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Ancient Witnesses to the Essenes

Philo of Alexandria, Flavius Josephus and Pliny the Elder

Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Book II, chapter 8, sections 2–13, translated by William Whiston (1737).

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book V, chapter 15 (17), translated by John Bostock and H. T. Riley (London: H. G. Bohn, 1855).

Philo of Alexandria, from *The Works of Philo Judaeus*, translated by C. D. Yonge (London: H. G. Bohn, 1854–55): *Every Good Man Is Free* §§ XII–XIII (vol. III, pp. 523–526); the Essene fragment of the *Hypothetica* preserved by Eusebius (vol. IV, pp. 218–220); and *On a Contemplative Life* on the Therapeutae (vol. IV, pp. 1–20). The Philo pages are reproduced as page images from a scan of the original volumes.

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Flavius Josephus

The Wars of the Jews, II.8.2–13

2. For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees; of the second, the Sadducees; and the third sect, which pretends to a severer discipline, are called Essens. These last are Jews by birth, and seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects have. These Essens reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence, and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue. They neglect wedlock, but choose out other persons children, while they are pliable, and fit for learning, and esteem them to be of their kindred, and form them according to their own manners. They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued; but they guard against the lascivious behavior of women, and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man.

3. These men are despisers of riches, and so very communicative as raises our admiration. Nor is there any one to be found among them who hath more than another; for it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order,—insomuch that among them all there is no appearance of poverty, or excess of riches, but every one's possessions are intermingled with every other's possessions; and so there is, as it were, one patrimony among all the brethren. They think that oil is a defilement; and if any one of them be anointed without his own approbation, it is wiped off his body; for they think to be sweaty is a good thing, as they do also to be clothed in white garments. They also have stewards appointed to take care of their common affairs, who every one of them have no separate business for any, but what is for the uses of them all.

4. They have no one certain city, but many of them dwell in every city; and if any of their sect come from other places, what they have lies open for them, just as if it were their own; and they go in

to such as they never knew before, as if they had been ever so long acquainted with them. For which reason they carry nothing at all with them when they travel into remote parts, though still they take their weapons with them, for fear of thieves. Accordingly, there is, in every city where they live, one appointed particularly to take care of strangers, and to provide garments and other necessaries for them. But the habit and management of their bodies is such as children use who are in fear of their masters. Nor do they allow of the change of garments or of shoes till be first torn to pieces, or worn out by time. Nor do they either buy or sell any thing to one another; but every one of them gives what he hath to him that wanteth it, and receives from him again in lieu of it what may be convenient for himself; and although there be no requital made, they are fully allowed to take what they want of whomsoever they please.

5. And as for their piety towards God, it is very extraordinary; for before sun-rising they speak not a word about profane matters, but put up certain prayers which they have received from their forefathers, as if they made a supplication for its rising. After this every one of them are sent away by their curators, to exercise some of those arts wherein they are skilled, in which they labor with great diligence till the fifth hour. After which they assemble themselves together again into one place; and when they have clothed themselves in white veils, they then bathe their bodies in cold water. And after this purification is over, they every one meet together in an apartment of their own, into which it is not permitted to any of another sect to enter; while they go, after a pure manner, into the dining-room, as into a certain holy temple, and quietly set themselves down; upon which the baker lays them loaves in order; the cook also brings a single plate of one sort of food, and sets it before every one of them; but a priest says grace before meat; and it is unlawful for any one to taste of the food before grace be said. The same priest, when he hath dined, says grace again after meat; and when they begin, and when they end, they praise God, as he that bestows their food upon them; after which they lay aside their [white] garments, and betake themselves to their labors again till the evening; then they return home to

supper, after the same manner; and if there be any strangers there, they sit down with them. Nor is there ever any clamor or disturbance to pollute their house, but they give every one leave to speak in their turn; which silence thus kept in their house appears to foreigners like some tremendous mystery; the cause of which is that perpetual sobriety they exercise, and the same settled measure of meat and drink that is allotted them, and that such as is abundantly sufficient for them.

6. And truly, as for other things, they do nothing but according to the injunctions of their curators; only these two things are done among them at everyone's own free-will, which are to assist those that want it, and to show mercy; for they are permitted of their own accord to afford succor to such as deserve it, when they stand in need of it, and to bestow food on those that are in distress; but they cannot give any thing to their kindred without the curators. They dispense their anger after a just manner, and restrain their passion. They are eminent for fidelity, and are the ministers of peace; whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath; but swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury 4 for they say that he who cannot be believed without [swearing by] God is already condemned. They also take great pains in studying the writings of the ancients, and choose out of them what is most for the advantage of their soul and body; and they inquire after such roots and medicinal stones as may cure their distempers.

7. But now if any one hath a mind to come over to their sect, he is not immediately admitted, but he is prescribed the same method of living which they use for a year, while he continues excluded'; and they give him also a small hatchet, and the fore-mentioned girdle, and the white garment. And when he hath given evidence, during that time, that he can observe their continence, he approaches nearer to their way of living, and is made a partaker of the waters of purification; yet is he not even now admitted to live with them; for after this demonstration of his fortitude, his temper is tried two more years; and if he appear to be worthy, they then admit him into their society. And before he is allowed to touch their common

food, he is obliged to take tremendous oaths, that, in the first place, he will exercise piety towards God, and then that he will observe justice towards men, and that he will do no harm to any one, either of his own accord, or by the command of others; that he will always hate the wicked, and be assistant to the righteous; that he will ever show fidelity to all men, and especially to those in authority, because no one obtains the government without God's assistance; and that if he be in authority, he will at no time whatever abuse his authority, nor endeavor to outshine his subjects either in his garments, or any other finery; that he will be perpetually a lover of truth, and propose to himself to reprove those that tell lies; that he will keep his hands clear from theft, and his soul from unlawful gains; and that he will neither conceal any thing from those of his own sect, nor discover any of their doctrines to others, no, not though anyone should compel him so to do at the hazard of his life. Moreover, he swears to communicate their doctrines to no one any otherwise than as he received them himself; that he will abstain from robbery, and will equally preserve the books belonging to their sect, and the names of the angels 5 [or messengers]. These are the oaths by which they secure their proselytes to themselves.

8. But for those that are caught in any heinous sins, they cast them out of their society; and he who is thus separated from them does often die after a miserable manner; for as he is bound by the oath he hath taken, and by the customs he hath been engaged in, he is not at liberty to partake of that food that he meets with elsewhere, but is forced to eat grass, and to famish his body with hunger, till he perish; for which reason they receive many of them again when they are at their last gasp, out of compassion to them, as thinking the miseries they have endured till they came to the very brink of death to be a sufficient punishment for the sins they had been guilty of.

9. But in the judgments they exercise they are most accurate and just, nor do they pass sentence by the votes of a court that is fewer than a hundred. And as to what is once determined by that number, it is unalterable. What they most of all honor, after God

himself, is the name of their legislator [Moses], whom if any one blaspheme he is punished capitally. They also think it a good thing to obey their elders, and the major part. Accordingly, if ten of them be sitting together, no one of them will speak while the other nine are against it. They also avoid spitting in the midst of them, or on the right side. Moreover, they are stricter than any other of the Jews in resting from their labors on the seventh day; for they not only get their food ready the day before, that they may not be obliged to kindle a fire on that day, but they will not remove any vessel out of its place, nor go to stool thereon. Nay, on other days they dig a small pit, a foot deep, with a paddle [which kind of hatchet is given them when they are first admitted among them]; and covering themselves round with their garment, that they may not affront the Divine rays of light, they ease themselves into that pit, after which they put the earth that was dug out again into the pit; and even this they do only in the more lonely places, which they choose out for this purpose; and although this easement of the body be natural, yet it is a rule with them to wash themselves after it, as if it were a defilement to them.

