Clement of Alexandria: Stromateis – Book 3

Views of Valentinus and Basilides on Marriage

1(1) The sect of Valentinus justify physical union from heaven from divine emanations, and approve of marriage. The followers of Basilides say that when the apostles enquired whether it was not better to refrain from marriage, the Lord answered, "It is not everyone who can accept this saying: some are eunuchs from birth, others from necessity." 1 (2) They explain the saying something as follows. Some men have from birth a physical aversion in relation to women. They follow their physical make-up and do well not to marry. (3) These, they say, are the eunuchs from birth. Those who are eunuchs from necessity are those ascetics who like the limelight and exercise control over themselves in hope of being newsworthy. Those who have suffered castration accidentally have become eunuchs from necessity. 2 It follows that those who are eunuchs from necessity are not eunuchs for any rational cause. (4) But those who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the eternal kingdom are making a choice of reasoned principle in their view because of the incidentals of married life; they are afraid of the amount of time spent on the provision of necessities.

2(1) Their view is that the Apostle’s words "It is better to marry than to burn" 3 mean "Do not hurl your soul into the fire, clinging on night and day in fear of falling away from abstinence. A soul directed towards clinging on is being cut off from hope." (2) "So, if you have a quarrelsome wife" (I am quoting Isidore’s Ethics), "be patient with her, to avoid being wrenched violently out of God’s grace; get rid of the fire with your semen; then go to prayer with a good conscience." 4 (3) "When your prayer of gratitude," he goes on, "sinks to a petition, and your petition is that in future you may not act wrongly, rather than that you may act rightly – get married. (4) A man may be young or poor or highly sexed and unwilling to follow the Apostle’s advice and get married. He must not be cut off from his Christian brother. He should say, 'I have entered the temple; there is nothing I can suffer.' (5) If he has an inkling of what is happening to him, he should say, 'Brother, lend me a hand to save me from going wrong.' Then he will receive help, spiritually and physically. He has only to desire to achieve 5 the good, and he will attain it.

3(1) "But sometimes we say with our lips, 'We do not want to sin,' but our intention is disposed towards sin. Such a person refrains from doing what he wants to do out of fear of punishment being set to his account. (2) The human condition involves some things which are natural and necessary, others which are merely natural. 6 To wear clothes is natural and necessary; all this business of sexual intercourse is natural but not necessary." 7 (3) I have passed on these statements to expose those followers of Basilides who do not lead upright lives, claiming that they have the authority actually to commit sin because of their perfection, or that they will in any event be saved by nature, even if they do sin, because of their ingrained election; their predecessors in the sect do not allow anyone to do the same 8 as they are doing. (4) So they should not wear the name of Christ as a cloak, live more licentiously than the most intemperate of the pagans, and bring ill-repute upon the name. [The Scripture text is] "Such men are false apostles, crooked workers" down to "whose doom shall match their acts." 9

4(1) Self-discipline means disdain of the body, following obedience 10 to God. Self-discipline applies, not just to sexual matters, but to everything else for which the soul lusts improperly, because it is not satisfied with the bare necessities. (2) Self-discipline applies to speech, possessions and their use, desire generally. 11 It is not just that it teaches us self-control. It offers us the gift of self-control, a divine power and grace of God. 12 (3) I must tell you our people’s view of the matter. We bless abstention from sexual intercourse and those to whom it comes as a gift of God. We admire monogamy and respect for one marriage and one only. We say that we ought to share in suffering and "bear one another’s burdens," 13 for fear that anyone who thinks he is standing firmly should in fact fall. 14 It is about second marriages that the Apostle says, "If you are on fire, get married." 15

