Two Epistles on Virginity

Pseudo-Clement (the Clementine writings) (3rd–4th century)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

Contents

Chapter I.-The Salutation. 2

Chapter II.-For True Virginity Perfect Virtue is Necessary. 3

Chapter III.-True Virgins Prove Themselves Such by Self-Denial, as Does the True Believer by Good Works. 4

Chapter IV.-Continuation of the Remarks on Self-Denial; Object and Reward of True Virgins. 5

Chapter V.-The Irksomeness and the Enemies of Virginity. 6

Chapter VI.-Divinity of Virginity. 7

Chapter VII.-The True Virgin. 8

Chapter VIII.-Virgins, by the Laying Aside of All Carnal Affection, are Imitators of God. 9

Chapter IX.-Continuation of the Subject of Mortification; Dignity of Persons Consecrated to God. 10

Chapter X.-Denunciation of Dangerous and Scandalous Association with Maidens. 11

Chapter XI.-Perniciousness of Idleness; Warning Against the Empty Longing to Be Teachers; Advice About Teaching and the Use of Divine Gifts. 12

Chapter XII.-Rules for Visits, Exorcisms, and How People are to Assist the Sick, and to Walk in All Things Without Offence. 14

Chapter XIII.-What Priests Should Be and Should Not Be. 16

Chapter I.-He Describes the Circumspectness of His Intercourse with the Other Sex, and Tells How in His Journeys He Acts at Places Where There are Brethren Only. 17

Chapter II.-His Behaviour in Places Where There Were Christians of Both Sexes. 18

Chapter III.-Rules for the Conduct of Celibate Brethren in Places Where There are Only Married Christians. 19

Chapter IV.-Conduct of the Holy Man Where There are Women Only. 20

Chapter V.-Where There is Only One Woman, the Father Does Not Make a Stay; How Carefully Stumbling-Blocks Must Be Avoided. 21

Chapter VI.-How Christians Should Behave Themselves Among Heathens. 23

Chapter VII.-Uses of Considering Admonitory Examples, as Well as Instructive Patterns. 25

Chapter VIII.-Joseph and Potiphar's Wife; Of What Kind Love to Females Ought to Be. 26

Chapter IX.-Samson's Admonitory Fall. 27

Chapter X.-David's Sin, So Admonitory to Us Weak Men. 28

Chapter XI.-Admonitory History of the Incestuous Children of David. 29

Chapter XII.-Solomon's Infatuation Through Women. 30

Chapter XIII.-The History of Susanna Teaches Circumspection with the Eyes and in Society. 31

Chapter XIV.-Examples of Circumspect Behaviour from the Old Testament. 32

Chapter XV.-The Example of Jesus; How We May Allow Ourselves to Be Served by Women. 33

Chapter XVI.-Exhortation to Union and to Obedience; Conclusion. 35

Authorship. These writings are not by Clement of Rome. The Clementine Homilies and Recognitions are a Christian romance with sermons and debates, put together in the fourth century from an older lost source; the two letters to virgins come from the third century. Their teaching is not the teaching of the first-century Clement, and the story is fiction.

Chapter I.-The Salutation.

To all those who love and cherish their life which is in Christ through God the Father, and obey the truth of God in hope of eternal life; to those who bear affection towards their brethren and towards their neighbours in the love of God; to the blessed brother virgins, who devote themselves to preserve virginity ”for the sake of the kingdom of heaven; ” and to the holy sister virgins: the peace which is in God.

Chapter II.-For True Virginity Perfect Virtue is Necessary.

Of all virgins of either sex who have truly resolved to preserve virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven-of each and every one of them it is required that he be worthy of the kingdom of heaven in every thing. For not by eloquence or renown, by station and descent, or by beauty or strength, or by length of life, is the kingdom of heaven obtained; but it is obtained by the power of faith, when a man exhibits the works of faith. For whosoever is truly righteous, his works testify concerning his faith, that he is truly a believer, with a faith which is great, a faith which is perfect, a faith which is in God, a faith which shines in good works, that the Father of all may be glorified through Christ. Now, those who are truly virgins for the sake of God give heed to Him who hath said, ”Let not righteousness and faith fail thee; bind them on thy neck, and thou shall find favour for thyself; and devise thou good things before God and before men.” ”The paths,” therefore, ”of the righteous shine as the light, and the light of them advances until the day is perfect.” For the beams of their light illumine the whole creation even now by good works, as those who are truly ”the light of the world,” giving light to ”those who sit in darkness,” that they may arise and go forth from the darkness by the light of the good works of the fear of God, ”that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven.” For it is required of the man of God, that in all his words and works he be perfect, and that in his life he be adorned with all exemplary and well-ordered behaviour, and do all his deeds in righteousness, as a man of God.

Chapter III.-True Virgins Prove Themselves Such by Self-Denial, as Does the True Believer by Good Works.

