

man against whom the serpent conspired. It is not quite clear whether Plato happened to hit on these matters by chance, or whether, as some think, on his visit to Egypt¹ he met even with those who interpret the Jews' traditions philosophically, and learnt some ideas from them, some of which he kept, and some of which he slightly altered, since he took care not to offend the Greeks by keeping the doctrines derived from the wisdom of the Jews without making any change. For they are popularly criticized for the strange character of their laws and their peculiar society. However, it is not now the right time to explain the myth of Plato, nor the story about the serpent and the paradise of God, and all the events which according to the Bible occurred in it. To the best of our ability we dealt with them as our primary concern in the commentary on Genesis.

40. When he asserts that the narrative of Moses represents God *most impiously, making Him into a weakling right from the beginning, and incapable of persuading even one man whom He had formed*, to this also we will reply that his remark is much the same as if one were to object to the existence of evil because God has been unable to prevent even one man from committing sin in order that just one individual might be found who has had no experience of evil from the beginning.² Just as in this matter those who are concerned to defend the doctrine of providence state their case at great length and with arguments of considerable cogency, so also the story of Adam and his sin will be interpreted philosophically by those who know that Adam means *anthropos* (man) in the Greek language, and that in what appears to be concerned with Adam Moses is speaking of the nature of man. For, as the Bible says, 'in Adam all die', and they were condemned in 'the likeness of Adam's transgression'.³ Here the divine Word says this not so much about an individual as of the whole race. Moreover, in the sequence of sayings⁴ which seem to refer to one individual, the curse of Adam is shared by all men. There is also no woman to whom the curses pronounced against Eve do not apply. And the statement that the man who was cast out of the garden with the woman was clothed with 'coats of skins',⁵ which God made for those who had sinned on account of the transgression of mankind, has a certain secret and mysterious

¹ Cf. Cicero, *de Fin.* v, 29, 87; Plutarch, *Mor.* 354E; Diogenes Laert. III, 6; Clem. Al. *Strom.* I, 66, 3; Philostratus, *V.A.* I, 2.

² Cf. IV, 3.

³ I Cor. xv. 22; Rom. v. 14.

⁴ I.e. the curses enumerated in Gen. iii. 17-19.

⁵ Gen. iii. 21. The Gnostics interpreted the coats of skins as bodies; cf. Cassianus ap. Clem. Al. *Strom.* III, 95, 2; Irenaeus, I, 5, 5 (Harvey, I, 50); Tertullian, *de Resurr. Carnis*, 7; Clem. Al. *Exc. Theod.* LV, 1. It is taken to be Origen's opinion by Methodius, *de Resurr.* I, 4, 2; I, 23, 3. But in *Sel. in Gen.* (vol. VIII, p. 58 Lomm.) Origen says this is possible but by no means certain. His disciple, Gregory of Nyssa, interprets it to mean a change for the worse in the physical state of man; cf. K. Holl, *Amphilochius von Ikonium* (1904), p. 202.

meaning, superior to the Platonic doctrine of the descent of the soul which loses its wings and is carried hither 'until it finds some firm resting-place'.¹

41. He next speaks as follows: *Then they tell of a flood and a prodigious ark holding everything inside it, and that a dove and a crow were messengers. This is a debased and unscrupulous version of the story of Deucalion,² I suppose they did not expect that this would come to light, but simply recounted the myth to small children.* Here also see the unphilosophical hatred of the man towards the very ancient scripture of the Jews. For he had nothing to say against the story of the flood; and he did not even realize what he could have said against the ark and its measurements. For if we follow the opinion of the multitude and accept the statement that the ark was three hundred cubits long, fifty wide, and thirty high, it is impossible to maintain that it had room for all the animals on earth, fourteen of each clean and four of each unclean animal. He merely says it was *prodigious, holding everything inside it*. But what was *prodigious* about it? It is related to have taken a hundred years to build; at the bottom its length was three hundred cubits and its breadth fifty cubits, and it contracted in dimensions until at the top, which was thirty cubits high, it ended by being one cubit square. Should we not rather admire a construction which resembled a very large city? For when we square the measurements, the result is that it was ninety thousand cubits long at the bottom, and two thousand five hundred broad.³ Should we not admire the planning which made it firmly built and able to endure a storm which brought such a flood? Moreover, it was not smeared with pitch or any such substance,

¹ Plato, *Phaedrus* 246B, C; Cf. VI, 43 below.

² For Noah as Deucalion cf. IV, 11; Philo, *de Praem. et Poen.* 23; Justin, *Apol.* II, 7, 2; Theophilus, *ad Autol.* III, 19.

³ The difficulty of the inadequate size of the ark was raised by Apelles, Marcion's pupil (cf. v, 54). Origen quotes his views in *Hom. in Gen.* II, 2; the Greek text of this passage is preserved both in Catenae and in Procopius of Gaza (see Baehrens' edition in the Berlin Corpus, VI, pp. 23 ff.). There Origen answers that he has learnt from a learned Jew that the cubits are to be understood as geometrical cubits, so that the measurements should be squared, giving a floor area of 90,000 by 2500 and a height of 900 cubits. 'And it would be quite absurd if one who had been educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, who are particularly expert in geometry, and had been brought up in the king's house, had not perceived that if the 300 cubits of length, the 50 of breadth, and 30 of height, had been ordinary cubits, there would probably not have been room even for four elephants and their food for a year, whereas God commanded that two of all unclean animals should go into the ark.'

The Latin text, however, has a sentence corresponding to nothing in the Greek fragment (Baehrens, p. 29): 'Apud geometras enim secundum eam rationem quae apud eos virtus (= δυνάμις) vocatur, ex solido et quadrato vel in sex cubitos unus deputatur, si generaliter, vel in trecentos, si minutatim deducatur.' The statement that according to the geometri- cians one cubit equals either six or three hundred does not fit the interpretation in the Greek fragment. But it explains Augustine's comments (*Quaest. in Hept.* I, 4 (Migne, P.L. XXXIV, 549); *de Civ. Dei*, XV, 27) that according to Origen the measurements of the ark are reckoned in geometrical cubits one of which equals six ordinary cubits.