Views of Carpocrates and Epiphanes on Marriage

5(1) The followers of Carpocrates and Epiphanes think that wives should be held in common. 16 It is through them that the greatest ill-repute has accrued to the name of Christ. (2) This Epiphanes, whose writings I actually possess, was Carpocrates’ son. His mother’s name was Alexandria. On his father’s side he was an Alexandrian, on his mother’s he was from Cephallenia. His life lasted only seventeen years. At Same in Cephallenia he has been honored as a god. A shrine of quarried blocks of stone was built and dedicated to him there, together with altars, sacred precincts, and a university. The inhabitants of Cephallenia gather at the shrine at the time of the new moon, and offer sacrifice to Epiphanes to celebrate his apotheosis as if it were his birthday. There are libations, feasts and the singing 17 of hymns. (3) He was educated by his father in the general curriculum and in Platonic philosophy, and taught the knowledge of the Monad, 18 the source of the heresy of the Carpocratians.
6(1) In his work *On Righteousness* he says, “God’s righteousness is a kind of social equity. There is equity in the way the sky is stretched out in all directions and embraces the whole earth in a circle. The night is equitable in displaying all the stars. From above, God pours out the light of the sun, which is responsible for the day and father of the light, over the earth equally for all those with the power of sight. The gift of sight is common to all. (2) There is no distinction between rich and poor, ruler and ruled, fools and wise, female and male, slave and free. He treats even the irrational animals no differently; on all the beasts he pours out his sunlight equally from above; he ratifies his righteousness to good and bad, so that none can have more than their share or deprive their neighbors so as to have twice as much light as they. (3) The sun draws up from the ground food for all animals alike; his righteousness is shared by all and given to all equally. In this respect it is exactly the same for individual cows and cattle as a whole, individual pigs and pigs as a whole, individual sheep and sheep as a whole, and so on. (4) It is this common shared quality which is revealed as righteousness among them. The same principle of commonality applies to all the species of plants alike in their seeding. Food is available in common to all animals that pasture on the land, and to all equally. It is not regulated by any law, but is there for all, as it were, in unison, by the generous provision of the giver, the one who has authorized it so. This, is his righteousness.

7(1) "Matters concerning the production of offspring do not involve any written law either (or it would have been handed down in writing). All beings sow their seeds and produce their offspring on equal terms, possessing an innate common disposition from the hands of righteousness. The author and Father of all gave to all alike on equal terms an eye to enable them to see. He made this dispensation out of his righteousness. He made no distinction between male and female, rational and irrational, no distinction of any kind. He dispensed sight by his grace to all alike by a single ordinance in accordance with the principle of equal sharing. (2) The laws," he goes on, "by their incapacity to punish human ignorance, actually taught illegal behavior. The individualism allowed by the laws cut damagingly at the roots of the universalism of God’s Law." He does not understand the Apostle’s dictum in the words: "It was through the Law that I knew sin." (3) He suggests that "mine" and "yours" came into existence through the laws, so that the earth and possessions were no longer put to common use. The same applies to marriage. (4) "For God has made vines for all in common; they do not deny the sparrow or the thief. So too with corn and the other fruits of the earth. It is transgression of the principle of common sharing and equality which has produced the thief of fruits and domestic animals.

8(1) "So God created everything for humanity in common. He brings the female to the male in common, and joined all animals together in a similar way. In this he showed that righteousness is a combination of community and equity. (2) But those who have been born in this way have denied the commonality that unites births, and say, ‘A man should marry a single wife and stick to her.’ Everyone can share her as the rest of the animals show." (3) After these words, which I quote precisely, he goes on in the same vein to add, in these very words: "With a view to the maintenance of the race he has implanted in the male strong and energetic sexual desire. Law cannot make this disappear, nor can social mores or anything else. It is God’s decree." (4) How can this fellow still be listed in our church members’ register when he openly does away with the Law and the Gospels alike by these words? The former says, "You shall not commit adultery," the latter, "Everyone who looks with lust has already committed adultery." (5) The words found in the Law, "You shall not lust," show that it is one single God who makes his proclamations through the Law, prophets and Gospels. He says, "You shall not lust for your neighbor’s wife." (6) The Jew’s neighbor is not the Jew, who is a brother of the same spirit. The alternative is that the neighbor is one of another race. How can a person who shares in the same spirit fail to be a neighbor? Abraham is father of Hebrews and gentiles alike.