For virgins are a beautiful pattern to believers, and to those who shall believe. The name alone, indeed, without works, does not introduce into the kingdom of heaven; but, if a man be truly a believer, such an one can be saved. For, if a person be only called a believer in name, whilst he is not such in works, he cannot possibly be a believer. ”Let no one,” therefore, ”lead you astray with the empty words of error. For, merely because a person is called a virgin, if he be destitute of works excellent and comely, and suitable to virginity, he cannot possibly be saved. For our Lord called such virginity as that ”foolish,” as He said in the Gospel; and because it had neither oil nor light, it was left outside of the kingdom of heaven, and was shut out from the joy of the bridegroom, and was reckoned with His enemies. For such persons as these ”have the appearance only of the fear of God, but the power of it they deny. For they ”think with themselves that they are something, whilst they are nothing, and are deceived. But let every one constantly try his works,” and know himself; for empty worship does he offer, whosoever he be that makes profession of virginity and sanctity, ”and denies its power. For virginity of such a kind is impure, and disowned by all good works. For ”every tree whatsoever is known from its fruits. ”See that thou understand what I say: God will give thee understanding.

For whosoever engages before God to preserve sanctity must be girded with all the holy power of God. And, if with true fear he crucify his body, he for the sake of the fear of God excuses himself from that word in which the Scripture has said: ”Be fruitful, and multiply,” and shuns all the display, and care, and sensuality, and fascination of this world, and its revelries and its drunkenness, and all its luxury and ease, and withdraws from the entire life of this world, and from its snares, and nets, and hindrances; and, whilst thou walkest upon the earth, be zealous that thy work and thy business be in heaven.

Chapter IV.-Continuation of the Remarks on Self-Denial; Object and Reward of True Virgins.

For he who covets for himself these things so great and excellent, withdraws and severs himself on this account from all the world, that he may go and live a life divine and heavenly, like the holy angels, in work pure and holy, and ”in the holiness of the Spirit of God,” and that he may serve God Almighty through Jesus Christ for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. On this account he severs himself from all the appetites of the body. And not only does he excuse himself from this command, ”Be fruitful, and multiply,” but he longs for the ”hope promised” and prepared ”and laid up in heaven” by God, who has declared with His mouth, and He does not lie, that it is ”better than sons and daughters,” and that He will give to virgins a notable place in the house of God, which is something ”better than sons and daughters,” and better than the place of those who have passed a wedded life in sanctity, and whose ”bed has not been defiled.” For God will give to virgins the kingdom of heaven, as to the holy angels, by reason of this great and noble profession.

Chapter V.-The Irksomeness and the Enemies of Virginity.

Thou desirest, then, to be a virgin? Knowest thou what hardship and irksomeness there is in true virginity-that which stands constantly at all seasons before God, and does not withdraw from His service, and ”is anxious how it may please its Lord with a holy body, and with its spirit? ” Knowest thou what great glory pertains to virginity, and is it for this that thou dost set thyself to practise it? Dost thou really know and understand what it is thou art eager to do? Art thou acquainted with the noble task of holy virginity? Dost thou know how, like a man, to enter ”lawfully” upon this contest and ”strive,” that, in the might of the Holy Spirit, thou choosest this for thyself, that thou mayest be crowned with a crown of light, and that they may lead thee about in triumph through ”the Jerusalem above”? If so be, then, that thou longest for all these things, conquer the body; conquer the appetites of the flesh; conquer the world in the Spirit of God; conquer these vain things of time, which pass away and grow old, and decay, and come to an end; conquer the dragon; conquer the lion; conquer the serpent; conquer Satan;-through Jesus Christ, who doth strengthen thee by the hearing of His words and the divine Eucharist. ”Take up thy cross and follow” Him who makes thee clean, Jesus Christ thy Lord. Strive to run straight forward and boldly, not with fear, but with courage, relying on the promise of thy Lord, that thou shalt obtain the victor-crown of thy ”calling on high” through Jesus Christ. For whosoever walks perfect in faith, and not fearing, doth in very deed receive the crown of virginity, which is great in its toil and great in its reward. Dost thou understand and know how honourable a thing is sanctity? Dost thou understand how great and exalted and excellent is the glory of virginity?

Chapter VI.-Divinity of Virginity.

The womb of a holy virgin carried our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and the body which our Lord wore, and in which He carried on the conflict in this world, He put on from a holy virgin. From this, therefore, understand the greatness and dignity of virginity. Dost thou wish to be a Christian? Imitate Christ in everything. John, the ambassador, he who came before our Lord, he "than whom there was not a greater among those born of women," the holy messenger of our Lord, was a virgin. Imitate, therefore, the ambassador of our Lord, and be his follower in every thing. That John, again, who "reclined on the bosom of our Lord, and whom He greatly loved," -he, too, was a holy person. For it was not without reason that our Lord loved him. Paul, also, and Barnabas, and Timothy, with all the others, "whose names are written in the book of life," -these, I say, all cherished and loved sanctity, and ran in the contest, and finished their course without blemish, as imitators of Christ, and as sons of the living God. Moreover, also, Elijah and Elisha, and many other holy men, we find to have lived a holy and spotless life. If, therefore, thou desirest to be like these, imitate them with all thy power. For the Scripture has said, "The elders who are among you, honour; and, seeing their manner of life and conduct, imitate their faith." And again it saith, "Imitate me, my brethren, as I imitate Christ."

Chapter VII.-The True Virgin.

