

Exhortation to the Greeks (Protrepticus)

Modern English version · SermonIndex

Clement of Alexandria · c. AD 190–200

An appeal by Clement, a Christian teacher in Alexandria, to educated Greeks. He mocks the myths and mystery cults, shows that the poets and philosophers caught only glimpses of the truth, and invites readers to turn to the Word of God, whom he presents as the new song. Clement is steeped in Greek literature, so the text is full of quotations and allusions to poets and myths.

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Chapter 1

1a Amphion of Thebes and Arion of Methymna were both singers. Both are the stuff of legend, and the Greeks still sing of them in their choruses. By the art of music, one lured a fish and the other built walls around Thebes. Another master, a Thracian (his story is another Greek legend), tamed wild beasts with song alone, and even moved trees, oaks, and replanted them by his music. I could also tell you of another legend and singer, a brother to these: Eunomus the Locrian and the Pythian cicada. A Greek festival was being held at Pytho over a dead serpent, and Eunomus was singing the reptile's funeral song. Whether the song was a hymn or a lament for the snake, I cannot say. But there was a contest, and Eunomus was playing the lyre in the heat of the day, when the cicadas, warmed by the sun, were singing among the leaves on the mountains.

Translator's note. "Pythian" refers to Pytho (Delphi), where Apollo was said to have killed the serpent.

1b But they were not singing to the dead Pythian serpent. They were singing to the all-wise God a song bound by no rule but its own, better than the tunes of Eunomus. The Locrian's string snapped. The cicada flew onto the neck of the lyre and chirped

there as if on a branch, and the singer tuned his playing to the cicada's song and so filled in the missing string. So the cicada was not drawn by the song of Eunomus, as the legend would have it. That legend even had a bronze statue set up at Pytho of Eunomus with his lyre, and with him the Locrian's partner in the contest. No, the cicada flew there of its own will and sang of its own will, but the Greeks think it was a performer playing along to his music. How, then, have you come to believe empty myths, and suppose that animals are charmed by music? Only the bright face of truth, it seems, looks false to you, and it is met with unbelieving eyes.

Translator's note. Clement plays on the Greek word *nomos*, which means both "law" and a kind of melody, and on the name Eunomus ("good *nomos*"). The cicada's song is *autonomos*, a "law (or tune) unto itself," and better than the *nomoi* of Eunomus.

1c So Cithaeron and Helicon and the mountains of the Odrysians and Thracians, the sites of rites of error, have been treated as sacred and celebrated in hymns because of the mysteries. For my part, even if these are only myths, I am grieved at so many disasters being played out as tragedy. But for you, even the records of evils have become dramas, and the actors in them a delight to watch. Well, let us crown the dramas and the poets of the wine-press, already thoroughly drunk, with ivy. Let us shut them up, raving wildly in Bacchic ritual with the satyrs and their frenzied band and the rest of the chorus of demons, on Helicon and Cithaeron, now grown old. And let us bring down truth from heaven above, together with the most radiant wisdom, to the holy mountain of God and the holy prophetic chorus. Let her shine her light as far as it can reach, all around on those who wallow in darkness. Let her free people from error, holding out her supreme right hand, which is understanding, for their salvation.

Translator's note. "Poets of the wine-press" renders a word linked to the *Lenaea*, an Athenian festival of Dionysus at which plays were performed.

1d Let them lift their heads and look up, leave Helicon and Cithaeron, and live in Zion. "For out of Zion will go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." This is the heavenly Word, the true champion crowned on the stage of the whole world. My Eunomus does not sing the tune of Terpander or of Capion, nor the Phrygian, Lydian or Dorian mode. He sings the eternal tune of the new harmony, which bears the name of God: the new song, the Levitical song, "that banishes pain and anger, and makes us forget all evils." A sweet and true remedy for sorrow is blended into the song. To my mind, then, that Thracian Orpheus, and the Theban and the Methymnaean, men who were not truly men, were deceivers. Under the pretext of music they ruined human life. Raving with a kind of skilled sorcery, as if possessed by demons, they brought people to ruin. They celebrated outrages in their rites and made sorrows into things divine. They were the first to lead people by the hand to idols, and to build up foolish custom out of stones and wood, that is, statues and painted images. With their

songs and incantations they bound in the worst slavery the truly splendid freedom of those who lived as citizens under heaven.

Translator's note. Terpander was a famous early Greek musician from Lesbos.

Scripture: [Isaiah 2:3](#); [Micah 4:2](#)

1e But my singer is not like that. He has come to put a swift end to the bitter slavery under tyrant demons. He leads us away to the gentle, humane yoke of reverence for God, and calls back up to heaven those who were thrown down to earth. He alone of all who have ever lived has tamed the most difficult of all wild beasts, human beings. The birds are the flighty among them, the reptiles the deceivers, the lions the hot-tempered, the swine the pleasure-lovers, and the wolves the greedy. The senseless are stones and wood. Indeed, a person soaked in ignorance is even duller than stones. Let the voice of prophecy stand as our witness, in harmony with the truth, pitying those worn down by ignorance and folly: "For God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones."

Translator's note. The quotation is John the Baptist's saying in [Matthew 3:9](#) (also [Luke 3:8](#)), which Clement calls the voice of prophecy.

Scripture: [Matthew 3:9](#); [Matthew 11:29](#)

1f God took pity on the deep ignorance and hardness of heart of those who had been turned to stone against the truth. Out of those very stones, the nations who had trusted in stones, he raised up a seed of godliness that is able to sense virtue. Again, he somewhere calls certain venom-spitting, treacherous hypocrites, who lie in wait to attack righteousness, "offspring of vipers." Yet even of these serpents, if one willingly repents and follows the Word, he becomes a "man of God." Others he speaks of in a figure as wolves dressed in sheepskins, hinting at those who are predatory in human form. So the heavenly song itself has changed all these most savage beasts, and all such stones, into gentle men. As the apostolic Scripture says: "For we too were once, yes once, senseless, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various pleasures and desires, spending our lives in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness and love for mankind of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his own mercy." See how great the power of the new song is! It has made men out of stones and men out of beasts.

Translator's note. The quotation is from [Titus 3:3-5](#).

Scripture: [Matthew 3:7](#); [Matthew 7:15](#); [Titus 3:3-5](#)

1g Even those who were otherwise dead, with no share in the life that truly is, came back to life simply by becoming hearers of the song. This song also set the whole universe in tuneful order. It brought the discord of the elements into the order of harmony, so

that the whole world might become a harmony for it. It let the sea go free, yet forbade it to overrun the land. The earth, which had been unsettled and adrift, it made firm, and it fixed the earth as the sea's boundary. It softened the rush of fire with air, as if blending the Dorian mode with the Lydian. It tamed the harsh coldness of air by mixing it with fire, blending these outermost notes of the universe in tune. And so the pure song, the support of the whole and the harmony of all things, stretched from the middle to the ends and from the extremes to the middle, and tuned this universe. It did so not after the manner of Thracian music, which is like Jubal's, but according to the fatherly will of God, which David eagerly followed.

Translator's note. "Thracian music" points to Orpheus, the legendary Thracian singer whom Clement mocked at the start of the work. Jubal appears in [Genesis 4:21](#) as the father of all who play the lyre and pipe.

Scripture: [Genesis 4:21](#); [John 5:25](#)

1h But the Word of God, who comes from David and was before him, disregarded the lyre and harp, those lifeless instruments. He tuned this universe by the Holy Spirit, and in particular the little universe, man, both soul and body. He makes music to God on this many-voiced instrument, and he sings to the accompaniment of that instrument, man. "For you are a harp and a pipe and a temple for me." A harp because of its harmony, a pipe because of the Spirit, a temple because of the Word. So the first may sound, the second breathe, and the third receive the Lord. David the king, the harpist we mentioned a little earlier, urged people toward the truth and away from idols. He was far from singing the praises of demons. They were driven away by his true music, and when Saul was under their influence, David healed him just by singing.

Translator's note. The story of Saul is in [1 Samuel 16:14-23](#). There David drives off the evil spirit by playing the lyre; Clement says he healed Saul by singing.

1i The Lord made man a beautiful breathing instrument, after his own image. And he himself is also God's all-harmonious instrument, tuneful and holy: the wisdom that is above the world, the heavenly Word. What, then, does this instrument, the Word of God, the Lord, the new song, want? He wants to open the eyes of the blind, to unstop the ears of the deaf, and to take by the hand those who limp on both feet, or who wander, and lead them to righteousness. He wants to show God to foolish people, to put an end to corruption, to conquer death, and to reconcile disobedient sons to their Father. God's instrument loves mankind. The Lord pities, trains, urges, warns, saves and guards. Out of his abundance he promises us the kingdom of heaven as the reward for our learning, and the only enjoyment he gets from us is that we are saved. For evil feeds on the ruin of human beings. But truth is like the bee: it harms nothing that exists, and delights only in the salvation of human beings.

Translator's note. "After his own image" recalls [Genesis 1:26-27](#). The

opening of the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, and the healing of the lame, echo [Isaiah 35:5-6](#).

Scripture: [Genesis 1:27](#); [Isaiah 35:5](#)

1j So you have the promise, and you have his love for mankind. Share in his grace. And do not suppose that my song of salvation is new the way a vessel or a house is new. “Before the morning star” it was, and “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Error is old, but truth appears as the new thing. Maybe the Phrygians are the oldest people, as the fabled goats teach. Maybe the Arcadians are, as the poets say who write that they lived before the moon. Maybe the Egyptians are, as those dream who say this land first produced both gods and men. But not one of these existed before this world. We existed before the foundation of the world. Because we were destined to exist in him, we were born to God beforehand. We are the rational creatures of God’s Word, and because of him we can claim great age, because “in the beginning was the Word.” Because the Word was from the first, he was and is the divine beginning of all things. But he has now received the name “Christ,” a name consecrated long ago and worthy of power. That is why I have called him a new song.

Translator’s note. Where the older English says “pre-existed in the eye of God,” the Greek says simply “were born to God beforehand.”

Scripture: [John 1:1](#); [Ephesians 1:4](#)

1k So the Word, the Christ, is the cause both of our being long ago (for he was in God) and of our well-being. Now this same Word has appeared to men. He alone is both, God and man, and he is the cause of all good things for us. Taught by him how to live well, we are sent on our way to eternal life. For, as that inspired apostle of the Lord says, “The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, training us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age, while we wait for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” This is the new song: the appearing, now shining out among us, of the Word who was in the beginning and who existed before. The Savior who existed before has appeared only recently. He who is in the One who truly is has appeared, because the Word who “was with God” has appeared as Teacher. He is the Word through whom all things were made. In the beginning, as Creator, he gave us life when he formed us. Appearing as Teacher, he taught us to live well, so that afterward, as God, he might supply us with life that never ends.

Translator’s note. The apostle is Paul ([Titus 2:11-13](#)).

Scripture: [Titus 2:11-13](#); [John 1:1-3](#)

1l This is not the first time he has pitied us for our error. He has done so from the first, from the very beginning. But now, by appearing, he has fully rescued us when we were already perishing.

For the evil, creeping beast still enslaves and torments people with his sorcery. It seems to me he takes a barbarian's revenge, like those who are said to tie captives to dead bodies until the captives rot together with them. In the same way this wicked tyrant and dragon takes whomever he can claim from birth and fastens them with the miserable chain of superstition to stones, wood, statues and idols of that kind. As the saying goes, he buries them alive, until the people and the idols decay together. There is one deceiver. From the beginning he brought Eve down to death, and now he brings the rest of mankind down as well. For this reason there is also one helper and defender for us, the Lord. From the beginning he foretold it through prophecy, and now he calls us plainly to salvation.

1m So let us obey the apostolic command and flee “the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience.” Let us run to the Savior, the Lord. Both now and always he has urged people toward salvation. He did so through wonders and signs in Egypt, and in the desert through the bush and through the cloud that followed the Hebrews like a servant, out of his gracious love for mankind. By the fear these things caused he urged the hard-hearted. But through Moses, who was wise in everything, through Isaiah, the lover of truth, and through the whole chorus of the prophets, he turns to the Word, in a more reasoned way, those who have ears. At one point he reproaches, at another he threatens. Over some people he mourns, and to others he sings. He is like a good physician with sick bodies. He applies poultices to some, soothes others, and bathes others. He cuts some with the knife, cauterizes others, and sometimes even saws off a limb, if there is any way to make the man healthy, even at the cost of a part or limb.

Translator's note. The last clause means the physician will, if necessary, sacrifice “a part or limb” to restore the whole person to health.

Scripture: [Ephesians 2:2](#)

1n The Savior has many voices and many ways of saving people. By threatening, he warns. By rebuking, he turns people around. By mourning, he shows pity. By singing, he encourages. He speaks through a bush (those people needed signs and wonders), and he frightens people with fire, kindling a flame from a pillar, a sign of grace and of fear together. If you obey, there is light; if you disobey, there is fire. But flesh is more precious than a pillar or a bush, so after those the prophets spoke, with the Lord himself speaking in Isaiah, himself in Elijah, himself through the mouth of the prophets. Perhaps you do not believe the prophets, and you suppose both the men and the fire to be a myth. Then the Lord himself will speak to you. He “being in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be seized, but emptied himself.” He is the God who loves to show compassion, and he longs to save man. Now the Word himself speaks to you plainly and shames your unbelief. Yes, I say

it: the Word of God became man, so that you too might learn from a man how a man may become God.

Translator's note. Clement quotes [Philippians 2:6-7](#); the Greek verb *ekenōsen* means "emptied himself."

Scripture: [Philippians 2:6-7](#)

1o Is it not absurd, my friends, that God should always be urging us toward virtue, while we shrink back from the benefit and put off our salvation? Does not John also call us to salvation, and has he not become wholly a voice of exhortation? Then let us question him: "Who are you among men, and where from?" He will not say he is Elijah. He will deny that he is Christ. But he will confess that he is a voice crying in the wilderness. Who then is John? To sketch it in outline, let me say: he is the exhorting voice of the Word, crying in the wilderness. What are you crying, O voice? "Tell us too." "Make straight the ways of the Lord." John is the forerunner, and his voice is the forerunner of the Word. It is a voice of encouragement, preparing people for salvation, a voice urging them toward an inheritance in the heavens. Through it the barren woman and the desert are fruitless no more.

Translator's note. Clement's wording, "Make straight the ways of the Lord," differs slightly from the Gospels' wording of [Isaiah 40:3](#).

Scripture: [John 1:19-23](#); [Isaiah 40:3](#)

1p This pregnancy, as I see it, was foretold by the voice of an angel. That voice, too, was a forerunner of the Lord, bringing good news to a barren woman, as John did to the wilderness. Because of this voice of the Word, then, the barren woman is blessed with children and the desert bears fruit. The Lord's two forerunning voices, that of the angel and that of John, hint to me at the salvation laid up for us. When this Word appeared, we were to carry off the fruit of that good childbearing, eternal life. Scripture brings the two voices together and makes it all plain: "Let her who does not bear listen. Let her who is not in labor break out in a cry, because the children of the desert are more numerous than those of the woman who has a husband." The angel brought good news to us, and John urged us to understand who the farmer is and to seek the husband. For he is one and the same: the husband of the barren woman, the farmer of the desert, who filled both the barren woman and the desert with divine power.

Translator's note. The quotation is [Isaiah 54:1](#), given in Clement's wording (also quoted in [Galatians 4:27](#)). The Greek word *erēmos* means both "desolate" and "desert," which allows Clement's pairing of the barren woman with the desert.

Scripture: [Isaiah 54:1](#); [Galatians 4:27](#)

1q The children of the noble woman are many. But the Hebrew woman, who from of old had many children, became childless through disobedience. So the barren woman receives the husband

and the desert receives the farmer. One then becomes the mother of fruits, the other of believers, and both are mothers through the Word. But for unbelievers she is still left barren and desolate even now. John, the herald of the Word, was in this way urging people to be ready for the coming of God, the Christ. This is what the silence of Zechariah hinted at, as it waited for the fruit that would go before Christ. The Word, the light of truth, was to become the gospel and release the mystic silence of the prophetic riddles. If you long to see God in truth, take part in purifications fit for God. Do not use laurel leaves or headbands decorated with wool and purple. Bind righteousness around your head and put on the leaves of self-control. Search diligently for Christ. "I am the door," he says somewhere. If we want to understand God, we must learn about this door, so that he may throw the gates of heaven wide open to us all at once. The gates of the Word are rational, and they are opened by the key of faith. "No one has known God except the Son, and the one to whom the Son reveals him." I know well that the one who opens the door, shut until now, will afterward reveal what is inside. He will show what could not have been known before, except by those who have gone in through Christ, through whom alone God is seen.

Translator's note. "Is seen" renders a verb that was also used of the highest stage of initiation in the Greek mystery religions.

Scripture: [Isaiah 54:1](#); [John 10:9](#); [Matthew 11:27](#); [Luke 10:22](#)

Chapter 2

2a So do not pry into godless inner sanctuaries. Leave alone the mouths of chasms full of monstrous trickery, the Thesprotian cauldron, the Cirrhaean tripod, and the bronze of Dodona. Leave the ancient oak honored in the desert sands, and the oracle there that withered along with the oak itself, to myths that have grown old. The spring of Castalia is silent, and so is the other spring at Colophon. The rest of the prophetic waters are dead in the same way. Emptied of their vanity, they have at last been exposed, late though it is, as having run dry together with their own myths. Tell us also about the other kind of divination, or rather madness, and its useless oracles: the Clarian, the Pythian, the Didymaeon, those of Amphiaraus, of Apollo, and of Amphilochus. If you like, consecrate along with them the readers of portents, the watchers of birds, and the interpreters of dreams. Bring the flour-diviners and barley-diviners and stand them beside the Pythian, along with the ventriloquists, who are still honored by many people. And let the secret shrines of the Egyptians and the necromancies of the Etruscans be handed over to darkness.

Translator's note. "Ventriloquists" translates *engastrimythoi*, "belly-talkers." These were diviners whose oracles seemed to speak from inside them.

2b These are truly mad things: workshops of trickery for unbelieving men, and gambling dens of unmixed delusion. Partners in this sorcery are goats trained for divination, and crows taught by men to give oracles to men. What if I were to go through the mysteries for you? I will not mimic them in dance and so give them away, as they say Alcibiades did. Instead I will strip bare, by the word of truth, the sorcery hidden in them. And I will wheel out your so-called gods themselves, whose mystic rites these are, as on the stage of life, before an audience of the truth. The Bacchants hold their orgies for the raving Dionysus. They celebrate their sacred madness by eating raw flesh, and they perform the apportioning of the butchered meat with snakes wound around their heads. They cry out “Euan!” and so call on Eva, that Eve through whom error followed. The sign of the Bacchic orgies is a consecrated snake. Indeed, in the exact speech of the Hebrews, the name Hevia, pronounced with the aspirate, is interpreted “female serpent.” Deo and Kore have become a mystic drama, and Eleusis lights the torches for their wandering, the abduction, and their grief.

Translator’s note. Clement links the Bacchic cry “Euan” to Eve ([Genesis 3](#)); Aramaic has a word like ḥewya meaning “serpent,” and a similar wordplay on Eve’s name appears in later Jewish interpretation (Genesis Rabbah 20.11).

2c It seems to me that we should trace the words “orgies” and “mysteries” to their sources. Orgies come from the anger (orgē) of Deo against Zeus, and mysteries from the pollution (mysos) that befell Dionysus. If they come instead from a certain Myus of Attica, who Apollodorus says was killed while hunting, I do not object. Then your mysteries have been glorified with the kind of honor paid at a tomb. You can also understand “mysteries” as “myth-hunts,” since the letters correspond. For if anything hunts down the most barbarous of the Thracians, the most foolish of the Phrygians, and the superstitious among the Greeks, myths like these certainly do. So let him perish, whoever first began this deception among men. It may have been Dardanus, who showed people the mysteries of the Mother of the gods. It may have been Eetion, who established the orgies and rites of the Samothracians. It may have been that Phrygian Midas, who learned from Odrysus and then passed on the skillful deceit to his subjects.

Translator’s note. “Odrysus” may instead mean “the Odrysian,” a member of a Thracian people.

2d For Cinyras, the islander from Cyprus, could never persuade me. He dared to bring the lewd orgies of Aphrodite out of the night and into the day, in his eagerness to make a goddess of a prostitute from his own city. Others say that Melampus, son of Amythaon, carried the festivals of Deo from Egypt to Greece, with her grief sung in hymns. I would call these men the originators of evil and the fathers of godless myths and deadly superstition. They planted the mysteries in human life as a seed of wickedness and corruption. Now, since the time has come, I will prove that your rites are full of

deceit and charlatanry. If you have been initiated, you will laugh all the more at these myths of yours that are held in honor. I will speak openly of what is hidden. I am not ashamed to tell what you are not ashamed to worship. There is, then, the “foam-born” and “Cyprus-born” goddess, the friend of Cinyras. I mean Aphrodite, “the lover of genitals, because she appeared from the genitals.” These were the lustful parts cut off from Uranus, which after the cutting forced themselves upon the waves. A fruit worthy of such shameless parts is born to you in Aphrodite. In the rites of this sea-born pleasure, as a token of her birth, a grain of salt and a phallus are given to those being initiated into the craft of adultery. The initiates bring a coin to her, as lovers do to a courtesan.

Translator’s note. The phrases come from Hesiod’s *Theogony* (lines 188–200), which tells of Aphrodite’s birth from the foam around the severed genitals of Uranus (Heaven); there she is called *philommeidēs* (“laughter-loving”) “because she appeared from the genitals (*mēdea*),” a pun Hesiod makes himself, and Clement gives the word as *philomēdea* (“genital-loving”) to bring out the crude meaning.

