

Psalm 68:1-13 and Genesis 2:4b-25

16th Sunday after Pentecost. September 13, 2026.

Texts from the NRSVUE Bible. According with *Un giorno una parola* lectionary.

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Psalm 68:1-13

- ¹ *Let God rise up; let his enemies be scattered;
let those who hate him flee before him.*
- ² *As smoke is driven away, so drive them away;
as wax melts before the fire,
let the wicked perish before God.*
- ³ *But let the righteous be joyful;
let them exult before God;
let them be jubilant with joy.*
- ⁴ *Sing to God; sing praises to his name;
lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds—
his name is the Lord—
be exultant before him.*
- ⁵ *Father of orphans and protector of widows
is God in his holy habitation.*
- ⁶ *God gives the desolate a home to live in;
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but the rebellious live in a parched land.*
- ⁷ *O God, when you went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness, Selah*
- ⁸ *the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain
at the presence of God, the God of Sinai,
at the presence of God, the God of Israel.*
- ⁹ *Rain in abundance, O God, you showered abroad;
you restored your heritage when it languished;*
- ¹⁰ *your flock found a dwelling in it;
in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.*
- ¹¹ *The Lord gives the command;
great is the company of those who bore the tidings:*
- ¹² *“The kings of the armies, they flee, they flee!”*
- The women at home divide the spoil,*
- ¹³ *though they stay among the sheepfolds—
the wings of a dove covered with silver,
its pinions with green gold.*

Genesis 2:4b-25

⁴*In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no vegetation of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground, ⁶but a stream would rise from the earth and water the whole face of the ground— ⁷then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. ⁸And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

¹⁰*A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. ¹¹The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold, ¹²and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.*

¹⁵*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”*

¹⁸*Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” ¹⁹So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air and brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all cattle and to the birds of the air and to every animal of the field, but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.”*

²⁴*Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

Sermon notes

I would discuss the text as announcement of the *cultural mandate* (Kuyper, Bavinck, neo-calvinists ...) in the setting of the creation of a human society based on generative couples. I know, it is not a popular view.

Appendix: John Calvin’s Commentary on Genesis 2:4b-25

From John Calvin, Commentary on Genesis, translated by the Rev. John King (Calvin Translation Society, 1847), on Genesis 2:4-25.

4. *These are the generations* The design of Moses was deeply to impress upon our minds the *origin* of the heaven and the earth, which he designates by the word *generation*. For there have always been ungrateful and malignant men, who, either by feigning, that the world was eternal or by obliterating the memory of the creations would attempt to obscure the glory of God. Thus the devil, by his guile, turns those away from God who are more ingenious and skillful than others in order that each may become a god unto himself. Wherefore, it is not a superfluous repetition which inculcates the necessary fact, that the world existed only from the time when it was created since such knowledge directs us to its Architect and Author. Under the names of heaven and earth, the whole is, by the figure *synecdoche*, included. Some of the Hebrews thinks that the essential name of God is here at length expressed by Moses, because his majesty shines forth more clearly in the completed world.

5. *And every plant* This verse is connected with the preceding, and must be read in continuation with it; for he annexes the plants and herbs to the earth, as the garment with which the Lord has adorned it, lest its nakedness should appear as a deformity. The noun שִׁיחַ (*sicah*,) which we translate plant, sometimes signifies trees, as below, (Genesis 21:15) Therefore, some in this place translate it *shrub*, to which I have no objection. Yet the word *plant* is not unsuitable; because in the former place, Moses seems to refer to the genus, and here to the species. But although he has before related that the herbs were created on the third day, yet it is not without reason that here again mention is made of them, in order that we may know that they were then produced, preserved, and propagated, in a manner different from that which we perceive at the present day. For herbs and trees are produced from seed; or grafts are taken from another roots or they grow by putting forth shoots: in all this the industry and the hand of man are engaged. But, at that time, the method was different: God clothed the earth, not in the same manner as now, (for there was no seed, no root, no plant, which might germinate,) but each suddenly sprung into existence at the command of God, and by the power of his word. They possessed durable vigor, so that they might stand by the force of their own nature, and not by that quickening influence which is now perceived, not by the help of rain, not by the irrigation or culture of man; but by the vapor with which God watered the earth. For he excludes these two things, the rain whence the earth derives moisture, that it may retain its native sap; and human culture, which is the assistant of nature. When he says, that God had ‘not yet caused it to rain,’ he at the same time intimates that it is God who opens and shuts the cataracts of heaven, and that rain and drought are in his hand.

7. *And the Lord God formed man* He now explains what he had before omitted in the creation of man, that his body was taken out of the earth. He had said that he was formed after the image of God. This is incomparably the highest nobility; and, lest men should use it as an occasion of pride, their first origin is placed immediately before them; whence they may learn that this advantage was adventitious; for Moses relates that man had been, in the beginning, dust of the earth. Let foolish men now go and boast of the excellency of their nature! Concerning other animals, it had before been said, Let the earth produce every living creature; but, on the other hand, the body of Adam is formed of clay, and destitute of sense; to the end that no one should exult beyond measure in his flesh. He must be excessively stupid who does not hence learn humility. That which is afterwards added from another quarter, lays us under just so much obligation to God. Nevertheless, he, at the same time, designed to distinguish man by some mark of excellence from brute animals: for these arose out of the earth in a moment; but the peculiar dignity of man is shown in this, that he was gradually formed. For why did not God command him immediately to spring alive out of the earth, unless that, by a special privilege, he might

outshine all the creatures which the earth produced?