10. Now after the time of their preparatory trial is over, they are parted into four classes; and so far are the juniors inferior to the seniors, that if the seniors should be touched by the juniors, they must wash themselves, as if they had intermixed themselves with the company of a foreigner. They are long-lived also, insomuch that many of them live above a hundred years, by means of the simplicity of their diet; nay, as I think, by means of the regular course of life they observe also. They contemn the miseries of life, and are above pain, by the generosity of their mind. And as for death, if it will be for their glory, they esteem it better than living always; and indeed our war with the Romans gave abundant evidence what great souls they had in their trials, wherein, although they were tortured and distorted, burnt and torn to pieces, and went through all kinds of instruments of torment, that they might be forced either to blaspheme their legislator, or to eat what was forbidden them, yet could they not be made to do either of them, no, nor once to flatter their tormentors, or to shed a tear; but they smiled in their very pains, and laughed those to scorn who

inflicted the torments upon them, and resigned up their souls with great alacrity, as expecting to receive them again.

11. For their doctrine is this: That bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of is not permanent; but that the souls are immortal, and continue for ever; and that they come out of the most subtile air, and are united to their bodies as to prisons, into which they are drawn by a certain natural enticement; but that when they are set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward. And this is like the opinions of the Greeks, that good souls have their habitations beyond the ocean, in a region that is neither oppressed with storms of rain or snow, or with intense heat, but that this place is such as is refreshed by the gentle breathing of a west wind, that is perpetually blowing from the ocean; while they allot to bad souls a dark and tempestuous den, full of never-ceasing punishments. And indeed the Greeks seem to me to have followed the same notion, when they allot the islands of the blessed to their brave men, whom they call heroes and demi-gods; and to the souls of the wicked, the region of the ungodly, in Hades, where their fables relate that certain persons, such as Sisyphus, and Tantalus, and Ixion, and Tityus, are punished; which is built on this first supposition, that souls are immortal; and thence are those exhortations to virtue and dehortations from wickedness collected; whereby good men are bettered in the conduct of their life by the hope they have of reward after their death; and whereby the vehement inclinations of bad men to vice are restrained, by the fear and expectation they are in, that although they should lie concealed in this life, they should suffer immortal punishment after their death. These are the Divine doctrines of the Essens 6 about the soul, which lay an unavoidable bait for such as have once had a taste of their philosophy.

12. There are also those among them who undertake to foretell things to come, 7 by reading the holy books, and using several sorts of purifications, and being perpetually conversant in the discourses of the prophets; and it is but seldom that they miss in their predictions.

13. Moreover, there is another order of Essens, 8 who agree with the rest as to their way of living, and customs, and laws, but differ from them in the point of marriage, as thinking that by not marrying they cut off the principal part of human life, which is the prospect of succession; nay, rather, that if all men should be of the same opinion, the whole race of mankind would fail. However, they try their spouses for three years; and if they find that they have their natural purgations thrice, as trials that they are likely to be fruitful, they then actually marry them. But they do not use to accompany with their wives when they are with child, as a demonstration that they do not many out of regard to pleasure, but for the sake of posterity. Now the women go into the baths with some of their garments on, as the men do with somewhat girded about them. And these are the customs of this order of Essens.

Pliny the Elder

Natural History, V.15 (17)

Lying on the west of Asphaltites, and sufficiently distant to escape its noxious exhalations, are the Esseni, a people that live apart from the world, and marvellous beyond all others throughout the whole earth, for they have no women among them; to sexual desire they are strangers; money they have none; the palm-trees are their only companions. Day after day, however, their numbers are fully recruited by multitudes of strangers that resort to them, driven thither to adopt their usages by the tempests of fortune, and wearied with the miseries of life. Thus it is, that through thousands of ages, incredible to relate, this people eternally prolongs its existence, without a single birth taking place there; so fruitful a source of population to it is that weariness of life which is felt by others. Below this people was formerly the town of Engadda, second only to Hierosolyma in the fertility of its soil and its groves of palm-trees; now, like it, it is another heap of ashes. Next to it we come to Masada, a fortress on a rock, not far from Lake Asphaltites. Thus much concerning Judæa.

Philo of Alexandria

The pages that follow are reproduced from C. D. Yonge's translation, 1854–55.

of becoming acquainted with the truth, do at their leisure become initiated themselves and initiate others in the divine virtues by very clear explanations. And among the Indians there is the class of the gymnosophists, who, in addition to natural philosophy, take great pains in the study of moral science likewise, and thus make their whole existence a sort of lesson in virtue.

XII. Moreover Palestine and Syria too are not barren of exemplary wisdom and virtue, which countries no slight portion of that most populous nation of the Jews inhabits. There is a portion of those people called Essenes, in number something more than four thousand in my opinion, who derive their name from their piety, though not according to any accurate form of the Grecian dialect, because they are above all men devoted to the service of God, not sacrificing living animals, but studying rather to preserve their own minds in a state of holiness and purity. These men, in the first place, live in villages, avoiding all cities on account of the habitual lawlessness of those who inhabit them, well knowing that such a moral disease is contracted from associations with wicked men, just as a real disease might be from an impure atmosphere, and that this would stamp an incurable evil on their souls. Of these men, some cultivating the earth, and others devoting themselves to those arts which are the result of peace, benefit both themselves and all those who come in contact with them, not storing up treasures of silver and of gold, nor acquiring vast sections of the earth out of a desire for ample revenues, but providing all things which are requisite for the natural purposes of life; for they alone of almost all men having been originally poor and destitute, and that too rather from their own habits and ways of life than from any real deficiency of good fortune, are nevertheless accounted very rich, judging contentment and frugality to be great abundance, as in truth they are.

Among those men you will find no makers of arrows, or javelins, or swords, or helmets, or breastplates, or shields; no makers of arms or of military engines; no one, in short, attending to any employment whatever connected with war, or even to any of those occupations even in peace which are easily perverted to wicked purposes; for they are utterly ignorant of all traffic, and of all commercial dealings, and of all navigation, but they repudiate and keep aloof from everything which can possibly afford any inducement to covetousness; and there is

not a single slave among them, but they are all free, aiding one another with a reciprocal interchange of good offices; and they condemn masters, not only as unjust, inasmuch as they corrupt the very principle of equality, but likewise as impious, because they destroy the ordinances of nature, which generated them all equally, and brought them up like a mother, as if they were all legitimate brethren, not in name only, but in reality and truth.

But in their view this natural relationship of all men to one another has been thrown into disorder by designing covetousness, continually wishing to surpass others in good fortune, and which has therefore engendered alienation instead of affection, and hatred instead of friendship; and leaving the logical part of philosophy, as in no respect necessary for the acquisition of virtue, to the word-catchers, and the natural part, as being too sublime for human nature to master, to those who love to converse about high objects (except indeed so far as such a study takes in the contemplation of the existence of God and of the creation of the universe), they devote all their attention to the moral part of philosophy, using as instructors the laws of their country which it would have been impossible for the human mind to devise without divine inspiration.