Those, therefore, who imitate Christ, imitate Him earnestly. For those who have ”put on Christ” in truth, express His likeness in their thoughts, and in their whole life, and in all their behaviour: in word, and in deeds, and in patience, and in fortitude, and in knowledge, and in chastity, and in long-suffering, and in a pure heart, and in faith, and in hope, and in full and perfect love towards God. No virgin, therefore, unless they be in everything as Christ, and as those ”who are Christs,” can be saved. For every virgin who is in God is holy in her body and in her spirit, and is constant in the service of her Lord, not turning away from it any whither, but waiting upon Him always in purity and holiness in the Spirit of God, being ”solicitous how she may please her Lord,” by living purely and without stain, and solicitous to be pleasing before Him in every thing. She who is such does not withdraw from our Lord, but in spirit is ever with her Lord: as it is written, ”Be ye holy, as I am holy, saith the Lord.”

Chapter VIII.-Virgins, by the Laying Aside of All Carnal Affection, are Imitators of God.

For, if a man be only in name called holy, he is not holy; but he must be holy in everything: in his body and in his spirit. And those who are virgins rejoice at all times in becoming like God and His Christ, and are imitators of them. For in those that are such there is not ”the mind of the flesh. In those who are truly believers, and ”in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells” -in them ”the mind of the flesh” cannot be: which is fornication, uncleanness, wantonness; idolatry, sorcery; enmity, jealousy, rivalry, wrath, disputes, dissensions, ill-will; drunkenness, revelry; buffoonery, foolish talking, boisterous laughter; backbiting, insinuations; bitterness, rage; clamour, abuse, insolence of speech; malice, inventing of evil, falsehood; talkativeness, babbling; threatenings, gnashing of teeth, readiness to accuse, jarring, disdainings, blows; perversions of the right, laxness in judgment; haughtiness, arrogance, ostentation, pompousness, boasting of family, of beauty, of position, of wealth, of an arm of flesh; quarrelsomeness, injustice, eagerness for victory; hatred, anger, envy, perfidy, retaliation; debauchery, gluttony, ”overreaching (which is idolatry),” ”the love of money (which is the root of all evils); ” love of display, vainglory, love of rule, assumption, pride (which is called death, and which ”God fights against”). Every man with whom are these and such like things-every such man is of the flesh. For, ”he that is born of the flesh is flesh; and he that is of the earth speaketh of the earth,” and his thoughts are of the earth. And ”the mind of the flesh is enmity towards God.

For it does not submit itself to the law of God; for it cannot do so,” because it is in the flesh, ”in which dwells no good,” because the Spirit of God is not in it. For this cause justly does the Scripture say regarding such a generation as this: ”My Spirit shall not dwell in men for ever, because they are flesh. ”Whosoever, therefore, has not the Spirit of God in him, is none of His: ” as it is written, ”The Spirit of God departed from Saul, and an evil spirit troubled him, which was sent upon him from God.”

Chapter IX.-Continuation of the Subject of Mortification; Dignity of Persons Consecrated to God.

He in whomsoever the Spirit of God is, is in accord with the will of the Spirit of God; and, because he is in accord with the Spirit of God, therefore does he mortify, the deeds of the body and live unto God, ”treading down and subjugating the body and keeping it under; so that, while preaching to others,” he may be a beautiful example and pattern to believers, and may spend his life in works which are worthy of the Holy Spirit, so that tie may ”not be cast away,” but may be approved before God and before men. For in ”the man who is of God,” with him I say there is nothing of the mind of the flesh; and especially in virgins of either sex; but the fruits of all of them are ”the fruits of the Spirit ” and of life, and they are truly the city of God, and the houses and temples in which God abides and dwells, and among which He walks, as in the holy city of heaven. For in this ”do ye appear to the world as lights, in that ye give heed to the Word of life,” and thus ye are in truth the praise, and the boast, and the crown of rejoicing, and the delight of good servants in our Lord Jesus Christ. For all who see you will ”acknowledge that ye are the seed which the Lord hath blessed; ” in very deed a seed honourable and holy, and ”a priestly kingdom, a holy people, the people of the inheritance,” the heirs of the promises of God; of things which do not decay, nor wither; of ”that which eye hath not seen, and car hath not heard, and which hath not come up into the heart of man; of that which God hath prepared for those who love Him and keep His commandments.”

Chapter X.-Denunciation of Dangerous and Scandalous Association with Maidens.

Now, we are persuaded of you, my brethren, that your thoughts are occupied about those things which are requisite for your salvation. But we speak thus in consequence of the evil rumours and reports concerning shameless men, who, under pretext of the fear of God, have their dwelling with maidens, and so, expose themselves to danger, and walk with them along the road and in solitary places alone-a course which is full of dangers, and full of stumbling-blocks and snares and pitfalls; nor is it in any respect right for Christians and those who fear God so to conduct themselves. Others, too, eat and drink with them at entertainments allowing themselves in loose behaviour and much uncleanness-such as ought not to be among believers, and especially among those who have chosen for themselves a life of holiness. Others, again, meet together for vain and trifling conversation and merriment, and that they may speak evil of one another; and they hunt up tales against one another, and are idle: persons with whom we do not allow you even to eat bread. Then, others gad about among the houses of virgin brethren or sisters, on pretence of visiting them, or reading the Scriptures to them, or exorcising them. Forasmuch as they are idle and do no work, they pry into those things which ought not to be inquired into, and by means of plausible words make merchandise of the name of Christ. These are men from whom the divine apostle kept aloof, because of the multitude of their evil deeds; as it is written: "Thorns sprout in the hands of the idle; " and, "The ways of the idle are full of thorns."