2e The mysteries of Deo involve Zeus’s sexual union with his mother Demeter, and the rage of Deo. (I do not know what to call her now, mother or wife.) Because of this rage she is said to have been named Brimo. They also include the pleading of Zeus, a drink of bile, the tearing out of hearts, and unspeakable rites. The Phrygians perform the same rites for Attis, Cybele and the Corybantes. They have gone on and on with a story that Zeus tore the testicles from a ram and threw them into Deo’s lap. This was supposedly a penalty for his violent union with her, as though he had castrated himself. The tokens of this initiation, which I set out here as something extra, will make you laugh, I know, even though the exposure leaves you in no mood for it. “I ate from the drum. I drank from the cymbal. I carried the sacred vessel. I slipped into the bridal chamber.” Are these tokens anything but an outrage?

Translator’s note. The “sacred vessel” is the *kernos*, a ritual vessel used in cults of Demeter.

2f Are these mysteries not a mockery? What if I add the rest? Demeter becomes pregnant, and Kore is brought up. Then Zeus, who fathered her, unites with Pherephatta, his own daughter, after having done so with her mother Deo. He has forgotten his earlier pollution. Zeus is both the father and the corrupter of the girl. He unites with her as a serpent, and so is exposed for what he was. In the Sabazian mysteries, at any rate, the token for the initiated is “the god through the bosom.” This god is a serpent drawn through the bosom of those being initiated, which proves the lack of self-control in Zeus. Pherephatta also bears a child in the shape of a bull. As one poet of the idols says: “The bull is the serpent’s father, and the serpent the bull’s father; on the mountain, the herdsman’s hidden goad.” By “herdsman’s goad,” I suppose, he means the fennel stalk that the bacchants wreath.

Translator's note. Deo is another name for Demeter. Pherephatta is a form of the name Persephone, the same goddess as Kore ("the Maiden").

2g Do you want me to tell you about Pherephatta's flower-gathering, the basket, her abduction by Aidoneus, the opening of the earth, and the pigs of Eubouleus that were swallowed up along with the two goddesses? This is the reason why, at the Thesmophoria, they throw pigs into the sacred pits. The women celebrate this myth in different ways from city to city, in the Thesmophoria, the Skirophoria and the Arrhetophoria. In many forms they act out the tragedy of Pherephatta's abduction. The mysteries of Dionysus are utterly inhuman. He was still a child, and the Kouretes were dancing around him with armed movements. The Titans crept in by treachery and deceived him with childish toys. Then these Titans tore him apart while he was still an infant, as Orpheus the Thracian, the poet of the Initiation, says: "Cone and bull-roarer, and jointed dolls, and beautiful golden apples from the clear-voiced Hesperides." It will also help to condemn this rite if I set out its worthless tokens for you: knucklebone, ball, spinning top, apples, bull-roarer, mirror, tuft of wool.

Translator's note. "Bull-roarer" translates rhombos, a toy or ritual object that was whirled or spun. It may also mean a kind of spinning top, and the older translation gave "top." That translation gave "hoop" for strobilos, which can mean a spinning top or a pine cone. The exact toys are uncertain.

2h Athena took the heart of Dionysus, and was named Pallas from the throbbing (pallein) of the heart. The Titans, who had torn him apart, put a cauldron on a tripod and threw in the limbs of Dionysus. First they boiled them, then they skewered them on spits and "held them over Hephaestus." Later Zeus appeared. If he was a god, perhaps he got a share of the savor of the roasting meat, which your gods admit is the "portion they have received." He struck the Titans with a thunderbolt and handed the limbs of Dionysus to his son Apollo to bury. Apollo did not disobey Zeus. He carried the torn corpse to Parnassus and laid it there. If you want to look on the rites of the Corybantes too, here they are. Two of them killed their third brother and covered the head of the corpse with a purple cloth. They crowned it, carried it on a bronze shield, and buried it at the foot of Olympus.

Translator's note. "Held them over Hephaestus" quotes Homer (Iliad 2.426), where sacrificial meat is held over the fire. Hephaestus, the fire-god, stands for the fire itself. The "portion they have received" also echoes Homer, where Zeus says that the savor of sacrifice is the honor the gods receive (Iliad 4.49; 24.70).

2i In short, these mysteries are murders and burials. Their priests are called "Lords of the Rite" (Anaktotelestai) by those who care to call them that. They add to the marvel of the tragedy by forbidding anyone to put celery on the table with its root. For they believe the celery grew from the blood that flowed from the Corybant. In the same way the women celebrating the Thesmophoria take care not

to eat pomegranate seeds that have fallen on the ground. They suppose that pomegranates sprang from the drops of Dionysus's blood. They also call the Corybantes "Cabeiri," and proclaim a Cabeiric rite. For these same two brother-killers took the chest in which the genitals of Dionysus lay, and carried it to Tyrrhenia, merchants of a glorious cargo! They lived there as exiles. They offered the Tyrrhenians this much-prized teaching of piety, genitals and a chest, for them to worship.

Translator's note. The Greek word selinon can mean celery or parsley, and the older translation has "parsley." Tyrrhenia is the Greek name for Etruria in central Italy.

2j For this reason some say, not unreasonably, that Dionysus is called Attis, because he was deprived of his private parts. And why be surprised that the barbarian Etruscans are initiated into such shameful sufferings, when among the Athenians and the rest of Greece the story of Deo is full of shame? I am ashamed even to tell it. Deo wandered about Eleusis looking for her daughter Kore (Eleusis is a place in Attica). She grew weary and sat down by a well, grieving. Even now this is forbidden to the initiates, so that those who have been initiated may not seem to imitate the mourning goddess. At that time the earth-born people lived at Eleusis. Their names were Baubo, Dysaules and Triptolemus, and also Eumolpus and Eubouleus. Triptolemus was a cowherd, Eumolpus a shepherd, and Eubouleus a swineherd. From them sprang the Eumolpidae and the Kerykes ("Heralds"), the priestly clans that flourished at Athens.

Translator's note. The Eumolpidae and the Kerykes were the two Athenian families that supplied the chief priests of the Eleusinian mysteries.

2k Next (for I will not hold back from telling it), Baubo took Deo in as a guest and offered her a drink of barley-mixture. Deo refused to take it and would not drink, for she was in mourning. Baubo was deeply hurt, as if she had been scorned. So she pulled up her clothes and showed her private parts to the goddess. Deo was pleased at the sight, and at last, delighted with the spectacle, accepted the drink. These are the secret mysteries of the Athenians. Orpheus also records them. I will set out Orpheus' own verses for you, so that you may have the guide of the mysteries himself as a witness to their shamelessness: "When she had spoken, she drew up her robes and showed all of her body, a shape not fit to be seen. The child Iacchus was there, and laughing he kept tossing it with his hand under Baubo's breast. Then the goddess smiled, and smiled in her heart, and took the shimmering cup in which the barley-drink was placed."

Translator's note. The Greek of these lines is obscure and may be corrupt, so the meaning of "tossing it with his hand" is uncertain.

2l This is the password of the Eleusinian mysteries: "I fasted, I drank the barley-drink, I took from the chest, and having done the

work, I put it in the basket, and from the basket into the chest.” Fine sights indeed, and fitting for a goddess! These rites are worthy of night and fire, and of the “great-hearted” (or rather empty-minded) people of the sons of Erechtheus, and of the other Greeks too, for whom, “when they have died, there awaits what they do not even hope for.” For whom does Heraclitus of Ephesus prophesy? “Night-wanderers, magi, bacchants, maenads, initiates.” He threatens these with what follows death; for these he foretells fire. “For the mysteries customary among men are entered into in an unholy way.” So the mysteries are only custom and empty opinion. They are a deceit of the serpent that people treat as worship, for with counterfeit piety they turn to initiations that are really no initiations, and to rites that are no true rites. And what are the mystic chests like? For I must strip bare their holy things and speak out what may not be spoken.

Translator’s note. The Greek says that the mysteries themselves are a deceit of the serpent; Clement probably means the devil, the ancient serpent, with a glance at the snake used in these rites (see the next section).

2m Are they not sesame cakes, pyramid-shaped cakes, balls of wool, many-knobbed cakes, lumps of salt, and a serpent, the sacred emblem of Dionysus Bassareus? Besides these, are there not pomegranates, fig branches, fennel-wands and ivy, and also round cakes and poppies? These are their holy things. In addition there are the secret symbols of Earth-Themis: marjoram, a lamp, a sword, and a woman’s comb, which is (to put it politely and in mystic language) a woman’s private part. What open shamelessness! Once, for self-controlled people, night was kept silent and was a cover for pleasure. Now, for the initiates, night is talked about and becomes a test of their lack of self-control, and the fire of the torches exposes their passions. Put out the fire, hierophant! Show respect for the torches, torch-bearer! The light exposes your Iacchus. Allow night to hide the mysteries. Let the rites be honored with darkness. Fire does not pretend.

Translator’s note. “Balls of wool” may instead mean round cakes. The Greek word can mean either.

2n Fire is commanded to expose and to punish. These are the mysteries of the godless. I call them godless with good reason, because they have not known the God who truly exists. Instead they shamelessly worship a child being torn apart by the Titans, a grieving woman, and private parts that truly cannot be named for shame. They are caught in a double godlessness. The first is that they do not know God and do not recognize the God who truly is. The second is this further error: they think that those who do not exist do exist, and they call gods those who do not truly exist, or rather do not exist at all and have only the name. For this reason the apostle also exposes us when he says, “You were strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” Many good things be to the king of the Scythians,

whoever he was.

Translator's note. Editors usually bracket the name Anacharsis as a later addition; in Herodotus (4.76) Anacharsis was the man killed by a Scythian king, not the king himself.

Scripture: [Ephesians 2:12](#)

2o This king shot his own countryman with an arrow. The man was imitating among the Scythians the rite of the Mother of the gods as it is practiced at Cyzicus. He beat a drum, clashed a cymbal, and had an image of a begging priest of the goddess hanging from his neck. The king shot him because he had become unmanly among the Greeks and was teaching the other Scythians the female disease. For this reason (for I must not hide it) I wonder how Euhemerus of Acragas, Nicanor of Cyprus, the two Melians Diagoras and Hippo, the Cyrenian Theodorus, and many others came to be called atheists. These men lived sober lives and saw the error about these gods more sharply than other people. They may not have grasped the truth itself, but they at least suspected the error. That suspicion springs up as no small seed, a spark of understanding that leads toward the truth. One of them urges the Egyptians: "If you think they are gods, do not mourn for them or beat your breasts. But if you grieve for them, stop considering them gods." Another took a wooden Heracles (he happened to be cooking something at home, as one might expect) and said, "Come now, Heracles. Now is your time to serve us as you served Eurystheus, and perform this thirteenth labor by preparing Diagoras' dinner." Then he put it on the fire like a piece of wood. So atheism and superstition are the extremes of ignorance, and we must work hard to stay clear of both.

Translator's note. Other ancient sources usually call Euhemerus a man of Messene rather than of Acragas.

2p Do you not see Moses, the hierophant of the truth, commanding that a man with crushed or cut-off genitals must not enter the assembly, nor the son of a prostitute either? Through the first two he hints at the godless way of life, which lacks divine and fruitful power. Through the third he points to the person who claims many falsely named gods in place of the one God who truly exists. In the same way the son of a prostitute claims many fathers, because he does not know his real father. There was once an inborn, ancient fellowship between human beings and heaven. Ignorance darkened it, yet now and then it suddenly leaps out of the darkness and shines. This is what someone has said: "Do you see this boundless sky on high, which holds the earth all around in its moist arms?" And again: "O you who uphold the earth and have your seat upon the earth, whoever you are, so hard to guess at and to see," and all the other things the sons of the poets sing.

Translator's note. Both quotations are from Euripides. The first is from a lost play (fragment 941), and the second is from "The Trojan Women" (lines 884-885).

| Scripture: [Deuteronomy 23:1-2](#)

2q But mistaken ideas, led away from the straight path and truly deadly, turned man, the heavenly plant, away from a heavenly way of life and stretched him out on the earth. They persuaded him to devote himself to images molded from earth. Some people were deceived at once by the sight of the heavens. They trusted their eyes alone and watched the movements of the stars. They admired them and made gods of them, calling the stars *theoi* ("gods") from *thein*, "to run." They worshiped the sun, as the Indians do, and the moon, as the Phrygians do. Others gathered the cultivated fruits that grow from the earth. They called grain Deo, as the Athenians do, and the vine Dionysus, as the Thebans do. Others looked at the payments that wickedness brings and made gods of those repayments, worshiping retributions and disasters. From this come the Erinyes and the Eumenides, the Palamnaioi and Prostopaioi, and also the Alastors, which the poets of the stage have invented.

Translator's note. The Erinyes ("Furies") were the avenging spirits of Greek myth, and "Eumenides" ("the Kindly Ones") was a softening name for the same beings. Palamnaioi, Prostopaioi and Alastors are names for spirits that avenge bloodshed and other crimes.

2r Some philosophers also, following the poets, make idols out of the shapes of the passions within you: Fear, Love, Joy and Hope. So, for example, the ancient Epimenides set up altars at Athens to Insolence and Shamelessness. Other gods arise from events and things themselves, and people make gods of them and give them bodily form: a certain Justice, Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos, Fate, and the Attic goddesses Auxo and Thallo. There is a sixth way of deception, which produces gods: the one by which they count up the twelve gods. Hesiod sings the genealogy of these gods in his own way, and Homer says much about them in his talk of the gods. The last way remains, for there are seven ways in all. It starts from the divine kindness shown to human beings.

Translator's note. Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos are the three Fates of Greek myth, whose names mean roughly "Growth" and "Blooming," were goddesses honored at Athens.

2s They did not understand that it is God who does us good. So they invented saviors: the Dioscuri, Heracles the averter of evil, and Asclepius the healer. These are slippery and harmful departures from the truth. They drag man down from heaven and tip him into a pit. I want to show you these gods up close, to show what sort they are and whether they are anything at all. Then you may finally give up your error and run back again to heaven. "For we too were once children of wrath, like the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, made us alive together with Christ, when we were already dead in our trespasses." For the Word is living, and the one who was buried with Christ is exalted together with God. Those who are still unbelieving are called "children of wrath," nourished on wrath. But

we are no longer wrath's nurslings, since we have been torn away from error and are rushing toward the truth.

Translator's note. The Greek here more naturally means that the Word is living and that the person buried with Christ is exalted with God, not that the Word himself was buried with Christ.

Scripture: [Ephesians 2:3-5](#); [Colossians 2:12](#)

2t In this way we, who were once sons of lawlessness, have now become sons of God, through the Word's love for humankind. Your own poet, Empedocles of Acragas, steps in and speaks to you: "Therefore, distraught amid grievous evils, you will never ease your heart of its wretched sorrows." Most of what is told about your gods is myth and invention. The rest, what is supposed to have really happened, is written about shameful men who lived licentious lives. "You walk in pride and madness. You have left the straight, right path and gone off by the one through thorns and stakes. Why do you wander, mortals? Stop, you fools. Leave the darkness of night and take hold of the light." The Sibyl, prophetic and poetic, urges this on us. Truth urges it too. She strips the crowd of gods of these terrifying, stunning masks, and she exposes the opinions people have built up about them by pointing out how they share the same names.

Translator's note. "Share the same names": in what follows, Clement points out that there were several gods called Zeus, Athena and so on, to show that these figures are human inventions. The Greek word translated "opinions" means opinions that people have made up.

2u For instance, some writers list three Zeuses. One is the son of Aether, in Arcadia. The other two are sons of Cronus, one in Crete and the other again in Arcadia. Some also suppose five Athenas. The first is the daughter of Hephaestus, the Athenian. The second is the daughter of Nilus, the Egyptian. The third is the daughter of Cronus, the inventor of war. The fourth is the daughter of Zeus, whom the Messenians call Koryphasia after her mother. Last is the daughter of Pallas and of Titanis, daughter of Oceanus. She impiously sacrificed her father and adorned herself with his skin, like a fleece. Then there is Apollo. Aristotle names as the first the son of Hephaestus and Athena (so here Athena is no longer a virgin). The second is the Cretan, the son of Cyrbas. The third is the son of Zeus. The fourth is the Arcadian, the son of Silenus, called Nomios among the Arcadians. After these he lists the Libyan, the son of Ammon. Didymus the grammarian adds a sixth, the son of Magnes.

2v How many Apollos are there even now? They are countless: mortal, perishable men who have been given the same name, just like those already mentioned. What if I told you about the many Asclepiuses, or the Hermeses on the lists, or the Hephaestuses of the myths? Would I not seem excessive, flooding your ears with so many names? But their homelands, their crafts, their lives, and even their tombs prove that they were men. Take Ares, whom even

the poets honor as highly as they can: "Ares, Ares, bane of mortals, blood-stained wall-batterer." This fickle, hostile god was a Spartan, according to Epicharmus. Sophocles knows him as a Thracian, and others say he was an Arcadian. Homer says he was kept in chains for thirteen months: "Ares endured it, when Otus and mighty Ephialtes, the sons of Aloeus, bound him in a strong bond. He was bound in a bronze jar for thirteen months."

Translator's note. The two Homer quotations are from the Iliad (5.31 and 5.385-387). "Fickle" echoes another Homeric description of Ares as one who changes sides.

2w May the Carians fare well, who sacrifice dogs to him! And let the Scythians never stop sacrificing donkeys, as Apollodorus and Callimachus say: "Phoebus comes to the Hyperboreans' sacrifices of donkeys." The same poet says elsewhere: "Rich donkey-slaughterings delight Phoebus." Then there is Hephaestus, whom Zeus threw from Olympus, "from the divine threshold." He fell on Lemnos and worked as a smith, crippled in both feet: "and his thin legs moved quickly beneath him." So among the gods you have not only a smith but also a physician. And the physician loved money. His name was Asclepius. I will bring in your own poet as witness, Pindar of Boeotia: "Him too gold, shown in his hands, turned aside for a lordly fee. Then the son of Cronus hurled his bolt from his hands right through the two of them and quickly took the breath from their chests. The blazing thunderbolt brought down their doom." Euripides says as well: "For Zeus is to blame for killing my son Asclepius, striking flame into his chest."

Translator's note. The line about Hephaestus's legs is from Homer, Iliad 18.411. The Greek says his thin legs moved quickly beneath him.

2x So Asclepius lies there, struck by lightning, in the territory of Cynosuris. Philochorus says that Poseidon is honored as a physician in Tenos, and that Sicily lies on top of Cronus, who is buried there. Patrocles of Thurii and Sophocles the younger tell the story of the Dioscuri in some of their tragedies. These two Dioscuri were mortal men, subject to death, if Homer is reliable enough to confirm what was said: "But them the life-giving earth already held, there in Lacedaemon, in their own dear native land." Let the writer of the Cyprian poems come forward too: "Castor is mortal, and the fate of death is appointed for him; but Polydeuces is immortal, a scion of Ares." That was a poet's lie. Homer is more trustworthy than he is. Homer spoke this way of both Dioscuri, and he also exposed Heracles as a mere shade of the dead, for he calls him "the man Heracles, who had a hand in great deeds."

Translator's note. The Homer lines on the Dioscuri are Iliad 3.243-244. The line on Heracles is from Odyssey 21.26. In Odyssey 11 Odysseus sees the "shade" (eidolon) of Heracles among the dead, which is probably what Clement has in mind.

2y So Homer himself knows Heracles as a mortal man. The philosopher Hieronymus even describes the build of his body: small,

bristly-haired, strong. Dicaearchus describes him as lean, sinewy, dark, hook-nosed, with rather bright eyes and straight hair. This Heracles lived fifty-two years. He ended his life and was given his funeral on the pyre on Mount Oeta. Then there are the Muses. Alcman gives them as the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, and the other poets and prose writers deify and worship them. Whole cities even set apart sacred precincts, “museums,” for them. Yet they were Mysian servant girls, bought by Megaclo, the daughter of Macar. Macar was king of the Lesbians and was always quarreling with his wife. Megaclo was angry on her mother’s behalf, and why would she not be? So she bought these Mysian servant girls, the same number as the Muses, and in the Aeolic dialect called them Moisai, “Muses.”

Translator’s note. The Greek says Megaclo bought (ἐώνηται) Mysian servant girls; “Moisai” is the Aeolic form of “Muses.”

2z She taught them to sing and to play the lyre, setting the deeds of old to music. By playing constantly and singing sweetly, they charmed Macar and put a stop to his anger. For this reason Megaclo set up bronze figures of them as a thank-offering on her mother’s behalf, and ordered that they be honored in all the temples. That is the story of the Muses, and it comes from Myrsilus of Lesbos. Now listen to the loves of the gods you worship. Hear the strange tales of their lack of self-control, their wounds and chains, their laughter and fights, their slavery as well, their drinking parties, their embraces, tears and sufferings, and their lewd pleasures. Call Poseidon for me, and the chorus of women ruined by him: Amphitrite, Amymone, Alope, Melanippe, Alcyone, Hippothoe, Chione, and countless others. Even with so many, your Poseidon’s passions still felt cramped.

Translator’s note. The Greek says only that the figures were “bronze.” In the last sentence, ἐστενοχωρεῖτο means “felt cramped” or “lacked room,” not simply “was not satisfied.”