And breathed into his nostrils Whatever the greater part of the ancients might think, I do not hesitate to subscribe to the opinion of those who explain this passage of the animal life of man; and thus I expound what they call the vital spirits by the word *breath*. Should any one object, that if so, no distinction would be made between man and other living creatures, since here Moses relates only what is common alike to all: I answer, though here mention is made only of the lower faculty of the soul, which imparts breath to the body, and gives it vigor and motion: this does not prevent the human soul from having its proper rank, and therefore it ought to be distinguished from others. Moses first speaks of the breath; he then adds, that a soul was given to man by which he might live, and be endued with sense and motion. Now we know that the powers of the human mind are many and various. Wherefore, there is nothing absurd in supposing that Moses here alludes only to one of them; but omits the intellectual part, of which mention has been made in the first chapter. Three gradations, indeed, are to be noted in the creation of man; that his dead body was formed out of the dust of the earth; that it was endued with a soul, whence it should receive vital motion; and that on this soul God engraved his own image, to which immortality is annexed.

Man became a living soul I take נֶפֶשׁ (*nepesh*,) for the very essence of the soul: but the epithet *living* suits only the present place, and does not embrace generally the powers of the soul. For Moses intended nothing more than to explain the animating of the clayey figure, whereby it came to pass that man began to live. Paul makes an antithesis between this living soul and the quickening spirit which Christ confers upon the faithful, (1 Corinthians 15:45,) for no other purpose than to teach us that the state of man was not perfected in the person of Adam; but it is a peculiar benefit conferred by Christ, that we may be renewed to a life which is *celestial*, whereas before the fall of Adams man's life was only earthly, seeing it had no firm and settled constancy.

8. *And the Lord God planted* Moses now adds the condition and rule of living which were given to man. And, first, he narrates in what part of the world he was placed, and what a happy and pleasant habitation was allotted to him. Moses says, that God had *planted* accommodating himself, by a simple and uncultivated style, to the capacity of the vulgar. For since the majesty of God, as it really is, cannot be expressed, the Scripture is wont to describe it according to the manner of men. God, then, had planted Paradise in a place which he had especially embellished with every variety of delights, with abounding fruits and with all other most excellent gifts. For this reason it is called a garden, on account of the elegance of its situation, and the beauty of its form. The ancient interpreter has not improperly translated it Paradise; because the Hebrews call the more highly cultivated gardens פֶּרְדִּים (*Pardaisim*,) and Xenophon pronounces the word to be Persian, when he treats of the magnificent and sumptuous gardens of kings. That region which the Lord assigned to Adam, as the firstborn of mankind, was one selected out of the whole world.

In Eden That Jerome improperly translates this, from the beginning, is very obvious: because Moses afterwards says, that Cain dwelt in the southern region of this place. Moreover it is to be observed, that when he describes paradise as in the east, he speaks in reference to the Jews, for he directs his discourse to his own people. Hence we infer, in the first place, that there was a certain region assigned by God to the first man, in which he might have his home. I state this expressly, because there have been authors who would extend this garden over all regions of the world. Truly, I confess, that if the earth had not been cursed on account of the sin of man, the whole — as it had been blessed from the beginning — would have remained the fairest

scene both of fruitfulness and of delight; that it would have been, in short, not dissimilar to Paradise, when compared with that scene of deformity which we now behold. But when Moses here describes particularly the situation of the region, they absurdly transfer what Moses said of a certain particular place to the whole world. It is not indeed doubtful (as I just now hinted) that God would choose the most fertile and pleasant place, the first-fruits (so to speak) of the earth, as his gift to Adam, whom he had dignified with the honor of primogeniture among men, in token of his special favor. Again, we infer, that this garden was situated on the earth, not as some dream in the air; for unless it had been a region of our world, it would not have been placed opposite to Judea, towards the east. We must, however, entirely reject the allegories of Origen, and of others like him, which Satan, with the deepest subtlety, has endeavored to introduce into the Church, for the purpose of rendering the doctrine of Scripture ambiguous and destitute of all certainty and firmness. It may be, indeed, that some, impelled by a supposed necessity, have resorted to an allegorical sense, because they never found in the world such a place as is described by Moses: but we see that the greater part, through a foolish affectation of subtleties, have been too much addicted to allegories. As it concerns the present passage, they speculate in vain, and to no purpose, by departing from the literal sense. For Moses has no other design than to teach man that he was formed by God, with this condition, that he should have dominion over the earth, from which he might gather fruit, and thus learn by daily experience that the world was subject unto him. What advantage is it to fly in the air, and to leave the earth, where God has given proof of his benevolence towards the human race? But some one may say, that to interpret this of celestial bliss is more skillful. I answer, since the eternal inheritance of man is in heaven, it is truly right that we should tend thither; yet must we fix our foot on earth long enough to enable us to consider the abode which God requires man to use for a time. For we are now conversant with that history which teaches us that Adam was, by Divine appointment, an inhabitant of the earth, in order that he might, in passing through his earthly life, meditate on heavenly glory; and that he had been bountifully enriched by the Lord with innumerable benefits, from the enjoyment of which he might infer the paternal benevolence of God. Moses, also, will hereafter subjoin that he was commanded to cultivate the fields and permitted to eat certain fruits: all which things neither suit the circle of the moon, nor the aerial regions. But although we have said, that the situation of Paradise lay between the rising of the sun and Judea, yet something more definite may be required respecting that region. They who contend that it was in the vicinity of Mesopotamia, rely on reasons not to be despised; because it is probable that the sons of Eden were contiguous to the river Tigris. But as the description of it by Moses will immediately follow, it is better to defer the consideration of it to that place. The ancient interpreter has fallen into a mistake in translating the proper name Eden by the word pleasure. I do not indeed deny that the place was so called from its delights; but it is easy to infer that the name was imposed upon the place to distinguish it from others.

