

Extracts from the Writings of Clement of Alexandria

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The following Extracts are from Clement's *Stromata* or Miscellanies.

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[Titus Flavius Clemens, presbyter of the Church of Alexandria. Date of birth unknown. Supposed date of death 220 A.D.]

It is a good thing, I reckon, to leave to posterity good children. This is the case with children of our bodies. But words are the progeny of soul. Hence we call those who have instructed us, fathers. Wisdom is a communicative and philanthropic thing. Accordingly, Solomon.... points out that the word that is sown is hidden in the soul of the learner, as in the earth, and this is spiritual planting.... For soul, methinks, joined with soul, and spirit with spirit, in the sowing of the word, will make that which is sown grow and germinate.... And if knowledge belong not to all (set an ass to the lyre, as the proverb goes), yet written compositions are for the many.

For each soul has its own proper nutriment; some growing by knowledge and science, and others feeding on the Hellenic philosophy, the whole of which, like nuts, is not eatable.

It is a feat fit for the gardener to pluck without injury the rose that is growing among the thorns; and for the craftsman to find out the pearl buried in the oyster's flesh. And they say that fowls have flesh of the most agreeable quality, when, through not being supplied with abundance of food, they pick their sustenance with difficulty, scraping with their feet.

If anyone, then ... wants to arrive at the truth.... he will hunt it out with much pains.

Now the ways of wisdom are various that lead right to the way of truth. Faith is the way.

Others have defined faith to be a uniting assent to an unseen object, as certainly the proof of an unknown thing is an evident assent. If, then, it be choice, being desirous of something, the desire is in this instance intellectual. And since choice is the beginning of action, faith is discovered to be the beginning of action, being the foundation of rational choice in the case of anyone who exhibits to himself

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the previous demonstration through faith. Voluntarily to follow what is useful is the first principle of understanding. Unswerving choice, then, gives considerable momentum in the direction of knowledge. The action of Faith directly becomes knowledge, reposing on a sure foundation. Knowledge, accordingly, is defined by the sons of the philosophers as a habit, which cannot be overthrown by reason. Is there any other true condition such as this, except piety, of which alone the Word is teacher? I think not. Theophrastus says that sensation is the root of faith. For from it the rudimentary principles extend to the reason that is in us, and the understanding Faith, then, is not established by demonstration.

Now inasmuch as there are Four things in which the truth resides — Sensation, Understanding, Knowledge, Opinion — intellectual apprehension is first in the order of nature; but in our case, and in relation to ourselves, Sensation is First, and of Sensation and Understanding the Essence of Knowledge is formed; and evidence is common to Understanding and Sensation. Well, Sensation is the ladder to Knowledge; while Faith, advancing over the pathway of the objects of sense, leaves Opinion behind, and speeds to things free of deception, and reposes in the truth.

Should anyone say that Knowledge is founded on demonstration by a process of reasoning, let him hear that first principles are incapable of demonstration Hence it is thought that the first cause of the universe can be apprehended by faith alone.... For knowledge is a state of mind that results from demonstration; but faith is a grace which from what is indemonstrable conducts to what is universal and simple, what is neither with matter, nor matter, nor under matter. For those who believe not.... drag all down from heaven and the region of the invisible, to earth, "absolutely grasping with their hands rocks and oaks", according to Plato. For, clinging to all such things, they asseverate that that alone exists which can be touched and handled.... With a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, whatever can be seen and heard is to be apprehended, by the faith and understanding of the disciples.... who speak, hear, and act spiritually. For there is genuine coin, and other that is spurious; which no less deceives unprofessionals, that it does not the money-changers, who know through having learnt how to separate and distinguish what has a false stamp from what is genuine. So the money-changer only says to the unprofessional man that the coin is counterfeit. But the reason why, only the banker's apprentice, and he that is trained to this department, learns.

Now Aristotle says that the judgment which follows knowledge is in truth faith. Accordingly, faith is something superior to knowledge, and is its criterion. Conjecture, which is only a feeble supposition, counterfeits faith...

And as the workman sees that by learning certain things he becomes an artificer, and the helmsman by being instructed in the art will be able to steer; he does not regard the mere wishing to become excellent and good enough, but he must learn it by the exercise of obedience.