Chapter XI.-Perniciousness of Idleness; Warning Against the Empty Longing to Be Teachers; Advice About Teaching and the Use of Divine Gifts.

Such are the ways of all those who do not work, but go hunting for tales, and think to themselves that this is profitable and right. For such persons are like those idle and prating widows ”who go wandering about among houses” with their prating, and hunt for idle tales, and carry them from house to house with much exaggeration, without fear of God. And besides all this, barefaced men as they are, under pretence of teaching, they set forth a variety of doctrines. And would that they taught the doctrines of truth! But it is this which is so disquieting, that they understand not what they mean, and assert that which is not true : because they wish to be teachers, and to display themselves as skilful in speaking; because they traffic in iniquity in the name of Christ-which it is not right for the servants of God to do. And they hearken not to that which the Scripture has said: ”Let not many be teachers among you, my brethren, and be not all of you prophets. For ”he who does not transgress in word is a perfect man, able to keep down and subjugate his whole body. And, ”If a man speak, let him speak in the words of God. And, ”If there is in thee understanding, give an answer to thy brother but if not, put thy hand on thy mouth. For, ”at one time it is proper to keep silence, and at another thee to speak.

And again it says ”When a man speaks in season, it is honourable to him. And again it says: ”Let your speech be seasoned with grace. For it is required of a man to know how to give an answer to every one in season. For ”he that utters whatsoever comes to his mouth, that man produces strife; and he that utters a superfluity of words increases vexation; and he that is hasty with his lips falls into evil. For because of the unruliness of the tongue cometh anger; but the perfect man keeps watch over his tongue, and loves his soul’s life. For these are they ”who by good words and fair speeches lead astray the hearts of the simple, and,

while offering them blessings, lead them astray. Let us, therefore, fear the judgment which awaits teachers. For a severe judgment will those teachers receive "who teach, but do not," and those who take upon them the name of Christ falsely, and say: We teach the truth, and yet go wandering about idly, and exalt themselves, and make their boast" in the mind of the flesh. These, moreover, are like "the blind man who leads the blind man, and they both fall into the ditch.

And they will receive judgment, because in their talkativeness and their frivolous teaching they teach natural wisdom and the "frivolous error of the plausible words of the wisdom of men," "according to the will of the prince of the dominion of the air, and of the spirit which works in those men who will not obey, according to the training of this world, and not according to the doctrine of Christ. But if thou hast received "the word of knowledge, or the word of instruction, or of prophecy," blessed be God, "who helps every man without grudging-that God who gives to every man and does not upbraid him. With the gift, therefore, which thou hast received from our Lord, serve thy spiritual brethren, the prophets who know that the words which thou speakest are those of our Lord; and declare the gift which thou hast received in the Church for the edification of the brethren in Christ (for good and excellent are those things which help the men of God), if so be that they are truly with thee.

Chapter XII.-Rules for Visits, Exorcisms, and How People are to Assist the Sick, and to Walk in All Things Without Offence.

Moreover, also, this is comely and useful, that a man "visit orphans and widows," and especially those poor persons who have many children. These things are, without controversy, required of the servants of God, and comely and suitable for them. This also, again, is suitable and right and comely for those who are brethren in Christ, that they should visit those who are harassed by evil spirits, and pray and pronounce adjurations over them, intelligently, offering such prayer as is acceptable before God; not with a multitude of fine words, well prepared and arranged, so that they may appear to men eloquent and of a good memory. Such men are "like a sounding pipe, or a tinkling cymbal; " and they bring no help to those over whom they make their adjurations; but they speak with terrible words, and affright people, but do not act with true faith, according to the teaching of our Lord, who hath said: "This kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer," offered unceasingly and with earnest mind. And let them holily ask and beg of God, with cheerfulness and all circumspection and purity, without hatred and without malice. In this way let us approach a brother or a sister who is sick, and visit them in a way that is right, without guile, and without covetousness, and without noise, and without talkativeness, and without such behaviour as is alien from the fear of God, and without haughtiness, but with the meek and lowly spirit of Christ.

Let them, therefore, with fasting and with prayer make their adjurations, and not with the elegant and wall-arranged and fitly-ordered words of learning, but as men who have received the gift of healing from God, confidently, to the glory of God. By your fastings and prayers and perpetual watching, together with your other good works, mortify the works of the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit. He who acts thus "is a temple of the Holy Spirit of God. Let this man cast out demons, and God will help him. For it is good that a man help those that are sick. Our Lord hath said: "Cast out demons," at the same thee commanding many other acts of healing; and, "Freely ye have received, freely give. For such persons as

these a goodly recompense is laid up by God, because they serve their brethren with the gifts which have been given them by the Lord. This is also comely and helpful to the servants of God, because they act according to the injunctions of our Lord, who hath said: "I was sick, and ye visited Me, and so on. And this is comely and right and just, that we visit our neighbours for the sake of God with all seemliness of manner and purity of behaviour; as the Apostle hath said: "Who is sick, and I am not sick? who is offended, and I am not offended? " But all these things are spoken in reference to the love with which a man should love his neighbour.