2aa Call Apollo for me too. This is Phoebus, a pure prophet and a good counselor. But Sterope does not say so, nor Aethusa, nor Arsinoe, nor Zeuxippe, nor Prothoe, nor Marpessa, nor Hypsipyle. Only Daphne escaped both the prophet and the ruin he brought. And let Zeus himself come last of all, the “father of men and gods,” as you call him. He poured himself out so far into sexual pleasure that he desired every woman and carried out his desire on every one. At any rate, he was filled with women no less than the Thmuite goat was with she-goats. And I have marveled at your poems, Homer: “He spoke, and the son of Cronus nodded with his dark brows. The ambrosial locks of the lord waved from his immortal head, and he shook great Olympus.”

Translator’s note. The quotation is from Homer, Iliad 1.528–530.

2ab You make Zeus a majestic figure, Homer, and you give him a nod worthy of honor. But if you only show the girdle, man, Zeus is

exposed and his hair is disgraced. To what lengths of licentiousness did that Zeus go, who took his pleasure with Alcmene for so many nights! Nine nights were not long for that unrestrained god. On the contrary, a whole lifetime was too short for his lack of self-control. All this so that he might sow for us the god who wards off evil! Heracles, the son of Zeus, truly the son of Zeus, was born of that long night. He labored through the twelve labors over a long time, yet in a single night he ruined the fifty daughters of Thestius, becoming at once adulterer and bridegroom of so many virgins. It is no surprise, then, that the poets call him “cruel” and “a doer of wicked deeds.” It would take too long to tell of his adulteries of every kind and his ruining of boys.

Translator’s note. Most other ancient accounts name the father of the fifty daughters Thespius rather than Thestius.

2ac Your gods did not even keep away from boys. One loved Hylas, another Hyacinthus, another Pelops, another Chrysippus, another Ganymede. Let your wives worship such gods, then. Let them pray that their own husbands will be like these gods, so self-controlled! That way the men will be like the gods, having eagerly copied the same behavior. Let your sons be trained to revere these gods too, so that when they grow up they will have taken the gods as a vivid picture of fornication. But perhaps only the male gods rush about after sexual pleasure. Homer says, “the goddesses stayed each at home, for shame.” In his story the goddesses were too modest to look at Aphrodite caught in adultery. Yet some goddesses indulged themselves with even more passion, bound up in adultery: Eos with Tithonus, Selene with Endymion, a Nereid with Aeacus, Thetis with Peleus, Demeter with Iasion, and Pherephatta with Adonis.

Translator’s note. “Pherephatta” is a form of Persephone’s name.

2ad Aphrodite, put to shame over Ares, went off to Cinyras. She married Anchises, lay in wait for Phaethon, and loved Adonis. She also quarreled with the ox-eyed goddess. For the sake of an apple the goddesses stripped and stood naked before the shepherd, to see whether any of them would seem beautiful to him. Come now, let us go briefly around the games and put an end to these festivals held at tombs: the Isthmian, Nemean and Pythian, and the Olympian after them. At Pytho the Pythian dragon is worshipped, and the festival of the serpent is announced as the Pythia. At the Isthmus the sea spat out a piece of pitiful refuse, and the Isthmia mourn Melicertes. At Nemea another child, Archemorus, was buried, and the funeral rite for the child is called the Nemea. And Pisa, you Greeks of every land, is the grave of a Phrygian charioteer. The Olympia are the funeral offerings for Pelops, and Pheidias’ Zeus claims them for himself.

Translator’s note. “The ox-eyed goddess” is Hera; the “shepherd” is Paris, who judged the contest of the three goddesses.

2ae So it seems the contests held over dead men were mysteries,

just as the oracles were, and both have been made public property. The mysteries at Agrae and at Halimus in Attica are confined to Athens. But the contests and the phalluses paraded for Dionysus are by now a disgrace to the whole world, and they have spread wickedly through all of life. The story goes like this. Dionysus was eager to go down to Hades but did not know the way. A man named Prosymnus promised to tell him, but not for free. The price was not honorable, though it seemed honorable to Dionysus. The favor was sexual, and the payment Prosymnus asked for was Dionysus himself. The god was glad to grant the request. He promised to give himself if he came back, and he confirmed his promise with an oath. Having learned the way, he left. Then he returned, but he did not find Prosymnus, for he had died. To discharge his obligation to his lover, Dionysus rushed to the tomb, burning with desire to play the passive part.

Translator's note. The Greek verb (paschētiaō) means to desire the passive role in sex. The act itself is described in the next section.

2af He cut a branch from a fig tree that happened to be at hand and shaped it like a male organ. Then he sat down on the branch, and so fulfilled his promise to the dead man. As a mystic reminder of this experience, phalluses are set up for Dionysus in city after city. Heraclitus says: "If it were not for Dionysus that they held the procession and sang the hymn to the shameful parts, their deeds would be most shameless. But Hades and Dionysus are the same, the one for whom they rave and celebrate the Lenaia." They do this, I think, not so much because of bodily drunkenness as because of the disgraceful sacred rite of licentiousness. It is no surprise, then, that gods like yours are slaves, since they have become slaves to their passions. Even before the so-called Helots among the Spartans, Apollo came under the yoke of slavery to Admetus in Pherae, and Heracles to Omphale in Sardis. Poseidon and Apollo worked as hired laborers for Laomedon. Apollo was like a worthless house slave, unable even to win his freedom from his former master. At that time the two of them also built the walls of Troy for the Phrygian.

Translator's note. "Before the Helots" follows the Greek (pro tōn Heilōtōn). The Helots were the state-owned serfs of Sparta.

2ag Homer is not ashamed to show Athena lighting the way for Odysseus, "holding a golden lamp" in her hands. And we have read that Aphrodite, like some loose little serving-girl, brought a chair and set it for Helen face to face with her adulterer, so that she might draw him into intercourse. Besides these, Panyasis records very many other gods who served men. He writes something like this: "Demeter endured, the famous Lame One endured, Poseidon endured, and silver-bowed Apollo endured it, to work as a hired servant beside a mortal man for a year. Fierce-hearted Ares endured it too, under his father's compulsion," and so on. It follows naturally, then, that I should present these lustful and passionate

gods of yours as having human feelings in every way. “For surely their skin is mortal.” Homer proves it. He shows Aphrodite, very precisely, crying out sharply and loudly at her wound. And he tells how Ares himself, the most warlike of all, was stabbed in the flank by Diomedes.

Translator’s note. The Homer passages are Odyssey 19.33-34 (Athena with the lamp), Iliad 3.424-425 (Aphrodite sets the chair for Helen), Iliad 5.335-343 (Aphrodite wounded), and Iliad 5.855-857 (Ares wounded by Diomedes).

2ah Polemon says that Athena was wounded by Ornytus. Homer says that Aidoneus (Hades) was shot with an arrow by Heracles, and Panyasis tells the same of the Sun. This same Panyasis also reports that Hera, the goddess of marriage, was wounded by this same Heracles “in sandy Pylos.” Sosibius says that Heracles himself was wounded in the hand by the sons of Hippocoon. But if there are wounds, there is blood. And the poets’ “ichor” is even more revolting than blood, since ichor is understood to be blood gone rotten. So they must also be given medical care and food, since they need these things. Hence the tables, the drinking, the laughter and the sex. If the gods were immortal, lacking nothing and never aging, they would not have human sexual relations, or father children, or even sleep.

Translator’s note. The older English makes “men” the subject of the last sentence. In the Greek, the subject is the gods: it is they who would not have sex, beget children or sleep if they were truly immortal and lacked nothing.

2ai Zeus himself also shared a meal at a human table among the Ethiopians. But at the house of Lycaon the Arcadian he was served an inhuman and forbidden meal. There he gorged himself on human flesh, though not willingly. The god did not know that his host Lycaon the Arcadian had slaughtered his own son (his name was Nyctimus) and set him before Zeus as a dish. A fine Zeus indeed: the prophetic, the god of guests, the god of suppliants, the gracious, the giver of every omen, the god to whom the guilty turn! Or rather he is the unjust, the lawless, the wicked, the impious, the inhuman, the violent, the corrupter, the adulterer, the lover. But that was when he was like this, when he was a man. Now, it seems to me, even your myths have grown old. Zeus is no longer a serpent, no longer a swan or an eagle or a man in love. The god does not fly, does not chase boys, does not kiss, does not use force. Yet there are still many beautiful women today, more comely than Leda and more in their prime than Semele. And there are youths more handsome and better mannered than the Phrygian herdsman.

Translator’s note. The “Phrygian herdsman” is Ganymede, the Trojan youth whom Zeus carried off.

2aj Where now is that eagle? Where is the swan? Where is Zeus himself? He has grown old, feathers and all. It cannot be that he has repented of his love affairs or been taught self-control. The

myth is stripped bare before you. Leda is dead, the swan is dead, the eagle is dead. Look for your Zeus, but do not search heaven; investigate the earth. The Cretan, in whose land he lies buried, will tell you. Callimachus says in his Hymns: "For a tomb, O lord, the Cretans built for you." For Zeus is dead (do not be upset), just like Leda, the swan, the eagle, the man in love, and the serpent. Even the superstitious themselves now show that, unwillingly but still plainly, they see the error about the gods. For the gods "are not from an ancient oak or from a rock, but are a race of men." And a little later they will be found to be oaks and rocks after all.

Translator's note. The oak-and-rock phrase adapts Homer's *Odyssey* 19.163, where Penelope tells the disguised Odysseus that he is not sprung "from an oak of old story or from a rock." In the last sentence Clement turns the phrase around: the gods' statues are in fact made of wood and stone.

2ak Staphylus reports that a certain Zeus Agamemnon is honored in Sparta. Phanocles, in his work "Loves, or the Beautiful Boys," says that Agamemnon, king of the Greeks, set up a temple of Aphrodite of Argynnus in honor of Argynnus, his beloved. The Arcadians worship an Artemis called the Hanged Woman, as Callimachus says in his *Origins*. At Methymna another Artemis is honored, called Condylitis. There is also a shrine of yet another Artemis, Artemis Podagra (Gout), in Laconia, as Sosibius says. Polemon knows of a statue of Apollo the Gaper, and of another Apollo, the Glutton, honored in Elis. There the Eleans sacrifice to Zeus the Fly-Averter. The Romans sacrifice to Heracles the Fly-Averter, and also to Fever and Fear, whom they list among Heracles' companions. I say nothing of the Argives and Spartans. The Argives worship Aphrodite the Grave-Robber, and the Spartans revere Artemis Chelytis (the Cougher), since they use the word "chelyttein" for coughing.

Translator's note. Older translation: it gives Phanocles' title as "Brave and Fair." The Greek title is "Erotes or Kaloi," meaning "Loves, or Beautiful Boys."

2al Do you suppose that the things we set before you are quoted from some spurious source? You do not seem to know even your own writers, whom I call as witnesses against your unbelief. You poor wretches, it is these writers who have filled your whole life, a life truly not worth living, with godless mockery! Is not a bald Zeus honored in Argos, and another Zeus, an avenger, in Cyprus? Do not the Argives sacrifice to Aphrodite Peribasō, the Athenians to Aphrodite the Courtesan, and the Syracusans to Aphrodite of the Beautiful Buttocks, whom the poet Nicander somewhere calls "kalliglouton"? I will say nothing now of Dionysus Choiropsalas. The people of Sicyon worship him. They put Dionysus in charge of women's private parts, and so revere the founder of outrage as overseer of shame. Such are their gods, and such are they themselves, who make sport of their gods, or rather mock and insult themselves. How much better the Egyptians are, who honor

irrational animals village by village and city by city, than the Greeks who worship such gods as these!

Translator's note. "Peribasō" is a cult title of uncertain meaning, perhaps from a verb meaning "to straddle" or "walk around," and often taken in a crude sense. "Choiropsalas" is an obscene title (choiros was slang for the female parts), so it is left untranslated.

2am For even if the Egyptians' animals are beasts, they are not adulterous or lustful, and not one of them hunts for pleasure against nature. As for what your gods are like, why say more, when they have been exposed enough already? Now the Egyptians I just mentioned are divided among themselves in their forms of worship. The people of Syene worship the phagros fish. Those who live at Elephantine worship the maiotes, which is another fish. The people of Oxyrhynchus likewise worship the fish that gives their country its name. The people of Heracleopolis worship the ichneumon. The people of Sais and Thebes worship the sheep. The people of Lycopolis worship the wolf, and those of Cynopolis the dog. The people of Memphis worship Apis, and those of Mendes the goat. But you, who are better than the Egyptians in every way (I hesitate to say worse), and who never stop laughing at the Egyptians day after day, what are you like when it comes to irrational animals?

Translator's note. The fish phagros cannot be identified with certainty. The name is used elsewhere for a kind of sea bream.

2an Among you, the Thessalians honor storks because of their familiarity with them, and the Thebans honor weasels because of the birth of Heracles. And what of the Thessalians again? They are said to worship ants, because they have learned that Zeus took the form of an ant, slept with Eurymedusa the daughter of Cleitor, and fathered Myrmidon. Polemon reports that the people living around the Troad worship the native mice, which they call "sminthoi," because the mice gnawed through their enemies' bowstrings. They also named Apollo "Sminthian" after those mice. Heraclides, in his *Foundings of Temples*, says that in Acarnania, where the promontory of Actium and the temple of Apollo of Actium are, an ox is first sacrificed to the flies. I will not forget the Samians either, for the Samians worship the sheep, as Euphorion says. Nor will I forget the Syrians living in Phoenicia. Some of them worship doves and others fish, as extravagantly as the Eleans worship Zeus.

Translator's note. The Greek word for the reason the Thessalians honor storks (synētheia) can mean either "custom" or "familiarity."

2ao Very well. Since the ones you worship are not gods, I think we should look again at whether they are really daimons, ranked, as you say, in this second order. For if they are daimons, they are greedy and unclean. In fact you can openly find local daimons, city by city, who receive honors. The Cythnians have Menedemus, the Tenians Callistagoras, the Delians Anius, and the Spartans Astrabacus. At Phalerum a hero is honored "at the stern." The Pythian priestess also ordered the Plataeans to sacrifice to

Androcrates, Democrates, Cyclaeus and Leucon when the Persian wars were at their height. Anyone who can look around even a little can see a great many other daimons. For “thrice ten thousand are there on the all-nourishing earth, immortal daimons, guardians of mortal men.” Who are these guardians, Boeotian? Do not begrudge us the answer.

Translator’s note. The verse is from Hesiod, *Works and Days* 252–253. Clement’s wording differs slightly from the standard text of Hesiod. The Boeotian addressed here is Hesiod, whom Clement calls “Ascraean” in the next section.

2ap Clearly these guardians are the ones just named, and those held in higher honor than they, the great daimons: Apollo, Artemis, Leto, Demeter, Kore, Pluto, Heracles, and Zeus himself. But surely they do not guard us against running away, Ascraean. Perhaps they guard us against sinning, though they have no experience of sins themselves! Here the proverb fits: “A father who has never been corrected corrects his child.” But if these really are guardians, they are not moved by any goodwill toward us. They are intent on your ruin, and like flatterers they cling to your life, lured by smoke. The daimons themselves somewhere confess their gluttony when they say: “of libation and the savor of fat, for this is the honor we have received as our portion.” And if the gods of the Egyptians, such as cats and weasels, were given a voice, what other voice would they use than the Homeric, poetic one, which loves the savor of fat and the art of cooking? Such are the daimons and gods among you, and the so-called demigods too, named the way mules are called “half-asses.” You have no shortage of names for compounding your impieties.

Translator’s note. The daimons’ words quote a line of Homer (*Iliad* 4.49, repeated at 24.70), where Zeus speaks of the libation and savor of fat that are the gods’ portion.

Chapter 3

3a Let us add this as well: your gods are inhuman daimons who hate humanity. They are not only glad at people’s madness, but they also enjoy the killing of human beings. Sometimes they take their occasions of pleasure from armed contests in the stadiums, sometimes from the countless ambitions of wars. In this way they may glut themselves as much as possible on human bloodshed without restraint. And in cities and nations they have descended like plagues and demanded savage offerings. So Aristomenes the Messenian cut the throats of three hundred men for Ithomaeon Zeus. He thought it a favorable sacrifice to offer so many hecatombs at once, and of such quality. Among them was Theopompus, king of the Spartans, a noble victim. The Taurians, who live on the Tauric Chersonese, immediately sacrifice to the Tauric Artemis any strangers they catch among them who have come to grief at sea. These sacrifices of yours Euripides sets out in

tragedy on the stage.

Translator's note. A "hecatomb" was properly a sacrifice of a hundred oxen, so three hundred men made three hecatombs. Euripides' play is Iphigenia among the Taurians.

3b Monimus records in his *Collection of Marvels* that at Pella in Thessaly an Achaean man is sacrificed to Peleus and Chiron. Anticleides, in his *Homeward Journeys*, shows that the Lyctians, a Cretan people, slaughter men to Zeus. Dosidas says that the Lesbians offer the same sacrifice to Dionysus. The Phocaeans I will not pass over either. Pythocles, in the third book of his *On Concord*, records that they burn a man whole to Artemis Tauropolos. Erechtheus of Attica and Marius the Roman both sacrificed their own daughters. Erechtheus offered his to Persephone, as Demaratus reports in the first book of his *Subjects of Tragedy*. Marius offered his to the Averting Powers, as Dorotheus reports in the fourth book of his *Italian History*. These examples show how kind the daimons are to humanity! And how could those who fear the daimons fail to be holy in proportion?

Translator's note. Clement is making a pun. The Greek word for these worshippers, deisidaimones, normally means "superstitious," but literally it means "those who fear the daimons."

3c The daimons are hailed as "saviors," and their worshippers ask for safety from the very ones who plot against their safety. Supposing they are offering favorable sacrifices to these powers, they do not notice that they are slaughtering their own kind, human beings. A killing does not become a sacrifice because of where it happens. Someone may slaughter a man to Artemis and Zeus at an altar in a supposedly holy place, instead of to anger and greed on the road, though anger and greed are daimons of the same kind. He may call his victim "sacred." But such a sacrifice is still murder and manslaughter. So why is it, you human beings, wisest of all living creatures, that we run from wild beasts? If we happen on a bear or a lion, we turn aside. "As when a man sees a snake in a mountain glen and springs back from it, and trembling seizes his limbs, and he draws back." Yet daimons are destructive and accursed, plotters, haters of mankind, and ruinous. You sense this beforehand and understand it. Why do you not turn aside and turn away from them?

Translator's note. The verse is from Homer (Iliad 3.33-35). In Homer the next words are "and pallor seized his cheeks," which Clement does not quote.

3d What truth could the wicked ever tell, or whom could they ever help? Right now I can show you that a human being is better than these gods of yours, the demons: Cyrus and Solon were better than Apollo the prophet. Your Phoebus loves gifts, but he does not love people. He betrayed his friend Croesus. Forgetting the payment he had received (so fond of glory was he), he led Croesus across the Halys to the pyre. This is how the demons love: they lead people into the fire. But you, O man, more loving toward people and more

truthful than Apollo, pity the one who lies bound on the pyre. You, Solon, prophesy the truth. You, Cyrus, order the pyre put out. And you, Croesus, be sensible at last, now that you have learned better through suffering. The one you worship is ungrateful. He takes his payment, and after taking the gold he lies again.

Translator's note. Clement draws on Herodotus (Histories 1.46-91). Croesus of Lydia sent rich gifts to Delphi and was told that if he made war on Persia he would destroy a great empire. The empire he destroyed was his own, for Cyrus defeated him. On the pyre he called out the name of Solon, who had once warned him. Cyrus ordered the fire put out, but in Herodotus the flames were quenched only by a rainstorm after Croesus prayed to Apollo.

3e So it is not the demon but the man who tells you to look to the end. Solon does not give crooked prophecies. This is the only oracle you will find true, barbarian, and you will test it on the pyre. This makes me wonder what fancies carried away those who first went astray, so that they proclaimed superstition to mankind and laid down laws to worship accursed demons. Whether it was Phoroneus, or Merops, or someone else, they set up temples and altars for these demons, and the myths say they were also the first to offer sacrifices. Later, as time went on, people kept molding new gods for themselves to worship. Take Eros, who is said to be among the oldest of the gods. No one honored him at all until Charmus seduced a certain youth and set up an altar in the Academy, as a thank-offering because his desire had been satisfied. So people have given the name Eros to the lewdness of that sickness, making a god out of unrestrained desire.

Translator's note. "The end" recalls Solon's famous advice to Croesus to call no one happy until he has seen the end of his life (Herodotus 1.32). "Crooked" (loxa) is a pun on Apollo's title Loxias, which the Greeks connected with his ambiguous oracles.

3f The Athenians did not even know who Pan was until Philippides told them. It is no surprise, then, that superstition, once it began somewhere, became a fountain of senseless evil. It was not checked. It grew and flowed out in a great flood, and became the maker of many demons. It offered sacrifices of a hundred oxen, held festivals, set up statues and built temples. These are the ones (for I will not be silent about them either, but will expose them too) that are politely called temples but are really tombs. In other words, the tombs have been given the name of temples. But you, now at least, forget your superstition, and be ashamed to honor tombs. In the temple of Athena at Larissa, on the acropolis, is the tomb of Acrisius. At Athens, on the acropolis, is the tomb of Cecrops, as Antiochus says in the ninth book of his *Histories*.

Translator's note. The clause "that is, the tombs have been given the name of temples" is bracketed by editors as a probable later explanatory addition to the Greek.

3g What of Erichthonius? Is he not buried in the temple of Athena

Polias? And Immarados, the son of Eumolpus and Daeira, is he not buried within the enclosure of the Eleusinion below the Acropolis? Are the daughters of Celeus not buried at Eleusis? Why should I list for you the women who came from the Hyperboreans? They were called Hyperoche and Laodice, and they are buried in the Artemision on Delos, which lies within the sanctuary of the Delian Apollo. Leandrius says that Cleochus is buried at Miletus, in the Didymaion. At this point, following Zeno of Myndus, we should not pass over the tomb of Leucophryne, who is buried in the temple of Artemis in Magnesia. Nor should we pass over the altar of Apollo at Telmessus, which they report to be the tomb of Telmessus the seer. Ptolemy, the son of Agesarchus, says in the first book of his work on Philopator that Cinyras and the descendants of Cinyras are buried in the temple of Aphrodite at Paphos.