9. *And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow* The production here spoken of belongs to the third day of the creation. But Moses expressly declares the place to have been richly replenished with every kind of fruitful trees, that there might be a full and happy abundance of all things. This was purposely done by the Lord, to the end that the cupidity of man might have the less excuse if, instead of being contented with such remarkable affluence, sweetness, and variety, it should (as really happened) precipitate itself against the commandment of God. The Holy Spirit also designedly relates by Moses the greatness of Adam's happiness, in order that his vile intemperance might the more clearly appear, which such superfluity was unable to restrain from breaking forth upon the forbidden fruit. And certainly it was shameful ingratitude, that he

could not rest in a state so happy and desirable: truly, that was more than brutal lust which bounty so great was not able to satisfy. No corner of the earth was then barren, nor was there even any which was not exceedingly rich and fertile: but that benediction of God, which was elsewhere comparatively moderate, had in this place poured itself wonderfully forth. For not only was there an abundant supply of food, but with it was added sweetness for the gratification of the palate, and beauty to feast the eyes. Therefore, from such benignant indulgence, it is more than sufficiently evident, how inexplicable had been the cupidity of man.

The tree of life also It is uncertain whether he means only two individual trees, or two kinds of trees. Either opinion is probable, but the point is by no means worthy of contention; since it is of little or no concern to us, which of the two is maintained. There is more importance in the epithets, which were applied to each tree from its effect, and that not by the will of man but of God. He gave the tree of life its name, not because it could confer on man that life with which he had been previously endued, but in order that it might be a symbol and memorial of the life which he had received from God. For we know it to be by no means unusual that God should give to us the attestation of his grace by external symbols. He does not indeed transfer his power into outward signs; but by them he stretches out his hand to us, because, without assistance, we cannot ascend to him. He intended, therefore, that man, as often as he tasted the fruit of that tree, should remember whence he received his life, in order that he might acknowledge that he lives not by his own power, but by the kindness of God alone; and that life is not (as they commonly speak) an intrinsic good, but proceeds from God. Finally, in that tree there was a visible testimony to the declaration, that ‘in God we are, and live, and move.’ But if Adam, hitherto innocent, and of an upright nature, had need of monitory signs to lead him to the knowledge of divine grace, how much more necessary are signs now, in this great imbecility of our nature, since we have fallen from the true light? Yet I am not dissatisfied with what has been handed down by some of the fathers, as Augustine and Eucherius, that the tree of life was a figure of Christ, inasmuch as he is the Eternal Word of God: it could not indeed be otherwise a symbol of life, than by representing him in figure. For we must maintain what is declared in the first chapter of John (John 1:1-3,) that the life of all things was included in the Word, but especially the life of men, which is conjoined with reason and intelligence. Wherefore, by this sign, Adam was admonished, that he could claim nothing for himself as if it were his own, in order that he might depend wholly upon the Son of God, and might not seek life anywhere but in him. But if he, at the time when he possessed life in safety, had it only as deposited in the word of God, and could not otherwise retain it, than by acknowledging that it was received from Him, whence may we recover it, after it has been lost? Let us know, therefore, that when we have departed from Christ, nothing remains for us but death.

I know that certain writers restrict the meaning of the expression here used to corporeal life. They suppose such a power of quickening the body to have been in the tree, that it should never languish through age; but I say, they omit what is the chief thing in life, namely, the grace of intelligence; for we must always consider for what end man was formed, and what rule of living was prescribed to him. Certainly, for him to live, was not simply to have a body fresh and lively, but also to excel in the endowments of the soul.

Concerning the tree of knowledge of good and evil, we must hold, that it was prohibited to man, not because God would have him to stray like a sheep, without judgment and without choice; but that he might not seek to be wiser than became him, nor by trusting to his own understanding, cast off the yoke of God, and constitute himself an arbiter and judge of good and

evil. His sin proceeded from an evil conscience; whence it follows, that a judgment had been given him, by which he might discriminate between virtues and vices. Nor could what Moses relates be otherwise true, namely, that he was created in the image of God; since the image of God comprises in itself the knowledge of him who is the chief good. Thoroughly insane, therefore, and monsters of men are the libertines, who pretend that we are restored to a state of innocence, when each is carried away by his own lust without judgment. We now understand what is meant by abstaining from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; namely, that Adam might not, in attempting one thing or another, rely upon his own prudence; but that, cleaving to God alone, he might become wise only by his obedience. Knowledge is here, therefore, taken disparagingly, in a bad sense, for that wretched experience which man, when he departed from the only fountain of perfect wisdom, began to acquire for himself. And this is the origin of freewill, that Adam wished to be independent, and dared to try what he was able to do.