And in these things let us occupy ourselves, without giving offence, and let us not do anything with partiality or for the shaming of others, but let us love the poor as the servants of God, and especially let us visit them. For this is comely before God and before men, that we should remember the poor, and be lovers of the brethren and of strangers, for the sake of God and for the sake of those who believe in God, as we have learnt from the law and from the prophets, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, concerning the love of the brotherhood and the love of strangers: for ye know the words which have been spoken concerning the love of the brotherhood and the love of strangers; powerfully are the words spoken to all those who do them.

Chapter XIII.-What Priests Should Be and Should Not Be.

Beloved brethren! that a man should build up and establish the brethren on the faith in one God, this also is manifest and well-known. This too, again, is comely, that a man should not be envious of his neighbour. And moreover, again, it is suitable and comely that all those who work the works of the Lord should work the works of the Lord in the fear of God. Thus is it required of them to conduct themselves. That ”the harvest is great, but the workmen are few,” this also is well-known and manifest. Let us, therefore, ”ask of the Lord of the harvest” that He would send forth workmen into the harvest; such workmen as ”shall skilfully dispense the word of truth; ”workmen ”who shall not be ashamed; ” faithful workmen; workmen who shall be ”the light of the world; ” workmen who ”work not for the food that perisheth, but for that food which abideth unto life eternal; ” workmen who shall be such as the apostles; workmen who imitate the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; who are concerned for the salvation of men; not ”hireling” workmen; not workmen to whom the fear of God and righteousness appear to be gain; not workmen who ”serve their belly; ”not workmen who ”with fair speeches and pleasant words mislead the hearts of the innocent; ” not workmen who imitate the children of light, while they are not light but darkness-”men whose end is destruction; ” not workmen who practise iniquity and wickedness and fraud; not ”crafty workmen; ” not workmen ”drunken” and ”faithless; ” nor workmen who traffic in Christ; not misleaders; not ”lovers of money; not malevolent.”

Let us, therefore, contemplate and imitate the faithful who have conducted themselves well in the Lord, as is becoming and suitable to our calling and profession. Thus let us do service before God in justice and righteousness, and without blemish, ”occupying ourselves with things good and comely before God and also before men.” For this is comely, that God be glorified in us in all things.Here endeth the first Epistle of Clement.

Chapter I.-He Describes the Circumspectness of His Intercourse with the Other Sex, and Tells How in His Journeys He Acts at Places Where There are Brethren Only.

I Would, moreover, have you know, my brethren, of what sort is our conduct in Christ, as well as that of all our brethren, in the various places in which we are. And if so be that you approve it, do ye also conduct yourselves in like manner in the Lord. Now we, if God help us, conduct ourselves thus: with maidens we do not dwell, nor have we anything in common with them; with maidens we do not eat, nor drink; and, where a maiden sleeps, we do not sleep; neither do women wash our feet, nor anoint us; and on no account do we sleep where a maiden sleeps who is unmarried or has taken the vow: even though she be in some other place if she be alone, we do not pass the night there. Moreover, if it chance that the time for rest overtake us in a place, whether in the country, or in a village, or in a town, or in a hamlet, or wheresoever we happen to be, and there are found brethren in that place, we turn in to one who is a brother, and call together there all the brethren, and speak to them words of encouragement and exhortation. And those among us who are gifted in speaking will speak such words as are earnest, and serious, and chaste, in the fear of God, and exhort them to please God in everything, and abound and go forward in good works, and "be free from anxious care in everything," as is fit and right for the people of God.

Chapter II.-His Behaviour in Places Where There Were Christians of Both Sexes.

And if, moreover, it chance that we are distant from our homes and from our neighbours, and the day decline and the eventide overtake us, and the brethren press us, through love of the brotherhood and by reason of their affection for strangers, to stay with them, so that we may watch with them, and they may hear the holy word of God and do it, and be fed with the words of the Lord, so that they may be mindful of them, and they set before us bread and water and that which God provides, and we be willing and consent to stay through the night with them; if there be there a holy man, with him we turn in and lodge, and that same brother will provide and prepare whatever is necessary for us; and he himself waits upon us, and he himself washes our feet for us and anoints us with ointment, and he himself gets ready a bed for us, that we may sleep in reliance on God. All these things will that consecrated brother, who is in the place in which we tarry, do in his own person. He will himself serve the brethren, and each one of the brethren who are in the same place will join with him in rendering all those services which are requisite for the brethren. But with us may no female, whether young maiden or married woman, be there at that thee; nor she that is aged. nor she that has taken the vow;

not even a maid-servant, whether Christian or heathen; but there shall only be men with men. And, if we see it to be requisite to stand and pray for the sake of the women, and to speak words of exhortation and edification, we call together the brethren and all the holy sisters and maidens, and likewise all the other women who are there, inviting them with all modesty and becoming behaviour to come and feast on the truth. And those among us who are skilled in speaking speak to them, and exhort them in those words which God has given us. And then we pray, and salute one another, the men the men. But the women and the maidens will wrap their hands in their garments; and we also, with circumspection and with all purity, our eyes looking upwards, shall wrap our right hand in our garments; and then they will come and give us the salutation on our right hand wrapped in our garments. Then we go where God permits us.

Chapter III.-Rules for the Conduct of Celibate Brethren in Places Where There are Only Married Christians.