Translator's note. Herodotus (4.33-35) tells of Hyperboreans who came to Delos from the far north; he names Hyperoche and Laodice as maidens who brought offerings and died there, and places their tomb in the Artemision (4.34).

3h But if I went through the tombs that you worship, all of time would not be enough for me. And if no shame at what you dare to do creeps over you, then you are completely dead and walk about trusting in the dead. "Ah, wretches, what is this evil you are suffering? Night wraps your heads in darkness."

Translator's note. The last line is from Homer's *Odyssey* (20.351), where the seer Theoclymenus warns the suitors of their coming death.

Chapter 4

4a Suppose I now bring the images themselves and set them before you to look over. As you examine them, you will find that your custom is truly nonsense, since you turn in devotion to senseless "works of men's hands." In ancient times the Scythians worshipped the short sword, the Arabs a stone, and the Persians a river. Other peoples, still more ancient, set up conspicuous wooden posts and stood up pillars of stone. These were called xoana, because they had been scraped out of their material. For example, the image of Artemis on Icarus was an unworked piece of wood, and that of Cithaeronian Hera at Thespieae was a cut-down tree trunk. The image of Samian Hera, according to Aethlius, was at first a plank. Later, when Procles was ruler, it was given human shape. When the xoana began to be made in the likeness of men, they took the name brete from brotoi, "mortals."

Translator's note. Clement explains two Greek words for cult images by wordplay: xoana from xeō, "to scrape or carve," and brete from brotoi, "mortals."

Scripture: [Psalm 135:15](#)

4b At Rome, the writer Varro says, the ancient wooden image of

Mars was just a spear. Craftsmen had not yet taken up this fine-looking but wicked craft. But once the craft flourished, the error grew. It is plain at once that men made human-shaped images out of stones and wood, in a word out of matter. You dress these up with a show of piety and slander the truth. Still, since the subject calls for some proof, I must not shrink from giving it. Everyone knows that Phidias made the Zeus at Olympia and the Athena Polias at Athens out of gold and ivory. Olympichus reports in his Samian History that the wooden image of Hera on Samos was made by Smilis, the son of Euclides. So do not doubt that, of the goddesses at Athens called the Venerable Ones, Scopas made two out of the stone called lychneus, and Calos made the one in the middle. I can show you Polemon as my witness, in the fourth book of his work against Timaeus. Do not doubt either that this same Phidias made the statues of Zeus and Apollo at Patara in Lycia, as well as the lions set up with them. If, as some say, the work is by Bryaxis, I will not quarrel. In him you have another maker of images. Put whichever of the two names you like on it.

Translator's note. The "Venerable Ones" (Semnai) were the goddesses worshiped at Athens and usually identified with the Furies (Erinyes or Eumenides).

4c Again, as Philochorus says, the statues of Poseidon and Amphitrite on Tenos, nine cubits tall and worshiped there, are the work of Telesias the Athenian. Demetrius, in the second book of his Argolic History, records both the material of the wooden image of Hera at Tiryns, which was pear wood, and its maker, Argus. Many people may well be amazed to learn that the Palladium called "fallen from heaven" was made from the bones of Pelops. Diomedes and Odysseus are said to have stolen it from Troy and entrusted it to Demophon. In the same way, the Olympian Zeus was made from other bones, those of an Indian beast. I bring forward Dionysius as my witness for this, in the fifth part of his Cycle. Apellas, in his Delphic History, says there were two Palladia and that both were made by men. And so that no one supposes I passed over these things out of ignorance, I will add the case of Dionysus Morychus.

Translator's note. The "Indian beast" is presumably the elephant, whose ivory Phidias used for the statue. Clement does not name it.

4d His image at Athens was made from the stone called phellates, and it is the work of Sikon, son of Eupalamos, as Polemon says in one of his letters. There were also two other sculptors, Cretans I think, named Skyllis and Dipoinos. They made the statues of the Dioscuri in Argos, the statue of Herakles in Tiryns, and the wooden image of Artemis Munychia in Sicyon. But why do I linger over these? I can show you who the "great god" himself really was. We hear that all people honor him above all others, and they have dared to call him "not made by hands." I mean the Egyptian Serapis. Some report that the people of Sinope sent him as a thank-offering to Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of the Egyptians. They had

been wasting away with famine and had sent to Egypt for grain, and Ptolemy had relieved them. They say this wooden image was a statue of Pluto. Ptolemy received the statue and set it up on the height now called Rhakotis. There the temple of Serapis is honored, and the site borders on those places.

4e When Ptolemy's concubine Blistiche died in Canopus, he brought her body over and buried her under the shrine just mentioned. Others say that Serapis is a wooden image from Pontus, brought to Alexandria with festival honors. Isidore alone says the image was brought from the Seleucians near Antioch, who had also been in a famine and were fed by Ptolemy. Athenodoros, son of Sandon, wanted to make Serapis ancient, but somehow he tripped himself up and proved that the image was man-made. He says that Sesostris, king of Egypt, had conquered most of the nations of the Greeks. When he came back to Egypt, he brought skilled craftsmen with him. He ordered them to fashion, at great expense, an image of Osiris, his forefather. The maker was Bryaxis, not the Athenian but another man with the same name. He used a mixture of various materials for the work.

4f He had filings of gold, silver, bronze, iron and lead, and also tin. Of Egyptian stones none was missing: there were fragments of sapphire, hematite, emerald and topaz. He ground all these down and mixed them together. He then colored the mixture dark blue, which is why the image is rather dark in color. He kneaded everything together with the embalming preparation left over from the funeral of Osiris and Apis, and so molded Serapis. Even his name hints at this shared funeral and at a creation that came out of burial, since it is put together from Osiris and Apis: Osirapis. The emperor of the Romans also solemnly made another new god, in Egypt and very nearly among the Greeks too. This was his beloved, a youth of great beauty, Antinous. He consecrated him as Zeus did Ganymede. For desire that has no fear is not easily held back. People now worship the "sacred nights" of Antinous, though the lover who kept vigil with him knew those nights were shameful.

Translator's note. The older translation leaves out both "bronze" and "iron" from the list of metals.

4g Why do you list for me a god who was honored for sexual immorality? Why did you command that he be mourned like a son? Why do you describe his beauty? Beauty withered by outrage is shameful. Do not play the tyrant over beauty, man, and do not abuse a young man in his bloom. Keep it pure, so that it may be beautiful. Be a king over beauty, not a tyrant. Let it stay free. Then I will acknowledge your beauty, when you have kept the image pure. Then I will worship beauty, when it is the true original of all that is beautiful. But as it is, there is already a tomb for the beloved boy, and a temple and a city of Antinous. Tombs, I think, are admired just as temples are: pyramids, mausoleums and labyrinths, which are other temples for the dead, just as those temples are

tombs of the gods. As your teacher I will bring forward the prophetess Sibyl. She is the spokeswoman not of the false Phoebus, whom foolish men called a god and falsely made a prophet. She speaks for the great God, whom the hands of men did not shape, like dumb idols of hewn stone.

Translator's note. The older translation reads "Remain free" as if spoken to the man. The Greek says that beauty is to remain free.

4h The Sibyl also calls the temples ruins. She foretells that the temple of Ephesian Artemis will be swallowed up in "chasms and earthquakes," in these words: "Ephesus will lie flat and wail, weeping by the banks, looking for a temple where no one lives any more." She says too that the temple of Isis and Serapis in Egypt will be thrown down and burned: "Isis, thrice-wretched goddess, you remain alone by the waters of the Nile, a raving woman without a voice, on the sands of Acheron." Then she goes on: "And you, Serapis, lying on many rough stones, you lie a huge ruin in thrice-wretched Egypt." But if you will not listen to the prophetess, at least listen to your own philosopher, Heraclitus of Ephesus, who reproaches the statues for their lack of feeling: "They pray to these statues, as though someone were chatting with houses." Are they not monstrous, those who turn to stones for help and then set them in front of their gates as if they were active? They worship Hermes as a god, and they set up Agueius as a doorkeeper.

Translator's note. Agueius is Apollo as guardian of the streets. He was represented by a pillar set up at the door.

4i If they abuse the statues as senseless, why do they worship them as gods? And if they think the statues share in sensation, why set them up as doorkeepers? The Romans credited their greatest successes to Fortune and thought her the greatest of gods. Yet they carried her off and set her up in the latrine, giving the goddess the toilet as a fitting temple. But senseless stone and wood and rich gold care nothing at all for the smell of burnt fat, for blood or for smoke. That smoke blackens them even as they are "honored" and fumigated. They care nothing for honor, and nothing for insult. Statues are worth less than any living creature. How senseless things came to be treated as gods baffles me, and I pity those who wander in such folly as wretched people. Some animals do not have all the senses: worms and caterpillars, for example, and creatures that seem crippled from birth, like moles and the shrew, which Nicander calls "blind and dreadful." Yet even these are better than those wooden images and statues, which are completely deaf. For these creatures have at least one sense, say hearing or touch, or something corresponding to smell or taste. But statues share in not a single sense.

4j Many animals have no sight, no hearing and not even a voice, such as oysters. Yet they live and grow, and even respond to the moon. Statues, by contrast, are idle, inactive and senseless. They are tied up, nailed on, fastened together, melted down, filed, sawn,

scraped and carved. The image-makers abuse the dumb earth. They drive it out of its own nature and, by their craft, persuade people to worship it. In my judgment, those who make gods are worshipping not gods or demons but earth and craftsmanship, which is all that statues are. For a statue truly is dead matter shaped by the hand of a craftsman. But for us the image is not something sensed, made of sensible matter. It is something grasped by the mind. God is grasped by the mind and not by the senses; he is the only one who is truly God.

Translator's note. Some editors bracket "the image" in the last sentence as a later addition. If the words are kept, the sense is that God himself is the Christian's image, one grasped by the mind and not by the senses.

4k On the other hand, in the midst of actual troubles the superstitious, the worshippers of stones, have learned by experience not to revere senseless matter. Yet they are overcome by need itself and are ruined by their superstition. They despise the statues, but do not want to be seen despising them altogether, and so they are shown up by the very gods whose names the statues bear. Dionysius the Younger, the tyrant, took the golden cloak off the statue of Zeus in Sicily and ordered a woolen one put on him. He joked that this was better than the golden one, since it was lighter in summer and warmer in winter. Antiochus of Cyzicus, short of money, ordered the golden statue of Zeus, fifteen cubits tall, to be melted down. He had a similar statue made of cheaper material, covered with gold leaf, and set up in its place.

Translator's note. "Antiochus of Cyzicus" is Antiochus IX, a Seleucid king of Syria (late 2nd century BC). He was nicknamed Cyzicenus because he was brought up at Cyzicus.

4l Swallows and most other birds fly in and foul the statues themselves. They care nothing for Olympian Zeus, or Asclepius of Epidaurus, or Athena Polias, or Egyptian Serapis. Yet even from them you do not learn that the statues feel nothing. Some criminals or enemies have attacked these places. Out of shameful greed they have plundered temples, robbed the offerings, and even melted down the statues. And if a Cambyses or a Darius or some other madman attempted such things, and if someone killed the Egyptian Apis, I laugh that he killed their god, but I am angry if he did wrong for the sake of profit. So I will gladly overlook this crime. I count it the work of greed, not proof that the idols are powerless. But fire and earthquakes are not out for profit. Nor do they fear or respect demons or statues, any more than the waves respect the pebbles piled up on the beaches.

Translator's note. Herodotus (Histories 3.27-29) tells how the Persian king Cambyses stabbed the Apis bull, which the Egyptians worshipped as a god.

4m I know a fire that exposes and cures superstition. If you want to stop your folly, this fire will light your way. This fire burned down the temple at Argos together with its priestess Chrysis. It burned

the temple of Artemis at Ephesus, a second time after the Amazons. It has swept over the Capitol in Rome many times. It did not spare even the temple of Serapis in the city of the Alexandrians. At Athens it brought down the temple of Dionysus Eleuthereus. At Delphi a storm first snatched away the temple of Apollo, and then a sensible fire wiped it out. This is a foretaste for you of what the fire promises. Do the makers of the statues not shame the sensible among you into despising the material? The Athenian Phidias wrote on the finger of Olympian Zeus, "Pantarkes is beautiful." For to him it was not Zeus who was beautiful, but the boy he loved. Praxiteles, as Posidippus explains in his book on Cnidus, made the statue of the Cnidian Aphrodite to look like his mistress Cratine, so that the poor wretches could worship Praxiteles' mistress.

Translator's note. Other ancient writers, such as Athenaeus, say Phryne (mentioned in the next section) was the model for the Cnidian Aphrodite. Clement follows Posidippus in naming Cratine.

4n When Phryne, the courtesan from Thespieae, was in her prime, all the painters modeled their pictures of Aphrodite on Phryne's beauty. In the same way the sculptors at Athens modeled their Hermes statues on Alcibiades. It is left to your own judgment to decide whether you want to worship courtesans too. I think it was this that moved the ancient kings. They despised these myths. Since men posed no danger to them, they shamelessly proclaimed themselves gods. In this way they taught that those other gods too had been made immortal because of their fame. Ceyx, son of Aeolus, was called Zeus by his wife Alcyone, and Alcyone in turn was called Hera by her husband. Ptolemy the Fourth was called Dionysus, and Mithridates of Pontus was also a Dionysus. Alexander wanted to be thought the son of Ammon and to be portrayed with horns by the sculptors. He was eager to disfigure the beautiful face of a man with a horn.

Translator's note. In the myth as told by Apollodorus (Library 1.7.4), Zeus punished Ceyx and Alcyone for calling themselves Zeus and Hera by turning them into birds. There, Alcyone is the daughter of Aeolus and Ceyx is the son of the Morning Star, whereas Clement calls Ceyx the son of Aeolus.

4o And it was not only kings. Private persons also puffed themselves up with divine titles. Menecrates the physician, for example, was called Zeus. Why should I list Alexarchus? He was a grammarian by profession, and, as Aristus of Salamis reports, he dressed himself up as the Sun. Why mention Nicagoras? He was from Zeleia and lived in the time of Alexander. He was called Hermes and wore the costume of Hermes, as he himself testifies. Indeed, whole nations and cities, with all their people, have given in to flattery and cheapened the myths about the gods. People dress themselves up as equals of the gods. They are puffed up with vanity and vote themselves excessive honors. At one time they decreed worship at Cynosarges for Philip, son of Amyntas, the Macedonian from Pella, "the man with the broken collarbone and the crippled

leg," who had an eye knocked out. At another time they proclaimed Demetrius a god as well. The place where he got off his horse as he entered Athens is a shrine of Demetrius the Descender, and there are altars to him everywhere. The Athenians even prepared a marriage for him with Athena. But he looked down on the goddess, since he could not marry a statue. He took his courtesan Lamia up to the Acropolis and lay with her in Athena's bridal chamber. To the old virgin he displayed the postures of the young courtesan.

Translator's note. The Greek calls Nicagoras a man of Zeleia, a town in the Troad near the Hellespont, not Zela in Pontus.

4p So there is no reason to be angry with Hippo either, for making his own death immortal. This Hippo ordered the following elegy to be inscribed on his tomb: "This is the tomb of Hippo, whom Fate, when he died, made equal to the immortal gods." Well done, Hippo! You show us the delusion of mankind. If people did not believe you while you were alive and speaking, let them become the disciples of a dead man. This is Hippo's oracle; let us understand it. The gods you worship were once men, and then they died. Myth and time have given them honor. For it is the way of things that what is present is despised through familiarity. But what is past is cut off from immediate refutation by the obscurity of time, and it is honored through invention. So the one is disbelieved, while the other is even admired. In just this way the dead of long ago, exalted by the long duration of the delusion, are regarded as gods by those who come after.

4q Your proof of all this is your own mysteries and festivals, with their chains and wounds and weeping gods: "Alas for me, that Sarpedon, dearest of men to me, is fated to be subdued by Patroclus, son of Menoetius." The will of Zeus is overpowered, and your Zeus, defeated, wails over Sarpedon. So you yourselves have rightly called them idols and demons, since Homer too paid Athena herself and the other gods a backhanded honor and called them demons: "She went to Olympus, to the house of aegis-bearing Zeus, among the other demons." How then can these idols and demons still be gods? They are truly foul and unclean spirits. Everyone agrees that they are earthy and filthy, weighed down toward the earth, "rolling about tombs and monuments," around which they appear faintly as "shadowy phantoms."

Translator's note. Clement says literally that Homer "honored them with badness." The exact sense is uncertain; the older translation has "sinister honour." The word rendered "filthy" (δυσαιδέα) seems to be related to a word for slime or mire, which probably explains the older translation's "watery." The older translation also renders εἰδωλά ("idols") as "shades."

4r These are your gods: idols and shadows. Besides them there are those "lame, wrinkled, squint-eyed" Prayers, who are more like daughters of Thersites than of Zeus. So I think Bion put it wittily: how could people rightly ask Zeus for fine children, when he could not provide them even for himself? Alas for such godlessness! As far

as it depends on you, you bury the incorruptible Being in the ground. You have heaped the earth of tombs over that pure and holy being, stripping the one who truly exists of his divinity. Why have you given the honors that belong to God to those who are not gods? Why have you left heaven and honored the earth? For what else are gold, silver, adamant, iron, bronze, ivory and precious stones?

Translator's note. Adamant (ἀδάμας) was a word for an extremely hard metal or stone; the older translation renders it "steel."

4s Are they not earth, and from the earth? Are not all these things you see the offspring of one mother, the earth? Why then, you vain and empty-headed people (I will say it again), have you blasphemed the place above the heavens and dragged religion down to the ground? You fashion earthly gods for yourselves, and you chase after these created things instead of the uncreated God, and so you have fallen into a deeper darkness. Parian marble is beautiful, but it is not yet Poseidon. Ivory is beautiful, but it is not yet the Olympian. Matter always needs craftsmanship, but God needs nothing. Craftsmanship has stepped forward, and the matter has been clothed with a shape. The costly material is valuable for profit, but it becomes an object of reverence only because of its shape. Your statue is gold, or wood, or stone, or earth, if you think it through from the beginning. It has received its form from the craftsman.

Translator's note. "The place above the heavens" echoes Plato, *Phaedrus* 247c. "The Olympian" means Zeus of Olympia, whose famous statue by Phidias was made of gold and ivory.

4t But I have trained myself to walk on the earth, not to worship it. It is not right for me ever to entrust the hopes of my soul to lifeless things. So we must go as close as we can to the statues, so that even their appearance may prove that error is at home in them. The very shapes of the statues bear a clear imprint of the character of the demons. If someone goes around looking at the paintings and statues, he will recognize your gods at once from their shameful shapes. He knows Dionysus by his robe, Hephaestus by his craft, Deo by her misfortune, Ino by her veil, Poseidon by his trident, and Zeus by the swan. The pyre shows him Heracles, and if he sees a naked woman portrayed, he understands her to be "golden" Aphrodite.

Translator's note. "Golden" is a standard epithet of Aphrodite in Homer.

4u So that famous Cypriot, Pygmalion, fell in love with an ivory statue. The statue was of Aphrodite, and she was naked. The Cypriot was overcome by her shape and had intercourse with the statue. Philostephanus tells this story. There was another Aphrodite, at Cnidus, made of stone and beautiful. Another man fell in love with her and had intercourse with the stone. Posidippus tells this one. The first wrote in his work *On Cyprus*, the second in his work *On Cnidus*. That is how strongly art could deceive, acting as a

procurer that led men in love into the pit. The craftsman's skill is powerful, but it cannot deceive a reasoning being, or those who have lived by reason. In paintings, it is true, pigeons have flown up to painted doves because of the likeness, and horses have neighed at well-painted mares. They say a girl fell in love with a portrait, and a handsome young man with the statue at Cnidus. But it was the eyes of the onlookers that art had deceived.

Translator's note. The Aphrodite of Cnidus was a famous nude statue by the sculptor Praxiteles.

4v For no one in his right mind would have embraced a goddess, or been buried with a corpse, or fallen in love with a demon and a stone. But art deceives you with a different kind of sorcery. It may not lead you to love the statues and paintings, but it leads you to honor and worship them. The painting is a good likeness; let the art be praised, but let it not deceive a person into taking it for the truth. The horse stands quietly; the dove is motionless, its wing idle. Yet Daedalus' cow, made of wood, caught a wild bull, and art, by deceiving the beast, forced it to mount a woman in the grip of desire. Such madness do these wicked arts put into foolish people. The keepers and caretakers of apes, however, marvel at them, because none of the likenesses made of wax or clay, none of the dolls, deceives them. You, then, will turn out worse than apes, if you devote yourselves to little statues of stone, wood, gold and ivory, and to paintings.

Translator's note. The woman is Pasiphae in the Greek myth. Daedalus built a wooden cow so that she could mate with a bull.

4w These are the deadly toys that your craftsmen make for you: the stonecutters, the sculptors, the painters, the carpenters, and the poets. Together they bring in a whole crowd of such beings. In the fields they put Satyrs and Pans. In the woods they put mountain Nymphs and Hamadryads. By the waters, rivers and springs they put Naiads, and around the sea, Nereids. Now magicians, too, boast that demons serve their impiety. They have enrolled them as their household servants and, by their incantations, have made them slaves under compulsion. Then there are the marriages of the gods, their fathering of children and their childbirths, which are recalled; their adulteries, which are sung; their feasts, which are made fun of in comedies; and the laughter they are shown enjoying over the wine. All this drives me to cry out, even if I would rather keep silent.