10. *And a river went out* Moses says that one river flowed to water the garden, which afterwards would divide itself into four heads. It is sufficiently agreed among all, that two of these heads are the Euphrates and the Tigris; for no one disputes that **הידקל** (*Hiddekel*) is the Tigris. But there is a great controversy respecting the other two. Many think, that Pison and Gihon are the Ganges and the Nile; the error, however, of these men is abundantly refuted by the distance of the positions of these rivers. Persons are not wanting who fly across even to the Danube; as if indeed the habitation of one man stretched itself from the most remote part of Asia to the extremity of Europe. But since many other celebrated rivers flow by the region of which we are speaking, there is greater probability in the opinion of those who believe that two of these rivers are pointed out, although their names are now obsolete. Be this as it may, the difficulty is not yet solved. For Moses divides the one river which flowed by the garden into four heads. Yet it appears, that the fountains of the Euphrates and the Tigris were far distant from each other. From this difficulty, some would free themselves by saying, that the surface of the globe may have been changed by the deluge; and, therefore, they imagine it might have happened that the courses of the rivers were disturbed and changed, and their springs transferred elsewhere; a solution which appears to me by no means to be accepted. For although I acknowledge that the earth, from the time that it was accursed, became reduced from its native beauty to a state of wretched defilement, and to a garb of mourning, and afterwards was further laid waste in many places by the deluge; still, I assert, it was the same earth which had been created in the beginning. Add to this, that Moses (in my judgment) accommodated his topography to the capacity of his age. Yet nothing is accomplished, unless we find that place where the Tigris and Euphrates proceed from one river. Observe, first, that no mention is made of a spring or fountain, but only that it is said, there was one river. But the four heads I understand to mean, both the beginnings from which the rivers are produced, and the mouths by which they discharge themselves into the sea. Now the Euphrates was formerly so joined by confluence with the Tigris, that it might justly be said, one river was divided into four heads; especially if what is manifest to all be conceded, that Moses does not speak acutely, nor in a philosophical manner, but popularly, so that every one least informed may understand him. Thus, in the first chapter, he called the sun and moon two great luminaries; not because the moon exceeded other planets in magnitude, but because, to common observation, it seemed greater. Add further, that he seems to remove all doubt when he says, that the river had four heads, because it was divided from that place. What does this mean, except that the channels were divided, out of one confluent stream, either above or below Paradise? I will now submit a plan to view, that the readers may understand where I think Paradise was placed by Moses.

Pliny indeed relates, in his Sixth Book, that the Euphrates was so stopped in its course by the Orcheni, that it could not flow into the sea, except through the Tigris. And Pomponius Mela, in his Third Book, denies that it flowed by any given outlet, as other rivers, but says that it failed in its course. Nearchus, however, (whom Alexander had made commander of his fleet, and who, under his sanction, had navigated all these regions,) reckons the distance from the mouth of the Euphrates to Babylon, three thousand three hundred stadia. But he places the mouths of the Tigris at the entrance of Susiana; in which region, returning from that long and memorable voyage, he met the king with his fleet, as Adrian relates in his Eighth Book of the Exploits of Alexander. This statement Strabo also confirms by his testimony in his Fifteenth Book. Nevertheless, wherever the Euphrates either submerges or mingles its stream, it is certain, that it and the Tigris, below the point of their confluence, are again divided. Adrian, however, in his Seventh Book, writes that not one channel only of the Euphrates runs into the Tigris, but also many rivers and ditches, because waters naturally descend from higher to lower ground. With respect to the confluence, the opinion of some was, that it had been effected by the labor of the Praefect Cobaris, lest the Euphrates, by its precipitate course, should injure Babylon. But he speaks of it as of a doubtful matter. It is more credible, that men, by art and industry, followed the guidance of Nature in forming ditches, when they saw the Euphrates any where flowing of its own accord from the higher ground into the Tigris. Moreover, if confidence is placed in Pomponius Mela, Semiramis conducted the Tigris and Euphrates into Mesopotamia, which was previously dry; a thing by no means credible. There is more truth in the statement of Strabo, — a diligent and attentive writer, — in his Eleventh Book, that at Babylon these two rivers unite: and then, that each is carried separately, in its own bed, into the Red Sea. He understands that junction to have taken place above Babylon, not far from the town Massica, as we read in the Fifth Book of Pliny. Thence one river flows through Babylon, the other glides by Seleucia, two of the most celebrated and opulent cities. If we admit this confluence, by which the Euphrates was mixed with the Tigris, to have been natural, and to have existed from the beginning, all absurdity is removed. If there is anywhere under heaven a region preeminent in beauty, in the abundance of all kinds of fruit, in fertility, in delicacies, and in other gifts, that is the region which writers most celebrate. Wherefore, the eulogies with which Moses commends Paradise are such as properly belong to a tract of this description. And that the region of Eden was situated in those parts is probable from Isaiah 37:12, Ezekiel 27:23. Moreover, when Moses declares that a river went forth, I understand him as speaking of the flowing of the stream; as if he had said, that Adam dwelt on the bank of the river, or in that land which was watered on both sides if you choose to take Paradise for both banks of the river. However, it makes no great difference whether Adam dwelt below the confluent stream towards Babylon and Seleucia, or in the higher part; it is enough that he occupied a well-watered country. How the river was divided into four heads is not difficult to understand. For there are two rivers which flow together into one, and then separate in different directions; thus, it is one at the point of confluence, but there are two heads in its upper channels, and two towards the sea; afterwards, they again begin to be more widely separated.