And if again we chance to come into a place where there is no consecrated brother, but all are married, all those who are there will receive the brother who comes to them, and minister to him, and care for his wants in everything, assiduously, with good-will. And the brother shall be ministered to by them in the way that is suitable . And the brother will say to the married persons who are in that place: We holy men do not eat or drink with women, nor are we waited on by women or by maidens, nor do women wash our feet for us, nor do women anoint us, nor do women prepare our bed for us, nor do we sleep where women sleep, so that we may be without reproach in everything, lest any one should be offended or stumble at us. And, whilst we observe all these things, "we are without offence to every man." As persons, therefore, "who know the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, and to God we are made manifest."

Chapter IV.-Conduct of the Holy Man Where There are Women Only.

But if we chance to come into a place where there are no Christian men, but all the believers are women and maidens, and they press us to pass the night there in that place, we call them all together to some suitable place, and ask them how they do; and according to that which we learn from them, and what we see to be their state of mind, we address them in a suitable man-Her, as men fearing God. And when they have all assembled and come together, and we see that they are in peace, we address to them words of exhortation in the fear of God, and read the Scripture to them, with purity and in the concise and weighty words of the fear of God. We do everything as for their edification. And as to those who are married, we speak to them in the Lord in a manner suited to them. And if, moreover, the day decline and the eventide draw on, we select, in order to pass the night there, a woman who is aged and the most exemplary of them all; and we speak to her to give us a place all to ourselves, where no woman enters, nor maiden. And this old woman herself will bring us a lamp, and whatever is requisite for us she will herself bring us. From love to the brethren, she will bring whatever is requisite for the service of stranger brethren. And she herself, when the time for sleep is come, will depart and go to her house in peace.

Chapter V.-Where There is Only One Woman, the Father Does Not Make a Stay; How Carefully Stumbling-Blocks Must Be Avoided.

But if, moreover, we chance upon a place, and find there one believing woman only, and no other person be there but she only, we do not stop there, nor pray there, nor read the Scriptures there, but we flee as from before the face of a serpent, and as from before the face of sin. Not that we disdain the believing woman-far be it from us to be so minded towards our brethren in Christ!-but, because she is alone, we are afraid lest any one should make insinuations against us in words of falsehood. For the hearts of men are firmly set on evil. And, that we may not give a pretext to those who desire to get a pretext against us and to speak evil of us, and that we may not be a stumbling-block to any one, on this account we cut off the pretext of those who desire to get a pretext against us; on this account we must be "on our guard that we be to no one a stumbling-block, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor yet to the Church of God; and we must not seek that which is profitable to ourselves only, but that which is for the profit of many, so that they may be saved. For this does not profit us, that another stumble because of us.

Let us, therefore, be studiously on our guard at all times, that we do not smite our brethren and give them to drink of a disquieting conscience through our being to them a stumbling-block. For "if for the sake of meat our brother be made sad, or shocked, or made weak, or caused to stumble, we are not walking in the love of God. For the sake of meat thou causest him to perish for whose sake Christ died. For, in "thus sinning against your brethren and wounding their sickly consciences, ye sin against Christ Himself. For, if for the sake of meat my brother is made to stumble," let us who are believers say, "Never will we eat flesh, that we may not make our brother to stumble. These things, moreover, does ever one who truly loves God, who truly takes up his cross, and puts on Christ, and loves his neighbour; the

man who watches over himself that he be not a stumbling-block to any one, that no one be caused to stumble because of him and die because he is constantly with maidens and lives in the same house with them-a thing which is not right-to the overthrow of those who see and hear. Evil conduct like this is fraught with stumbling and peril, and is akin to death. But blessed is that man who is circumspect and fearful in everything for the sake of purity!

Chapter VI.-How Christians Should Behave Themselves Among Heathens.

If, moreover, it chance that we go to a place in which there are no Christians, and it be important for us to stay there a few days, let us be ”wise as serpents, and harmless as doves; ” and let us ”not be as the foolish, but as the wise,” in all the self-restraint of the fear of God, that God may be glorified in everything through our Lord Jesus Christ, through our chaste and holy behaviour. For, ”whether we eat, or drink, or do anything else, let us do it as for the glory of God. Let ”all those who see us acknowledge that we are a blessed seed,” ”sons of the living God,” in everything-in all our words in shamefastness, in purity, in humility, forasmuch as we do not copy the heathen in anything, nor are as believers like other men, but in everything are estranged from the wicked. And we ”do not cast that which is holy before dogs, nor pearls before swine; ” but with all possible self-restraint, and with all discretion, and with all fear of God, and with earnestness of mind we praise God. For we do not minister where heathens are drinking and blaspheming in their feasts with words of impurity, because of their wickedness.

Therefore do we not sing psalms to the heathens, nor do we read to them the Scriptures, that we may not be like common singers, either those who play on the lyre, or those who sing with the voice, or like soothsayers, as many are, who follow these practices and do these things, that they may sate themselves with a paltry mouthful of bread, and who, for the sake of a sorry cup of wine, go about ”singing the songs of the Lord in the strange land” of the heathen, and doing what is not right. Do not so, my brethren; we beseech you, my brethren, let not these deeds be done among you; but put away those who choose thus to behave themselves with infamy and disgrace. It is not proper, my brethren, that these things should be so. But we beseech you, brethren in righteousness, that these things be so done with you as with us, as for a pattern of believers, and of those who shall believe. Let us be of the flock of Christ, in all righteousness, and in all holy and unblemished conduct, behaving ourselves with uprightness and sanctity, as is right for believers, and observing those things which are praiseworthy, and pure, and holy, and honourable, and noble; and

do ye promote all those things which are profitable. For ye are ”our joy, and our crown,” and our hope, and our life, ”if so be that ye stand in the Lord. So be it!