Translator's note. The Greek word rendered "carpenters" (tektones) usually means woodworkers or builders.

4x Alas for the godlessness! You have turned heaven into a stage. The divine has become a play for you. You have made a comedy of what is holy by dressing it in the masks of demons. By your superstition you have turned true reverence for God into a satyr-play. "But he, striking the lyre, began to sing beautifully." Sing for

us, Homer, in that beautiful voice, “about the love of Ares and fair-crowned Aphrodite, how they first lay together secretly in the house of Hephaestus. He gave many gifts, and dishonored the bed and couch of lord Hephaestus.” Stop the song, Homer. It is not beautiful. It teaches adultery. We have renounced fornication, even with our ears. For we, we are the ones who carry the image of God in this living, moving statue, the human being. This image lives in the house with us, advises us, talks with us, eats at our table, shares our feelings, and feels for us. We have become an offering to God for Christ. “We are the chosen race, the royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, who once were not a people but now are the people of God.” As John puts it, we are not “from below” but have learned everything from the one who came from above. We have understood God’s plan of salvation, and we have trained ourselves to “walk in newness of life.”

Translator’s note. The Greek word for “plan” is *oikonomia*, often rendered “dispensation” or “economy.”

Scripture: [1 Peter 2:9-10](#); [John 8:23](#); [Romans 6:4](#)

4y But most people do not think this way. They throw off shame and fear, and they have the unnatural lusts of the demons painted in their own homes. They devote themselves to painted tablets hung up high, and they decorate their bedrooms with indecency, thinking lewdness to be piety. Lying on the couch, in the very midst of their embraces, they look at that naked Aphrodite, bound fast in her embrace. And the amorous bird fluttering around Leda they engrave on the bezels of their rings. They welcome this picture of effeminacy, using a seal that suits the lust of Zeus. These are the models of your self-indulgence. These are the theologies of outrage. These are the teachings of the gods who commit fornication along with you. As the Athenian orator says, “What each man wants, that he also believes.” And what other images you have! Little Pans, naked girls, drunken satyrs, and erect male parts, all stripped bare in paintings and condemned by their lack of self-control.

Translator’s note. The Athenian orator is Demosthenes (Third Olynthiac 19).

4z Now you look openly, with the whole crowd, at pictures of every posture of lewdness, and you are not ashamed. Worse still, you keep them on display as if they really were images of your gods. You have consecrated pillars of shamelessness in your homes, and you have the postures of Philaenis painted just as readily as the labors of Heracles. We declare that not only the use of these things but even the sight and the hearing of them should be forgotten. Your ears have turned prostitute, your eyes have committed fornication, and strangest of all, your looks have committed adultery before any embrace. O you who have done violence to man, and have struck off in disgrace the divine element in God’s creature! You disbelieve everything so that you can be driven wild by passion. You believe in the idols, because you are eager to copy

their lack of self-control. You disbelieve God, because you cannot bear self-control. You have hated the better things and honored the worse. You have become spectators of virtue but contestants in vice.

Translator's note. Philaenis was a woman to whom a manual of sexual positions was attributed.

Scripture: [Matthew 5:28](#)

4aa So happy, one might say, are those alone, all of them with one mind, who, as the Sibyl says, “will renounce all temples when they see them, and altars, useless foundations of dumb stones, and stone carvings and hand-made statues, defiled with the blood of living things, with sacrifices of four-footed and two-footed creatures and birds, and with the slaughter of wild beasts.” For we are plainly forbidden to practice a deceptive art. “You shall not make,” says the prophet, “a likeness of anything that is in heaven above or on the earth beneath.” Could we possibly still take the Demeter, the Kore and the mystic Iacchus of Praxiteles to be gods? Or the works of Lysippus, or the hands of Apelles, which have put the shape of divine glory on mere material? You work hard to have the statue made as beautiful as possible, but you take no care that you yourselves do not become like the statues through your lack of feeling. The prophetic word exposes this habit very plainly and briefly: “All the gods of the nations are idols of demons, but God made the heavens,” and what is in heaven.

Translator's note. The quotation is [Psalm 96:5](#) (95:5 in the Greek Old Testament), which in the Greek reads “all the gods of the nations are demons, but the Lord made the heavens” (the Hebrew has “idols”). Clement’s wording differs (“idols of demons,” “God”), and “and what is in heaven” appears to be his own addition.

Scripture: [Exodus 20:4](#)

4ab Some people are led astray here, I do not know how. They worship a divine piece of craftsmanship, but not God. They worship the sun, the moon and the rest of the chorus of stars, absurdly taking them for gods, though they are only instruments for measuring time. “For by his word they were made firm, and by the breath of his mouth all their power.” Human skill makes houses, ships, cities and paintings. But how could I tell all that God makes? Look at the whole world: it is his work. Heaven, sun, angels and men are “works of his fingers.” How great is God’s power! His will alone is the making of the world. For God alone made it, since he alone is truly God. He creates by simply willing it, and as soon as he wishes it, it comes to be.

Translator's note. The quotation adapts [Psalm 33:6](#) (32:6 in the Greek Old Testament), where the subject is “the heavens” and “the word of the Lord.” “Works of his fingers” comes from [Psalm 8:3](#).

Scripture: [Psalm 8:3](#)

4ac Here the chorus of philosophers goes astray. They agree that man was made wonderfully well for looking at the heavens, yet they worship the things that appear in the heavens and are grasped by sight. For even if the works in heaven are not human works, they were at least made for human beings. Let none of you worship the sun, but long for the maker of the sun. Do not make the world divine, but seek the Creator of the world. So it seems that the only refuge left for anyone who means to reach the doors of salvation is divine wisdom. From there, as from some sacred sanctuary that cannot be violated, the man who hurries toward salvation can no longer be dragged away by any demon.

Translator's note. The adverb rendered “wonderfully well” (pankalōs) most naturally goes with “was made,” but the word order also allows it to go with “agree” (“quite rightly agree”).

Chapter 5

5a Let us also run through, if you like, the opinions the philosophers boast about concerning the gods. Perhaps we will find that philosophy itself, out of vanity, turns matter into idols. Or perhaps we can show, in passing, that while it deifies certain demons, it only dreams of the truth. Some of them praised the elements and left them as first principles. Thales of Miletus praised water. Anaximenes, also of Miletus, praised air, and Diogenes of Apollonia later followed him. Parmenides of Elea introduced fire and earth as gods. Of these two, Hippasus of Metapontum and Heraclitus of Ephesus took only fire to be a god. Empedocles of Acragas fell into plurality: besides these four elements he counts Strife and Love. These men too are godless. By a kind of unwise wisdom they worshipped matter. They did not honor stones or wood, but they deified earth, the mother of these. They did not fashion a Poseidon, but they turned in devotion to water itself.

5b For what is Poseidon but a watery substance, a name made from “posis,” drinking? So too the warlike Ares is named from “arsis” and “anairesis,” that is, lifting up and killing. That is why, I think, many simply fix a sword in the ground and sacrifice to it as to Ares. This is a Scythian custom, as Eudoxus says in the second book of his *Circuit of the Earth*. Among the Scythians, the Sauromatians worship a short sword, as Hicesius says in his work *On Mysteries*. The followers of Heraclitus do the same thing when they revere fire as the original source of things, for others have named this same fire Hephaestus. The Persian Magi honor fire, and so do many who live in Asia, and also the Macedonians, as Diogenes says in the first book of his *Persian History*. Why should I list the Sauromatians, whom Nymphodorus in his *Barbarian Customs* reports to worship fire? Or the Persians, the Medes and the Magi?

Translator's note. Clement's derivations of “Poseidon” from “posis” (drink) and “Ares” from “arsis”/“anairesis” are ancient word-plays, not reliable etymologies.

5c Dinon says these peoples sacrifice in the open air, and that they regard fire and water as the only images of the gods. I have not hidden their ignorance either. However much they think they have escaped error, they slip into another deception. They have not taken wood and stones to be images of gods, as the Greeks do. They have not taken ibises and ichneumons, as the Egyptians do. They have taken fire and water, as the philosophers do. Yet Berosus, in the third book of his *Chaldean History*, shows that many cycles of years later they came to worship images in human form. Artaxerxes, son of Darius Ochus, introduced this. He was the first to set up the statue of Aphrodite Anaitis in Babylon, Susa and Ecbatana, and he showed the Persians, the Bactrians, Damascus and Sardis how to worship it. So let the philosophers admit that their teachers are Persians, Sauromatians or Magi. From these they learned the godlessness of revering first principles. They are ignorant of the Ruler, the Maker of all things and Creator of those very principles, the God who has no beginning. Instead they turn in devotion to those “poor” and “weak” “elements,” as the apostle calls them, which were made to serve human beings.

Translator’s note. The Greek reads literally “Artaxerxes of Darius of Ochus.” This most likely means Artaxerxes II, son of Darius II, whose personal name was Ochus.

Scripture: [Galatians 4:9](#)

5d Other philosophers went beyond the elements and busied themselves with something higher and more out of the ordinary. Some of them praised the Unlimited. These were Anaximander (he was from Miletus), Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, and Archelaus of Athens. These last two set Mind over the Unlimited. Leucippus of Miletus and Metrodorus of Chios, it seems, left two first principles, the full and the empty. Democritus of Abdera took these two and added to them the “images.” Alcmaeon of Croton thought the stars were gods, and living ones. I will not keep silent about their shamelessness. Xenocrates (he was from Chalcedon) hints that there are seven gods, the planets, and an eighth, the heavens made up of all the fixed stars. Nor will I pass over the Stoics. They say that the divine pervades all matter, even the most dishonorable, and they simply bring shame on philosophy.

Translator’s note. “Fixed stars” translates “aplaneis,” the “non-wandering” stars, as opposed to the planets (“wanderers”). Xenocrates’ eighth god is the heaven made up of these fixed stars.

5e I think it is no trouble, now that we are here, to mention the Peripatetics too. The father of that school did not understand the Father of all things. He thinks the one called “the Highest” is the soul of the universe. That is, he takes the soul of the world to be God, and so he runs himself through with his own sword. He limits providence to the region reaching only as far as the moon, and then he regards the world as God. So he contradicts himself, teaching that something with no share in God is God. Then there is

Theophrastus of Eresus, Aristotle's pupil, who guesses at one moment that God is heaven and at another that he is spirit. Epicurus alone I will gladly leave out. He thinks God cares about nothing, and he is impious in everything. And what of Heraclides of Pontus? Is there any point at which he too is not dragged down to the images of Democritus?

Translator's note. Ancient summaries of Aristotle's teaching credited him with the view that providence reaches only as far as the moon. It is not stated in this form in his surviving works.

Chapter 6

6a A great crowd of such men presses in on me. They are like a bogeyman, bringing in an absurd sketch of strange demons and telling myths in old wives' drivel. We are far from letting grown men listen to such talk. We do not even soothe our own crying children with tales, as the saying goes. We are afraid of raising them alongside the godlessness that these would-be sages proclaim, men who know the truth no better than babies. In the name of truth, why do you show those who trust you to be given over to flux and drift and disorderly whirlpools? Why do you fill my life with idols, fashioning winds, air, fire, earth, stones, wood, iron, and this world itself into gods? You even make gods of the wandering stars. Through this much-talked-of astrology (which is not astronomy) you talk about the heavens and babble to people who have truly wandered astray.

Translator's note. The "wandering stars" are the planets. The Greek word for "wander" is the root of "planet", and Clement plays on it: those who worship the wanderers have themselves wandered astray.

6b It is the Lord of the winds I long for, the Lord of fire, the Maker of the world, the one who gives light to the sun. I am seeking God, not the works of God. Whom then shall I take from you as a fellow worker in the search? We have not given up on you altogether. If you like, let it be Plato. How then must God be tracked down, Plato? "To find the Father and Maker of this universe is hard work, and having found him, it is impossible to declare him to everyone." Why so, in God's own name? "Because he cannot be spoken of at all." Well done, Plato; you have touched on the truth. But do not grow weary. Join me in the search for the Good. For a kind of divine outflow has been dropped into all people without exception, and especially into those who devote themselves to learning. That is why, even against their will, they confess that God is one, indestructible and unbegotten. They confess that he exists truly and always, somewhere high up on the back of heaven, in his own proper place of vantage.

Translator's note. "The back of heaven" echoes Plato's Phaedrus (247b-c), where the souls stand on the back of heaven and gaze at true being.

6c What kind of God, tell me, are we to think of? "One who sees all

things and is himself not seen,” says Euripides. Menander, I think, was mistaken when he said: “O Sun, you must be worshipped first of the gods, for through you we are able to see the other gods.” The sun could never show us the true God. It is the sound Word who does that, who is the sun of the soul. Only when he rises within, in the depth of the mind, is the eye of the soul lit up. So Democritus has good reason to say that “a few learned men stretched out their hands toward what we Greeks now call the air and called it Zeus. For he knows all things, he gives and takes away all things, and he is king of all.” Plato is thinking along the same lines when he hints at God: “All things are around the king of all, and he is the cause of all that is good.” Who then is the king of all?

| *Translator’s note.* The Plato quotation is from his Second Letter (312e).

6d He is God, the measure of the truth of all that exists. Things that are measured are grasped by the measure. In the same way, truth is measured and grasped by understanding God. The truly holy Moses says: “There shall not be in your bag a weight and a weight, one great and one small. Nor shall there be in your house a measure great or small. You shall have only a true and just weight.” He understands God to be the weight, the measure and the number of the whole. For unjust and unequal idols are hidden at home in the bag, and, so to speak, in the filthy soul. But the only just measure, the only one who is truly God, is always equal, always the same and unchanging. He measures and weighs all things. As with a balance, he embraces and holds up the nature of the whole by his justice, without tipping either way.

| *Translator’s note.* [Deuteronomy 25:13-15](#), quoted closely from the Greek Old Testament, with some shortening.

| *Scripture:* [Deuteronomy 25:13-15](#)

6e “God, as the old saying goes, holds the beginning, the end and the middle of all things. He goes straight on his course, moving around them according to nature. Justice always follows him, avenging those who fall away from the divine law.” Where, Plato, do you get your hints of the truth? Where does your rich supply of words get its prophetic sense of true worship? “The barbarian peoples,” he says, “are wiser than these.” I know your teachers, even if you want to hide them. You learn geometry from the Egyptians and astronomy from the Babylonians. You take your healing charms from the Thracians, and the Assyrians have taught you many things. But for the laws that are true and for your thoughts about God, you are indebted to the Hebrews themselves, who “do not honor with empty deceits the works of men, in gold and bronze, in silver and ivory, or the images of dead mortals, in wood and stone, such as mortals honor in their empty-minded counsel. Instead they lift pure arms to heaven, rising early from their beds, always cleansing their skin with water, and they honor only the Immortal One who rules forever.”

Translator's note. The closing verses come from the Sibylline Oracles (Book 3), Greek verses written in the style of a pagan prophetess. Clement does not name the source here.

6f And, philosophy, hurry to bring before me not just this one man, Plato, but many others too. Bring those who, by God's inspiration, proclaim the one God who truly is the only God, if they have laid hold of the truth anywhere. Antisthenes did not think this up as a Cynic. It was as a follower of Socrates that he said, "God is like no one; therefore no one can learn to know him from an image." Xenophon the Athenian would also have written openly about the truth, bearing witness as Socrates did, if he had not feared the poison that Socrates drank. Even so, he hints at it. He says: "The one who shakes all things and stills them is clearly great and powerful, but what he is like in form is unseen. Even the sun, which appears so bright, does not seem to allow itself to be seen. If anyone stares at it shamelessly, it takes away his sight." Where, then, does the son of Gryllus get his wisdom, if not plainly from the Hebrew prophetess, who prophesies something like this?

Translator's note. "The son of Gryllus" is Xenophon. The saying about the sun closely matches Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (4.3.14). The "Hebrew prophetess" is the Sibyl, whose verses follow. Clement treats her as a prophetess of the Hebrews.

6g "What flesh can see with its eyes the heavenly and true God, the immortal, who dwells in the vault of heaven? Men cannot even stand in front of the rays of the sun, since they are born mortal." Cleanthes of Pedasa, the philosopher of the Stoa, shows not a poet's account of the gods' origins but a true account of God. He did not hide what he thought about God: "You ask me what the good is like? Listen: ordered, just, holy, pious, self-controlled, useful, noble, fitting, austere, frank, always beneficial, fearless, free from grief, profitable, painless, helpful, pleasing, safe, dear, honored, consistent * * * * * glorious, free from conceit, careful, gentle, vigorous, enduring, blameless, lasting always. Slavish is everyone who looks to reputation, as if he would get something good from it." Here, I think, he clearly teaches what God is like. He also teaches that popular opinion and custom make slaves of those who follow them instead of seeking God.

Translator's note. The same Greek word, *doxa*, means "reputation" in Cleanthes' line and "opinion" in Clement's comment, so Clement's comment picks up the word from the quotation.

6h We must not leave out the followers of Pythagoras either. They say: "God is one. He is not, as some suppose, outside the ordered world, but in it, whole in the whole circle. He oversees all coming-to-be. He is the blending of all the ages, and the worker of his own powers and of all his works. He is the light-giver in heaven and the Father of all, the mind and the animating soul of the whole circle, and the mover of all things." These words too are enough for knowing God, for anyone who can examine the truth even a little.

They were written by these men through God's inspiration, and we have selected them.

Chapter 7

7a Let poetry also come forward for us, since philosophy alone is not enough. Poetry is wholly taken up with falsehood. Yet now at last, with difficulty, it will bear witness to the truth, or rather, it will confess to God how it strayed into myth. Let whichever poet likes come forward first. Aratus thinks that God's power runs through all things: "so that all things may grow firmly established; therefore they appease him always, first and last. Hail, Father, great wonder, great benefit to men." In the same way Hesiod of Ascrea hints at God: "For he himself is king and lord of all, and no other among the immortals has contended with him in strength." On the stage too they uncover the truth. One of them looks up to the upper air and the heaven and says, "Take this to be God." This is Euripides. Then Sophocles, son of Sophillus, says: "In truth there is one God, only one, who made heaven and the wide earth, the bright swell of the sea and the force of the winds. But many of us mortals, wandering in heart, have set up images of the gods, made of stone, or of bronze, or of gold, or of ivory, as a comfort in our troubles. We give them sacrifices and empty festivals, and so we think we are worshipping rightly."

Translator's note. Most scholars think these "Sophocles" lines are not genuine, and that a later writer, probably a Jewish one, composed them.

7b This poet, then, even at some risk, brought the truth before the audience on the stage. But the Thracian Orpheus, son of Oeagrus, was both priest of the mysteries and poet. After teaching the secret rites and the theology of idols, he brings in a retraction of his own, a "palinode" of the truth. Late though it was, he still sang a truly sacred word: "I will speak to those for whom it is right. Shut the doors, all you uninitiated alike. But you, Musaeus, offspring of the light-bringing Moon, listen, for I will tell what is true. Do not let what appeared to you before in your heart rob you of the life you love. Look to the divine Word and keep close to it, keeping your heart, the vessel of understanding, on a straight course. Walk well on the path, and look only to the immortal Lord of the world." Then he goes on and says plainly: "He is one, self-begotten, and all things are made as the offspring of the One. Among them he himself moves, and no mortal sees him, but he himself sees all."

Translator's note. These verses come from a poem known as the "Testament of Orpheus." Most scholars think a Jewish author wrote it, not the legendary Orpheus.

7c So spoke Orpheus. In time, after wandering, he came to understand. But you, mortal of many devices, do not delay. Turn back from your wandering and seek God's favor. For even if the Greeks did catch some sparks of the divine Word and spoke a few

things of the truth, this only shows two things. It bears witness that the power of the truth is not hidden. It also proves their own weakness, because they did not reach the goal. For I think it is now clear to everyone that those who act or speak apart from the Word of truth are like people trying to walk without feet. Let the exposures of your gods also shame you into salvation. The poets, forced by the truth, put these exposures into their comedies. The comic poet Menander, for example, says in his play *The Charioteer* (some editors read *The Changeling*): “No god pleases me who walks about outdoors with an old woman, nor one who slips into houses on a little board, a begging priest of the Mother.” For that is what the begging priests of the Mother are like.

Translator’s note. Menander is mocking the wandering begging priests of Cybele, the “Mother of the gods”; the exact sense of “on a little board” is uncertain.

7d So Antisthenes rightly said to them when they begged: “I do not feed the Mother of the gods; the gods feed her.” Again, the same comic writer, in his play *The Priestess*, is angry at the common practice. He tries to expose the godless pride of this error and wisely says: “If a man drags the god wherever he wants with cymbals, then the man who does this is greater than the god. But these are tools of audacity and force, invented by men.” Menander is not the only one. Homer and Euripides and many other poets also expose your gods, and they are not afraid to abuse them as freely as they like. For example, they call Athena “dog-fly” and Hephaestus “lame in both legs.” And Helen says to Aphrodite: “May your feet never carry you back to Olympus.”

Translator’s note. The phrase “as freely as they like” renders a short and obscure Greek expression.