As, then, playing at ball not only depends on one throwing the ball skilfully, but it requires besides one to catch it dexterously, that the game may be gone through according to the rules for ball; so also is it the case that teaching is reliable when faith on the part of those who hear, being, so to speak, a sort of natural art, contributes to the process of learning... For there is no good in the very best instruction without the exercise of the receptive faculty on the part of the learner...

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Now to will is the act of the soul, but to do is not without the body.

..... faith to be, the assent of the soul to any of those things, that do not affect the senses through not being present.

Accordingly, faith may not, any more, without reason be disparaged in an offhand way, as simple and vulgar, appertaining to anybody. For, if it were a mere human habit, as the Greeks supposed, it would have been extinguished. But if it grow, and there be no place where it is not, then I affirm, that faith, whether founded in love, or in fear, as its disparagers assert, is something divine; which is neither rent asunder by other mundane friendship, nor dissolved by the presence of fear.

And as without the Four Elements it is not possible to live, so neither can knowledge be attained without faith. It is then the support of truth.

..... the law enjoins us to shun what are in reality bad things ignorance, wickedness, soul-disease, death (not that which severs the soul from the body, but that which severs the soul from truth).

Plainly, he that draws near knowledge has the benefit of perils, fears, troubles, afflictions, by reason of his desire for the truth.

Piety is conduct suitable and corresponding to God.

These three things, therefore, our philosopher attaches himself to: first, speculation; second, the performance of the precepts; third, the forming of good men Whichever of these is wanting, the elements of knowledge limp.

Sinning arises from being unable to determine what ought to be done, or being unable to do it; as doubtless one falls into a ditch either through not knowing, or through inability to leap over through feebleness of body. But application to the training of ourselves, and subjection to the commandments, is in our own power; with which if we will have nothing to do, by abandoning ourselves wholly to lust, we shall sin, nay, rather, wrong our own soul.

..... there are times in which silence is better than speech, for silence has a safe recompense.

..... The virtues valour, and temperance, and wisdom, and justice, and endurance, and patience, and decorum, and self-restraint, and in addition to these, piety.

..... They [the Greeks] define manliness to be knowledge of things formidable, and not formidable, and what is intermediate; and temperance to be a state of mind which, by choosing or avoiding, preserves the

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judgment of wisdom; and conjoined with manliness is patience, which is called endurance, the knowledge of what is bearable and what is unbearable; and magnanimity is the knowledge which rises superior to circumstances. With temperance also is enjoined caution, which is avoidance in accordance with reason. And observance of the commandments which is the innocuous keeping of them, is the attainment of a secure life. And there is no endurance without manliness, nor the exercise of self-restraint without temperance. And these virtues follow one another; and with whom are the sequences of the virtues, with him is also salvation, which is the keeping of the state of well-being.

.....For great natures that are free of passions somehow hit the mark respecting the truth.....

The divine law trains men specially to self-restraint, laying this as the foundation of the virtues ...

If, then, we are to exercise control over the belly, and what is below the belly, it is clear that we are to check lust by the law.

And this will be completely effected if we unfeignedly condemn what is the fuel of lust: I mean pleasure...

And I agree with Antisthenes when he says, "Could I catch Aphrodite, I would shoot her; for she has destroyed many of our beautiful and good woman". And he says that "Love is a vice of nature, and the wretches who fall under its power call the disease a deity". For in these words it is shown that stupid people are overcome from ignorance of pleasure, to which we ought to give no admittance even though....it be given by God for the necessity of procreation.

"For the minds of those even who are deemed grave, pleasure makes waxen", according to Plato; since "each pleasure and pain nails to the body the soul" of the man who does not sever and crucify himself from the passions....For if you would loose, and withdraw, and separate (for this is what the cross means) your soul from the delight and pleasure that is in this life, you will possess it....

There is need of a man who shall use in a praiseworthy and discriminating manner the things from which passions take their rise, as riches and poverty, honour and dishonour, health and sickness, life and death, toil and pleasure. For, in order that we may treat things, that are different, indifferently, there is need of a great difference in us, as having been previously afflicted by much feebleness, and in the distortion of a bad training and nurtured ignorantly indulged ourselves. The simple word, then, of our philosophy declares the passions to be impressions on the soul which is soft and yielding, and, as it were, the signatures of the spiritual powers with whom we have to struggle.