Now these laws they are taught at other times, indeed, but most especially on the seventh day, for the seventh day is accounted sacred, on which they abstain from all other employments, and frequent the sacred places which are called synagogues, and there they sit according to their age in classes, the younger sitting under the elder, and listening with eager attention in becoming order. Then one, indeed, takes up the holy volume and reads it, and another of the men of the greatest experience comes forward and explains what is not very intelligible, for a great many precepts are delivered in enigmatical modes of expression, and allegorically, as the old fashion was; and thus the people are taught piety, and holiness, and justice, and economy, and the science of regulating the state, and the knowledge of such things as are naturally good, or bad, or indifferent, and to choose what is right and to avoid what is wrong, using a threefold variety of definitions, and rules, and criteria, namely, the love of God, and the love of virtue, and the love of mankind.

Accordingly, the sacred volumes present an infinite number of instances of the disposition devoted to the love of God, and

of a continued and uninterrupted purity throughout the whole of life, of a careful avoidance of oaths and of falsehood, and of a strict adherence to the principle of looking on the Deity as the cause of everything which is good and of nothing which is evil. They also furnish us with many proofs of a love of virtue, such as abstinence from all covetousness of money, from ambition, from indulgence in pleasures, temperance, endurance, and also moderation, simplicity, good temper, the absence of pride, obedience to the laws, steadiness, and everything of that kind; and, lastly, they bring forward as proofs of the love of mankind, goodwill, equality beyond all power of description, and fellowship, about which it is not unreasonable to say a few words.

In the first place, then, there is no one who has a house so absolutely his own private property, that it does not in some sense also belong to every one: for besides that they all dwell together in companies, the house is open to all those of the same notions, who come to them from other quarters; then there is one magazine among them all; their expenses are all in common; their garments belong to them all in common; their food is common, since they all eat in messes; for there is no other people among which you can find a common use of the same house, a common adoption of one mode of living, and a common use of the same table more thoroughly established in fact than among this tribe: and is not this very natural? For whatever they, after having been working during the day, receive for their wages, that they do not retain as their own, but bring it into the common stock, and give any advantage that is to be derived from it to all who desire to avail themselves of it; and those who are sick are not neglected because they are unable to contribute to the common stock, inasmuch as the tribe have in their public stock a means of supplying their necessities and aiding their weakness, so that from their ample means they support them liberally and abundantly; and they cherish respect for their elders, and honour them and care for them, just as parents are honoured and cared for by their lawful children: being supported by them in all abundance both by their personal exertions, and by innumerable contrivances.

XIII. Such diligent practisers of virtue does philosophy, unconnected with any superfluous care of examining into Greek names render men, proposing to them as necessary

exercises to train them towards its attainment, all praiseworthy actions by which a freedom, which can never be enslaved, is firmly established.

And a proof of this is that, though at different times a great number of chiefs of every variety of disposition and character, have occupied their country, some of whom have endeavoured to surpass even ferocious wild beasts in cruelty, leaving no sort of inhumanity unpractised, and have never ceased to murder their subjects in whole troops, and have even torn them to pieces while living, like cooks cutting them limb from limb, till they themselves, being overtaken by the vengeance of divine justice, have at last experienced the same miseries in their turn: others again having converted their barbarous frenzy into another kind of wickedness, practising an ineffable degree of savageness, talking with the people quietly, but through the hypocrisy of a more gentle voice, betraying the ferocity of their real disposition, fawning upon their victims like treacherous dogs, and becoming the causes of irremediable miseries to them, have left in all their cities monuments of their impiety, and hatred of all mankind, in the never to be forgotten miseries endured by those whom they oppressed: and yet no one, not even of those immoderately cruel tyrants, nor of the more treacherous and hypocritical oppressors was ever able to bring any real accusation against the multitude of those called Essenes or Holy.* But everyone being subdued by the virtue of these men, looked up to them as free by nature, and not subject to the frown of any human being, and have celebrated their manner of messing together, and their fellowship with one another beyond all description in respect of its mutual good faith, which is an ample proof of a perfect and very happy life.

XIV. But it is necessary for us (since some persons do not believe that there is any perfect virtue in the multitude, but that whatever in such persons appears like virtue only reaches a certain point of increase and growth), to bring forward as corroborative testimonies the lives of some particular good men who are the most undeniable evidences of freedom.

Calanus was an Indian by birth, one of the gymnosophists; he, being looked upon as the man who was possessed of the greatest fortitude of all his contemporaries, and that too, not

* The Greek is *ἐσσαίων ἢ ὁσίων*, as if *ἐσσαίων* was only a variety of the word *ὅσιων*, "holy."

when separate they depart, having gained some skill in the sacred laws, and having made great advances towards piety.

Do not these objects appear to you to be of greater importance than any other pursuit can possibly be? Therefore they do not go to interpreters of laws to learn what they ought to do; and even without asking, they are in no ignorance respecting the laws, so as to be likely, through following their own inclinations, to do wrong; but if you violate or alter any one of their laws, or if you ask any one of them about their national laws or customs, they can all tell you at once, without any difficulty; and the husband appears to be a master, endowed with sufficient authority to explain these laws to his wife, a father to teach them to his children, and a master to his servants.

And again, it is easy to speak in the same manner with respect to the seventh year, though, perhaps, one is not to say exactly the same things, for they do not abstain from all work as they do on the sabbath days, only they leave their land fallow till the next year, in order that so it may become productive; for they think that thus it becomes much better after having had this rest, and then that it may be cultivated again, and not be dried up and exhausted by the uninterrupted continuance of cultivation; and you may see that a similar practice conduces to strength of body, for not only do intervals of relaxation contribute to health, but you may see too that physicians also enjoin a degree of rest at times from work; for what is incessant, and uninterrupted, and always the same, is likely to be injurious, especially in the case of hard work, the cultivation of the land.

And a proof of this is, that if any one were to recommend the people to cultivate the land itself much more, and to add this seventh year also, and should promise them that the usual crops of fruit should reward their labours, they still would not adopt his advice, for they think that they are not alone entitled to rest from their labours, and yet even if they were to do so, it would be nothing strange; but they think that their land also deserves a certain degree of rest and exemption, in order again to receive a fresh beginning of care and cultivation; since, in God's name, what could hinder them from letting it out during the year of jubilee thus proposed, and then receiving its annual produce once a year from those who rented and

cultivated it? But as I said before, they will not admit of any such expedient in any manner or degree whatever, out of care, as it seems to me, for the welfare of the land; and this is truly a very great proof of their humanity and moderation.

For, since they themselves rest from their labours during that year, they think that it is not right either to collect the fruits or crops which are produced, nor to lay up any thing which has not accrued to them from their own labours; but, as if God provided for them while the land is thus enjoying rest and regulating itself according to its will, they think that any one who chooses or who is in want, any traveller or stranger, may gather the fruit that year with impunity.

However, this is enough to say to you on these matters; for, as to the fact of this law existing among them with regard to the seventh day and seventh year, you will not inquire of me, as you have perhaps heard it often from many persons, both physicians, and investigators of natural history, and philosophers, who discuss this law about the seventh year, as to the effect which it has on the nature of the universe, and especially on the nature of man.

This is what he says about the seventh day.

From the same book, c. 8.

I shall be contented with the testimony of Philo on the present occasion, which he has given about the matter which I am here explaining in many passages of his treatises. And now do you take that work which he has written in defence of the Jewish nation, and read the following sentences in it.

But our lawgiver trained an innumerable body of his pupils to partake in those things, who are called Essenes, being, as I imagine, honoured with this appellation because of their exceeding holiness.

