

Against Plato, On the Cause of the Universe

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1. And this is the passage regarding demons. But now we must speak of Hades, in which the souls both of the righteous and the unrighteous are detained. Hades is a place in the created system, rude, a locality beneath the earth, in which the light of the world does not shine; and as the sun does not shine in this locality, there must necessarily be perpetual darkness there. This locality has been destined to be as it were a guard-house for souls, at which the angels are stationed as guards, distributing according to each one's deeds the temporary punishments for (different) characters. And in this locality there is a certain place set apart by itself, a lake of unquenchable fire, into which we suppose no one has ever yet been cast; for it is prepared against the day determined by God, in which one sentence of righteous judgment shall be justly applied to all. And the unrighteous, and those who believed not God, who have honoured as God the vain works of the hands of men, idols fashioned (by themselves), shall be sentenced to this endless punishment. But the righteous shall obtain the incorruptible and un-fading kingdom, who indeed are at present detained in Hades, but not in the same place with the unrighteous. For to this locality there is one descent, at the gate whereof we believe an archangel is stationed with a host. And when those who are conducted by the angels appointed unto the souls have passed through this gate, they do not proceed on one and the same way; but the righteous, being conducted in the light toward the right, and being hymned by the angels stationed at the place, are brought to a locality full of light. And there the righteous from the beginning dwell, not ruled by necessity, but enjoying always the contemplation of the blessings which are in their view, and delighting themselves with the expectation of others ever new, and deeming those ever better than these. And that place brings no toils to them. There, there is neither fierce heat, nor cold, nor thorn; but the face of the fathers and the righteous is seen to be always smiling, as they wait for the rest and eternal revival in heaven which succeed this location. And we call it by the name *Abraham's bosom*. But the unrighteous are dragged toward the left by angels who are ministers of punishment, and they go of their own accord no longer, but are dragged by force as prisoners. And the angels appointed over them send them along, reproaching them and threatening them with an eye of terror, forcing them down into the lower parts. And when they are brought there, those appointed to that service drag them on to the confines or hell. And those who are so near hear incessantly the agitation, and feel the hot smoke. And when that vision is so near, as they see the terrible and excessively glowing spectacle of the fire, they shudder in horror at the expectation of the future judgment, (as if they were) already feeling the power of their punishment. And again, where they see the place of the fathers and the righteous, they are also punished there. For a deep and vast abyss is set there in the midst, so that neither can any of the righteous in sympathy think to pass it, nor any of the unrighteous dare to cross it.

2. Thus far, then, on the subject of Hades, in which the souls of all are detained until the time which God has determined; and then He will accomplish a resurrection of all, not by transferring souls into other bodies, but by raising the bodies themselves. And if, O Greeks, you refuse credit to this because you see these (bodies) in their

dissolution, learn not to be incredulous. For if you believe that the soul is originated and is made immortal by God, according to the opinion of Plato, in time, you ought not to refuse to believe that God is able also to raise the body, which is composed of the same elements, and make it immortal. To be able in one thing, and to be unable in another, is a word which cannot be said of God. We therefore believe that the body also is raised. For if it become corrupt, it is not at least destroyed. For the earth receiving its remains preserves them, and they, becoming as it were seed, and being wrapped up with the richer part of earth, spring up and bloom. And that which is sown is sown indeed bare grain; but at the command of God the Artificer it buds, and is raised arrayed and glorious, but not until it has first died, and been dissolved, and mingled with earth. Not, therefore, without good reason do we believe in the resurrection of the body. Moreover, if it is dissolved in its season on account of the primeval transgression, and is committed to the earth as to a furnace, to be moulded again anew, it is not raised the same thing as it is now, but pure and no longer corruptible. And to every body its own proper soul will be given again; and the soul, being endued again with it, shall not be grieved, but shall rejoice together with it, abiding itself pure with it also pure. And as it now sojourns with it in the world righteously, and finds it in nothing now a traitor, it will receive it again (the body) with great joy. But the unrighteous will receive their bodies unchanged, and unransomed from suffering and disease, and unglorified, and still with all the ills in which they died. And whatever manner of persons they (were when they) lived without faith, as such they shall be faithfully judged.

3. For all, the righteous and the unrighteous alike, shall be brought before God the Word. For the Father has committed all judgment to Him; and in fulfilment of the Father's counsel, He comes as Judge whom we call Christ. For it is not Minos and Rhadamanthys that are to judge (the world), as you fancy, O Greeks, but He whom God the Father has glorified, of whom we have spoken elsewhere more in particular, for the profit of those who seek the truth. He, in administering the righteous judgment of the Father to all, assigns to each what is righteous according to his works. And being present at His judicial decision, all, both men and angels and demons, shall utter one voice, saying, "Righteous is Your judgment." Of which voice the justification will be seen in the awarding to each that which is just; since to those who have done well shall be assigned righteously eternal bliss, and to the lovers of iniquity shall be given eternal punishment. And the fire which is un-quenchable and without end awaits these latter, and a certain fiery worm which dies not, and which does not waste the body, but continues bursting forth from the body with unending pain. No sleep will give them rest; no night will soothe them; no death will deliver them from punishment; no voice of interceding friends will profit them. For neither are the righteous seen by them any longer, nor are they worthy of remembrance. But the righteous will remember only the righteous deeds by which they reached the heavenly kingdom, in which there is neither sleep, nor pain, nor corruption, nor care, nor night, nor day measured by time; nor sun traversing in necessary course the circle of heaven, which marks the limits of seasons, or the points measured out for the life of man so easily read; nor moon waning or waxing, or inducing the changes of seasons, or moistening the earth; no burning sun, no changeful Bear, no Orion coming forth, no numerous wandering of stars, no painfully-trodden earth, no abode of paradise hard to find; no furious roaring of the sea, forbidding one to touch or traverse it; but this too will be readily passable for the righteous, although it lacks no water. There will be no heaven inaccessible to men, nor will the way of its ascent be one impossible to find; and there will be no earth unwrought, or toilsome for men, but one producing fruit spontaneously in beauty and order; nor will there be generation of wild beasts again, nor the bursting substance of other creatures. Neither with man will there be generation again, but the number of the righteous remains indefectible with the righteous angels and spirits. You who believe these words, O men, will be partakers with the righteous, and will have part in these future blessings, which "eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." To Him be the glory and the power, for ever and ever. Amen.

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