For as the exhalations which arise from the earth, and from marshes, gather into mists and cloudy masses, so the vapours of fleshly lusts bring on the soul an evil condition, scattering about the idols of pleasure before the soul. Accordingly, they spread darkness over the light of intelligence, the spirit attracting the exhalations that arise from lust, and thickening the masses of the passions by persistency in pleasures.

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For peace and freedom are not otherwise won than by ceaseless and unyielding struggles with our lusts.

We must then exercise ourselves in taking care about those things which fall under the power of the passions;.....and the sensations that tend to luxury, which are a solid reward to others, must no longer be so to us. For God's greatest gift is self-restraint.

"For those who seek for gold", says Heraclitus, "dig much earth and find little gold". But those who are of the truly golden race, in mining for what is allied to them, will find the much in little.

And you may prosecute, in addition to these, other labours and researches; since, in the case of people who are setting out on a road with which they are unacquainted, it is sufficient merely to point out the direction. After this they must walk and find out the rest for themselves.

The most of men have a disposition unstable and heedless like the nature of storms What shall we say is the peculiar function of man? He is like, it appears to me, the Centaur, a Thessalian figment, compounded of a rational and irrational part, of soul and body. Well, the body tills the ground, and hastes to it; but the soul is raised to God: trained in the true philosophy, it speeds to its kindred above, turning away from the lusts of the body and, besides these, from toil and fear....

We must then, as it fit, in investigating the nature of the body and the essence of the soul, apprehend the end of each, and not regard death as an evil.

The severance, therefore, of the soul from the body, made a lifelong study, produces in the philosopher gnostic alacrity, so that he is easily able to bear natural death, which is the dissolution of the chains which bind the soul to the body.

Fit objects for admiration are the Stoics, who say that the soul is not affected by the body, either to vice by disease or to virtue by health; but these things, they say, are indifferent.

When pain is present, the soul appears to decline from it, and to deem release from present pain a precious thing. At that moment it slackens from studies, when the other virtues also are neglected; andand if he who has not yet attained the habit of self-command be not a high-souled man, he is distraught; and the inability to endure it is found equivalent to fleeing from it.

The same holds good also in the case of poverty. For it compels the soul to desist from necessary things, I mean contemplation, and from pure sin lessness, forcing him, who has not wholly dedicated himself to God in love, to occupy himself about provisions.

The Gnostic will never then have the chief end placed in life, but in being always happy and blessed, and a kingly friend of God. Although visited with ignominy, and exile, and confiscation, and, above all, death,

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he will never be wrenched from his freedom and signal love to God.

"...he applied the name 'brood of vipers' to the voluptuous, who serve the belly and the pudenda, and cut off one another's heads for the sake of worldly pleasures".

The man of understanding and perspicacity is, then, a Gnostic. And his business is not abstinence from what is evil (for this is a step to the highest perception) or the doing of good out of fear Nor any more is he to do so from hope of promised recompense But only the doing of good out of love, and for the sake of its own excellence, is to be the Gnostic's choice And if, in doing good, he be met with anything adverse, he will let the recompense pass without resentment as if it were good, he being just and good "to the just and the unjust" Such a one is no longer continent, but has reached a state of passion lessness Not even he himself who shows mercy ought to know that he does show mercy; for in this way he will be sometimes merciful, sometimes not. And when he shall do good by habit, he will imitate that nature of good, and his disposition will be his nature and his practice. There is no necessity for removing those who are raised on high, but there is necessity for those who are walking to reach the requisite goal, by passing over the whole of the narrow way....For assimilation to God, as far as we can, is preserving the mind in its relation to the same things. And this is the relation of mind to mind.

For sanctity, as I conceive it, is perfect pureness of mind, and deeds, and thoughts, and words too, and, in its last degree, sin lessness in dreams.

For it is not in the food the belly that we have heard good to be situated.

Nor will turning away from objects of sense, as a matter of necessary consequence, produce attachment to intellectual objects. On the contrary, the attachment to intellectual objects naturally becomes to the Gnostic an influence which draws away from the objects of sense; inasmuch as he, in virtue of the selection of what is good, has chosen what is good according to knowledge....

For instruction harmonises man, and by harmonising makes him natural; and it is no matter whether one was made such as he is by nature, or transformed by time and education.