9(1) If the adulteress and her paramour are both punished with death, it is surely clear that the commandment "You shall not lust for your neighbor’s wife" applies to the gentiles, so that anyone who follows the Law in keeping his hands off his neighbor’s wife and his sister may hear directly from the Lord: "But I say to you, you shall not lust." The addition of the pronoun "I" shows that the application of the commandment is more rigidly binding. (2) and that Carpocrates and Epiphanes are battling against God. Epiphanes in that notorious book, I mean *On Righteousness*, goes on like this, and I quote: (3) "So you must hear the words ‘You shall not lust’ as a joke of the Lawgiver, to which he added the even more ludicrous words ‘for your neighbor’s property.’ The very one who endows human beings with desire to sustain the processes of birth gives orders that it is to be suppressed, though he suppresses it in no other living creature! The words ‘for your neighbor’s wife’ are even more ridiculous since he is forcing public property to become private property."

10(1) These are the doctrines of our noble Carpocratians. They say that these people and some other zealots for the same vicious practices gather for dinner (I could never call their congregation a Christian love-feast), men and women together, and after they have stuffed themselves ("The Cyprian goddess is there when you are full," they say, they knock over the lamps, put out the light that would expose their fornicating righteousness," and couple as
they will with any woman they fancy.  

So in this love-feast they practice commonality. Then by daylight they demand any woman they want in obedience – it would be wrong to say to the Law of God – to the law of Carpocrates. I guess that is the sort of legislation Carpocrates must have established for the copulation of dogs, pigs, and goats. (2) I fancy he has, in fact, misunderstood Plato’s dictum in the Republic that wives are to be held in common by everyone. Plato really meant that before marriage they are to be available to any who intend to ask them to marry, just as the theatre is open to all spectators; but that once a woman has married she belongs to the particular man who secured her first and is no longer held in common by everyone.

11(1) Xanthus in his book entitled the Works of the Magi says, “The Magi think it right to have sexual union with their mothers, daughters and sisters. The women are held in common by mutual agreement, not forcibly or secretly, when one man wants to marry another’s wife.” (2) I fancy Jude was speaking prophetically of these and similar sects in his letter when he wrote: “So too with these people caught up in their dreams” who do not set upon the truth with their eyes fully open, down to “pompous phrases pour from their mouth.”

4

Heretics Use Several Pretexts in Order to Exercise Licentiousness

25(1) From the heretics we have spoken of Marcion from Pontus who deprecates the use of worldly things because of his antipathy to their creator. (2) The creator is thus actually responsible for his self-control. This giant who battles with God and thinks he can withstand him is an unwilling ascetic who runs down the creation and the formation of human beings. (3) If they quote the Lord’s words addressed to Philip, “Let the dead bury their dead; for your part follow me,” they should also reflect that Philip’s flesh was of the same formation, and he was not endowed with a polluted corpse. (4) Then how could he have a body of flesh without having a corpse? Because when the Lord put his passions to death he rose from the grave and lived to Christ. (5) We have spoken of the lawless communism in women held by Carpocrates. But when we mentioned Nicolaus’ remark we omitted one point. (6) They say that he had a pretty wife. After the Savior’s resurrection he was accused of jealousy by the apostles. He brought his wife out into their midst and offered her to anyone who wanted her in marriage. (7) They say that his action was consistent with the saying “The flesh is to be treated with contempt.” Those who are members of his sect follow his word and act simply and uncritically, and indulge in unrestrained licence.

26(1) However, I learn that Nicolaus had relations with no woman other than his wedded wife, and of his children the girls grew to old age as virgins, and the son remained innocent. (2) In these circumstances it was a rejection of the passions to wheel out the wife, over whom he was charged with jealousy, into the middle of the apostles; and his control of the generally acknowledged pleasures was a lesson in “treating the flesh with contempt.” I suppose that, following the Savior’s command, he did not want “to serve two masters,” pleasure and God. (3) Anyway, they say that Matthias taught the lesson of fighting against the flesh, holding it in contempt, never giving in to its desire for unrestrained pleasure, and enabling the soul to grow through faith and revealed knowledge.