And they dwell in many cities of Judæa, and in many villages, and in great and populous communities. And this sect of them is not an hereditary or family connexion; for family ties are not spoken of with reference to acts voluntarily performed; but it is adopted because of their admiration for virtue and love of gentleness and humanity. At all events, there are no children among the Essenes, no, nor any youths or persons only just entering upon manhood; since the dispositions of all such persons are unstable and liable to change, from the

imperfections incident to their age, but they are all full-grown men, and even already declining towards old age, such as are no longer carried away by the impetuosity of their bodily passions, and are not under the influence of the appetites, but such as enjoy a genuine freedom, the only true and real liberty. And a proof of this is to be found in their life of perfect freedom; no one among them ventures at all to acquire any property whatever of his own, neither house, nor slave, nor farm, nor flocks and herds, nor any thing of any sort which can be looked upon as the fountain or provision of riches; but they bring them together into the middle as a common stock, and enjoy one common general benefit from it all.

And they all dwell in the same place, making clubs, and societies, and combinations, and unions with one another, and doing every thing throughout their whole lives with reference to the general advantage; but the different members of this body have different employments in which they occupy themselves, and labour without hesitation and without cessation, making no mention of either cold, or heat, or any changes of weather or temperature as an excuse for desisting from their tasks. But before the sun rises they betake themselves to their daily work, and they do not quit it till some time after it has set, when they return home rejoicing no less than those who have been exercising themselves in gymnastic contests; for they imagine that whatever they devote themselves to as a practice is a sort of gymnastic exercise of more advantage to life, and more pleasant both to soul and body, and of more enduring benefit and equability, than mere athletic labours, inasmuch as such toil does not cease to be practised with delight when the age of vigour of body is passed; for there are some of them who are devoted to the practice of agriculture, being skilful in such things as pertain to the sowing and cultivation of lands; others again are shepherds, or cowherds, and experienced in the management of every kind of animal; some are cunning in what relates to swarms of bees; others again are artisans and handicraftsmen, in order to guard against suffering from the want of anything of which there is at times an actual need; and these men omit and delay nothing, which is requisite for the innocent supply of the necessaries of life.

Accordingly, each of these men, who differ so widely in their respective employments, when they have received their wages

A TREATISE
ON A CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE,
OR
ON THE VIRTUES OF SUPPLIANTS.

I. Having mentioned the Essenes, who in all respects selected for their admiration and for their especial adoption the practical course of life, and who excel in all, or what perhaps may be a less unpopular and invidious thing to say, in most of its parts, I will now proceed, in the regular order of my subject, to speak of those who have embraced the speculative life, and I will say what appears to me to be desirable to be said on the subject, not drawing any fictitious statements from my own head for the sake of improving the appearance of that side of the question which nearly all poets and essayists are much accustomed to do in the scarcity of good actions to extol, but with the greatest simplicity adhering strictly to the truth itself, to which I know well that even the most eloquent men do not keep close in their speeches.

Nevertheless we must make the endeavour and labour to attain to this virtue; for it is not right that the greatness of the virtue of the men should be a cause of silence to those who do not think it right that anything which is creditable should be suppressed in silence; but the deliberate intention of the philosopher is at once displayed from the appellation given to them; for with strict regard to etymology, they are called therapeutæ and therapeutrides,* either because they profess an art of medicine more excellent than that in general use in cities (for that only heals bodies, but the other heals souls which are under the mastery of terrible and almost incurable diseases, which pleasures and appetites, fears and griefs, and covetousness, and follies, and injustice, and all the rest of the innumerable multitude of other passions and vices, have inflicted upon them), or else because they have been instructed by nature and the sacred laws to serve the living God, who is

* From θεραπεύω, "to heal."

superior to the good, and more simple than the one, and more ancient than the unit; with whom, however, who is there of those who profess piety that we can possibly compare? Can we compare those who honour the elements, earth, water, air, and fire? to whom different nations have given different names, calling fire Hephæstus, I imagine because of its kindling,* and the air Hera, I imagine because of its being raised up,† and raised aloft to a great height, and water Poseidon, probably because of its being drinkable,‡ and the earth Demeter, because it appears to be the mother § of all plants and of all animals.

But these names are the inventions of sophists: but the elements are inanimate matter, and immovable by any power of their own, being subjected to the operator on them to receive from him every kind of shape or distinctive quality which he chooses to give them. But what shall we say of those men who worship the perfect things made of them, the sun, the moon, and the other stars, planets, or fixed-stars, or the whole heaven, or the universal world? And yet even they do not owe their existence to themselves, but to some creator whose knowledge has been most perfect, both in mind and degree. What, again, shall we say of the demi-gods? This is a matter which is perfectly ridiculous: for how can the same man be both mortal and immortal, even if we leave out of the question the fact that the origin of the birth of all these beings is liable to reproach, as being full of youthful intemperance, which its authors endeavour with great profanity to impute to blessed and divine natures, as if they, being madly in love with mortal women, had connected themselves with them; while we know gods to be free from all participation in and from all influence of passion, and completely happy.

Again, what shall we say of those who worship carved works and images? the substances of which, stone and wood, were only a little while before perfectly destitute of shape,

* The Greek is ἔξαψις, as if Ἥφαιστος were also derived from ἅπτομαι, being akin to ἀφή.

† The Greek word is αἴρεσθαι, to which Ἥρα has some similarity in sound.

‡ The Greek word is πότον, derived from 3rd sing. perf. pass. of πίνω πέποται, from the 2nd sing. of which Πέποσαι, ποσειδῶν may probably be derived.

§ The Greek word is μητὴρ, evidently the root of Δημητὴρ.

before the stone-cutters or wood-cutters hewed them out of the kindred stuff around them, while the remainder of the material, their near relation and brother as it were, is made into ewers, or foot-pans, and other common and dishonoured vessels, which are employed rather for uses of darkness than for such as will bear the light; for as for the customs of the Egyptians, it is not creditable even to mention them, for they have introduced irrational beasts, and those not merely such as are domestic and tame, but even the most ferocious of wild beasts to share the honours of the gods, taking some out of each of the elements beneath the moon, as the lion from among the animals which live on the earth, the crocodile from among those which live in the water, the kite from such as traverse the air, and the Egyptian iris. And though they actually see that these animals are born, and that they are in need of food, and that they are insatiable in voracity and full of all sorts of filth, and moreover poisonous and devourers of men, and liable to be destroyed by all kinds of diseases, and that in fact they are often destroyed not only by natural deaths, but also by violence, still they, civilised men, worship these untameable and ferocious beasts; though rational men, they worship irrational beasts; though they have a near relationship to the Deity, they worship creatures unworthy of being compared even to some of the beasts; though appointed as rulers and masters, they worship creatures which are by nature subjects and slaves.

II. But since these men infect not only their fellow countrymen, but also all that come near them with folly, let them remain uncovered, being mutilated in that most indispensable of all the outward senses, namely, sight. I am speaking here not of the sight of the body, but of that of the soul, by which alone truth and falsehood are distinguished from one another. But the therapeutic sect of mankind, being continually taught to see without interruption, may well aim at obtaining a sight of the living God, and may pass by the sun, which is visible to the outward sense, and never leave this order which conducts to perfect happiness. But they who apply themselves to this kind of worship, not because they are influenced to do so by custom, nor by the advice or recommendation of any particular persons, but because they are carried away by a certain heavenly love, give way to enthusiasm, behaving like so many revellers in bacchanalian or corybantian

mysteries, until they see the object which they have been earnestly desiring.