Those, then, who run down created existence and vilify the body are wrong; not considering that the frame of man was formed erect for the contemplation of heaven, and that the organisation of the senses tends to knowledge; and that the members and parts are arranged for good, not for pleasure Now, the soul of the wise man and Gnostic, as sojourning in the body, conducts itself towards it gravely and respectfully The body, too, as one sent on a distance pilgrimage, uses inns and dwellings by the way, having care of things of the world, of the places where he halts; but leaving his dwelling-place and property without excessive emotion; readily following him that leads him away from life; by no means and on no occasion turning back; giving thanks for his sojourn and blessing for his departure....

Now Faith is the ear of the Soul.

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And we must possess the healthy mind which is fixed on the pursuit of the good For, bound in this earthly body, we apprehend the objects of sense by means of the body; but we grasp intellectual objects by means of the logical faculty itself. But if one expect to apprehend all things by the sense, he has fallen far from the truth

For he who hopes, as he who believes, sees intellectual objects and future things with the mind. If, then, we affirm that aught is just, and affirm it to be good, and we also say that truth is something, yet we have never seen any of such objects without our eyes, but with our mind alone

Now the sacrifice which is acceptable to God is unswerving abstraction from the body and its passions. This is the really true piety....For he who neither employs his eyes in the exercise of thought, nor dawns aught from his other senses, but with pure mind itself applies to objects, practises the true philosophy

For the Gnostic soul must be consecrated to the light, stripped of the integuments of matter, devoid of the frivolousness of the body and of all the passions, which are acquired through vain and lying opinions, and divested of the lusts of the flesh. But the most of men, clothed with what is perishable, like cockles, and rolled all round in a ball in their excesses, like hedgehogs, entertain the same ideas of the blessed and incorruptible God as of themselves

This discourse respecting God is most difficult to handle. For, since the first principle of everything is difficult to find out, the absolutely first and oldest principle, which is the cause of all other things being and having been, is difficult to exhibit. For how can that be expressed which is neither genus, nor difference, nor species, nor individual, nor numbers; nay, more, is neither an event, nor that to which an event happens? No one can rightly express Him wholly. For on account of His greatness, He is ranked as the All, and is the Father of the Universe. Nor are any parts to be predicated of Him. For the One is indivisible, wherefore also it is infinite, not considered with reference to inscrutability, but with reference to its being without dimensions and not having a limit. And therefore it is without form and name. And if we name it, we do not do so properly, terming it either the One, or the Good, or Mind, or Absolute Being, or Father, or God, or Creator, or Lord. We speak, not as supplying His name; but for want we use good names, in order that the mind may have these as points of support, so as not to err in other respects.

In a meadow, the flowers blooming variously and in a park the plantations of fruit-trees, are not separated according to their species from those of other kinds. If some, culling varieties, have composed learned collections — Meadows and Helicons, and Honeycombs and Robes; then with the things which come to recollection by haphazard, and are expurgated neither in order nor expression, but purposely scattered, the form of the Miscellanies is promiscuously variegated like a meadow. And, such being the case, my notes shall serve as kindling sparks; and in the case of him who is fit for knowledge, if he chances to fall in with them, research made with exertion will turn out to his benefit and advantage. For it is right that labour should precede not only food, but also much more knowledge....

And it is just like geometry, which treats of measures, and magnitudes, and forms, by delineation on plain surfaces, and just as painting appears to take in the whole field of view in the scenes represented. But it gives a false description of the view, according to the rules of the art, employing the signs that result from the incidence of the lines of vision. By this means, the higher and lower points in the view and those

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between are preserved; and some objects seem to appear in the foreground, and others in the background, and others to appear in some other way, on the smooth and level surface. So also the philosophers copy the truth after manner of painting. And always, in the case of each one of them, their self-love is the cause of their mistake. Wherefore one ought not, in the desire of the glory that terminates in men, to be animated by self-love; but, loving God, to become really holy with wisdom.

