
The Philanthropy of God

God the mother-bird

For God, of His great love to man, comes to the help of man, as the mother-bird flies to one of her young that has fallen out of the nest; and if a serpent open its mouth to swallow the little bird, "the mother flutters round, uttering cries of grief over her dear progeny;"¹ and God the Father seeks His creature, remedies the falling away, pursues the serpent, restores the young one to strength again, and incites it to fly up to the nest.²

The affection of God

Whatever is feeble and tender, as needing help on account of its feebleness, is kindly looked on, and is sweet and pleasant, anger changing into help in the case of such: for thus horses' colts, and the little calves of cows, and the lion's whelp, and the stag's fawn, and the child of man, are looked upon with pleasure by their fathers and mothers. Thus also the Father of the universe cherishes affection towards those who have fled to Him; and having begotten them again by His Spirit to the adoption of children, knows them as gentle, and loves those alone, and aids and fights for them; and therefore He bestows on them the name of child.³

The Instructor as helmsmen

[As] the pilot steers the vessel, desiring to save the passengers; so also the Instructor guides the children to a saving course of conduct, through solicitude for us; and, in general, whatever we ask in accordance with reason from God to be done for us, will happen to those who believe in the Instructor. And just as the helmsman does not always yield to the winds, but sometimes, turning the prow towards them, opposes the whole force of the hurricanes; so the Instructor never yields to the blasts that blow in this world, nor commits the child to them like a vessel to make shipwreck on a wild and licentious course of life; but, wafted on by the favouring breeze of the Spirit of truth, stoutly holds on to the child's helm,- his ears, I mean,- until He bring him safe to anchor in the haven of heaven.⁴

¹ A reference to Homer's *Illiad*

² *Prot.* 10 (ANF Vol.2, p.197b)

³ *Paed.* 1.5 (ANF Vol.2, p.214b)

⁴ *Paed.* 1.7 (ANF Vol.2, p.223a)