The question remains concerning the names Pison and Gihon. For it does not seem consonant with reason, to assign a double name to each of the rivers. But it is nothing new for rivers to change their names in their course, especially where there is any special mark of distinction. The Tigris itself (by the authority of Pliny) is called *Diglito* near its source; but after it has formed many channels, and again coalesces, it takes the name of *Pasitigris*. There is, therefore, no absurdity in saying, that after its confluence it had different names. Further there is some

such affinity between Pasin and Pison, as to render it not improbable, that the name Pasitigris is a vestige of the ancient appellation. In the Fifth Book of Quintus Curtius, concerning the Exploits of Alexander, where mention is made of Pasitigris, some copies read, that it was called by the inhabitants Pasin. Nor do the other circumstances, by which Moses describes three of these rivers, disagree with this supposition. Pison surrounds the land of Havila, where gold is produced. Surrounding is rightly attributed to the Tigris, on account of its winding course below Mesopotamia. The land of Havila, in my judgment, is here taken for a region adjoining Persia. For subsequently, in the twenty-fifth chapter (Genesis 25:1,) Moses relates, that the Ishmaelites dwelt from Havila unto Shur, which is contiguous to Egypt, and through which the road lies into Assyria. Havila, as one boundary, is opposed to Shur as another, and this boundary Moses places near Egypt, on the side which lies towards Assyria. Whence it follows, that Havila (the other boundary) extends towards Susia and Persia. For it is necessary that it should lie below Assyria towards the Persian Sea; besides, it is placed at a great distance from Egypt; because Moses enumerates many nations which dwelt between these boundaries. Then it appears that the Nabathaeans, of whom mention is there made, were neighbors to the Persian. Every thing which Moses asserts respecting gold and precious stones is most applicable to this district.

The river Gihon still remains to be noticed, which, as Moses declares, waters the land of *Chus*. All interpreters translate this word *Ethiopia*; but the country of the Midianites, and the conterminous country of Arabia, are included under the same name by Moses; for which reason, his wife is elsewhere called an Ethiopian woman. Moreover, since the lower course of the Euphrates tends toward that region, I do not see why it should be deemed absurd, that it there receives the name of Gihon. And thus the simple meaning of Moses is, that the garden of which Adam was the possessor was well watered, the channel of a river passing that way, which was afterwards divided into four heads.

15. *And the Lord God took the man* Moses now adds, that the earth was given to man, with this condition, that he should occupy himself in its cultivation. Whence it follows that men were created to employ themselves in some work, and not to lie down in inactivity and idleness. This labor, truly, was pleasant, and full of delight, entirely exempt from all trouble and weariness; since however God ordained that man should be exercised in the culture of the ground, he condemned in his person, all indolent repose. Wherefore, nothing is more contrary to the order of nature, than to consume life in eating, drinking, and sleeping, while in the meantime we propose nothing to ourselves to do. Moses adds, that the custody of the garden was given in charge to Adam, to show that we possess the things which God has committed to our hands, on the condition, that being content with a frugal and moderate use of them, we should take care of what shall remain. Let him who possesses a field, so partake of its yearly fruits, that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence; but let him endeavor to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated. Let him so feed on its fruits that he neither dissipates it by luxury, nor permits to be marred or ruined by neglect. Moreover, that this economy, and this diligence, with respect to those good things which God has given us to enjoy, may flourish among us; let every one regard himself as the steward of God in all things which he possesses. Then he will neither conduct himself dissolutely, nor corrupt by abuse those things which God requires to be preserved.

16. *And the Lord God commanded* Moses now teaches, that man was the governor of the world, with this exception, that he should, nevertheless, be subject to God. A law is imposed upon him in token of his subjection; for it would have made no difference to God, if he had eaten

indiscriminately of any fruit he pleased. Therefore the prohibition of one tree was a test of obedience. And in this mode, God designed that the whole human race should be accustomed from the beginning to reverence his Deity; as, doubtless, it was necessary that man, adorned and enriched with so many excellent gifts, should be held under restraint, lest he should break forth into licentiousness. There was, indeed, another special reason, to which we have before alluded, lest Adam should desire to be wise above measure; but this is to be kept in mind as God's general design, that he would have men subject to his authority. Therefore, abstinence from the fruit of one tree was a kind of first lesson in obedience, that man might know he had a Director and Lord of his life, on whose will he ought to depend, and in whose commands he ought to acquiesce. And this, truly, is the only rule of living well and rationally, that men should exercise themselves in obeying God. It seems, however, to some as if this did not accord with the judgment of Paul, when he teaches, that the law was not made for the righteous, (1 Timothy 1:9.) For if it be so, then, when Adam was yet innocent and upright, he had no need of a law. But the solution is ready. For Paul is not there writing controversially; but from the common practice of life, he declares, that they who freely run, do not require to be compelled by the necessity of law; as it is said, in the common proverb, that 'Good laws spring from bad manners.' In the meantime, he does not deny that God, from the beginning, imposed a law upon man, for the purpose of maintaining the right due to himself. Should any one bring, as an objection, another statement of Paul, where he asserts that the "law is the minister of death," (2 Corinthians 3:7,) I answer, it is so accidentally, and from the corruption of our nature. But at the time of which we speak, a precept was given to man, whence he might know that God ruled over him. These minute things, however, I lightly pass over. What I have before said, since it is of far greater moment, is to be frequently recalled to memory, namely, that our life will then be rightly ordered, if we obey God, and if his will be the regulator of all our affections.