Now the Gnostic must be erudite

The pruning-hook is made, certainly, principally for pruning; but with it we separate things that have got intertwined, cut the thorns that grow along with the vines, which it is not very easy to reach. And all these things have a reference to pruning. Again, Man is made principally for the knowledge of God; but he also measures land, practises agriculture, and philosophises; of which pursuits, one conduces to life, another to living well, a third to the study of the things which are capable of demonstration

And is not knowledge (Gnosis) an attribute of the natural soul, which trains itself for this, that by knowledge it may become entitled to immortality? For both are powers of the soul, both knowledge and impulse. And impulse is found to be a movement after an assent. For he who has an impulse towards an action, first receives the knowledge of the action, and secondly the impulse

For since learning is older than action (for, naturally, he who does what he wishes to do learns it first; and knowledge comes from learning, and impulse follows knowledge; after which comes action), knowledge turns out to be the beginning and author of all natural action. So that rightly the peculiar nature of the rational soul is characterised by this alone; for in reality impulse, like knowledge, is excited by existing objects. And knowledge (Gnosis) is essentially a contemplation of existences on the part of the soul, either of a certain thing or of certain things, and, when perfected, of all together. Although some say that the wise man is persuaded that there are some things incomprehensible, in such wise as to have respecting them a kind of comprehension, inasmuch as he comprehends that things incomprehensible are incomprehensible; which is common, and pertains to those who are capable of perceiving little. For such a man affirms that there are some things incomprehensible. But that Gnostic of whom I speak himself comprehends what seems to be incomprehensible to others

The Gnostic is such that he is subject only to the affections that exist for the maintenance of the body, such as hunger, thirst, and the like having most gnostically mastered anger, and fear, and lust not liable even to such of the movements of feelings as seem good, courage, zeal, joy, desire, through a steady condition of mind, not changing a whit

And should it be granted that the affections specified above, when produced naturally, are good, yet they are nevertheless inadmissible in the case of the perfect man, who is incapable of exercising courage: for neither does he meet what inspires fear, as he regards none of the things that occur in life as to be dreaded; nor can aught dislodge him from this — the love he has towards God. Nor does he need cheerfulness of mind; for he does not fall into pain, being persuaded that all things happen well. Nor is he angry; for there is nothing to move him to anger, seeing he ever loves God, and is entirely turned towards Him alone, and therefore hates none of God's creatures. No more does he envy; for nothing is wanting to him that is requisite to assimilation, in order that he may be excellent and good Thus also the good man is godlike in form and semblance as respects his soul. And, on the other hand, God is like man. For the distinctive form of each one is the mind by which we are characterised. Consequently, also, those who sin against man are unholy and impious. For it were ridiculous to say that the Gnostic and perfect man must not eradicate anger and courage, inasmuch as without these he will not struggle against circumstances or abide what is terrible.

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But if we take from him desire, he will be quite overwhelmed by troubles, and therefore depart from this life very basely. Unless possessed of it, as some suppose, he will not conceive a desire for what is like the excellent and the good. If, then, all alliance with what is good is accompanied with desire, how, it is said, does he remain impassible who desires what is excellent?

For these people know not, as appears, the divinity of love. For love is not desire on the part of him who loves; but it is a relation of affection, restoring the Gnostic to the Unity of the Faith — independent of time and place. But he who by love is already in the midst of that in which he is destined to be, and has anticipated hope by knowledge, does not desire anything, having, as far as possible, the very thing desired. Accordingly he continues in the exercise of gnostic love, in the one unvarying state.

Nor will he, therefore, eagerly desire to be assimilated to what is beautiful, possessing, as he does, beauty by love. What more need of courage and desire to him, who has attained the affinity to the impassible God which arises from love, and by love has enrolled himself among the Friends of God?

We must therefore rescue the Gnostic and perfect man from all passion of the soul. For knowledge (Gnosis) produces practice, and practice habit or disposition; and such a state as this produces impassibility, not moderation of passion. And the complete eradication of desire reaps as its fruit impassibility. But the Gnostic does not share either in those affections that are commonly celebrated as good, that is, the good things of the affections which are allied to the passions: such, I mean, as gladness, which is allied to pleasure; and dejection, for this is conjoined with pain; and caution, for it is subject to fear. Nor yet does he share in high spirit, for it takes its place alongside of wrath; although some say that these are no longer evil, but already good. For it is impossible that he who has been once made perfect by love, and feasts eternally and insatiably on the boundless joy of contemplation, should delight in small and grovelling things. For what rational cause remains any more to the man who has gained "the light inaccessible" for reverting to the good things of the world? Although not yet true as to time and place, yet by that Gnostic love through which the inheritance and perfect restitution follow, the giver of the reward makes good by deeds what the Gnostic, by gnostic choice, has grasped by anticipation through love.