Chapter VII.-Uses of Considering Admonitory Examples, as Well as Instructive Patterns.

Let us consider, therefore, my brethren, and see how all the righteous fathers conducted themselves during the whole time of their sojourn in this life, and let us search and examine from the law down to the New Testament. For this is both becoming and profitable, that we should know how many men there have been, and who they were, that have perished through women; and who and how many have been the women that have perished through men, by reason of the constancy with which they have associated with one another. And further, also, for the same reason, I will show how many have been the men, and who they were, that lived all their lifetime, and continued even to the close, with one another in the performance of chaste works without blemish. And it is manifest and well-known that this is so.

Chapter VIII.-Joseph and Potiphar's Wife; Of What Kind Love to Females Ought to Be.

There is Joseph, faithful, and intelligent, and wise, and who feared God in everything. Did not a woman conceive an excessive passion for the beauty of this chaste and upright man? And, when he would not yield and consent to gratify her passionate desire, she cast the righteous man into every kind of distress and torment, to within a little of death, by bearing false witness. But God delivered him from all the evils that came upon him through this wretched woman. Ye see, my brethren, what distresses the constant sight of the person of the Egyptian woman brought upon the righteous man. Therefore, let us not be constantly with women, nor with maidens. For this is not profitable for those who truly wish to "gird up their loins." For it is required that we love the sisters in all purity and chasteness, and with all curbing of thought, in the fear of God, not associating constantly with them, nor finding access to them at every hour.

Chapter IX.-Samson's Admonitory Fall.

Hast thou not heard concerning Samson the Nazarite, "with whom was the Spirit of God," the man of great strength? This man, who was a Nazarite, and consecrated to God, and who was gifted with strength and might, a woman brought to ruin with her wretched body, and with her vile passion. Art thou, perchance, such a man as he? Know thyself, and know the measure of thy strength. "The married woman catcheth precious souls." Therefore, we do not allow any man whatsoever to sit with a married woman; much less to live in the same house with a maiden who has taken the vow, or to sleep where she sleeps, or to be constantly with her. For this is to be hated and abominated by those who fear God.

Chapter X.-David's Sin, So Admonitory to Us Weak Men.

Does not the case of David instruct thee, whom God "found a man after His heart," one faithful, faultless, pious, true? This same man saw the beauty of a woman-I mean of Bathsheba-when he saw her as she was cleansing herself and washing unclothed. This woman the holy man saw, and was thoroughly captivated with desire by the sight of her. See, then, what evils he committed because of a woman, and how this righteous man sinned, and gave command that the husband of this woman should be killed in battle. Ye have seen what wicked schemes he laid and executed, and how, because of his passion for a woman, he perpetrated a murder-he, David, who was called "the anointed of the Lord." Be admonished, O man: for, if such men as these have been brought to ruin through women, what is thy righteousness, or what art thou among the holy, that thou consortest with women and with maidens day and night, with much silliness, without fear of God? Not thus, my brethren, not thus let us conduct ourselves; but let us be mindful of that word which is spoken concerning a woman: "Her hands lay snares, and her heart spreadeth nets; but the just shall escape from her, whilst the wicked falleth into her hands." Therefore let us, who are consecrated, be careful not to live in the same house with females who have taken the vow. For such conduct as this is not becoming nor right for the servants of God.

Chapter XI.-Admonitory History of the Incestuous Children of David.

Hast thou not read concerning Amnon and Tamar, the children of David? This Amnon conceived a passion for his sister, and humbled her, and did not spare her, because he longed for her with a shameful passion; and he proved wicked and profligate because of his constant intercourse with her, without the fear of God, and he ”wrought uncleanness in Israel.” Therefore, it is not proper for us, nor right for us, to associate with sisters, indulging in laughter and looseness; but we ought to behave towards them with all chasteness and purity, and in the fear of the Lord.

Chapter XII.-Solomon's Infatuation Through Women.

Hast thou not read the history of Solomon, the son of David, the man to whom God gave wisdom, and knowledge, and largeness of mind, and riches, and much glory, beyond all men? Yet this same man, through women, came to ruin, and departed from the Lord.

Chapter XIII.-The History of Susanna Teaches Circumspection with the Eyes and in Society.