Then, because of their anxious desire for an immortal and blessed existence, thinking that their mortal life has already come to an end, they leave their possessions to their sons or daughters, or perhaps to other relations, giving them up their inheritance with willing cheerfulness; and those who know no relations give their property to their companions or friends, for it followed of necessity that those who have acquired the wealth which sees, as if ready prepared for them, should be willing to surrender that wealth which is blind to those who themselves also are still blind in their minds.

The Greeks celebrate Anaxagoras and Democritus, because they, being smitten with a desire for philosophy, allowed all their estates to be devoured by cattle. I myself admire the men who thus showed themselves superior to the attractions of money; but how much better were those who have not permitted cattle to devour their possessions, but have supplied the necessities of mankind, of their own relations and friends, and have made them rich though they were poor before? For surely that was inconsiderate conduct (that I may avoid saying that any action of men whom Greece has agreed to admire was a piece of insanity); but this is the act of sober men, and one which has been carefully elaborated by exceeding prudence.

For what more can enemies do than ravage, and destroy, and cut down all the trees in the country of their antagonists, that they may be forced to submit by reason of the extent to which they are oppressed by want of necessaries? And yet Democritus did this to his own blood relations, inflicting artificial want and penury upon them, not perhaps from any hostile intention towards them, but because he did not foresee and provide for what was advantageous to others. How much better and more admirable are they who, without having any inferior eagerness for the attainment of philosophy, have nevertheless preferred magnanimity to carelessness, and, giving presents from their possessions instead of destroying them, so as to be able to benefit others and themselves also, have made others happy by imparting to them of the abundance of their wealth, and themselves by the study of philosophy? For an undue care for money and wealth causes great waste

of time, and it is proper to economise time, since, according to the saying of the celebrated physician Hippocrates, life is short but art long. And this is what Homer appears to me to imply figuratively in the Iliad, at the beginning of the thirteenth book, by the following lines,—

> "The Mysian close-fighting bands,
> And dwellers on the Scythian lands,
> Content to seek their humble fare
> From milk of cow and milk of mare,
> The justest of mankind."*

As if great anxiety concerning the means of subsistence and the acquisition of money engendered injustice by reason of the inequality which it produced, while the contrary disposition and pursuit produced justice by reason of its equality, according to which it is that the wealth of nature is defined, and is superior to that which exists only in vain opinion.

When, therefore, men abandon their property without being influenced by any predominant attraction, they flee without even turning their heads back again, deserting their brethren, their children, their wives, their parents, their numerous families, their affectionate bands of companions, their native lands in which they have been born and brought up, though long familiarity is a most attractive bond, and one very well able to allure any one. And they depart, not to another city as those do who entreat to be purchased from those who at present possess them, being either unfortunate or else worthless servants, and as such seeking a change of masters rather than endeavouring to procure freedom (for every city, even that which is under the happiest laws, is full of indescribable tumults, and disorders, and calamities, which no one would submit to who had been even for a moment under the influence of wisdom), but they take up their abode outside of walls, or gardens, or solitary lands, seeking for a desert place, not because of any ill-natured misanthropy to which they have learnt to devote themselves, but because of the associations with people of wholly dissimilar dispositions to which they would otherwise be compelled, and which they know to be unprofitable and mischievous.

III. Now this class of persons may be met with in many places, for it was fitting that both Greece and the country

* Il. xiii. 5.

of the barbarians should partake of whatever is perfectly good; and there is the greatest number of such men in Egypt, in every one of the districts, or nomi as they are called, and especially around Alexandria; and from all quarters those who are the best of these therapeutæ proceed on their pilgrimage to some most suitable place as if it were their country, which is beyond the Mareotic lake, lying in a somewhat level plain a little raised above the rest, being suitable for their purpose by reason of its safety and also of the fine temperature of the air.

For the houses built in the fields and the villages which surround it on all sides give it safety; and the admirable temperature of the air proceeds from the continual breezes which come from the lake which falls into the sea, and also from the sea itself in the neighbourhood, the breezes from the sea being light, and those which proceed from the lake which falls into the sea being heavy, the mixture of which produces a most healthy atmosphere.

But the houses of these men thus congregated together are very plain, just giving shelter in respect of the two things most important to be provided against, the heat of the sun, and the cold from the open air; and they did not live near to one another as men do in cities, for immediate neighbourhood to others would be a troublesome and unpleasant thing to men who have conceived an admiration for, and have determined to devote themselves to, solitude; and, on the other hand, they did not live very far from one another on account of the fellowship which they desire to cultivate, and because of the desirableness of being able to assist one another if they should be attacked by robbers.

And in every house there is a sacred shrine which is called the holy place, and the monastery in which they retire by themselves and perform all the mysteries of a holy life, bringing in nothing, neither meat, nor drink, nor anything else which is indispensable towards supplying the necessities of the body, but studying in that place the laws and the sacred oracles of God enunciated by the holy prophets, and hymns, and psalms, and all kinds of other things by reason of which knowledge and piety are increased and brought to perfection.

Therefore they always retain an imperishable recollection of God, so that not even in their dreams is any other object ever

presented to their eyes except the beauty of the divine virtues and of the divine powers. Therefore many persons speak in their sleep, divulging and publishing the celebrated doctrines of the sacred philosophy. And they are accustomed to pray twice every day, at morning and at evening; when the sun is rising entreating God that the happiness of the coming day may be real happiness, so that their minds may be filled with heavenly light, and when the sun is setting they pray that their soul, being entirely lightened and relieved of the burden of the outward senses, and of the appropriate object of these outward senses, may be able to trace out truth existing in its own consistory and council chamber. And the interval between morning and evening is by them devoted wholly to meditation on and to practice of virtue, for they take up the sacred scriptures and philosophise concerning them, investigating the allegories of their national philosophy, since they look upon their literal expressions as symbols of some secret meaning of nature, intended to be conveyed in those figurative expressions.

They have also writings of ancient men, who having been the founders of one sect or another have left behind them many memorials of the allegorical system of writing and explanation, whom they take as a kind of model, and imitate the general fashion of their sect; so that they do not occupy themselves solely in contemplation, but they likewise compose psalms and hymns to God in every kind of metre and melody imaginable, which they of necessity arrange in more dignified rhythm. Therefore, during six days, each of these individuals, retiring into solitude by himself, philosophises by himself in one of the places called monasteries, never going outside the threshold of the outer court, and indeed never even looking out.

But on the seventh day they all come together as if to meet in a sacred assembly, and they sit down in order according to their ages with all becoming gravity, keeping their hands inside their garments, having their right hand between their chest and their dress, and the left hand down by their side, close to their flank; and then the eldest of them who has the most profound learning in their doctrines comes forward and speaks with steadfast look and with steadfast voice, with great powers of reasoning, and great prudence, not making an

exhibition of his oratorical powers like the rhetoricians of old, or the sophists of the present day, but investigating with great pains, and explaining with minute accuracy the precise meaning of the laws, which sits, not indeed at the tips of their ears, but penetrates through their hearing into the soul, and remains there lastingly; and all the rest listen in silence to the praises which he bestows upon the law, showing their assent only by nods of the head, or the eager look of the eyes.