27(1) Those who call Licentious Aphrodite a mystical communion insult the latter name. (2) It is called an action alike whether you do something wrong or right. In the same way communion is a good thing when it involves a sharing of money, food, or clothing. But they use the word irreligiously in applying it to any kind of sexual intercourse. (3) Anyway, there is a story that one of them encountered one of our beautiful virgins and said, “It is written, ‘Give yourself to anyone who asks.’” She did not understand the fellow’s impudence and replied with the height of propriety, “If the subject is marriage, speak to my mother.” (4) What godlessness! These communists in sexual freedom, these brothers in lustfulness, actually pervert the Savior’s words. They are a disgrace not just to philosophy but to the whole of human life. They deface the truth, or rather raze it to the ground insofar as they can. (5) The wretches make a religion out of physical union and sexual intercourse, and think that this will lead them into the kingdom of God.

28(1) It is to the brothels that that sort of communism leads. Pigs and goats should be their companions. It is the whores who preside over the bordello and indiscriminately receive all comers who have most to hope from them. (2) “That is not how you have learned Christ, if you have been told of him, if you have learned your lessons in him, as the truth is in Jesus Christ – to leave on one side your former way of life, to put off the old human nature, which is deluded by its lusts and on the road to destruction. (3) Be made new in mind and spirit. Put on the new human nature, created in God’s way, in the righteousness and holiness which truth demands, following the likeness of the divine.” (4) “Become imitators of God, like dear children, and set your course in love, as Christ loved you and gave himself up for us as an offering and sacrifice to God producing a pleasing fragrance. (5) Fornication, indecency of any kind, the profit motive, coarseness, trivial talk should never even be mentioned among you as is right for God’s people.” (6) Yes, and the Apostle teaches the practice of chastity in speech when he writes, "Know well that everyone who practices fornication" and so on down to "but rather show them up."
29(1) Their doctrine was derived from an apocryphal work. 98 In fact I will quote the passage which is the mother of their impropriety. Whether the actual authors of the book are responsible (see their senselessness if in their licentiousness they falsely impugn God), or whether they encountered some others, they heard sound doctrine and held distorted ideas about it. (2) This is how the passage runs: "All things were one. Since this Unity thought it right not to be left alone, a Spirit of Inspiration emerged from it. It had intercourse with this and produced the Beloved. From the Beloved emerged its own Spirit of Inspiration, with which it had intercourse, producing Powers, invisible and inaudible" down to "each by her own name." (3) If these people were speaking of spiritual unions, like Valentinus’ followers, then one might perhaps accept 99 their assumption. But only a person who has renounced salvation could attribute to the holy spirit of prophecy a union consisting in sexual violence.

30(1) Similar doctrines are expressed by Prodicus’ school, 100 who falsely claim the name of Gnostics for themselves, calling themselves natural sons of the primal god. They make wrong use of their high birth and freedom to live as they will. What they will is a life of pleasure-loving, having come to the conclusion that they are inferior to none, being lords of the sabbath, and born princes superior to all humankind. For a king, they say, there is no written law. (2) In the first place, 101 they do not do all they want; many things will stand in the way of their desires and efforts. Further, what they do do, they do not as kings but as slaves liable to flogging; they are in fear of discovery in their secret adulteries; they are evading condemnation; they are afraid of punishment. (3) How can a combination of immoderation and dirty language be freedom? "Everyone who sins is a slave," says the Apostle. 102

31(1) How can the man who has given himself over to every lust be a citizen according to the Law of God when the Lord has declared, "I say, you shall not lust"? 103 (2) Is a person to take a decision to sin deliberately, and to lay it down as a principle to commit adultery, to waste his substance in high living, and to break up other people’s marriages, when we actually pity the rest who fall involuntarily into sin? (3) Even if they have arrived in an alien world, if they prove unfaithful in what belongs to another, 104 they will have no hold on the truth. (4) Does a foreigner insult the citizens? Do them wrong? Does he not rather behave as a visitor 105 and live out his life in conformity with the regulations without offending the citizens? (5) How can they say that they are the only people with a knowledge of God when they behave in the same way as those the gentiles hate for their failure to obey the laws’ injunctions – criminals, immoralists, the avaricious, and adulterers? (6) They ought to be living virtuous lives in a foreign land too, so as to show that they really are of royal blood.

