
Perfection

Continual growth

Although on the whole my argument has shown that what is sought for is unattainable, one should not disregard the commandment of the Lord which says, *Therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly father is perfect.*¹ For in the case of those things which are good by nature, even if men of understanding were not able to attain to everything, by attaining even a part they could yet gain a great deal.

We should show great diligence not to fall away from the perfection which is attainable but to acquire as much as is possible: To that extent let us make progress within the realm of what we seek. For the perfection of human nature consists perhaps in its very growth in goodness.²

Servanthood

Having come to the very top of the mountain, [Moses], like a good sculptor who has fashioned well the whole statue of his own life, did not simply bring his creation to an end but he placed the finishing touch on his work.

What does the history say about this? That *Moses the servant of Yahweh died as Yahweh decreed, and no one has ever found his grave, his eyes were undimmed, and his face unimpaired.*³ From this we learn that, when one has accomplished such noble actions, he is considered worthy of this sublime name, to be called servant of Yahweh ... This for him is the end of the virtuous life, an end wrought by the word of God. History speaks of “death,” a living death, which is not followed by the grave, or fills the tomb, or brings dimness to the eyes and aging to the person.

What then are we taught through what has been said? To have but one purpose in life: to be called servants of God by virtue of the lives we live.⁴

The complete recovery of image-likeness

The person who by every means achieves incorruption in his whole life admits no corruption in himself. For he who has truly come to be in the image of God and who has in no way turned aside from the divine character bears in himself its distinguishing marks and shows in all things his conformity to the archetype; he beautifies his own soul with what is incorruptible, unchangeable, and shares in no evil at all.⁵

¹ Matthew 5:48

² *Life of Moses* 1.9-10 (p.31)

³ Deuteronomy 34:5-7 (modified)

⁴ *Life of Moses* 2.313-5 (pp.134-5)

⁵ *Life of Moses* 2.318 (p.136)

Becoming God's friend

These things concerning the perfection of the virtuous life, O Caesarius, man of God, we have briefly written for you, tracing in outline like a pattern of beauty the life of the great Moses so that each one of us might copy the image of the beauty which has been shown to us by imitating his way of life. What more trustworthy witness of the fact that Moses did attain the perfection which was possible would be found than the divine voice which said to him: *I have known you more than all others?*⁶ It is also shown in the fact that he is named the "friend of God"⁷ by God himself, and by preferring to perish with all the rest if the Divine One did not through his good will forgive their errors, he stayed God's wrath against the Israelites. God averted judgment so as not to grieve his friend. All such things are a clear testimony and demonstration of the fact that the life of Moses did ascend the highest mount of perfection.

Since the goal of the virtuous way of life was the very thing we have been seeking, and this goal has been found in what we have said, it is time for you, noble friend, to look to that example and, by transferring to your own life what is contemplated through spiritual interpretation of the things spoken literally, to be known by God and to become his friend. This is true perfection: not to avoid a wicked life because like slaves we servilely fear punishment, nor to do good because we hope for rewards, as if cashing in on the virtuous life by some business-like and contractual arrangement. On the contrary, disregarding all those things for which we hope and which have been reserved by promise, we regard falling from God's friendship as the only thing dreadful and we consider becoming God's friend the only thing worthy of honour and desire. This, as I have said, is the perfection of life.⁸

⁶ Exodus 33:17,12 (in the Septuagint version)

⁷ Exodus 33:11

⁸ *Life of Moses* 2.319-20 (pp.136-7)