Of every tree To the end that Adam might the more willingly comply, God commends his own liberality. 'Behold,' he says, 'I deliver into thy hand whatever fruits the earth may produce, whatever fruits every kind of tree may yield: from this immense profusion and variety I except only one tree.' Then, by denouncing punishment, he strikes terror, for the purpose of confirming the authority of the law. So much the greater, then, is the wickedness of man, whom neither that kind commemoration of the gifts of God, nor the dread of punishment, was able to retain in his duty.

But it is asked, what kind of death God means in this place? It appears to me, that the definition of this death is to be sought from its opposite; we must, I say, remember from what kind of life man fell. He was, in every respect, happy; his life, therefore, had alike respect to his body and his soul, since in his soul a right judgment and a proper government of the affections prevailed, there also life reigned; in his body there was no defect, wherefore he was wholly free from death. His earthly life truly would have been temporal; yet he would have passed into heaven without death, and without injury. Death, therefore, is now a terror to us; first, because there is a kind of annihilation, as it respects the body; then, because the soul feels the curse of God. We must also see what is the cause of death, namely alienation from God. Thence it follows, that under the name of death is comprehended all those miseries in which Adam involved himself by his defection; for as soon as he revolted from God, the fountain of life, he was cast down from his former state, in order that he might perceive the life of man without God to be wretched and lost, and therefore differing nothing from death. Hence the condition of man after his sin is not improperly called both the privation of life, and death. The miseries and evils both of soul and body, with which man is beset so long as he is on earth, are a kind of entrance into death,

till death itself entirely absorbs him; for the Scripture everywhere calls those dead who, being oppressed by the tyranny of sin and Satan, breathe nothing but their own destruction. Wherefore the question is superfluous, how it was that God threatened death to Adam on the day in which he should touch the fruit, when he long deferred the punishment? For then was Adam consigned to death, and death began its reign in him, until supervening grace should bring a remedy.

18. *It is not good that the man should be alone* Moses now explains the design of God in creating the woman; namely, that there should be human beings on the earth who might cultivate mutual society between themselves. Yet a doubt may arise whether this design ought to be extended to progeny, for the words simply mean that since it was not expedient for man to be alone, a wife must be created, who might be his helper. I, however, take the meaning to be this, that God begins, indeed, at the first step of human society, yet designs to include others, each in its proper place. The commencement, therefore, involves a general principle, that man was formed to be a social animal. Now, the human race could not exist without the woman; and, therefore, in the conjunction of human beings, that sacred bond is especially conspicuous, by which the husband and the wife are combined in one body, and one soul; as nature itself taught Plato, and others of the sounder class of philosophers, to speak. But although God pronounced, concerning Adam, that it would not be profitable for him to be alone, yet I do not restrict the declaration to his person alone, but rather regard it as a common law of man's vocation, so that every one ought to receive it as said to himself, that solitude is not good, excepting only him whom God exempts as by a special privilege. Many think that celibacy conduces to their advantage, and therefore, abstain from marriage, lest they should be miserable. Not only have heathen writers defined that to be a happy life which is passed without a wife, but the first book of Jerome, against Jovinian, is stuffed with petulant reproaches, by which he attempts to render hallowed wedlock both hateful and infamous. To these wicked suggestions of Satan let the faithful learn to oppose this declaration of God, by which he ordains the conjugal life for man, not to his destruction, but to his salvation.

I will make him an help It may be inquired, why this is not said in the plural number, *Let us make*, as before in the creation of man. Some suppose that a distinction between the two sexes is in this manner marked, and that it is thus shown how much the man excels the woman. But I am better satisfied with an interpretation which, though not altogether contrary, is yet different; namely, since in the person of the man the human race had been created, the common dignity of our whole nature was without distinction, honored with one eulogy, when it was said, *Let us make man*; nor was it necessary to be repeated in creating the woman, who was nothing else than an accession to the man. Certainly, it cannot be denied, that the woman also, though in the second degree, was created in the image of God; whence it follows, that what was said in the creation of the man belongs to the female sex. Now, since God assigns the woman as a help to the man, he not only prescribes to wives the rule of their vocation to instruct them in their duty, but he also pronounces that marriage will really prove to men the best support of life. We may therefore conclude, that the order of nature implies that the woman should be the helper of the man. The vulgar proverb, indeed, is, that she is a necessary evil; but the voice of God is rather to be heard, which declares that woman is given as a companion and an associate to the man, to assist him to live well. I confess, indeed, that in this corrupt state of mankind, the blessing of God, which is here described, is neither perceived nor flourishes; but the cause of the evil must be considered, namely, that the order of nature, which God had appointed, has been inverted by us. For if the integrity of man had remained to this day such as it was from the beginning, that divine institution would be clearly discerned, and the sweetest harmony would

reign in marriage; because the husband would look up with reverence to God; the woman in this would be a faithful assistant to him; and both, with one consent, would cultivate a holy, as well as friendly and peaceful intercourse. Now, it has happened by our fault, and by the corruption of nature, that this happiness of marriage has, in a great measure, perished, or, at least, is mixed and infected with many inconveniences. Hence arise strifes, troubles, sorrows, dissensions, and a boundless sea of evils; and hence it follows, that men are often disturbed by their wives, and suffer through them many discouragements. Still, marriage was not capable of being so far vitiated by the depravity of men, that the blessing which God has once sanctioned by his word should be utterly abolished and extinguished. Therefore, amidst many inconveniences of marriage, which are the fruits of degenerate nature, some residue of divine good remains; as in the fire apparently smothered, some sparks still glitter. On this main point hangs another, that women, being instructed in their duty of helping their husbands, should study to keep this divinely appointed order. It is also the part of men to consider what they owe in return to the other half of their kind, for the obligation of both sexes is mutual, and on this condition is the woman assigned as a help to the man, that he may fill the place of her head and leader. One thing more is to be noted, that, when the woman is here called the help of the man, no allusion is made to that necessity to which we are reduced since the fall of Adam; for the woman was ordained to be the man's helper, even although he had stood in his integrity. But now, since the depravity of appetite also requires a remedy, we have from God a double benefit: but the latter is accidental.

