creeping things and of the other land animals, while those whose composition partook the most of the wet element gathered into the region congenial to them, receiving the name of water animals. And since the earth constantly grew more solid through the action of the sun's fire and of the winds, it was finally no longer able to generate any of the larger animals, but each kind of living creature was now begotten by breeding with one another...

... Concerning the first generation of the universe this is the account which we have received I Epicuran influence I. But the first men to be born, they say, led an undisciplined and bestial life, setting out one by one to secure their sustenance and taking for their food both the tenderest herbs and the fruits of wild trees. Then, since they were attacked by the wild beasts, they came to each other's aid, being instructed by expediency, and when gathered together in this way by reason of their fear they gradually came to recognize their mutual characteristics. And though the sounds which they made were at first unintelligible and indistinct, yet gradually they came to give articulation to their speech, and by agreeing with one another upon symbols for each thing which presented itself to them, made known among themselves the significance which was to be attached to each term. But since groups of this kind arose over every part of the inhabited world, not all men had the same language, inasmuch as every group organized the elements of its speech by mere chance. This is the explanation of the present existence of every conceivable kind of language, and, furthermore, out of these first groups to be formed came all the original nations of the world.

Now the first men, since none of the things useful for life had yet been discovered, led a wretched existence, having no clothing to cover them, knowing not the use of dwelling and fire, and also being totally ignorant of cultivated food. For since they also even neglected the harvesting of the wild food, they laid by no store of its fruits against their needs; consequently large numbers of them perished in the winters because of the cold and the lack of food. Little by little, however, experience taught them both to take to the caves in winter and to store such fruits as could be preserved. And when they had become acquainted with fire and other useful things, the arts also and whatever else is capable of furthering man's social life were gradually discovered. Indeed, speaking generally, in all things it was necessity itself that became man's teacher, supplying in appropriate fashion instruction in every matter to a creature which was endowed by nature and had, as its assistants for every purpose, hands and speech and sagacity of mind...

... Now the Egyptians have an account like this:

when in the beginning the universe came into being, men first came into existence in Egypt, both because of the favourable climate of the land and because of the nature of the Nile. For this stream, since it produces much life *and* provides a Spontaneous supply of food, easily supports whatever living things have been engendered; for both the root of the reed *and* the lotus, as well as the Egyptian bean and CORSAEUM, as it is called, and many other similar plants, supply the race of men with nourishment all ready for use. As proof that animal life appeared first of all in their land they would offer the fact that even at the present day the soil of the Thebaid at certain times generates mice in such numbers and of such size as to astonish all who have witnessed the phenomenon; for some of them are fully formed as far as the breast and front feet and are able to move, while the rest of the body is unformed, the clod of earth still retaining its natural character. And from this fact it is manifest that, when the world was first taking shape, the land of Egypt could better *than* any other have been the place where mankind came into being because of the well-tempered nature of its soil; for even at the present *time*, while the soil of no other country generates any such things, in it alone certain living creatures may be seen coming into being in a marvellous fashion.

– *Diodorus Sicilicus*

Philo Judaeus, *On the Creation of the World*

So having transcended by reason all visible being, let us go "on to the dignity of Him who is without bodily form and invisible, and can be apprehended by thought alone, who is not only the God of the worlds both of thought and sense, but also the Creator of all things. But if any one assign the worship of the eternal Maker to another younger and begotten being, let him be written down as a madman and guilty of the greatest...

Now if any one should wish to use names in a plainer way, he would not call the intelligible world anything else than the Word (or, Reason) of God already engaged in the creation of a world. For neither is the intelligible city anything else than the reasoning of the architect, when already designing to build the visible city [y help of the intelligible].

But this is Moses' doctrine, not mine. For instance, in recording the creation of man he expressly avows, in what follows, that he was fashioned after the image of God.

'Now if the part (man) is an image of an image, evidently also the whole species, I mean the whole of this visible world, which is greater than the human image, is a copy of a divine image ; and the archetypal seal, as we call the intelligible world, must itself evidently be the archetypal pattern, the Idea of the Ideas, the Word (Reason) of God.

'He says too that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the *earth*"; taking the beginning to be not, as some suppose, the beginning in time; for time was not before the world, but either has begun with it, or after it.

'For since time is the interval of the motion of the universe, and motion could not begin before that which was to be moved, but must necessarily be established either after it or with it, so time also must necessarily either have been of the same age as the universe or younger than it, and to venture to represent it as older is un-philosophical.

First, therefore, the Maker proceeded to make an immaterial heaven, and an invisible earth, and an ideal form of air and of empty space, the former of which lie called *darkness*, because the air is by nature black, and the latter He called *the deep*, for the empty space is very deep and vast.

Then He made the incorporeal essence of water and of wind, and over all the essence of light, the seventh in order, which again was incorporeal, and then an intelligible model of the sun, and of all stars that were destined to be established as luminaries in the heaven.

'And the wind and the light were honoured with special privilege for the one lie called the *Spirit of God*, because spirit is the most life-giving thing, and God is the author of life; and light, because it excels in beauty. For the intelligible is, I suppose, as much more brilliant and radiant than the sensible, as the sun is than darkness, and day than night, and the mind, which is the guide

of the whole soul, than the criteria of sense, and the eyes than the body.