7e Of Dionysus, Homer writes openly: “He [Lycurgus] once chased the nurses of raving Dionysus over holy Nysa. All of them together threw their sacred implements on the ground, under the attack of man-slaying Lycurgus.” Euripides is truly worthy of the Socratic school. He keeps his eye on the truth and takes no notice of his audience. At one point he exposes Apollo, “who dwells on his seat at the earth’s center, giving mortals his most certain oracles.” Orestes says: “I obeyed him and killed my mother. Think of him as the unholy one and put him to death. He sinned, not I.” For Apollo is the one more ignorant of what is good and just. At another point Euripides brings on Heracles raving mad, and elsewhere drunk and greedy. And why not? This was the Heracles who, when feasted on meat, ate green figs on top of it, howling so tunelessly that even a barbarian would notice. Then in his play *Ion* he brazenly wheels the gods out onto the stage: “How is it just that you, who wrote the laws for mortals, are yourselves guilty of wrongdoing? Suppose (though it never will happen, I will make the argument) you pay men the penalty for the women you took by force, you, Poseidon, and Zeus, who rules the sky. Then in paying for your wrongs you

will empty your temples.”

Translator’s note. “Brazenly” renders a Greek idiom that literally means “with bare head,” that is, openly and without shame. The Greek speaks literally of “violent marriages,” unions forced on women.

Chapter 8

8a Now that we have finished the other matters in order, it is time to turn to the writings of the prophets. Their oracles set out most clearly the starting points for true devotion to God, and so they lay the foundation of the truth. The divine Scriptures, together with a disciplined way of life, are short roads to salvation. They have no cosmetics, no outward fine speech, no glibness, no flattery. They raise up a person who is being strangled by evil, and they look down on the slippery footing of this life. With one and the same voice they heal many ills. They turn us away from ruinous deceit, and they plainly urge us toward a salvation that lies open before us. So let the prophetess, the Sibyl, be the first to sing us the song of salvation: “Look, he is plain to all and free from error. Come, do not keep chasing darkness and gloom. See, the sweet-shining light of the sun gleams brilliantly.”

Translator’s note. Clement quotes from the Sibylline Oracles. These Greek verses were written in the name of the ancient pagan prophetess, the Sibyl, but much of the collection was produced by Jews and Christians. Clement treats them as genuine prophecy. They are not part of Scripture.

8b “But know it, and store up wisdom in your hearts. There is one God, who sends rains, winds, earthquakes, lightnings, famines, plagues, grievous sorrows, snows and ice. But why do I list them one by one? He rules heaven, he governs the earth, he himself truly exists.” In this she speaks with real inspiration. She likens deceit to darkness and the knowledge of God to the sun and its light. By setting the two side by side she teaches us to choose. For falsehood is not scattered by merely placing the truth next to it. It is driven out and put to flight when the truth is put to use. The prophet Jeremiah is full of wisdom, or rather the Holy Spirit in Jeremiah shows us God. He says: “I am a God who is near, and not a God far off. If a man does something in secret, will I not see him?”

Translator’s note. Clement quotes [Jeremiah 23:23-24](#) as a statement, following the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint); the Hebrew text, followed by most English Bibles, has a question: “Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off?”

Scripture: [Jeremiah 23:23-24](#)

8c Do I not fill the heavens and the earth? says the Lord.” Again, through Isaiah, he says: “Who will measure the heaven with a span and the whole earth with a handful?” See God’s greatness and be amazed. Let us worship him of whom the prophet says: “Before your face mountains will melt, as wax melts before the face of fire.” This, he says, is the God “whose throne is heaven and whose

footstool is the earth,” and “if he opens the heaven, trembling will seize you.” Do you want to hear what this prophet says about idols too? “They will be made an example before the sun. Their dead bodies will be food for the birds of heaven and the wild animals of the earth. They will rot under the sun and the moon, which they loved and served, and their city will be burned.” He says that the elements and the world will be destroyed along with them: “The earth will grow old and the heaven will pass away, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And what of the time when God again wants to show himself through Moses?

Translator’s note. The quotations are from [Jeremiah 23:24](#), [Isaiah 40:12](#), [Isaiah 64:1-2](#) (Greek Old Testament; the source of both the melting mountains and the opened heaven), and [Isaiah 66:1](#). The passage on idols loosely combines [Jeremiah 7:33](#) and 8:2. The last quotations are from [Isaiah 51:6](#) and 40:8.

Scripture: [Isaiah 40:12](#); [Isaiah 64:1-2](#); [Isaiah 66:1](#); [Isaiah 40:8](#)

8d “Look, look! I am, and there is no other god besides me. I will kill and I will make alive; I will strike and I will heal, and there is no one who can rescue from my hands.” But do you want to hear another prophet speaking God’s oracles? You have the whole prophetic chorus, the companions of Moses. What does the Holy Spirit say to them through Hosea? I will not hesitate to say it: “Look, I am the one who makes the thunder strong and creates the wind (spirit).” His hands laid the foundations of the host of heaven. Again, through Isaiah (I will recall this saying for you as well): “I am, I am the Lord, who speaks righteousness and announces truth. Gather together and come. Take counsel together, you who have escaped from the nations. They did not know, those who carry their wooden carved image and pray to gods who will not save them.” Then, going on, he says: “I am God, and there is no righteous one except me, and there is no savior besides me. Turn to me and you will be saved, you from the ends of the earth.

Translator’s note. The first quotation is [Deuteronomy 32:39](#). The “thunder” quotation matches [Amos 4:13](#) in the Greek Old Testament, though Clement names Hosea. The Isaiah quotations are from [Isaiah 45:19-22](#).

Scripture: [Deuteronomy 32:39](#); [Amos 4:13](#); [Isaiah 45:19-20](#); [Isaiah 45:21-22](#)

8e I am God, and there is no other. I swear by myself.” He is angry with idol worshippers and says: “To whom have you likened the Lord? Or what likeness have you compared him to? Did a craftsman make an image, or did a goldsmith melt gold and plate him with gold?” And so on. Surely you are not still idol worshippers? At least now beware of the threats. The carved and handmade things will wail, or rather those who trust in them will, for matter has no feeling. He says further: “The Lord will shake inhabited cities and will seize the whole inhabited world in his hand like a nest.” Why should I tell you the mysteries of wisdom and the sayings of a

Hebrew child who was made wise? “The Lord created me as the beginning of his ways, for his works.” And: “The Lord gives wisdom, and from his face come knowledge and understanding.” “How long, lazy one, will you lie there?”

Translator’s note. The quotations are from [Isaiah 45:22-23](#), [Isaiah 40:18-19](#), [Isaiah 10:10](#) and 10:13-14, [Proverbs 8:22](#), [Proverbs 2:6](#) and [Proverbs 6:9](#). The “Hebrew child” is apparently Solomon, since the sayings come from Proverbs, but Clement does not name him here.

Scripture: [Isaiah 45:22-23](#); [Isaiah 40:18-19](#); [Proverbs 8:22](#); [Proverbs 2:6](#)

8f When will you rise from sleep? But if you are not lazy, your harvest will come to you like a spring.” This harvest is the Father’s Word, the good lamp, the Lord who brings light, faith and salvation to all. For as Jeremiah says, “The Lord who made the earth by his strength set the world upright by his wisdom.” We had fallen down to idols, and wisdom, which is his Word, sets us upright again toward the truth. This is the first resurrection from our fall. So the divinely inspired Moses, turning us away from all idolatry, cried out most beautifully: “Hear, Israel: the Lord your God, the Lord, is one,” and “You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him alone.” So now, understand, you people, as that blessed psalmist David says: “Take hold of instruction, or the Lord may become angry, and you will perish from the righteous way, when his anger is quickly kindled.

Translator’s note. The quotations are from [Proverbs 6:11](#) (Greek Old Testament), [Jeremiah 10:12](#), [Deuteronomy 6:4](#) and 6:13, and [Psalm 2:10-12](#). Clement’s wording of [Deuteronomy 6:13](#) (“worship... him alone”) matches Jesus’ quotation in [Matthew 4:10](#), whereas most manuscripts of the Greek Old Testament read “fear.”

Scripture: [Jeremiah 10:12](#); [Deuteronomy 6:4](#); [Deuteronomy 6:13](#)

8g Blessed are all who trust in him.” Already the Lord, in his great pity for us, is giving the song of salvation, like a marching rhythm: “Sons of men, how long will you be heavy of heart? Why do you love emptiness and seek after falsehood?” What, then, is the emptiness, and what is the falsehood? The holy apostle of the Lord, accusing the Greeks, will explain it to you: “Because they knew God but did not glorify him as God or give thanks. Instead they became empty in their reasonings, and they exchanged the glory of God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and they worshipped the creation instead of the Creator.” Yet this is the God who “in the beginning made heaven and earth.” You do not understand God, but you worship the heaven. How are you not guilty of impiety?

Translator’s note. The quotations are from [Psalm 2:12](#), [Psalm 4:2](#) ([Psalm 4:3](#) in the Greek numbering), [Romans 1:21-25](#) and [Genesis 1:1](#). Clement shortens the Romans passage, joining parts of verses 21, 23 and 25.

Scripture: [Romans 1:21-23](#); [Romans 1:25](#); [Genesis 1:1](#)

8h Listen again to a prophet who says: “The sun will fail and the heaven will be darkened, but the Almighty will shine forever. The

powers of the heavens will be shaken, and the heavens, stretched out and drawn together, will be rolled up like a hide.” (These are the words of the prophets.) “And the earth will flee from the face of the Lord.”

Translator’s note. Clement’s remark “these are the words of the prophets” shows that this is a string of prophetic phrases, not one passage. Compare [Isaiah 13:10](#) and 34:4, [Matthew 24:29](#), and [Revelation 6:14](#) and 20:11.

Scripture: [Isaiah 13:10](#); [Isaiah 34:4](#)

Chapter 9

9a I could bring you countless passages of Scripture, of which not one “stroke of a letter” will pass away without being fulfilled. For the mouth of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, spoke these things. “So then, my son,” he says, “no longer make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you.” What overflowing kindness! He does not warn us as a teacher warns pupils, or a master warns servants, or God warns men. He warns us as “a gentle father” warns his sons. Moses admits that he was “afraid and trembling” when he heard about the Word. Do you hear the divine Word and feel no fear? Do you feel no anguish? Are you not both reverent and eager to learn, that is, eager for salvation? Do you not fear the wrath, love the grace, and long for the hope, so that you may escape the judgment?

Translator’s note. Moses’ words “afraid and trembling” closely follow [Hebrews 12:21](#), about Mount Sinai. Clement applies them to Moses hearing about the Word (περὶ τοῦ λόγου).

Scripture: [Matthew 5:18](#); [Proverbs 3:11](#); [Hebrews 12:5](#); [Hebrews 12:21](#)

9b Come, come, my young people! “Unless you become like little children again and are born again,” as the Scripture says, you will not receive the Father who truly is, “and you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” How could a foreigner be allowed to enter? But when he is enrolled, made a citizen, and receives the Father, then, I think, he will be “among the things of the Father.” Then he will be counted worthy to inherit. Then he will share the Father’s kingdom with the true Son, the “Beloved.” For this is the firstborn church, made up of many good children. These are the “firstborn enrolled in heaven,” who keep festival together with so many “myriads of angels.” We are the firstborn children, the ones God nurtures, the true friends of the “Firstborn.” We were the first of all people to understand God, the first to be torn away from our sins, and the first to be separated from the devil.

Translator’s note. “Among the things of the Father” is the same Greek phrase as in [Luke 2:49](#), usually rendered “in my Father’s house” or “about my Father’s business”. The Greek wording of the “firstborn enrolled in heaven” and the “myriads of angels” echoes [Hebrews 12:22-23](#).

Scripture: [Matthew 18:3](#); [John 3:3](#); [Luke 2:49](#); [Hebrews 12:22-23](#)

9c But now, the kinder God is, the more godless some people become. He wants us to become sons instead of slaves, and they have been too proud even to become sons. What great folly! You are ashamed of the Lord. He promises freedom, and you run off to slavery. He gives salvation as a gift, and you let yourselves be carried down to death. He offers eternal life, and you wait for punishment. You look toward “the fire that the Lord prepared for the devil and his angels.” That is why the blessed apostle says, “I testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the emptiness of their minds. Their understanding is darkened, and they are cut off from the life of God because of the ignorance in them and the hardness of their hearts. Having lost all feeling, they have given themselves over to indecency, to practice every kind of uncleanness and greed.” Such a witness exposes human folly and calls on God. What is left for the unbelieving but judgment and condemnation?

Translator’s note. The Greek verb (προσκοπεῖτε) means to look ahead to or watch for the fire, that is, they are heading toward it.

Scripture: [Matthew 25:41](#); [Ephesians 4:17-19](#)

9d The Lord never tires of advising, frightening, urging, rousing and warning. He wakes people from sleep, and he raises out of the darkness those who have gone astray. “Wake up, sleeper,” he says, “and rise from the dead, and Christ the Lord will shine on you.” He is the sun of the resurrection, “begotten before the morning star,” who gave life by his own rays. So let no one look down on the Word, or he may unknowingly be despising himself. For the Scripture says somewhere, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers tested me by putting me on trial.” If you want to learn what that trial was, the Holy Spirit will explain it to you: “And they saw my works for forty years. So I was angry with that generation and said, ‘They are always going astray in their hearts. They did not know my ways.’ So I swore in my anger, ‘They shall never enter into my rest.’” See the threat. See the encouragement. See the honor. Why, then, do we still turn grace into wrath? Why do we not take in the Word with open ears and welcome God as a guest in pure souls?

Translator’s note. “They shall never enter” renders a Hebrew-style oath formula, literally “if they shall enter.”

Scripture: [Ephesians 5:14](#); [Hebrews 3:7-11](#)

9e For great is the grace of his promise, if today we hear his voice. This “today” grows with each day, as long as it is still called “today.” Until the end of the age, both the “today” and the learning continue. Then the true “today,” God’s unending day, stretches out together with the ages. So let us always obey the voice of the divine Word. For “today” is an image of eternal time, and day is a symbol of light. The Word is light for human beings, and through him we

are lit up to see God. It is fitting, then, that grace should overflow to those who believe and obey. But God is angry with those who disobey, who go astray in heart, and who have not known the Lord's paths, which John commanded people to make straight and ready, and he threatens them. The ancient wanderers of the Hebrews received the outcome of that threat in a figure. They are said not to have entered the rest because of their unbelief, until at last, by following Moses' successor, they learned by actual experience that they could be saved in no other way than by believing as Joshua (in Greek, "Jesus") believed.

Translator's note. Moses' successor is Joshua, whose Greek name, Iêsous, is the same as "Jesus." [Hebrews 4:8](#) also calls Joshua by that name, and Clement likely intends a play on the name.

Scripture: [Hebrews 3:13](#); [Hebrews 3:19](#); [Matthew 3:3](#)

9f The Lord, in his love for humanity, calls all people "to the knowledge of the truth." He is the one who sends the Paraclete. What, then, is this knowledge? Godliness. For according to Paul, "godliness is profitable for everything, holding a promise for the present life and for the life to come." How much would you have agreed to pay, my friends, if eternal salvation were for sale? Even if someone measured out the whole of the Pactolus, that legendary stream of gold, he would not count out a price equal to salvation. So do not lose heart. You may, if you wish, buy this priceless salvation with a treasure of your own: love and the faith that belongs to life. That is a worthy price. God gladly accepts this payment. "For we have set our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of believers." But the rest cling to the world like seaweed to rocks in the sea, and they think little of immortality. Like the old man of Ithaca, they long not for the truth, nor for the homeland in heaven, nor for the light that truly is, but for smoke.

Translator's note. The Pactolus was a river in Lydia famous in legend for its gold. The "old man of Ithaca" is Odysseus, who in the *Odyssey* (book 1) longs to see even the smoke rising from his homeland. He also turned down the nymph Calypso's offer to make him immortal so that he could go home.

Scripture: [1 Timothy 2:4](#); [1 Timothy 4:8](#); [1 Timothy 4:10](#)

9g Godliness makes a person like God as far as that is possible. It names as its fitting teacher God, who alone is able to make a human being truly like himself. The apostle knew this teaching to be truly divine, and he says: "But you, Timothy, have known the sacred writings from infancy, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ." Truly sacred are those writings that make people holy and make them divine. The same apostle then calls the Scriptures that are put together from these sacred letters and syllables "God-breathed," "useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." No one could be so struck by the exhortations of any other saints as by the Lord

himself, the lover of humanity. For this is his one and only work: that human beings be saved.

Translator's note. The quotations are from [2 Timothy 3:15-17](#). The Greek word for "writings" (grammata) also means "letters" of the alphabet, which is why Clement goes on to speak of "letters and syllables."

Scripture: [2 Timothy 3:15](#); [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)

9h So he himself cries out, urging people on to salvation: "The kingdom of heaven has come near." He turns people around by fear as they draw near. In the same way the Lord's apostle, appealing to the Macedonians, becomes the interpreter of the divine voice, saying, "The Lord is near; take care that we are not found empty." But you are so fearless, or rather so unbelieving, that you obey neither the Lord himself nor Paul, even though Paul was in chains for Christ. "Taste and see that God is good." Faith will lead you in, experience will teach you, and Scripture will train you, saying, "Come, children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Then, as though to people who already believe, it briefly adds, "Who is the person who wants life and loves to see good days?" We are, we shall answer, we who worship the Good and are zealous for good things.

Translator's note. The psalm quotations are from [Psalm 34:8](#), 11-12 (33:9, 12-13 in the Greek Old Testament). The Greek Psalm has "the Lord is good," and Clement has "God."

Scripture: [Matthew 4:17](#); [Philippians 4:5](#)

9i So hear, "you who are far away," and hear, "you who are near." The Word has been hidden from no one. He is a common light and shines on all people. No one is a Cimmerian as far as the Word is concerned. Let us hurry to salvation, to the new birth. Let us, the many, hurry to be gathered into one love, in keeping with the union of the single, undivided being. As we are made good, let us likewise pursue unity, seeking the good Unity. The union of the many, receiving a divine harmony out of a medley of voices and scattered parts, becomes one symphony. It follows one choir-leader and teacher, the Word, and rests on the truth itself, saying "Abba, Father." God welcomes this true voice from his children and gathers it as the first fruit.

Translator's note. The Cimmerians were a legendary people in Homer's *Odyssey* (book 11) who lived in mist and darkness, never seeing the sun.

Scripture: [Isaiah 57:19](#); [Ephesians 2:17](#); [Romans 8:15](#); [Galatians 4:6](#)

Chapter 10

10a "But," you say, "it is not reasonable to overturn a custom handed down to us from our fathers." Then why do we not still live on our first food, milk, which our nurses accustomed us to from birth? Why do we increase or reduce our inheritance, and not keep

it exactly the same as we received it? Why do we no longer spit up on our fathers' laps? Why do we no longer keep doing the other things that made us laughingstocks as babies raised by our mothers? We have corrected ourselves, even if we never had good tutors. Again, on a sea voyage, detours are costly and dangerous, yet somehow they seem sweet. But in the conduct of life, shall we not leave behind the custom that is evil, passion-driven and godless, even if our fathers are angry? Shall we not turn to the truth and seek the One who is truly Father, throwing off habit like a poisonous drug?

10b This is in fact the finest part of my undertaking: to show you that godliness was hated because of madness and this thrice-wretched custom. Such a good thing, greater than anything God has ever given to the human race, would never have been hated or rejected if you had not been swept away by custom. You then stopped your ears against us. Like stiff-necked horses that refuse the rein, you took the bit in your teeth and ran away from our words. You longed to throw us off, though we were the drivers of your life, and in your folly you were carried toward the cliffs of destruction. You took the holy word of God to be something defiled. So, as Sophocles says, the wages of your choice follow you: "a mind gone, ears useless, empty cares." And you do not know that this above all is true: the good and godly, who honored what is good, will receive a good reward, while the wicked, on the other hand, will receive fitting punishment. Punishment hangs over the ruler of wickedness himself.

Translator's note. The Sophocles line does not appear in his surviving plays. It probably comes from a lost work.

10c So the prophet Zechariah threatens him: "May he who chose Jerusalem rebuke you. Is this not a brand plucked out of the fire?" Why, then, are people still gripped by a desire for a death they choose for themselves? Why have they run for refuge to this deadly brand, with which they will be burned up, when they could live well according to God and not according to custom? God gives life freely. But evil custom, after we leave this world, brings empty repentance together with punishment. "The fool learns by suffering" that superstition destroys and godliness saves. Let any of you look at those who serve at the idols. Their hair is filthy, and they are disgraced by dirty, ragged clothes. They have never so much as tried a bath, and their long fingernails make them like wild beasts. Many of them have even been castrated. They show in practice that the idols' sacred precincts are tombs or prisons. To me these people seem to be mourning the gods, not worshiping them. What they have suffered deserves pity rather than reverence.

Translator's note. "The fool learns by suffering" is from Hesiod (Works and Days 218); Homer has a similar saying ("the fool learns when it is done," Iliad 17.32, 20.198).

Scripture: [Zechariah 3:2](#)

10d Do you see all this and still stay blind? Will you not look up to the Master of all, the Lord of the universe? Will you not escape from the prisons here and take refuge in the mercy that comes from heaven? Out of his great love for humanity, God holds fast to man, as a mother bird flies to a nestling that has fallen from the nest. If a creeping beast gapes at the chick, “the mother flutters around, wailing for her dear children.” But God the Father seeks his creature, heals his fall, drives off the beast, and takes the chick up again, urging it to fly back to the nest. Dogs that have wandered off track down their master by scent. Horses that have thrown their rider obey their master at a single whistle. “The ox knows its owner,” it says, “and the donkey its master’s manger, but Israel does not know me.” What, then, does the Lord do?

| *Translator’s note.* The “it says” quotation is from [Isaiah 1:3](#).

| *Scripture:* [Isaiah 1:3](#)

10e He does not hold grudges. He still shows pity, and he still calls for repentance. I want to ask you something. Does it not seem absurd to you that you, who are human beings, God’s own creation, who received your soul from him and belong wholly to God, should serve another master? Worse, you serve a tyrant in place of the king, and the evil one in place of the good. For tell me, by the truth, what sane person leaves the good behind and lives with wickedness? Who runs away from God to live with demons? Who, when he can be a son of God, enjoys being a slave? Or who, when he can be a citizen of heaven, chases after Erebus? He could instead tend Paradise, walk about in heaven, and share in the living, unpolluted spring. Like Elijah, he could travel through the air in the track of that shining cloud and watch the rain that brings salvation.

| *Translator’s note.* Clement draws on the Elijah stories: the cloud and rain after the drought ([1 Kings 18:44-45](#)) and Elijah’s being taken up to heaven ([2 Kings 2:11](#)). “Shining cloud” is also the phrase used for the cloud at the Transfiguration, where Elijah appears ([Matthew 17:5](#)).