Meet for him In the Hebrew it is כנגדו (*kenegedo*), “as if opposite to,” or “over against him.” ׀ (*Caph*) in that language is a note of similitude. But although some of the Rabbies think it is here put as an affirmative, yet I take it in its general sense, as though it were said that she is a kind of counterpart, for the woman is said to be *opposite* to or *over against* the man, because she responds to him. But the particle of similitude seems to me to be added because it is a form of speech taken from common usage. The Greek translators have faithfully rendered the sense, and Jerome, “Which may be like him,” for Moses intended to note some equality. And hence is refuted the error of some, who think that the woman was formed only for the sake of propagation, and who restrict the word “good,” which had been lately mentioned, to the production of offspring. They do not think that a wife was personally necessary for Adam, because he was hitherto free from lust; as if she had been given to him only for the companion of his chamber, and not rather that she might be the inseparable associate of his life. Wherefore the particle ׀ (*caph*) is of importance, as intimating that marriage extends to all parts and usages of life. The explanation given by others, as if it were said, Let her be ready to obedience, is cold; for Moses intended to express more, as is manifest from what follows.

19. *And out of the ground the Lord God formed, etc.* This is a more ample exposition of the preceding sentence, for he says that, of all the animals, when they had been placed in order, not one was found which might be conferred upon and adapted to Adam; nor was there such affinity of nature, that Adam could choose for himself a companion for life out of any one species. Nor did this occur through ignorance, for each species had passed in review before Adam, and he had imposed names upon them, not rashly but from certain knowledge; yet there was no just proportion between him and them. Therefore, unless a wife had been given him of the same kind with himself, he would have remained destitute of a suitable and proper help. Moreover, what is here said of God's bringing the animals to Adam signifies nothing else than that he endued them with the disposition to obedience, so that they would voluntarily offer themselves to the man, in order that he, having closely inspected them, might distinguish them by appropriate

names, agreeing with the nature of each. This gentleness towards man would have remained also in wild beasts, if Adam, by his defection from God, had not lost the authority he had before received. But now, from the time in which he began to be rebellious against God, he experienced the ferocity of brute animals against himself; for some are tamed with difficulty, others always remain unsubdued, and some, even of their own accord, inspire us with terror by their fierceness. Yet some remains of their former subjection continue to the present time, as we shall see in the second verse of the ninth chapter (Genesis 9:2.) Besides, it is to be remarked that Moses speaks only of those animals which approach the nearest to man, for the fishes live as in another world. As to the names which Adam imposed, I do not doubt that each of them was founded on the best reason; but their use, with many other good things, has become obsolete.

21. *And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall, etc.* Although to profane persons this method of forming woman may seem ridiculous, and some of these may say that Moses is dealing in fables, yet to us the wonderful providence of God here shines forth; for, to the end that the conjunction of the human race might be the more sacred, he purposed that both males and females should spring from one and the same origin. Therefore he created human nature in the person of Adam, and thence formed Eve, that the woman should be only a portion of the whole human race. This is the import of the words of Moses which we have had before, (Genesis 1:28,) “God created man... he made them male and female.” In this manner Adam was taught to recognize himself in his wife, as in a mirror; and Eve, in her turn, to submit herself willingly to her husband, as being taken out of him. But if the two sexes had proceeded from different sources, there would have been occasion either of mutual contempt, or envy, or contentions. And against what do perverse men here object? ‘The narration does not seem credible, since it is at variance with custom.’ As if, indeed, such an objection would have more color than one raised against the usual mode of the production of mankind, if the latter were not known by use and experience. But they object that either the rib which was taken from Adam had been superfluous, or that his body had been mutilated by the absence of the rib. To either of these it may be answered, that they find out a great absurdity. If, however, we should say that the rib out of which he would form another body had been prepared previously by the Creator of the world, I find nothing in this answer which is not in accordance with Divine Providence. Yet I am more in favor of a different conjecture, namely, that something was taken from Adam, in order that he might embrace, with greater benevolence, a part of himself. He lost, therefore, one of his ribs; but, instead of it, a far richer reward was granted him, since he obtained a faithful associate of life; for he now saw himself, who had before been imperfect, rendered complete in his wife. And in this we see a true resemblance of our union with the Son of God; for he became weak that he might have members of his body endued with strength. In the meantime, it is to be noted, that Adam had been plunged in a sleep so profound, that he felt no pain; and further, that neither had the rupture been violent, nor was any want perceived of the lost rib, because God so filled up the vacuity with flesh, that his strength remained unimpaired; only the hardness of bone was removed. Moses also designedly used the word *built*, to teach us that in the person of the woman the human race was at length complete, which had before been like a building just begun. Others refer the expression to the domestic economy, as if Moses would say that legitimate family order was then instituted, which does not differ widely from the former exposition.