Hast thou not read, and dost thou not know, concerning those elders who were in the days of Susanna, who, because they were constantly with women, and looking upon the beauty which was another's, fell into the depths of wantonness, and were not able to keep themselves in a chaste mind, but were overcome by a depraved disposition, and came suddenly upon the blessed Susanna to corrupt her. But she did not consent to their foul passion, but cried unto God, and God saved her out of the hands of the bad old men. Does it not, therefore, behove us to tremble and be afraid, forasmuch as these old men, judges and elders of the people of God, fell from their dignity because of a woman? For they did not keep in mind that which is said: "Look thou not on the beauty which is another's; "and, "The beauty of woman has destroyed many; " and "With a married woman do not sit; " and that, again, in which it says: "Is there any one that puts fire in his bosom, and does not burn his clothes; " or, "Does a man walk on fire, and his feet are not scorched? So whosoever goeth in to another man's wife is not pure from evil, and whosoever comes near to her shall not escape." And again it says: "Thou shall not long after the beauty a woman, lest she take thee captive with her eyelids; " and, "Thou shalt not look upon a maiden, lest thou perish through desire of her; " and, "With a woman that sings beautifully thou shall not constantly be; " and, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Chapter XIV.-Examples of Circumspect Behaviour from the Old Testament.

But see what it says also concerning those holy men, the prophets, and concerning the apostles of our Lord. Let us see whether any one of these holy men was constantly with maidens, or with young married women, or with such widows as the divine apostle declines to receive. Let us consider, in the fear of God, the manner of life of these holy men. Lo! we find it written concerning Moses and Aaron, that they acted and lived in the company of men, who themselves also followed a course of conduct like theirs. And thus did Joshua also, the son of Nun. Woman was there none with them; but they by themselves used holily to minister before God, men with men. And not only so; but they taught the people, that, whensoever the host moved, every tribe should move on apart, and the women with the women apart, and that they should go into the rear behind the host, and the men also apart by their tribes. And, according to the command of the Lord, so did they set out, like a wise people, that there might be no disorder on account of the women when the host moved. With beautiful and well-ordered arrangements did they march without stumbling. For lo! the Scriptures bear testimony to my words: "When the children of Israel had crossed over the Sea of Suth, Moses and the children of Israel sang the praises of the Lord, and said: We will praise the Lord, because He is exceedingly to be praised.

And, after that Moses had finished singing praises, then Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, took a timbrel in her hands, and all the women went out after her, and sang praises with her, women with women apart, and men with men apart. Then again, we find that Elisha and Gehazi and the sons of the prophets lived together in the fear of God, and that they had no females living with them. Micah too, and all the prophets likewise, we find to have lived in this manner in the fear of the Lord.

Chapter XV.-The Example of Jesus; How We May Allow Ourselves to Be Served by Women.

And, not to extend our discourse to too great length, what shall we say concerning our Lord Jesus Christ? Our Lord Himself was constantly with His twelve disciples when He had come forth to the world. And not only so; but also, when He was sending them out, He sent them out two and two together, men with men; but women were not sent with them, and neither in the highway nor in the house did they associate with women or with maidens: and thus they pleased God in everything. Also, when our Lord Jesus Christ Himself was talking with the woman of Samaria by the well alone, ”His disciples came” and found Him talking with her, ”and wondered that Jesus was standing and talking with a woman. Is He not a rule, such as may not be set aside, an example, and a pattern to all the tribes of men? And not only so; but also, when our Lord was risen from the place of the dead, and Mary came to the place of sepulture, she ran and fell at the feet of our Lord and worshipped Him, and would have taken hold of Him. But He said to her: ”Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father.

Is it not, then, matter for astonishment, that, while our Lord did not allow Mary, the blessed woman, to touch His feet, yet thou livest with them, and art waited on by women and maidens, and sleepest where they sleep, and women wash thy feet for thee, and anoint thee! Alas for this culpable state of mind! Alas for this state of mind which is destitute of fear! Alas for this affrontery and folly, which is without fear of God! Dost thou not judge thine own self? Dost thou not examine thine own self? Dost thou not know thine own self and the measure of thy strength? These things, moreover, are trustworthy, and these things are true and right; and these are rules immutable for those who behave themselves uprightly in our Lord. Many holy women, again, ministered to holy men of their substance, as the Shunammite woman ministered to Elisha; but she did not live with him, but the prophet lived in a house apart. And, when her son died, she wanted to throw herself at the feet of the prophet; but his attendant would not allow her, but restrained her. But Elisha said to his servant: ”Let her alone, because her soul is distressed. From these things, then, we ought to understand

their manner of life. To Jesus Christ our Lord women ministered of their substance: but they did not live with him; but chastely, and holily, and unblameably they behaved before the Lord, and finished their course, and received the crown in our Lord God Almighty.

Chapter XVI.-Exhortation to Union and to Obedience; Conclusion.

Therefore, we beseech you, our brethren in our Lord, that these things be observed with you, as with us, and that we may be of the same mind, that we may be one in you and ye may be one in us, and that in everything we may be of one soul and one heart in our Lord. Whosoever knoweth the Lord heareth us; and every one who is not of God heareth not us. He who desires truly to keep sanctity heareth us; and the virgin who truly desires to keep virginity heareth us; but she who does not truly desire to keep virginity doth not hear us. Finally, farewell in our Lord, and rejoice in the Lord, all ye saints Peace and joy be with you from God the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord. So be it. Here endeth the Second Epistle of Clement, the disciple of Peter. His prayer be with us! So be it.

Authorship. These writings are not by Clement of Rome. The Clementine Homilies and Recognitions are a Christian romance with sermons and debates, put together in the fourth century from an older lost source; the two letters to virgins come from the third century. Their teaching is not the teaching of the first-century Clement, and the story is fiction.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.