10f But others, like worms, roll about in swamps and mud, the streams of pleasure, and feed on useless and senseless luxuries. They are swinish people. For pigs, it is said, “enjoy mud” more than clean water, and, as Democritus says, “they go mad with desire over filth.” No, let us never, never be made slaves, and let us not become swinish. As true “children of light,” let us look up and gaze at the light, so that the Lord does not expose us as illegitimate, as the sun does with eagles. So let us repent and move from ignorance to knowledge, from folly to wisdom, from lack of self-control to self-control, from injustice to justice, and from godlessness to God. The risk of deserting to God’s side is a good one. Those of us who love righteousness and pursue eternal salvation can enjoy many other good things as well. Above all, there are the things God himself hints at when he speaks through Isaiah: “There is an inheritance for those who serve the Lord.” It is a fine and lovable inheritance. It is

not gold, silver or clothing, where the moth creeps in, and where the thief, eyeing earthbound wealth, breaks in. It is that treasure of salvation, and we must hurry toward it, becoming lovers of the Word. Our good works depart with us from here and fly with us on the wing of truth.

Translator's note. "Lovers of the Word" translates a Greek word that can also mean "lovers of learning" or "lovers of discourse."

Scripture: [Ephesians 5:8](#); [Isaiah 54:17](#); [Matthew 6:19-20](#)

10g The eternal covenant of God hands this inheritance over to us, supplying an everlasting gift. This loving Father of ours, the one who is truly a Father, never stops urging, warning, training and loving us. For he never stops saving us, and he gives the best advice: "Become righteous, says the Lord. You who are thirsty, go to the water. And all of you who have no money, go, buy and drink without money." He calls us to the washing, to salvation, to enlightenment. He all but cries out and says: "I give you land and sea, child, and heaven too, and I freely give you all the living creatures in them." Only thirst for your Father, child. God will be shown to you without payment. The truth is not peddled in the marketplace. He gives you the birds, the fish, and the animals of the land. The Father made all these for you to enjoy with thanksgiving.

Translator's note. The words "You who are thirsty... without money" are [Isaiah 55:1](#). The opening words, "Become righteous, says the Lord," do not match any single known Bible verse.

Scripture: [Isaiah 55:1](#)

10h The illegitimate one, a child of destruction who has chosen to "serve mammon," will have to buy things with money. But God entrusts to you what is yours. I mean to you, the true child, who loves the Father, and for whose sake he is still at work. To this child alone he makes the promise: "And the land will not be sold into permanent ownership." For it is not signed over to decay. "For all the land is mine," and it is also yours, if you receive God. So the Scripture rightly brings good news to those who have believed: "The holy ones of the Lord will inherit the glory of God and his power." What glory, blessed one? Tell me. The glory "which no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered the human heart. And they will rejoice in the kingdom of their Lord forever. Amen." You people have the divine promise of grace. You have also heard the other side, the threat of punishment. By both of these the Lord saves, training people with fear and with grace. Why are we waiting?

Translator's note. The saying about the saints inheriting God's glory has no exact match in our Bibles. "What no eye has seen..." is close to [1 Corinthians 2:9](#), which echoes [Isaiah 64:4](#).

Scripture: [Matthew 6:24](#); [Leviticus 25:23](#); [1 Corinthians 2:9](#)

10i Why do we not turn away from the punishment? Why do we not accept the gift? Why do we not choose the better things: God instead of the evil one, wisdom over idol-worship, life in exchange for death? “See,” he says, “I have set death and life before your face.” The Lord is trying to get you to choose life. Like a father, he advises you to obey God. “For if you listen to me,” he says, “and are willing, you will eat the good things of the land.” That is the grace given for obedience. “But if you do not obey me and are not willing, the sword and fire will devour you.” That is the judgment on disobedience. “For the mouth of the Lord has spoken these things.” The word of the Lord is a law of truth. Do you want me to be a good counselor to you? Then listen, and I will show you what I can. People, when you thought about the Good itself, you ought to have brought in an inborn faith. That would have been a trustworthy witness from your own household, plainly choosing what is best. Then you would not ask whether the Good should be pursued, but would work hard at it.

Translator’s note. “Death and life” comes from [Deuteronomy 30:15](#) and [30:19](#), where Moses urges Israel to “choose life.” The two “if” sayings and “the mouth of the Lord has spoken” are from [Isaiah 1:19-20](#). The words “grace” and “judgment” are Clement’s own comments on them.

Scripture: [Deuteronomy 30:15](#); [Deuteronomy 30:19](#); [Isaiah 1:19-20](#)

10j Take drunkenness, for example. If anyone is going to get drunk, he ought to hesitate over it. But you get drunk before you even think about it. And if you are going to behave outrageously, you make no inquiry at all; you do it as fast as you can. Only when it comes to worshipping God do you start asking questions. Should we follow this wise God and Christ? That is the one thing you think deserves deliberation and study, though you have not even grasped what is fitting for God, whatever that is. Believe us at least as you believe drunkenness, so that you may become sober. Believe us at least as you believe outrage, so that you may live. But if you want to be persuaded after looking at the clear assurance that the virtues give, then I will set before you, from my abundance, the case for the Word. As for you, your ancestral customs no longer keep you busy and distract you from the truth, now that you have already been instructed. So you can now hear how the rest of the matter stands. Do not let any shame at this name take hold of you first. That shame “greatly harms men” and turns them aside from salvation.

Translator’s note. “Greatly harms men” is from a line of Homer (*Iliad* 24.45), also found in Hesiod (*Works and Days* 318). The original line is about shame, which “greatly harms men, and helps them too.” Clement quotes only the harmful half.

10k So let us strip openly and compete in the stadium of truth like true athletes. The holy Word will be the umpire, and the Master of all things will preside over the contest. The prize set before us is not a small one: immortality. So do not worry any more, not even a little, about what some marketplace rabble say about you. They are

godless dancers in the chorus of superstition, driven by folly and madness into the very pit. They make idols and bow down to stones. These people have dared to turn men into gods. They have even listed Alexander the Macedonian as a thirteenth god, though “Babylon exposed him as a corpse.” So I admire the sophist from Chios, whose name was Theocritus. After Alexander’s death, Theocritus mocked the empty ideas people held about gods. He said to his fellow citizens, “Men, take courage, as long as you see the gods dying before men.” But whoever worships the visible gods, and this mixed crowd of created things, and attaches himself to them, is far more wretched than those demons themselves.

Translator’s note. “Thirteenth god” means one more than the twelve Olympian gods. The Greek calls Theocritus “the sophist from Chios,” that is, from the island of Chios.

10l For God is not unjust in any way, as the demons are. He is as perfectly just as can be. Nothing is more like him than the one of us who becomes perfectly just. “Be on your way, all you working folk, who turn in prayer to Ergane, the fierce-eyed goddess, daughter of Zeus, with winnowing-baskets set up beside you.” You fools, you are makers and worshipers of stones! Let your Phidias come, and Polycleitus, and Praxiteles and Apelles, and everyone who practices the manual crafts. They are earthly men, workers in earth. For a certain prophecy says that affairs here will go badly when people put their trust in statues. So let the petty craftsmen come again, for I will not stop calling. Not one of them has ever made a breathing image, or kneaded soft flesh out of earth. Who melted the marrow? Who set the bones?

Translator’s note. Phidias, Polycleitus and Praxiteles were famous sculptors, and Apelles a famous painter.

10m Who stretched the sinews? Who made the veins swell? Who poured blood into them? Who stretched the skin around the body? Which of them could ever make eyes that see? Who breathed a soul into it? Who gave righteousness? Who promised immortality? Only the Maker of the universe, “the Father, the best of craftsmen,” formed us human beings as such a living statue. But your Olympian, an image of an image, far out of tune with the truth, is the dumb work of Attic hands. For the “image of God” is his Word. The divine Word is the true Son of the Mind, light that is the original pattern of light. The image of the Word is the true human being, the mind in man. For this reason he is said to have been made “in the image” and “after the likeness” of God. By the understanding in his heart he is made like the divine Word, and in this way he is rational.

Translator’s note. “Image of God” echoes [Colossians 1:15](#) (compare [2 Corinthians 4:4](#)). “Image” and “likeness” echo [Genesis 1:26](#). “Breathed a soul into” recalls [Genesis 2:7](#).

Scripture: [Genesis 2:7](#); [Genesis 1:26](#); [Colossians 1:15](#); [2 Corinthians 4:4](#)

10n But the man-shaped statues are only an earthly image of the

visible, earth-born man. They are a short-lived imprint, plainly far from the truth. To me, then, human life seems to have become nothing but madness, when it spends such zeal on raw material. Custom has given you a taste of slavery and of senseless, overbusy concern, and it has been corrupted by empty opinion. Ignorance is the cause of lawless customs and deceitful pretenses. It has devised many forms of demons, deadly fates and hateful idols for the human race, and it has stamped the stain of long death on those who follow it. So take the water of the Word. Wash, you who are defiled. Sprinkle yourselves clean of custom with the true drops. The pure must go up into the heavens. You are a human being, which is the most common thing about you, so look for the one who made you. You are a son, which is the most personal thing about you, so acknowledge your Father.

Translator's note. "Wash, you who are defiled" may echo [Isaiah 1:16](#), "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean."

Scripture: [Isaiah 1:16](#)

10o Yet do you still stay in your sins, clinging to pleasures? To whom will the Lord say, "Yours is the kingdom of the heavens"? It is yours if you are willing, you who have set your choice toward God. It is yours if you are willing simply to believe and to follow the short, plain message. The Ninevites obeyed that message. By genuine repentance they exchanged the capture they expected for a good salvation. "How then," someone asks, "shall I go up to the heavens?" The Lord is "the way." It is "narrow," but it comes "from the heavens." It is narrow, but it sends us up to the heavens. It is narrow on earth, where it is despised, and wide in the heavens, where it is worshiped. Now the person who has never heard the word has his ignorance to excuse his error. But the person who has heard it with his own ears carries disobedience in his soul by his own decision. The wiser he seems to be, the more his understanding works against him. By not choosing the best, he has made his own good sense his accuser. For by nature, as a human being, he is made for close kinship with God.

Translator's note. The Greek (*oikeiōs echein pros theon*) says that a human being is by nature closely akin to God.

Scripture: [John 14:6](#); [Matthew 7:14](#)

10p We do not force a horse to plough or a bull to hunt. We lead each animal toward what it is naturally suited for. In the same way we call human beings to the knowledge of God. They were made to gaze at heaven, and they are truly a heavenly plant. We have grasped what belongs to them and sets them apart from the other living creatures. So we advise them to equip themselves with godliness, a provision sufficient for the ages. We say: if you are a farmer, farm, but know God as you farm. You who love the sea, sail, but call on the heavenly pilot. Has knowledge found you as a soldier? Listen to the commander who gives just orders. So, like

people weighed down with stupor and drunkenness, sober up. Open your eyes a little and think what the stones you worship mean to you, and what you spend with empty zeal on mere matter. You waste your money and your livelihood on ignorance, just as you waste your life on death. That is the only end your vain hope finds. You cannot even pity yourselves, and you are not ready to listen to those who pity you for your error. You are enslaved to a bad custom. You cling to it by your own choice until your last breath, and so you are carried off to ruin. "For the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light." Yet you could wipe away what stands in the way of your salvation: conceit, wealth and fear. You could say aloud that line of the poet: "Where am I carrying all this wealth?"

Translator's note. The poet's lines are from Homer's *Odyssey* (13.203-204). Odysseus speaks them when he wakes up in Ithaca and does not recognize where he is.

Scripture: [John 3:19](#)

10q And where am I myself wandering?" Will you not throw away these empty fantasies and say goodbye to custom itself? Say to vain glory: "Farewell, false dreams; you were nothing after all." What do you think, my friends, of Hermes Tychon, the Hermes of Andocides, and Hermes Amyetus? Surely it is clear to everyone that they are stones, just like Hermes himself. The halo is not a god, and the rainbow is not a god. They are conditions of the air and the clouds. In the same way, day is not a god, nor is the year, nor is the time that is made up of them. Neither are the sun and the moon, which mark off each of these. So who in his right mind would take Reckoning, Punishment, Justice and Retribution to be gods?

Translator's note. The Greek word for rainbow, iris, is also the name of the rainbow goddess Iris.

10r Neither are the Furies, the Fates or Destiny gods, since the State, Glory and Wealth are not gods either. Painters even show Wealth as blind. If you make gods of Shame, Love and Aphrodite, then let Disgrace, Desire, Beauty and Sexual Union follow them as gods too. So it no longer makes sense for you to regard Sleep and Death as twin gods. These are conditions that happen naturally to living creatures. Nor could you rightly call Doom, Destiny or the Fates goddesses. If Strife and Battle are not gods, then neither are Ares and Enyo. Again, if lightning, thunderbolts and rainstorms are not gods, how can fire and water be gods? And how can shooting stars and comets be gods, when they come about through a disturbance of the air?

Translator's note. Wealth (Plutus) was pictured as blind because he hands out riches without regard to merit.

10s Whoever calls Fortune a god may as well call Action a god. Suppose none of these is held to be a god, and neither are those senseless figures made by human hands. Yet a providence of divine

power is plainly at work around us. Then nothing is left but to admit that he alone truly is and exists who alone is truly God. But you foolish people are like men who have drunk mandrake or some other drug. May God at last grant you to wake from this sleep and to understand God. May you no longer picture gold, or stone, or a tree, or an action, or a suffering, or a disease, or a fear as a god. For truly there are “thirty thousand” demons “on the many-nourishing earth.” They are “not immortal,” and not mortal either. They have no share in sensation, and so they have no share in death. They are masters of human beings, made of stone and wood, who abuse human life and break faith with it through custom.

Translator’s note. Clement adapts Hesiod (Works and Days 252-253), who says there are thirty thousand immortal watchers of Zeus over mortal men on the many-nourishing earth. Clement calls them “demons” and denies they are immortal, to make his point that they are only lifeless images of stone and wood.

10t “The earth is the Lord’s,” it says, “and its fullness.” Then how do you dare to live in luxury on the Lord’s property and not know your Master? The Lord will say to you, “Leave my land. Do not touch the water that I send up. Do not share in the fruits that I cultivate.” Pay God back for the cost of your upbringing, O man. Recognize your Master. You are God’s own creature. How could what is his own rightly come to belong to someone else? For what has been estranged, and so has lost its belonging, has also lost the truth. Are you not, in a way, like Niobe? Or rather, to speak to you more mystically, are you not like the Hebrew woman (the ancients named her after Lot), turning into something without feeling? We have received the account that this woman was turned to stone because she loved Sodom. And the Sodomites are the godless, those who turn to impiety, the hard-hearted and the foolish.

Translator’s note. In Greek myth, Niobe was turned to stone while grieving for her children.

Scripture: [Psalm 24:1](#); [1 Corinthians 10:26](#); [Genesis 19:26](#)

10u Think of these words as spoken to you from God. Do not suppose that stones, wood, birds and snakes are sacred, but human beings are not. The truth is just the opposite. Regard human beings as truly sacred, and take the animals and stones for what they are. For wretched, miserable people think that God cries out through a raven or a jackdaw but is silent through a man. They honor the raven as a messenger of God, but they persecute the man of God. He does not croak or chatter. He speaks. Alas, he teaches them with reason and with love for humanity, and they try inhumanly to cut his throat. He calls them to righteousness, yet they neither wait for the grace from above nor turn away from the punishment. For they do not believe God, and they do not learn his power.

10v But the one whose love for humanity is beyond words also has a hatred of evil beyond all measure. Anger feeds punishment for sin, but love for humanity does good to those who repent. The most

pitiable thing of all is to be deprived of help from God. Blindness of the eyes and deafness of the ears are more painful than the other ways the evil one gets the better of us. The one robs a person of the sight of heaven, and the other deprives him of divine teaching. But you are crippled toward the truth, blind in mind and deaf in understanding, and yet you feel no pain and no distress. You have not longed to see heaven and the Maker of heaven. You have not sought to hear and learn from the Creator and Father of all, joining your choice to your salvation. For nothing stands in the way of the person who hurries toward the knowledge of God: not lack of education, not poverty, not obscurity, not lack of possessions. And no one prays to gain the truly real wisdom by “slaying with bronze,” or with iron. This saying is well spoken, better than any other: the good person brings salvation everywhere. For the one who is zealous for what is right, as a lover of the One who lacks nothing, needs little himself. He has stored up his blessedness in nothing other than God himself, where there is no moth, no thief, no pirate, but the eternal Giver of good things.

| *Translator’s note.* “No moth, no thief” echoes [Matthew 6:19–20](#).

| *Scripture:* [Matthew 6:20](#)

10w So it is fitting that you have been likened to those serpents whose ears are shut against the charmers. For the Scripture says, “Their anger is like that of a serpent, like a deaf asp that stops up its ears and will not hear the voice of charmers.” But as for you, let your savagery be charmed away. Accept our gentle Word, and spit out the poisonous venom, so that you may be given the chance, as far as possible, to strip off corruption, as those serpents strip off old age. Listen to me. Do not stop up your ears or block your hearing, but take what is said to heart. The medicine of immortality is good. Stop at last your crawling, snakelike trails. “For the enemies of the Lord,” it says, “will lick the dust.” Lift your heads from the earth to the sky, look up to heaven, and marvel. Stop lying in wait for the heel of the righteous and blocking “the way of truth.” Be wise and harmless. Perhaps the Lord will give you the wing of simplicity (he has chosen to give wings to those born of the earth), so that you may leave your holes and live in the heavens.

| *Translator’s note.* “Will lick the dust” adapts [Psalm 72:9](#) (71:9 in the Greek Bible). “The heel of the righteous” recalls the serpent and the heel in [Genesis 3:15](#). “Wise and harmless” echoes [Matthew 10:16](#).

| *Scripture:* [Matthew 10:16](#); [Genesis 3:15](#)

10x Only let us repent with our whole heart, so that we may be able to hold God with our whole heart. “Hope in him, all you assembly of the people,” it says. “Pour out all your hearts before him.” This is said to those who are empty of wickedness. He has mercy on them and fills them with righteousness. Believe, O man, in the one who is man and God. Believe, O man, in the living God, who suffered and is worshipped. Believe, you slaves, in the one who died. All people,

believe in him who alone is God of all people. Believe, and receive salvation as your reward. "Seek God, and your soul will live." The one who seeks God is busy about his own salvation. Have you found God? Then you have life. So let us seek, so that we may live. The reward of finding is life with God. "Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you, and let them say always, 'Let God be magnified.'" A beautiful hymn to God is an immortal man, built up in righteousness, in whom the words of truth are engraved.

Translator's note. The quotations follow the Greek Old Testament: [Psalm 62:8](#) (61:9 in the Greek Bible), [Psalm 69:32](#) (68:33), and [Psalm 70:4](#) (69:5); in the last, Clement leaves out the psalm's words "who love your salvation."

Scripture: [Psalm 62:8](#)

10y For where else should righteousness be written than in a self-controlled soul? Where else love? Where else reverence? Where else gentleness? I think that those who have stamped these divine writings on their soul should regard wisdom as a good starting point for anyone, whatever part of life they turn to. They should also count the same wisdom as the calm harbor of salvation. Through this wisdom, those who have run to the Father are good fathers to their children. Those who have come to know the Son are good sons to their parents. Those who remember the Bridegroom are good husbands to their wives. Those who have been ransomed from the worst slavery are good masters to their servants. Oh, the beasts are more blessed than people in their error! They feed on ignorance, as you do, but they do not put on a show of truth. Among them there are no tribes of flatterers. Fish are not superstitious, and birds do not worship idols. They are struck with awe by the one heaven alone, since, denied reason, they cannot conceive of God.

10z Are you not ashamed? You have made yourselves even more irrational than the irrational animals, you who have worn away so many stages of life in godlessness. You were children, then boys, then young men, then grown men, but never good. At least respect old age. Now that you have reached the sunset of life, come to your senses. Even at the end of life, come to know God, so that the end of your life may become the beginning of salvation. You have grown old in superstition; come to the worship of God as young people. God will accept guileless children. Let the Athenian follow the laws of Solon, the Argive those of Phoroneus, and the Spartan those of Lycurgus. But if you enroll yourself as belonging to God, heaven is your homeland and God your lawgiver. And what are the laws? "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not corrupt boys, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness; you shall love the Lord your God." There are also the supplements to these: rational laws and holy words written on the hearts themselves. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." "To the one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also." "You shall not desire, for by desire alone you have committed adultery." How much better it is for people not even to want to desire what they

should not, in the first place, than to get what they desire!

Translator's note. The "supplements" come from [Leviticus 19:18](#) (compare [Matthew 22:39](#)), [Luke 6:29](#), and a free combination of "You shall not covet" ([Exodus 20:17](#)) with [Matthew 5:28](#).