And this common holy place to which they all come together on the seventh day is a twofold circuit, being separated partly into the apartment of the men, and partly into a chamber for the women, for women also, in accordance with the usual fashion there, form a part of the audience, having the same feelings of admiration as the men, and having adopted the same sect with equal deliberation and decision; and the wall which is between the houses rises from the ground three or four cubits upwards, like a battlement, and the upper portion rises upwards to the roof without any opening, on two accounts; first of all, in order that the modesty which is so becoming to the female sex may be preserved, and secondly, that the women may be easily able to comprehend what is said being seated within earshot, since there is then nothing which can possibly intercept the voice of him who is speaking.

IV. And these expounders of the law, having first of all laid down temperance as a sort of foundation for the soul to rest upon, proceed to build up other virtues on this foundation, and no one of them may take any meat or drink before the setting of the sun, since they judge that the work of philosophising is one which is worthy of the light, but that the care for the necessities of the body is suitable only to darkness, on which account they appropriate the day to the one occupation, and a brief portion of the night to the other; and some men, in whom there is implanted a more fervent desire of knowledge, can endure to cherish a recollection of their food for three days without even tasting it, and some men are so delighted, and enjoy themselves so exceedingly when regaled by wisdom which supplies them with her doctrines in all possible wealth and abundance, that they can even hold out twice as great a length of time, and will scarcely at the end of six days taste even necessary food, being accustomed, as they say that grass

hoppers are, to feed on air, their song, as I imagine, making their scarcity tolerable to them.

And they, looking upon the seventh day as one of perfect holiness and a most complete festival, have thought it worthy of a most especial honour, and on it, after taking due care of their soul, they tend their bodies also, giving them, just as they do to their cattle, a complete rest from their continual labours; and they eat nothing of a costly character, but plain bread and a seasoning of salt, which the more luxurious of them do further season with hyssop; and their drink is water from the spring; for they oppose those feelings which nature has made mistresses of the human race, namely, hunger and thirst, giving them nothing to flatter or humour them, but only such useful things as it is not possible to exist without. On this account they eat only so far as not to be hungry, and they drink just enough to escape from thirst, avoiding all satiety, as an enemy of and a plotter against both soul and body.

And there are two kinds of covering, one raiment and the other a house: we have already spoken of their houses, that they are not decorated with any ornaments, but run up in a hurry, being only made to answer such purposes as are absolutely necessary; and in like manner their raiment is of the most ordinary description, just stout enough to ward off cold and heat, being a cloak of some shaggy hide for winter, and a thin mantle or linen shawl in the summer; for in short they practise entire simplicity, looking upon falsehood as the foundation of pride, but truth as the origin of simplicity, and upon truth and falsehood as standing in the light of fountains, for from falsehood proceeds every variety of evil and wickedness, and from truth there flows every imaginable abundance of good things both human and divine.

V. I wish also to speak of their common assemblies, and their very cheerful meetings at convivial parties, setting them in opposition and contrast to the banquets of others, for others, when they drink strong wine, as if they had been drinking not wine but some agitating and maddening kind of liquor, or even the most formidable thing which can be imagined for driving a man out of his natural reason, rage about and tear things to pieces like so many ferocious dogs, and rise up and attack one another, biting and gnawing each other's noses, and

ears, and fingers, and other parts of their body, so as to give an accurate representation of the story related about the Cyclops and the companions of Ulysses, who ate, as the poet says, fragments of human flesh,* and that more savagely than even he himself; for he was only avenging himself on those whom he conceived to be his enemies, but they were ill-treating their companions and friends, and sometimes even their actual relations, while having the salt and dinner-table before them, at a time of peace perpetrating actions inconsistent with peace, like those which are done by men in gymnastic contests, debasing the proper exercises of the body as coiners debase good money, and instead of athletes (ἀθληταί) becoming miserable men (ἄθλιοι), for that is the name which properly belongs to them.

For that which those men who gain victories in the Olympic games, when perfectly sober in the arena, and having all the Greeks for spectators do by day, exerting all their skill for the purpose of gaining victory and the crown, these men with base designs do at convivial entertainments, getting drunk by night, in the hour of darkness, when soaked in wine, acting without either knowledge, or art, or skill, to the insult, and injury, and great disgrace of those who are subjected to their violence.

And if no one were to come like an umpire into the middle of them, and part the combatants, and reconcile them, they would continue the contest with unlimited licence, striving to kill and murder one another, and being killed and murdered on the spot; for they do not suffer less than they inflict, though out of the delirious state into which they have worked themselves they do not feel what is done to them, since they have filled themselves with wine, not, as the comic poet says, to the injury of their neighbour, but to their own. Therefore those persons who a little while before came safe and sound to the banquet, and in friendship for one another, do presently afterwards depart in hostility and mutilated in their bodies.

And some of these men stand in need of advocates and judges, and others require surgeons and physicians, and the help which may be received from them. Others again who seem to be a more moderate kind of feasters when they have drunk unmixed wine as if it were mandragora, boil over as it were, and lean on their left elbow, and turn their heads on

* Odyssey ix. 355.

one side with their breath redolent of their wine, till at last they sink into profound slumber, neither seeing nor hearing anything, as if they had but one single sense, and that the most slavish of all, namely, taste. And I know some persons who, when they are completely filled with wine, before they are wholly overpowered by it, begin to prepare a drinking party for the next day by a kind of subscription and picnic contribution, conceiving a great part of their present delight to consist in the hope of future drunkenness; and in this manner they exist to the very end of their lives, without a house and without a home, the enemies of their parents, and of their wives, and of their children, and the enemies of their country, and the worst enemies of all to themselves. For a debauched and profligate life is apt to lay snares for every one.

VI. And perhaps some people may be inclined to approve of the arrangement of such entertainments which at present prevails everywhere, from an admiration of, and a desire of imitating, the luxury and extravagance of the Italians which both Greeks and barbarians emulate, making all their preparations with a view to show rather than to real enjoyment, for they use couches called triclinia, and sofas all round the table made of tortoiseshell, and ivory, and other costly materials, most of which are inlaid with precious stones; and coverlets of purple embroidered with gold and silver thread; and others brocaded in flowers of every kind of hue and colour imaginable to allure the sight, and a vast array of drinking cups arrayed according to each separate description; for there are bowls, and vases, and beakers, and goblets, and all kinds of other vessels wrought with the most exquisite skill, their clean cups and others finished with the most elaborate refinement of skilful and ingenious men; and well shaped slaves of the most exquisite beauty, ministering, as if they had come not more for the purpose of serving the guests than of delighting the eyes of the spectators by their mere appearance.

Of these slaves, some, being still boys, pour out the wine; and others more fully grown pour water, being carefully washed and rubbed down, with their faces anointed and pencilled, and the hair of their heads admirably plaited and curled and wreathed in delicate knots; for they have very long hair, being either completely unshorn, or else having only the hair on their foreheads cut at the end so as to make them of an equal

length all round, being accurately sloped away so as to represent a circular line, and being clothed in tunics of the most delicate texture, and of the purest white, reaching in front down to the lower part of the knee, and behind to a little below the calf of the leg, and drawing up each side with a gentle doubling of the fringe at the joinings of the tunics, raising undulations of the garment as it were at the sides, and widening them at the hollow part of the side.

Others, again, are young men just beginning to show a beard on their youthful chins, having been, for a short time, the sport of the profligate debauchees, and being prepared with exceeding care and diligence for more painful services; being a kind of exhibition of the excessive opulence of the giver of the feast, or rather, to say the truth, of their thorough ignorance of all propriety, as those who are acquainted with them well know.

