CHAPTER SIX

THE SHORT SEQUENCES

1. Introductory remarks

Apart from the more extended sequences that have been analyzed in the previous chapters, four more concise sequences are examined here. They are put together in this chapter not because of their content, but because of their size. Their subject matter is only partly related. The first and the last sequence deal with the problem of knowledge of God and with the anthropomorphic way of speaking about God found in the Bible. The second sequence describes the ascent of the Gnostic soul on its way to contemplation; this passage presents an extensive disquisition on numbers and is characterized by a strongly ethical tone. The third sequence deals with the Gnostic soul in its relationship to God. All these passages have in common that they are built on biblical texts that had already been used by Philo.

The approach to the individual passages is similar to that of the preceding chapters. First a translation is given, which is followed by a schematic overview. The individual units are then analyzed within the context in which they appear. Finally, the two authors are compared. A more general conclusion like those provided in previous chapters was not feasible given the diversity of the material in this section.

1.2 Overview of the passages

2.1 Str. II 5,3-6,4 — Post. 5-18
2.2 Str. II 46,2-52,4 — Congr. 83-106; Post. 22-29
2.3 Str. V 67,4-68,3 — Sacr. 95-100
2.4 Str. V 71,5-74,1(4) — Post. 14-20; Somn. I 63-66

2 Individual passages

2.1 Str. II 5,3-6,4 - Post. 5-18

II 5,1 “Accordingly, the Barbarian philosophy, which we follow, is really perfect and true. So it is said in the book of Wisdom: ‘For he himself has given me the unerring knowledge of things, to know the constitution of the world’, and so forth, down to ‘and the natural properties of roots’. Among all these he comprehends natural science, which deals with all the things that have come into being in the world of sense.
II 5.2 And in continuation he alludes also to the spiritual things, when he continues: ‘What is hidden or manifest I have known; for wisdom, the artificer of all things, taught me’. You have in brief the program of our philosophy.

II 5.3 The learning of these branches, when pursued with right conduct, leads through wisdom, the artificer of all things, to the Ruler of all, something that is difficult to grasp and apprehend, since it always recedes and withdraws from him who pursues it.

II 5.4 But he who is far off has come very near, oh ineffable marvel: ‘I am a God who draws near’, says the Lord. He is remote in essence, for how could that which has been forgotten have ever approached the Unbegotten, but very near in power, by which he holds all things in his embrace.

II 5.5 ‘Shall one do things in secret, and shall I not see him?’, Scripture says, for the power of God is always present, taking hold of us through the faculty of contemplation, beneficence and instruction.

II 6.1 Whence Moses, convinced that God is never to be known by human wisdom, says: ‘Show yourself to me’ and he is pressed to enter into the darkness, where God’s voice was, that is into the inaccessable and invisible conceptions of the Existent. For God is not in darkness or in space but above both space and time and peculiarities of created things.

II 6.2 Wherefore neither is he ever in some particular part, since he contains all and is not himself contained by anything, either by limitation or by section.

II 6.3 For ‘what house will you build to me says the Lord’. But he has not even built one for himself, since he cannot be contained, and though heaven be called his throne, not even thus is he contained, but he rests delighted in the creation.

II 6.4 It is clear then that the truth has been hidden from us and if that has been already shown by one example, we shall establish it little after by several more.’’

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1 Str. II 5,1-6,4: ή μὲν οὖν βάρβαρος φιλόσοφος, ἦν μεθέπομεν ἡμεῖς, τελεία τῷ ὄντι καὶ ἀληθής. φησὶ γοῦν ἐν τῇ Σοφίᾳ αὐτός γὰρ μοι δέδωκεν τῶν ὄντων γνώσιν ἀφευθή, εἰδέναι σοῦσαι κόσμουν τὰ τὰ εἴτε ἦσαν ἵπποι. εὐμεταλείπερας ἑνῶν τοῖς ἵπποις κόσμους ἀπάντων τῶν γεγονότων. 5,2: έτις δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν νοητῶν αἰνετᾶται δι’ ὧν ἐπέγει: “διὰ τέσσερα κρύπτη καὶ ἐμφανή ἐγνών· ἕτερ· πάντων τεχνίτες εἰδίδατε με σοφία.” έχεις ἐν ἐραχεί τὸ ἐναπάγειμα τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς φιλοσοφίας. 5,3: ἀναγεί δὲ τούτων μάθησις, μετά ὁρθῆς πολιτείας ἀσκηθείσα, διὰ τῆς πάντων τεχνίτιδος σοφίας ἐπὶ τὸν ἡγεμόνα τοῦ πάντος, δυσκόλωτον τῷ χρήμα καὶ δυσθήρατον, ἐξαναγωγοῦν αἰεὶ καὶ πόρρω ἀφιστάμεθαν τοῦ διώκοντος. 5,4: ο δὲ αὐτὸς μαχρὲν ἐν ἐγνωτέωτα βέβηκεν, θαύμα ἐρημοῦν: “θεὸς ἐγιζών ἐγώ,” φησίν κὺριος· πόρρω μὲν κατ’ οὔσιαν (πόσο γὰρ ἐν συνεγερσίᾳ ποτὲ τὸ γεγονός ἐγγενέτω), ἐγκυτάτω δὲ δωμάτει, ἢ τὰ πάντα ἐγκεκαλύπτει. 5,5: “εἰ ποιήσεις τὰς χρύσας”, φησίν, “τι, καὶ οὐκ ἐπόφημοι αὐτῶν”, καὶ δὴ πάρεστιν αἰεὶ τῇ ἐποπτικῇ τῇ τε ἐνεργετικῇ τῇ τε πατικητικῇ ἀποτελήμενή ἡμῶν δυνάμεις ὑμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ. 6,1: δὴν ὁ Μωσῆς ὁ οὕτως ἀνθρωποποῖησα σοφία γνωσθήσαται τῷ θεῷ πεπεισμένος, ἡμᾶς ἡμῶν ἡμῶν κακοτοῦ” φησὶ καὶ “ἐλείς τοῦ γνώρου”, οὐ γὰρ ἐν φωνῇ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰπελθέν ἑβαθμίζεται, τουτεστὶν εἰς τὰς ἀδιάποτους καὶ ἀείδικες περὶ τοῦ ὄντος ἐννοιας· οὐ γὰρ ἐν γνώρῳ ἡ τόπῳ ὁ θεὸς, ἀλλ’ ὑπέρανω καὶ τόπον καὶ χρόνον καὶ τῆς τῶν γεγονότων ἰδιότητος. 6,2: διὸ οὖθεν ἐν μέρει κατατάγεται ποτὲ ἀπειρίκη δὲ περιεχόμενος ἡ κατὰ ὁμοῖων τινα κατὰ ἀπομολυνμένον. 6,3: “ποίην γὰρ οἶκον οἰκοδομήσατε μοι,” λέγει κύριος· ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ ἐστὶν ὑποδομήσαν ἀχώρητος