32(1) As it is, they have taken the decision to live lawlessly, and won the hatred alike of human legislators and of the Law of God. At any rate, the man who speared through the fornicator in Numbers is shown to be blessed by God. 106 (2) "If we say," says John in his letter, "that we have communion with him" – that is, God – "and walk in darkness, we are lying and not acting out the truth. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we enjoy communion with him, and the blood of his son Jesus cleanses us from sin." 107

33(1) How then are those who behave in this manner superior to the worldly? They are like the dregs of the worldly. Like acts reveal like natures, I suppose. (2) Those who claim superiority of birth ought to show superiority of character, if they want to escape incarceration in prison. 108 (3) It really is as the Lord said: "If your righteousness does not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of God." 109 (4) Scripture shows in Daniel the principle of abstinence in food. 110 To sum up, David in the Psalms speaks about obedience: "How shall a young man keep his path straight?" The answer comes immediately: "By keeping your Word with his whole heart." 111 (5) Jeremiah says, "These are the Lord’s words: do not follow the paths of the gentiles." 112

34(1) In consequence, some other worthless scoundrels 113 say that humanity was fashioned by different powers, the body down to the navel being the product of divine craftsmanship, and below that of inferior work; which is why human beings yearn for intercourse. 114 (2) They forget that the upper parts of the body call out for food, and in some people show lust. They contradict Christ’s statement to the Pharisees that the same God made our outer and our inner man. 115 In addition, desire does not come from the body, even though it expresses itself through the body. 116 (3) There is another group whom we call the Opponents. They affirm that the God of the universe is our father by nature, and everything that he has made is good. But one of those who came into being from him sowed weeds, and brought into being the growth of evil things. He has surrounded us all with these evils and so set us in opposition to the Father. (4) For this reason we set ourselves to vindicate the Father in opposition to him, counteracting the will of this second being. So, since it is the latter who said, "You shall not commit adultery," 118 we should, they say, commit adultery 119 so as to annul his order.

35(1) To these people we would say that we have been taught to recognize false prophets and those who merely make a pretense of the truth by their actions. 120 Your actions are evidence against you. How can you say that you still adhere to the truth? (2) Either there is no such thing as evil, in which case the one you charge with opposition to God does not merit reproof, and has never created anything evil (the tree and the fruit are eliminated together), or else, if evil really does exist, they must tell us what is their view of the commandments ordained about
righteousness, self-control, patience, forbearance and so on: are they bad or good? (3) If the commandment which bans the performance of the vast majority of disgraceful actions is not good, then vice will be legislating against itself to its own undoing – which is impossible. If it is good, then in opposing good directions they admit that they are opposing the good and acting wickedly.

36(1) The Savior himself, the only person they think warrants obedience, has set himself in the way of hatred and abusiveness, 121 and says, "When you go to court with an opponent, try and achieve an amicable reconciliation." 122 (2) So they will either reject Christ’s recommendation and remain in opposition to their opponent, or they will become friends and drop their suit against him. (3) Well? Can’t you see, good people (I want to speak as if you were here with me), that in fighting against these excellent commandments, you are in conflict 123 with your own salvation? It is not these admirable directions you are undermining. It is yourselves. (4) "Your good actions should shine out," the Lord said. 124 It is your immorality that you display. (5) Besides, if your aim is to undo the lawgiver’s commandments, why on earth do you aim to undo by your immorality "You shall not commit adultery" and "You shall not corrupt boys" 125 and all that bears on self-control? Why do you do away with winter – he made it! – to produce summer when it is still the middle of winter? Why do you not make the land navigable and enable people to walk on the sea as the compilers of history say that Xerxes, a non Greek, wanted to do? 126