For he does not withdraw himself from life. For that is not permitted to him. But he has withdrawn his soul from the passions. For that is granted to him. And, on the other hand, he lives, having put to death his lusts, and no longer makes use of the body, but allows it the use of necessaries, that he may not give cause for dissolution.

How, then, has he any more need of fortitude who is not in the midst of dangers, being not present, but already wholly with the object of love? And what necessity for self-restraint to him who has not need of it? For to have such desires as require self-restraint in order to their control, is characteristic of one who is not yet pure, but subject to passion. Now fortitude is assumed by reason of fear and cowardice. For it were no longer seemly that the friend of God should fall into pleasures or fears, and be occupied in the repressing of the passions.

And, through love, the future is for him already present And he who knows the sure comprehension of the future, which there is in the circumstances in which he is placed, by love goes to meet the future. So

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he that is persuaded that he will obtain the things that are really good, will not pray to obtain what is here, but that he may always cling to the faith which hits the mark and succeeds. And, besides, he will pray that as many as possible may become like him

For, in fine, it is impossible that the immutable should assume firmness and consistency in the mutable. But the ruling faculty being in perpetual change, and therefore unstable, the force of habit is not maintained. For how can he who is perpetually changed by external occurrences and accidents ever possess habit and disposition, and, in a word, grasp of scientific knowledge? And as knowledge (Gnosis) is not born with men, but is acquired, and the acquiring of it in its elements demands application and training, and progress; and then from incessant practice it passes into a habit; so, when perfected in the mystic habit, it abides, being infallible through love.

In scientific matters, as being alone possessed of scientific knowledge, he will hold the preeminence, and will discourse on the discussion respecting the good, ever intent on intellectual objects, tracing out his procedure in human affairs from the archetypes above; as navigators direct the ship according to the star; prepared to hold himself in readiness for every suitable action; accustomed to despise all difficulties and dangers when it is necessary to undergo them; never doing anything precipitate or incongruous either to himself or the common weal; foreseeing; and inflexible by pleasures both of waking hours and of dreams. For, accustomed to spare living and frugality, he is moderate, active and grave; requiring few necessaries for life; occupying himself with nothing superfluous. But desiring not even these things as chief, but by reason of fellowship in life, as necessary for his sojourn in life, as far as necessary.

For to him knowledge (Gnosis) is the principal thing. Consequently, therefore, he applies to the subjects that are a training for knowledge, taking from each branch of study its contribution to the truth. Prosecuting, then, the proportion of harmonies in music; and in arithmetic noting the increasing and decreasing of numbers and their relation to one another, and how the most of things fall under some proportion of numbers; studying geometry, which is abstract essence, he perceives a continuous distance and an immutable essence which is different from these bodies. And by astronomy, again, raised from the earth in his mind, he is elevated along with heaven, and will resolve with its revolution; studying ever divine things and their harmony with each other

But the multitude are frightened at the Hellenic philosophy as children are at masks, being afraid lest it lead them astray. But if the faith (for I cannot call it knowledge) which they possess be such as to be dissolved by plausible speech, let it be by all means dissolved and let them confess that they will not retain the truth. For truth is immovable; but false opinion dissolves. We chose, for instance, one purple by comparison with another purple. So that, if one confesses that he has not a heart that has been made right, he has not the table of the money-changers or the test of words. And how can he be any longer a money-changer who is not able to test and distinguish spurious coin, even offhand?

As, then, lyres ought not to be touched by those who are destitute of skill in playing the lyre, nor flutes by those who are unskilled in flute-playing, neither are those to put their hands to affairs who have not knowledge, and know not how to use them in the whole of life.

The struggle for freedom, then, is waged not alone by the athletes of battles in wards, but also in

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banquets, and in bed, and in the tribunals, by those who are anointed by the word, who are ashamed to become the captives of pleasures.