22. *And brought her, etc.* Moses now relates that marriage was divinely instituted, which is especially useful to be known; for since Adam did not take a wife to himself at his own will, but received her as offered and appropriated to him by God, the sanctity of marriage hence more clearly appears, because we recognize God as its Author. The more Satan has endeavored to

dishonor marriage, the more should we vindicate it from all reproach and abuse, that it may receive its due reverence. Thence it will follow that the children of God may embrace a conjugal life with a good and tranquil conscience, and husbands and wives may live together in chastity and honor. The artifice of Satan in attempting the defamation of marriage was twofold: first, that by means of the odium attached to it he might introduce the pestilential law of celibacy; and, secondly, that married persons might indulge themselves in whatever license they pleased. Therefore, by showing the dignity of marriage, we must remove superstition, lest it should in the slightest degree hinder the faithful from chastely using the lawful and pure ordinance of God; and further, we must oppose the lasciviousness of the flesh, in order that men may live modestly with their wives. But if no other reason influenced us, yet this alone ought to be abundantly sufficient, that unless we think and speak honorably of marriage, reproach is attached to its Author and Patron, for such God is here described as being by Moses.

23. *And Adam said, etc.* It is demanded whence Adam derived this knowledge since he was at that time buried in deep sleep. If we say that his quickness of perception was then such as to enable him by conjecture to form a judgment, the solution would be weak. But we ought not to doubt that God would make the whole course of the affair manifest to him, either by secret revelation or by his word; for it was not from any necessity on God's part that He borrowed from man the rib out of which he might form the woman; but he designed that they should be more closely joined together by this bond which could not have been effected unless he had informed them of the fact. Moses does not indeed explain by what means God gave them this information; yet unless we would make the work of God superfluous, we must conclude that its Author revealed both the fact itself and the method and design of its accomplishment. The deep sleep was sent upon Adam, not to hide from him the origin of his wife, but to exempt him from pain and trouble, until he should receive a compensation so excellent for the loss of his rib.

This is now bone of, etc. In using the expression **הַפֶּעַם** (*hac vice*,) Adam indicates that something had been wanting to him; as if he had said, Now at length I have obtained a suitable companion, who is part of the substance of my flesh, and in whom I behold, as it were, another self. And he gives to his wife a name taken from that of man, that by this testimony and this mark he might transmit a perpetual memorial of the wisdom of God. A deficiency in the Latin language has compelled the ancient interpreter to render **אִשָּׁה** (*ishah*,) by the word *virago*. It is, however, to be remarked, that the Hebrew term means nothing else than the female of the man.

24. *Therefore shall a man leave* It is doubted whether Moses here introduces God as speaking, or continues the discourse of Adam, or, indeed, has added this, in virtue of his office as teacher, in his own person. The last of these is that which I most approve. Therefore, after he has related historically what God had done, he also demonstrates the end of the divine institution. The sum of the whole is, that among the offices pertaining to human society, this is the principal, and as it were the most sacred, that a man should cleave unto his wife. And he amplifies this by a superadded comparison, that the husband ought to prefer his wife to his father. But the father is said to be *left* not because marriage severs sons from their fathers, or dispenses with other ties of nature, for in this way God would be acting contrary to himself. While, however, the piety of the son towards his father is to be most assiduously cultivated and ought in itself to be deemed inviolable and sacred, yet Moses so speaks of marriage as to show that it is less lawful to desert a wife than parents. Therefore, they who, for slight causes, rashly allow of divorces, violate, in one single particular, all the laws of nature, and reduce them to nothing. If we should make it a point of conscience not to separate a father from his son, it is a still greater wickedness to dissolve the

bond which God has preferred to all others.

They shall be one flesh Although the ancient Latin interpreter has translated the passage ‘in one flesh,’ yet the Greek interpreters have expressed it more forcibly: ‘They two shall be *into* one flesh,’ and thus Christ cites the place in Matthew 19:5. But though here no mention is made of *two*, yet there is no ambiguity in the sense; for Moses had not said that God has assigned many wives, but only one to one man; and in the general direction given, he had put the wife in the singular number. It remains, therefore, that the conjugal bond subsists between two persons only, whence it easily appears, that nothing is less accordant with the divine institution than polygamy. Now, when Christ, in censuring the voluntary divorces of the Jews, adduces as his reason for doing it, that ‘it was not so in the beginning,’ (Matthew 19:5,) he certainly commands this institution to be observed as a perpetual rule of conduct. To the same point also Malachi recalls the Jews of his own time:

‘Did he not make them one from the beginning? and yet the Spirit was abounding in him.’ (Malachi 2:15.)

Wherefore, there is no doubt that polygamy is a corruption of legitimate marriage.

25. *They were both naked* That the nakedness of men should be deemed indecorous and unsightly, while that of cattle has nothing disgraceful, seems little to agree with the dignity of human nature. We cannot behold a naked man without a sense of shame; yet at the sight of an ass, a dog, or an ox, no such feeling will be produced. Moreover, every one is ashamed of his own nakedness, even though other witnesses may not be present. Where then is that dignity in which we excel? The cause of this sense of shame, to which we are now alluding, Moses will show in the next chapter. He now esteems it enough to say, that in our uncorrupted nature, there was nothing but what was honorable; whence it follows, that whatsoever is opprobrious in us, must be imputed to our own fault, since our parents had nothing in themselves which was unbecoming until they were defiled with sin.