37(1) Why do you not oppose all the commandments? He said, "Increase and multiply." 127 In your opposition to him you should have totally refrained from sexual intercourse. He said, "I gave you everything for food and delight." 128 You ought not to have had any delights. (2) Besides, he says, "An eye for an eye." 129 You ought never to have met opposition with opposition. He told the thief to make fourfold restitution. 130 You ought to have paid the thief something in addition. (3) Similarly with the command "You shall love the Lord": 131 You ought to have opposed it and to have shown no love towards the God of the universe. Again he said, "You shall not make an image by carving or by melting metal." 132 The logical conclusion was for you to offer worship to statues.(4) It is irreligious of you to oppose, on your own admission, the creator, and to try and rival prostitutes and adulterers in your behavior. (5) Can’t you see that you are in fact exalting the very one you regard as weak, if it is his will that finds fulfillment rather than the will of the good God? The other side of this is that you yourselves 133 are demonstrating the weakness of the one you call your father.

38(1) These people also collect passages from extracts of the prophets, making an anthology and cobbling them together quite wrongly, taking literally 134 what was meant allegorically.

(2) They say that Scripture has this: "They opposed God and found salvation." 135 But they add, "the shameless God." They accept this saying as advice extended to them. They think that it is salvation to oppose the creator. (3) Scripture does not say, "the shameless god." And even if it did, you idiots, it would be talking of the one we call the devil as shameless, whether as the maligner of humanity, or as the prosecutor of sinners, or as an apostate. (4) At any rate, the people referred to in the passage objected to being disciplined for their sins; they protested and murmured at the passage quoted because the other nations were not being punished for their offenses while they alone were put down for every single offense. Even Jeremiah was led to say, "Why is the path of the wicked easy?" 136 The passage 137 from Malachi already quoted is to the same effect: "They opposed God and found salvation." (5) The prophets in their oracular utterances do not merely say that they have heard certain messages from God; they demonstrably report the popular conversations, replying to objections voiced, as if they were officially recording questions from human sources. The saying before us is an example of this.

39(1) It may be these people whom the Apostle is inveighing against in his Epistle to the Romans when he writes, "We are slanderingly charged by some people with saying that we are to do evil things so that good consequences may follow. No! Such a view is justly condemned." 138 (2) These are the people who, when they read, twist the Scriptures by their tone of voice to serve their own pleasures. They alter some of the accents and punctuation marks in order to force wise and constructive precepts to support their taste for luxury. 139 (3) "You who have provoked God with your words," says Malachi, "have actually said, ‘In what have we provoked him?’ You do this by saying, ‘Everyone who acts immorally is good in the Lord’s sight and he approves of them,’ and, ‘Where is the God of righteousness?’" 140

There Are Two Kinds of Heresies – Licentious or Ascetic

40(1) We have no intention of making a closer examination of this topic or mentioning more implausible heresies. We have no intention of being forced to an individual discussion of each of them in all their scandalous nature or prolonging these notes to a vast length. Let us answer them by dividing all the heresies into two groups. 141 (2) Either they teach a way of life which makes no distinction between right and wrong or their hymn is too highly strung 142 and they acclaim asceticism out of a spirit of irreligious quarrelsomeness. (3) I must first expound the former division. If it is legitimate to choose any way of life, then clearly it is legitimate to choose the way that involves asceticism. If there is no way of life which carries danger for the elect, then clearly this is particularly true of the life
of virtuous self-discipline. (4) If the Lord of the sabbath has been granted freedom from accountability for a life of licentiousness, the man whose social life is orderly will be far freer from accountability. (5) The Apostle says, "Everything is legitimate for me; not everything is expedient." If everything is legitimate, that obviously includes self-discipline.