Scripture: [Exodus 20:13-16](#); [Matthew 22:37-39](#); [Luke 6:29](#); [Matthew 5:28](#)

10aa But you cannot bear the severity of salvation. We enjoy sweet foods and prefer them for the smooth pleasure they give, yet bitter things that roughen the taste heal us and make us well, and the harshness of medicines strengthens those with weak stomachs. In the same way, custom is pleasant and tickles the senses, but custom pushes us into the pit, while truth leads up to heaven. Truth is "rugged" at first, "but a good nurse of the young." She is a dignified women's quarters and a sober council of elders. She is neither hard to approach nor impossible to grasp. She lives very near us, within us, as the all-wise Moses hints, dwelling in three parts of us: "in hands, mouth, and heart." This is a true symbol that truth is completed by three things altogether: purpose, action, and speech. Do not fear that the many delightful things that appear before you will rob you of wisdom. You will willingly step over the nonsense of custom yourself, just as children, once grown, throw away their toys.

Translator's note. The words about hands, mouth and heart echo [Deuteronomy 30:14](#). "Hands" appears in the Greek Old Testament there but not in the Hebrew.

Scripture: [Deuteronomy 30:14](#); [1 Corinthians 13:11](#)

10ab With unsurpassable speed and easily approached goodwill, the divine power shone on the earth and filled the whole world with the seed of salvation. For the Lord could not have accomplished so great a work in so short a time without divine care. He was despised in appearance but worshiped in fact: the purifier, the savior, the gentle one, the divine Word, truly the most plainly visible God, made equal to the Master of all, because he was his Son and "the Word was in God." He was not disbelieved when he was first announced beforehand. Nor was he unrecognized when he took up the mask of a man, formed himself in flesh, and acted out the saving drama of humanity. For he was a true contender, fighting side by side with his own creature. He spread to all people very quickly, rising faster than the sun from the Father's own will, and most easily made God shine upon us. By what he taught and showed, he made clear where he himself came from and who he was. He is the bearer of the peace treaty, the reconciler, our Savior, the Word, a life-giving, peaceful spring, poured out over the whole face of the earth. Through him, one might say, everything has already become a sea of good things.

Translator's note. "Mask" and "drama" are theater words in the Greek. Clement pictures the incarnation as an actor taking on a role, but he does not mean the role was unreal: the Word truly "formed himself in flesh."

Chapter 11

11a If you wish, look back briefly to the beginning and see God's kindness. The first man played freely in Paradise, because he was a child of God. But he gave way to pleasure. (The serpent is an allegory for pleasure, crawling on its belly, an earthly vice turned toward material things.) He was led astray by desires. The child grew into a man through disobedience, and having disobeyed his Father, he was ashamed before God. See what pleasure could do. The man who had been free because of his simplicity was found bound by sins. Then the Lord wished to free him from his bonds once more. He was bound in flesh (a divine mystery!), subdued the serpent, and enslaved the tyrant, death. Most astonishing of all, by outstretched hands he showed that man, who had been led astray by pleasure and held fast by corruption, was set free. O mystical wonder! The Lord lay down, and man rose up. He who fell out of Paradise receives a greater prize for obedience: the heavens.

Translator's note. The Greek does not say whose hands are outstretched, but they are commonly taken as the Lord's hands stretched out on the cross.

| Scripture: [Genesis 3:14](#)

11b For this reason, now that the Word himself has come to us from heaven, it seems to me we no longer need to go after human teaching, busying ourselves with Athens and the rest of Greece, and Ionia too. If our teacher is the one who filled all things with holy powers, in creation, salvation, kindness, lawgiving, prophecy and teaching, then that teacher now instructs us in everything. Through the Word the whole world has already become Athens and Greece. You believed a poet's myth that records Minos the Cretan as a close companion of Zeus. Will you then refuse to believe us, who have become disciples of God and have taken up the wisdom that is really true? The leaders of philosophy only hinted at that wisdom, but the disciples of Christ have grasped it and proclaimed it. And so, one might say, everyone ... [words missing] ... Christ is not divided. There is neither barbarian nor Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, but a new human being, remade by the Holy Spirit of God.

Translator's note. "Christ is not divided" echoes [1 Corinthians 1:13](#). The rest of the sentence echoes [Galatians 3:28](#) and [Colossians 3:10-11](#) ("the new self").

| Scripture: [1 Corinthians 1:13](#); [Galatians 3:28](#); [Colossians 3:11](#)

11c Furthermore, all the other counsels and instructions are poor things and concern particular matters: whether to marry, whether to take part in public life, whether to have children. But there is one exhortation that is universal. It covers the whole of life, in every

season and every circumstance, and it directs us toward the highest goal, which is life. That exhortation is godliness. It is the only rule we must live by if we are to live forever. Philosophy, as the elders say, is a counsel of long duration, courting an everlasting love of wisdom. But “the commandment of the Lord is far-shining, enlightening the eyes.” Receive Christ, receive sight, receive your light, “that you may know well both God and man.” The Word who has enlightened us is “sweet, above gold and precious stone”; he is desirable “above honey and the honeycomb.” How could he not be desirable, when he has brought into clear light a mind buried in darkness and sharpened the “light-bringing eyes” of the soul?

Translator’s note. “That you may know well both God and man” adapts Homer, *Iliad* 5.128. There Athena removes the mist from Diomedes’ eyes so that he can tell gods from men.

11d For just as “if there were no sun, it would be night everywhere, despite the other stars,” so, if we had not known the Word and been lit up by him, we would be no better than fattened birds, grown plump in darkness and fed for death. Let us take in the light, so that we may take in God. Let us take in the light and become disciples of the Lord. This is what he promised the Father: “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the midst of the assembly I will sing hymns to you.” Sing, then, and tell me about your Father, God. Your accounts will save me, and your song will teach me. Until now I was wandering, seeking God. But since you lead me into the light, Lord, Lord, I find God through you and receive the Father from you. I become your fellow heir, since you were not ashamed of me, your brother.

Translator’s note. The Psalm quotation ends after “I will sing hymns to you”; what follows (“Sing, then...”) is Clement’s own prayer, not Scripture.

Scripture: [Psalm 22:22](#); [Hebrews 2:11-12](#); [Romans 8:17](#)

11e So let us remove, let us remove, our forgetfulness of the truth. Let us strip away ignorance and the darkness that stands in the way like a mist over the eyes, and let us look upon the God who truly is. First let us sing to him this greeting: “Hail, light!” Light has shone on us from heaven, on us who were buried in darkness and shut up in the shadow of death. It is purer than the sun and sweeter than the life we have here. That light is eternal life, and whatever shares in it lives. Night is afraid of the light, and in fear it sets and yields to the Lord’s day. Everything has become sleepless light, and the west has been turned into the east. This is what the new creation means. For the “sun of righteousness,” who drives his chariot over all things, travels equally around all humanity. He imitates the Father, who “makes his sun rise on all people,” and he sprinkles on them the dew of truth.

Translator’s note. The older translation reads “the west has given credence to the east.” The Greek printed here says the west (sunset) has been turned around into the east (sunrise), and this version follows the Greek.

| Scripture: [Luke 1:79](#); [Malachi 4:2](#); [Matthew 5:45](#)

11f He turned the west into the east, and through the cross he turned death into life. He snatched man out of destruction and lifted him up to hang in the upper air. He transplanted corruption into incorruption and changed earth into heaven. He is God's farmer, "giving favorable signs, rousing the people to work," to good work, "reminding them of their livelihood," the true one. He has given us the Father's inheritance, which is truly great and divine and cannot be taken away. By heavenly teaching he makes man divine, "putting laws into their mind and writing them on their heart." What laws does he write? "That all will know God, from small to great; and I will be merciful to them," says God, "and I will by no means remember their sins." Let us receive the laws of life and obey God when he exhorts us. Let us learn to know him, so that he may be merciful. Even though he needs nothing, let us pay him a wage of thanks, which is willing obedience, like a kind of rent paid to God for our dwelling here.

| *Translator's note.* After "rent," the edition used has the word "piety" in brackets, marking it as a possible later addition. It is left out here.

| Scripture: [Hebrews 8:10-12](#); [Jeremiah 31:33-34](#)

11g "Gold for bronze, the price of a hundred oxen for the price of nine." So it is with you: for a little faith God gives you all this earth to farm, water to drink and to sail on, air to breathe, fire to serve you, and a world to live in. He has even allowed you to send a colony from here to the heavens. All these great works of his hands, and all these gifts, he has paid out to you for a little faith. People who trust sorcerers accept their amulets and charms, supposing these will save them. Will you not be willing to have the heavenly Word, the Saviour, fastened on you like an amulet? Will you not trust God's own charm and be set free from the passions, which are diseases of the soul, and be torn away from sin? For sin is eternal death. Truly you are completely toothless and blind, like moles. You live in the dark, doing nothing but eating, and you are wasting away in corruption. But there is, there is a truth that cries out: "Out of darkness light will shine."

| *Translator's note.* The closing words quote [2 Corinthians 4:6](#), "Light will shine out of darkness."

| Scripture: [2 Corinthians 4:6](#)

11h So let the light shine in the hidden part of a person, in the heart. Let the rays of knowledge rise and bring out the person hidden within, making him shine: the disciple of the light, the friend and fellow heir of Christ. This is especially so when a devout and good child comes to know the most honored and venerable name, the name of a good Father. This Father gives gentle commands and urges his child toward what will save him. The one who obeys him gains in every way. He follows God, he obeys the Father. He came to know him while he was still wandering. He has loved God, he has

loved his neighbor, he has fulfilled the commandment. He looks for the prize, he claims the promise. It is always God's purpose to save the flock of humanity. For this reason the good God sent the good Shepherd. And the Word, laying the truth open, showed people the height of salvation, so that they would either repent and be saved, or refuse to obey and be judged.

Translator's note. "The good Shepherd" recalls [John 10:11](#). Loving God and neighbor recalls [Matthew 22:37-39](#).

Scripture: [1 Peter 3:4](#); [Matthew 22:37-39](#); [John 10:11](#)

11i This is the proclamation of righteousness: good news for those who obey, a judgment for those who refuse to listen. Now when the "loud-crashing" trumpet sounds, it gathers soldiers and announces war. Christ has breathed a song of peace to the ends of the earth. Will he not, then, gather his own soldiers of peace? He has indeed gathered them, my friend. By his blood and by his word he has gathered a bloodless army, and he has entrusted the kingdom of heaven to them. Christ's trumpet is his gospel. He has sounded it, and we have heard it. Let us arm ourselves in peace, "putting on the breastplate of righteousness," taking up the shield of faith, putting on the helmet of salvation, and sharpening "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This is how the apostle draws us up for battle, in peace. These are our weapons, and nothing can pierce them. Armed with them, let us take our stand against the evil one. Let us put out the evil one's flaming arrows with blade-points of water, dipped by the Word. Let us repay his kindness with grateful praise, and honor God with the divine Word.

Translator's note. The Greek verb for "dipped" is used for tempering metal by plunging it into water. It is related to the word for "baptize," so Clement may be alluding to baptism.

Scripture: [Ephesians 6:14-17](#)

11j "While you are still speaking," he says, "he will say, 'Look, I am here.'" What a holy and blessed power this is, by which God lives as a fellow citizen with human beings! It is better and finer, then, to become both an imitator and a servant of the best being there is. For no one can imitate God except through the holy service he gives him, and no one can serve and honor him except by imitating him. The heavenly and truly divine love comes to people in this way: when true beauty, fanned into flame by the divine Word, is able to shine out somewhere within the soul itself. And most important of all, salvation runs together with sincerely wanting it, since choice and life are, so to speak, yoked together. For this reason, this appeal of the truth alone is likened to the most faithful of friends. It stays with us to our last breath. For those who depart for heaven, it becomes a good escort for the whole and perfect spirit of the soul.

Translator's note. The quotation matches the Greek (Septuagint) text of [Isaiah 58:9](#) ("while you are still speaking, he will say, 'Here I am'").

Scripture: [Isaiah 58:9](#)

11k What, then, am I urging you to do? I am pressing you to be saved. This is what Christ wants. In a word, he gives you life as a gift. And who is this? Learn it in brief: the Word of truth, the Word of incorruption, who gives people new birth and brings them back to the truth. He is the goad that drives us to salvation. He drives out corruption and chases away death. He has built a temple in human beings, so that he might enshrine God in them. Make the temple clean. Leave pleasures and carelessness to the wind and the fire, like a flower that lasts a day. But farm the fruits of self-control with good sense, and dedicate yourself to God as a first-fruits offering. Then you will be not only God's work but also his gift. Both suit Christ's disciple: to be shown worthy of the kingdom, and to have been counted worthy of the kingdom.

Translator's note. "His work... his gift" translates *ergon... charis tou theou*, literally "work... grace (or favor) of God."

Scripture: [1 Corinthians 3:16](#); [2 Thessalonians 1:5](#)

Chapter 12

12a So let us flee from custom. Let us flee it as we would a dangerous headland, or the menace of Charybdis, or the Sirens of the myths. Custom chokes a person, turns him away from the truth, and leads him away from life. It is a snare, a chasm, a pit, a greedy evil. "Keep your ship clear of that smoke and that surge." Let us flee, fellow sailors, let us flee this wave! It belches out fire. It is a wicked island, piled high with bones and corpses. On it sings a pretty little harlot, Pleasure, who delights in music for the common crowd. "Come here, much-praised Odysseus, great glory of the Achaeans; bring your ship to rest, that you may hear a diviner voice." She praises you, sailor, and calls you famous in song, and the harlot claims for herself the glory of the Greeks. Let her feed on the dead. A heavenly Spirit helps you. Pass Pleasure by; she is a deceiver. "Do not let a woman with swaying hips cheat your mind, coaxing you with wheedling talk while she pries into your barn."

Translator's note. "A greedy evil" follows the Greek *lichnon*, "greedy." The older English's "winnowing fan" seems to read a similar-looking word, *liknon*.

12b Sail past the song; it brings death. Only be willing, and you have conquered destruction. Bound to the wood, you will be set free from all corruption. The Word of God will steer you, and the Holy Spirit will bring you to anchor in the harbors of heaven. Then you will look upon my God. You will be initiated into those holy mysteries, and you will enjoy the hidden things in heaven that are kept for me, "which no ear has heard, and which have not entered the heart" of anyone. "Indeed, I seem to see two suns, and two Thebes," said one who was in a Bacchic frenzy over idols, drunk with undiluted ignorance. I would pity him in his drunken raving. Even in such madness I would urge him toward a sober salvation,

because the Lord welcomes the repentance of a sinner and not his death. Come, you who are out of your mind. Do not lean on the thyrsus or wrap yourself in ivy. Throw away the headband, throw away the fawn-skin, and come to your senses. I will show you the Word and the mysteries of the Word, explaining them in images you will recognize.

Translator's note. The "two suns" line is spoken by Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae*. The "ear has not heard" wording echoes [1 Corinthians 2:9](#). The "sinner's repentance" echoes [Ezekiel 18:23](#) and 33:11.

Scripture: [1 Corinthians 2:9](#); [Ezekiel 33:11](#)

12c This is a mountain beloved by God. It is not the subject of tragedies, as Cithaeron is, but is given over to the dramas of truth. It is a sober mountain, shaded by pure woods. On it revel not the sisters of Semele "the lightning-struck," the Maenads, who are initiated into an unholy sharing out of flesh, but the daughters of God, the fair lambs. They proclaim the solemn rites of the Word and gather a sober chorus. The chorus is the righteous, and the song is a hymn to the King of all. The maidens sing, the angels give glory, the prophets speak. The sound of music goes out. They run to follow the festal band, and those who have been called hurry on, longing to receive the Father. Come to me, old man, you also. Leave Thebes, give up prophecy and Bacchic revelry, and be led by the hand to the truth. Look, I give you the wood to lean on. Hurry, Tiresias, believe, and you will see. Christ shines more brightly than the sun, and through him the eyes of the blind receive their sight. Night will flee from you, fire will fear you, and death will be gone. You will see the heavens, old man, you who cannot see Thebes.

Translator's note. The older translation's "[of the cross]" is a bracketed addition; the Greek says only "the wood," as in the previous section.

12d O truly holy mysteries! O pure light! I am led by torchlight to look upon the heavens and God. I become holy by being initiated. The Lord is the one who reveals the sacred things. He seals the initiate as he leads him into the light, and he presents the believer to the Father, to be kept for the ages. These are the revels of my mysteries. If you wish, be initiated yourself, and you will dance with angels around the unbegotten, indestructible, and only true God, while the Word of God sings the hymn with us. This Jesus is eternal, the one great High Priest of the one God, who is also his Father. He prays for human beings and calls out to them: "'Listen, countless tribes,' or rather, all of you among humankind who have reason, barbarians and Greeks alike. I call the whole human race, whose Maker I am by the Father's will. Come to me, to be placed under the one God and the one Word of God. You do not only surpass the irrational animals by reason. Out of all mortal creatures, I grant to you alone the harvest of immortality."

Translator's note. "Listen, countless tribes" is a line from Homer's *Iliad* (17.220), where Hector addresses his allies. Clement puts it in the mouth of Christ and then corrects it to "all who have reason."

| Scripture: [Hebrews 4:14](#)

12e “For I want, I truly want, to share this grace with you as well, and to give you the whole benefit, which is incorruption. I give you the Word, the knowledge of God. I give you myself, complete. This is what I am. This is what God wants. This is concord, this is the harmony of the Father. This is the Son, this is Christ, this is the Word of God, the arm of the Lord, the power of the universe, the will of the Father. You were images long ago, but not all of you were true likenesses. I want to set you right according to the original, so that you may become like me. I will anoint you with the ointment of faith, by which you throw off corruption. I will show you the form of righteousness, bare of any covering, by which you climb up to God. ‘Come to me, all you who labor and are weighed down, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is kind and my burden is light.’” Let us hurry, let us run, you who are loved by God, you godlike statues of the Word. Let us hurry, let us run, let us take up his yoke. Let us strive for incorruption, and let us love Christ, the noble charioteer of humanity. He brought the colt, the beast of burden, together with the old one. Having yoked the pair of humankind, he steers the chariot toward immortality. He hurries toward God to fulfil in plain fact what he once hinted at. Before, he drove into Jerusalem; now he drives into the heavens. The eternal Son, victorious, is a most beautiful sight for the Father.

Translator’s note. The colt and “the old one” refer to the animals in Christ’s entry into Jerusalem ([Matthew 21:2-7](#), quoting [Zechariah 9:9](#)). The Greek says only “the old one”; “with its parent” in the older translation is not in the Greek. Clement does not spell out his meaning here. He seems to see the two animals as a picture of the new and old peoples of humanity, both brought under Christ’s yoke.

| Scripture: [Matthew 11:28-30](#); [Matthew 21:2-7](#)

12f So let us be people who eagerly pursue what is good and who are loved by God, and let us gain the greatest of all goods, God and life. The Word is our helper. Let us trust him, and let no desire for silver and gold, or for glory, ever come over us as strongly as our desire for the Word of truth himself. For it does not please even God himself if we count what is most valuable as worth least, and instead value more highly the glaring outrages of ignorance, stupidity, laziness, and idolatry, and the extreme of ungodliness. It is not without reason that the children of the philosophers regard everything the foolish do as unholy and impious. They describe ignorance itself as a form of madness, and so they declare that the many are simply mad. Reason, then, leaves no room for doubt about which of the two is better, to be sane or to be mad. Instead we must hold on to the truth with all our grip and follow God with all our strength. With a sound mind we must regard everything as his, as it truly is. Beyond that, since we have learned that we are the finest of his possessions, we must entrust ourselves to God, loving the Lord

God and treating this as our work through the whole of life.

Translator's note. The idea that human beings are God's possessions echoes Plato's *Phaedo* (62b). "Loving the Lord God" recalls [Deuteronomy 6:5](#) and [Matthew 22:37](#).

Scripture: [Deuteronomy 6:5](#)

12g Now if "friends have all things in common," and man is loved by God (for he is indeed a friend of God, with the Word as mediator), then everything becomes man's, because everything is God's. All things are shared by both friends, God and man. So it is time for us to say that only the devout Christian is rich, sound-minded and well-born, and in this way is God's image, together with his likeness. We should say and believe that he has become "righteous and holy with understanding" through Christ Jesus, and so is already that far like God. The prophet does not hide this grace when he says, "I said, You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High." For he has adopted us, yes us, and wishes to be called the Father of us alone, not of those who disobey.

Translator's note. Clement calls the devout person *sôphrôn*, "sound-minded" or "self-controlled," rather than simply "wise," and calls the others *apeithountes*, "those who disobey," a word sometimes also rendered "unbelieving."

Scripture: [Psalm 82:6](#); [Genesis 1:26](#)

12h This is how it stands with us who follow Christ: as our purposes are, so are our words; as our words are, so are our actions; and as our deeds are, so is our life. The whole life of those who have known Christ is good. I think I have said enough, even though, out of love for humanity, I have gone on rather long. I have poured out whatever I had from God, to urge you toward the greatest of goods, salvation. For when the subject is a life that has no end at all, the words themselves never want to stop revealing its sacred mysteries. What remains for you is this final step: to choose what is to your advantage, judgment or grace. I do not think there should even be any hesitation over which of the two is better. Nor is it even right to compare life with destruction.

Translator's note. "Revealing its sacred mysteries" translates a verb taken from the hierophant, the chief priest of the Eleusinian mysteries, who displayed the sacred objects to those being initiated. Clement has mocked these mysteries earlier in the work, and here he applies their language to the gospel. The Greek also plays on "end" and "stop": a life without end, words that never want to stop.

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