Besides all these things, there is an infinite variety of sweetmeats, and delicacies, and confections, about which bakers and cooks and confectioners labour, considering not the taste, which is the point of real importance, so as to make the food palatable to that, but also the sight, so as to allure that by the delicacy of the look of their viands. Accordingly, seven tables, and often more, are brought in, full of every kind of delicacy which earth, and sea, and rivers, and air produce, all procured with great pains, and in high condition, composed of terrestrial, and acquatic, and flying creatures, every one of which is different both in its mode of dressing and in its seasoning.

And that no description of thing existing in nature may be omitted, at the last dishes are brought in full of fruits, besides those which are kept back for the more luxurious portion of the entertainment, and for what is called the dessert; and afterwards some of the dishes are carried away empty from the insatiable greediness of those at table, who, gorging themselves like cormorants, devour all the delicacies so completely that they gnaw even the bones, which some left half devoured after all that they contained has been torn to pieces and spoiled. And when they are completely tired with eating, having their bellies filled up to their very throats, but their desires still unsatisfied, being fatigued with eating they turn their heads round in every direction, scanning everything with their eyes and with their nostrils, examining the richness and the number

of the dishes with the first, and the steam which is sent up by them with the second.

Then, when they are thoroughly sated both with the sight and with the scent, these senses again prompt their owners to eat, praising in no moderate terms both the entertainment itself and the giver of it, for its costliness and magnificence. However, why need I dwell with prolixity on these matters, which are already condemned by the generality of more moderate men as inflaming the passions, the diminution of which is desirable? For any one in his senses would pray for the most unfortunate of all states, hunger and thirst, rather than for a most unlimited abundance of meat and drink at such banquets as these.

VII. Now of the banquets among the Greeks the two most celebrated and most remarkable are those at which Socrates also was present, the one in the house of Callias, when, after Autolycus had gained the crown of victory, he gave a feast in honour of the event, and the other in the house of Agathon, which was thought worthy of being commemorated by men who were imbued with the true spirit of philosophy both in their dispositions and in their discourses, Plato and Xenophon, for they recorded them as events worthy to be had in perpetual recollection, looking upon it that future generations would take them as models for a well managed arrangement of future banquets; but nevertheless even these, if compared with the banquets of the men of our time who have embraced the contemplative system of life, will appear ridiculous. Each description, indeed, has its own pleasures, but that recorded by Xenophon is the one the delights of which are most in accordance with human nature. for female harp-players, and dancers, and conjurors, and jugglers, and men who do ridiculous things, who pride themselves much on their powers of jesting and of amusing others, and many other species of more cheerful relaxation, are brought forward at it. But the entertainment recorded by Plato is almost entirely connected with love; not that of men madly desirous or fond of women, or of women furiously in love with men, for these desires are accomplished in accordance with a law of nature, but with that love which is felt by men for one another, differing only in respect of age; for if there is anything in the account of that banquet elegantly said in praise of genuine love and heavenly Venus, it is

introduced merely for the sake of making a neat speech; for the greater part of the book is occupied by common, vulgar, promiscuous love, which takes away from the soul courage, that which is the most serviceable of all virtues both in war and in peace, and which engenders in it instead the female disease, and renders men men-women, though they ought rather to be carefully trained in all the practices likely to give men valour.

And having corrupted the age of boys, and having metamorphosed them and removed them into the classification and character of women, it has injured their lovers also in the most important particulars, their bodies, their souls, and their properties; for it follows of necessity that the mind of a lover of boys must be kept on the stretch towards the objects of his affection, and must have no acuteness of vision for any other object, but must be blinded by its desire as to all other objects private or common, and must so be wasted away, more especially if it fails in its objects. Moreover, the man's property must be diminished on two accounts, both from the owner's neglect and from his expenses for the beloved object.

There is also another greater evil which affects the whole people, and which grows up alongside of the other, for men who give into such passions produce solitude in cities, and a scarcity of the best kind of men, and barrenness, and unproductiveness, inasmuch as they are imitating those farmers who are unskilful in agriculture, and who, instead of the deep-soiled champaign country, sow briny marshes, or stony and rugged districts, which are not calculated to produce crops of any kind, and which only destroy the seed which is put into them. I pass over in silence the different fabulous fictions, and the stories of persons with two bodies, who having originally been stuck to one another by amatory influences, are subsequently separated like portions which have been brought together and are disjoined again, the harmony having been dissolved by which they were held together; for all these things are very attractive, being able by the novelty of their imagination to allure the ears, but they are despised by the disciples of Moses, who in the abundance of their wisdom have learnt from their earliest infancy to love truth, and also continue to the end of their lives impossible to be deceived.

VIII. But since the entertainments of the greatest celebrity

are full of such trifling and folly, bearing conviction in themselves, if any one should think fit not to regard vague opinion and the character which has been commonly handed down concerning them as feasts which have gone off with the most eminent success, I will oppose to them the entertainments of those persons who have devoted their whole life and themselves to the knowledge and contemplation of the affairs of nature in accordance with the most sacred admonitions and precepts of the prophet Moses.

In the first place, these men assemble at the end of seven weeks, venerating not only the simple week of seven days, but also its multiplied power, for they know it to be pure and always virgin; and it is a prelude and a kind of forefeast of the greatest feast, which is assigned to the number fifty, the most holy and natural of numbers, being compounded of the power of the right-angled triangle, which is the principle of the origination and condition of the whole.

Therefore when they come together clothed in white garments, and joyful with the most exceeding gravity, when some one of the ephemereutæ (for that is the appellation which they are accustomed to give to those who are employed in such ministrations), before they sit down to meat standing in order in a row, and raising their eyes and their hands to heaven, the one because they have learnt to fix their attention on what is worth looking at, and the other because they are free from the reproach of all impure gain, being never polluted under any pretence whatever by any description of criminality which can arise from any means taken to procure advantage, they pray to God that the entertainment may be acceptable, and welcome, and pleasing; and after having offered up these prayers the elders sit down to meat, still observing the order in which they were previously arranged, for they do not look on those as elders who are advanced in years and very ancient, but in some cases they esteem those as very young men, if they have attached themselves to this sect only lately, but those whom they call elders are those who from their earliest infancy have grown up and arrived at maturity in the speculative portion of philosophy, which is the most beautiful and most divine part of it.

And the women also share in this feast, the greater part of whom, though old, are virgins in respect of their purity (not

indeed through necessity, as some of the priestesses among the Greeks are, who have been compelled to preserve their chastity more than they would have done of their own accord), but out of an admiration for and love of wisdom, with which they are desirous to pass their lives, on account of which they are indifferent to the pleasures of the body, desiring not a mortal but an immortal offspring, which the soul that is attached to God is alone able to produce by itself and from itself, the Father having sown in it rays of light appreciable only by the intellect, by means of which it will be able to perceive the doctrines of wisdom.

IX. And the order in which they sit down to meat is a divided one, the men sitting on the right hand and the women apart from them on the left; and in case any one by chance suspects that cushions, if not very costly ones, still at all events of a tolerably soft substance, are prepared for men who are well born and well bred, and contemplators of philosophy, he must know that they have nothing but rugs of the coarsest materials, cheap mats of the most ordinary kind of the papyrus of the land, piled up on the ground and projecting a little near the elbow, so that the feasters may lean upon them, for they relax in a slight degree the Lacedæmonian rigour of life, and at all times and in all places they practise a liberal, gentlemanlike kind of frugality, hating the allurements of pleasure with all their might.