So just as the person who uses his legitimate choice to live a virtuous life is worthy of praise, so the one who gives us this free and sovereign right of legitimate choice, allowing us to live as we wish, is far more to be reverenced and honored in not allowing our positive or negative choices to fall into inescapable slavery. (2) Neither has occasion for fear from the choice of license or discipline; but they are not held in the same respect. The person who drifts into pleasures is gratifying his body; the ascetic is freeing his soul from passions, and the soul has authority over the body. (3) If they tell us that we are called to freedom, we are not, as the Apostle puts it, to present that "freedom as an opening for our lower selves." (4) If we are to gratify lust, if we are to think a reprehensible way of living a matter of moral indifference, as they assert, either we ought to obey our lusts at all points and, if so, to engage in the most immoral and irreligious practices in conformity with our teachers, (5) or we shall turn away from some of our desires, no longer compelled to live by amoral standards, no longer in unbridled servitude to our least honorable parts – stomach and sex-organs – pampering our carcass to serve our desire. (6) Lust is nurtured and vitalized if we minister to its enjoyment; on the other hand, it fades away if it is kept in check.

How is it possible for a person who is overpowered by physical pleasures to grow like the Lord or have a true knowledge of God? Every pleasure has its origin in a desire. Desire is a form of pain, a care which yearns for something it lacks.

(2) Those who choose this way of life simply seem to me, in the familiar words,

"To be suffering grief on top of shame" for the present and the future. (3) So if everything were legitimate and there were no fear of missing out on the ultimate hope because of immoral actions, then they might have some excuse for their wretchedly vicious lives. (4) Through the commandments we have a demonstration of the blessed life. We all ought to pursue it without misunderstanding any of the statements or neglecting any of the properties, even the slightest of them. We are to follow where the Word leads. But if we do slip up, we cannot avoid falling into "undying evil." (5) We must follow God’s Scripture, the road taken by the faithful, and we will, so far as possible, become like the Lord. We are not to live amorally. We are, so far as possible, to purify ourselves from pleasures and lusts, and take care of our soul which should continue to be engaged solely with the divine. (6) For if it is pure and freed from all vice, the mind is somehow capable of receiving the power of God, when the divine image is established within it. Scripture says, "Everyone who has this hope in the Lord is purifying himself as the Lord is pure." (2) It is impossible for those who are still under the direction of their passions to receive true knowledge of God. It follows that if they have not achieved any knowledge of God, they do not have any experience of final hope either. The person who fails to attain this end looks liable to the charge of ignorance of God. Ignorance of God is the only good: This is seen only in the Lord, God alone is good and the sole fit object of love. (3) "You have been circumcised in Christ with a circumcision not performed with hands in stripping yourselves of your fleshly body, that is, in Christ’s circumcision." (4) "So if you are risen together with Christ, look for the things above, fix your mind on them, not on earthly things. For you are dead, and your life has been buried in God together with Christ" – this hardly applies to the sexual immorality which they practice! (5) "So mortify your earthly members – fornication, filthiness, passion, lust; through these the visitation of anger is on its way." So they too should put away "anger, temper, vice, slander, dirty talk from their mouths, stripping themselves of the old human nature with its lusts and putting on the new human nature, which is renewed for full knowledge in accordance with the likeness of its creator." The nature of a person’s way of living shows up clearly those who have come to know the commandments, since the behavior follows the inward reason. (2) The tree is known by its fruits, not by its flowers and leaves. True knowledge is discerned from the fruits of behavior, not from the flower of theory. (3) We do not call bare theory knowledge; knowledge is a kind of divine understanding; it is that light engendered in the soul from obedience to the commandments which makes everything clear and enables a person to know what is in a state of change, to know his own humanity, to know himself, and teaches him to establish himself within reach of God. For knowledge stands to the mind as the eye to the body.
longer subject to sin. "The past is gone for what he has done by means of his body. (2) "So that, if a person is in Christ, he is recreated"

62(1) So they have not understood, words, at a single stroke he undoes the sophistical skill at the service of pleasure. Shall we sin because we are no longer under Law but under grace? God forbid!

Apostle in person will refute their charge in the words with which he continues the previous quotation: "Well then! These purposes, as I am not equipping a pirate ship! Let

61(1) Those who drag in a doctrine of moral indifference do violence to some few passages of Scripture, thinking that their support their own love of pleasures; in particular, the passage "Sin shall have no authority over you; for you are not subject to sin but to grace. 234 But there are other such passages, which there is no good reason to record for these purposes, as I am not equipping a pirate ship! Let me quickly cut through their attempt. (2) The admirable Apostle in person will refute their charge in the words with which he continues the previous quotation: "Well then! Shall we sin because we are no longer under Law but under grace? God forbid!" 235 With these inspired prophetic words, at a single stroke he undoes the sophistical skill at the service of pleasure.