And they do not use the ministrations of slaves, looking upon the possession of servants or slaves to be a thing absolutely and wholly contrary to nature, for nature has created all men free, but the injustice and covetousness of some men who prefer inequality, that cause of all evil, having subdued some, has given to the more powerful authority over those who are weaker.

Accordingly in this sacred entertainment there is, as I have said, no slave, but free men minister to the guests, performing the offices of servants, not under compulsion, nor in obedience to any imperious commands, but of their own voluntary free will, with all eagerness and promptitude anticipating all orders, for they are not any chance free men who are appointed to perform these duties, but young men who are selected from their order with all possible care on account of their excellence, acting as virtuous and well-born youths ought

to act who are eager to attain to the perfection of virtue, and who, like legitimate sons, with affectionate rivalry minister to their fathers and mothers, thinking their common parents more closely connected with them than those who are related by blood, since in truth to men of right principles there is nothing more nearly akin than virtue; and they come in to perform their service ungirdled, and with their tunics let down, in order that nothing which bears any resemblance to a slavish appearance may be introduced into this festival

I know well that some persons will laugh when they hear this, but they who laugh will be those who do things worthy of weeping and lamentation. And in those days wine is not introduced, but only the clearest water; cold water for the generality, and hot water for those old men who are accustomed to a luxurious life. And the table, too, bears nothing which has blood, but there is placed upon it bread for food and salt for seasoning, to which also hyssop is sometimes added as an extra sauce for the sake of those who are delicate in their eating, for just as right reason commands the priest to offer up sober sacrifices, so also these men are commanded to live sober lives, for wine is the medicine of folly, and costly seasonings and sauces excite desire, which is the most insatiable of all beasts.

X. These, then, are the first circumstances of the feast; but after the guests have sat down to the table in the order which I have been describing, and when those who minister to them are all standing around in order, ready to wait upon them, and when there is nothing to drink, some one will say . . . . but even more so than before, so that no one ventures to mutter, or even to breathe at all hard, and then some one looks out some passage in the sacred scriptures, or explains some difficulty which is proposed by some one else, without any thoughts of display on his own part, for he is not aiming at reputation for cleverness and eloquence, but is only desirous to see some points more accurately, and is content when he has thus seen them himself not to bear ill will to others, who, even if they did not perceive the truth with equal acuteness, have at all events an equal desire of learning. And he, indeed, follows a slower method of instruction, dwelling on and lingering over his explanations with repetitions, in order to imprint his conceptions deep in the minds of his hearers, for as the understanding of his hearers is not able to keep up with the

interpretation of one who goes on fluently, without stopping to take breath, it gets behind-hand, and fails to comprehend what is said; but the hearers, fixing their eyes and attention upon the speaker, remain in one and the same position listening attentively, indicating their attention and comprehension by their nods and looks, and the praise which they are inclined to bestow on the speaker by the cheerfulness and gentle manner in which they follow him with their eyes and with the fore-finger of the right hand.

And the young men who are standing around attend to this explanation no less than the guests themselves who are sitting at meat. And these explanations of the sacred scriptures are delivered by mystic expressions in allegories, for the whole of the law appears to these men to resemble a living animal, and its express commandments seem to be the body, and the invisible meaning concealed under and lying beneath the plain words resembles the soul, in which the rational soul begins most excellently to contemplate what belongs to itself, as in a mirror, beholding in these very words the exceeding beauty of the sentiments, and unfolding and explaining the symbols, and bringing the secret meaning naked to the light to all who are able by the light of a slight intimation to perceive what is unseen by what is visible.

When, therefore, the president appears to have spoken at sufficient length, and to have carried out his intentions adequately, so that his explanation has gone on felicitously and fluently through his own acuteness, and the hearing of the others has been profitable, applause arises from them all as of men rejoicing together at what they have seen and heard; and then some one rising up sings a hymn which has been made in honour of God, either such as he has composed himself, or some ancient one of some old poet, for they have left behind them many poems and songs in trimetre iambics, and in psalms of thanksgiving and in hymns, and songs at the time of libation, and at the altar, and in regular order, and in choruses, admirably measured out in various and well diversified strophes.

And after him then others also arise in their ranks, in becoming order, while every one else listens in decent silence, except when it is proper for them to take up the burden of the song, and to join in at the end; for then they all, both men

and women, join in the hymn. And when each individual has finished his psalm, then the young men bring in the table which was mentioned a little while ago, on which was placed that most holy food, the leavened bread, with a seasoning of salt, with which hyssop is mingled, out of reverence for the sacred table, which lies thus in the holy outer temple; for on this table are placed loaves and salt without seasoning, and the bread is unleavened, and the salt unmixed with anything else, for it was becoming that the simplest and purest things should be allotted to the most excellent portion of the priests, as a reward for their ministrations, and that the others should admire similar things, but should abstain from the loaves, in order that those who are the more excellent persons may have the precedence.

XI. And after the feast they celebrate the sacred festival during the whole night; and this nocturnal festival is celebrated in the following manner: they all stand up together, and in the middle of the entertainment two choruses are formed at first, the one of men and the other of women, and for each chorus there is a leader and chief selected, who is the most honourable and most excellent of the band. Then they sing hymns which have been composed in honour of God in many metres and tunes, at one time all singing together, and at another moving their hands and dancing in corresponding harmony, and uttering in an inspired manner songs of thanksgiving, and at another time regular odes, and performing all necessary strophes and antistrophes.

Then, when each chorus of the men and each chorus of the women has feasted separately by itself, like persons in the bacchanalian revels, drinking the pure wine of the love of God, they join together, and the two become one chorus, an imitation of that one which, in old time, was established by the Red Sea, on account of the wondrous works which were displayed there; for, by the commandment of God, the sea became to one party the cause of safety, and to the other that of utter destruction; for it being burst asunder, and dragged back by a violent reflux, and being built up on each side as if there were a solid wall, the space in the midst was widened, and cut into a level and dry road, along which the people passed over to the opposite land, being conducted onwards to higher ground; then, when the sea returned and

ran back to its former channel, and was poured out from both sides, on what had just before been dry ground, those of the enemy who pursued were overwhelmed and perished.

When the Israelites saw and experienced this great miracle, which was an event beyond all description, beyond all imagination, and beyond all hope, both men and women together, under the influence of divine inspiration, becoming all one chorus, sang hymns of thanksgiving to God the Saviour, Moses the prophet leading the men, and Miriam the prophetess leading the women.

Now the chorus of male and female worshippers being formed, as far as possible on this model, makes a most humorous concert, and a truly musical symphony, the shrill voices of the women mingling with the deep-toned voices of the men. The ideas were beautiful, the expressions beautiful, and the chorus-singers were beautiful; and the end of ideas, and expressions, and chorus-singers, was piety; therefore, being intoxicated all night till the morning with this beautiful intoxication, without feeling their heads heavy or closing their eyes for sleep, but being even more awake than when they came to the feast, as to their eyes and their whole bodies, and standing there till morning, when they saw the sun rising they raised their hands to heaven, imploring tranquillity and truth, and acuteness of understanding.

And after their prayers they each retired to their own separate abodes, with the intention of again practising the usual philosophy to which they had been wont to devote themselves.

This then is what I have to say of those who are called therapeutæ, who have devoted themselves to the contemplation of nature, and who have lived in it and in the soul alone, being citizens of heaven and of the world, and very acceptable to the Father and Creator of the universe because of their virtue, which has procured them his love as their most appropriate reward, which far surpasses all the gifts of fortune, and conducts them to the very summit and perfection of happiness.