62(1) So they have not understood, 236 it seems, that "we must all appear before Christ’s tribunal, where each must receive what is due to him for his physical conduct, good or bad. 237 that is, where a person may receive recompense for what he has done by means of his body. (2) "So that, if a person is in Christ, he is recreated" 238 in a way no longer subject to sin. "The past is gone" – we have washed away the
old life. "Look, new things have emerged" – chastity instead of sexual looseness, self-control instead of license, righteousness instead of unrighteousness. "What have righteousness and lawlessness in common? What fellowship is there between light and darkness? Can Christ agree with Beliar? (3) What have the faithful to do with the faithless? Can there be a compact between the Temple of God and idols?" 239 "These are the promises made to us. Let us purify ourselves of anything that can stain flesh or spirit, aiming at the goal of holiness in the fear of God." 240

9 Heretics Quote the Words Spoken to Salome to Censure Marriage

63(1) Those who attack God’s creation under the pious name of self-control quote the words spoken to Salome, which we have mentioned previously. 241 I fancy the passage comes from the Gospel according to the Egyptians. (2) They maintain that the Savior personally said, "I am come to destroy the works of the female." "Female" refers to sexual desire, and its works are birth and decay. So what are they to say? Has this world order been undone? They could never say so. The universe remains in the same condition. (3) But the Lord did not speak falsely. In reality he brought to nothing the works of desire – the love of money, or winning, or glory, craziness over women, a passion for boys, gluttony, profligacy and the like. The birth of these means decay in the soul, if we become "dead in sins." 242 This is what is meant by "female" lack of self-control. (4) Birth and decay in creation are bound to take place in accordance with the divine principle until the time of total dissolution and the restoration of the elect, an event through which the beings which are mixed up with the material world are also assigned to their true condition. 64(1) It follows, as the argument reveals, 244 that it is in relation to the final consummation that Salome says, "How long will human beings go on dying?" Scripture uses the word "human being" in two senses, the visible and the spiritual one subject to salvation and one not. Sin is called the death of the soul. That is why the Lord answers with circumspection, "As long as women give birth," that is to say, as long as sexual desire is still at work. (2) "Therefore as sin entered the world through one human being, and death penetrated to all human beings through sin in that all sinned, death also held dominion from Adam to Moses," says the Apostle. 246 By natural necessity of divine dispensation, death follows birth, and the union of soul and body is followed by their dissolution. 247 (3) The object of birth is learning and knowledge, the object of dissolution is restoration. Woman is regarded as the cause of death because of giving birth, but for the same reason she is also to be regarded as the cause of life.

65(1) The woman who initiated transgression was called "Life," because she was responsible for the succession of those who came to birth and sinned, mother of righteous and unrighteous alike; each one of us shows himself just or renders himself disobedient. (2) As a result, I do not think that the Apostle is disparaging life in the flesh when he says, "I shall speak out. Christ will come in my body, whether through my life or through my death. For to me life is Christ, and death is gain. But if life in the flesh means for me some fruitful work, I do not ever think that marriage under the rule of the Logos is a sin, if he does not find it bitter to bring up children; indeed, for many people, childlessness is the most grievous experience of all. At the same time, if he does not regard the production of children as bitter because it drags him away from the things of God, for which there is necessarily no time, but does not look favorably upon life as a bachelor, then he can look forward to marriage, since there is no harm in disciplined pleasure, and each of us is in a position to make a decision over the engendering of children. (2) I realize that there are some people who have used the excuse of marriage to abstain from it without following the principles of sacred knowledge and have fallen into hatred of humankind so that the spirit of Christian love has vanished from them; others have become embroiled in marriage and indulged their taste for pleasure within the authority of the Law, and as the prophet says, "have become like cattle." 255