Now our Gnostic always occupies himself with the things of highest importance. But if at any time he has leisure and time for relaxation from what is of prime consequence, he applies himself to Hellenic philosophy in preference to other recreation, feasting on it as a kind of dessert at supper. Not that he neglects what is superior; but that he takes this in addition as long as is proper

It is well indeed to know all. But the man whose soul is destitute of the ability to reach to acquaintance with many subjects of study will select the principal and better subjects alone. For real science (επιστήμη) (which we affirm the Gnostic alone possesses) is a sure comprehension leading up through true and sure reasons to the knowledge of the cause. And he who is acquainted with what is true respecting any one subject, becomes of course acquainted with what is false respecting it.

For truly it appears to me to be a proper point for discussion, whether we ought to philosophise But if we are not to philosophise, what then? (For no one can condemn a thing without first knowing it): the consequence, even in that case, is , that we must philosophise.

But I affirm that gnostic souls, that surpass in the grandeur of contemplation the mode of life of each of the holy ranks reckoned holy among the holy, transferred entire from among the entire, reaching places better than the better places, embracing the divine vision not in mirrors or by means of mirrors, but in the transcendently clear and absolutely pure insatiable vision which is the privilege of intensely loving souls, holding festival through endless ages, remain honoured with the identity of all excellence. Such is the vision attainable by the "pure in heart".

Ruling, then, over himself and what belongs to him, and possessing a sure grasp of divine science, he makes a genuine approach to the truth. For the knowledge and apprehension of intellectual objects must necessarily be called certain scientific knowledge, whose function in reference to divine things is to consider what is the First Cause, and what that "by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made"; and what things, on the other hand, are as pervasive and what as comprehensive; what conjoined, what disjoined; and what is the position which each one of them holds, and what power and what service each contributes. And, again, among human things what man himself is, and what he has naturally or preternaturally; and how, again, it becomes him to do or to suffer; and what are his virtues and what his vices; and about things good, bad, and indifferent; also about fortitude and prudence and self-restraint, and the virtue which is in all respects complete, namely, righteousness.

Further, he employs prudence and righteousness in the acquisition of wisdom, and fortitude, not only in the endurance of circumstances, but also in restraining pleasure and desire, grief and anger; and, in general, to withstand everything which either by any force or fraud entices us. For it is not necessary to endure vices and virtues, but it is to be persuaded to bear things that inspire fear.

Accordingly, pain is found beneficial in the healing art, and in discipline, and in punishment; and by it men's manners are corrected to their advantage. Forms of fortitude are endurance, magnanimity, high

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spirit, liberality, and grandeur. And for this reason he neither meets with the blame or the bad opinion of the multitude; nor is he subjected to opinions or flatteries. But in the endurance of toils and at the same time in the discharge of any duty, and in his manly superiority to all the circumstances, he appears truly a man among the rest of human beings. And, on the other hand, maintaining prudence, he exercises moderation in the calmness of his soul; receptive of what is commanded, as of what belongs to him, entertaining aversion to what is base, as alien to him; become decorous and supra-mundane, he does everything with decorum and in order, and transgresses in no respect and in nothing. Rich he is in the highest degree in desiring nothing, as having few wants; and being in the midst of abundance of all good through the knowledge of the good. For it is the first effect of his righteousness, to love to spend his time and associate with those of his own race both in earth and heaven. So also he is liberal of what he possesses. And being a lover of men, he is a hater of the wicked, entertaining a perfect aversion to all villainy. He must consequently learn to be faithful both to himself and to his neighbours, and obedient to the commandments And he who already, not through the commandments, but through knowledge itself, is pure in heart, is the friend of God.

This is the true athlete — he who in the great stadium, the fair world, is crowned for the true victory over all the passions.

..... the habitude that results from the eating of flesh. Perchance also some Gnostic will abstain from the eating of flesh for the sake of training, and in order that the flesh may not grow wanton in amorousness.

..... not in a specified place, or selected temple, or at certain festivals and on appointed days, but during his whole life, the Gnostic, in every place, even if he be alone by himself, and wherever he has any of those who have exercised the like faith, honours God, that is, acknowledges his gratitude for the knowledge of the way to live.

And if the presence of a good man, through the respect and reverence which he inspires, always improves him with whom he associates, with much more reason does not he who always holds uninterrupted converse with God by knowledge, life, and thanksgiving, grow at every step superior to himself in all respects — in conduct, in words, in disposition? Such an one is persuaded that God is ever beside him, and does not suppose that He is confined in certain limited places; so that under the idea that at times he is without Him, he may indulge in excesses night and day.

Holding festival, then, in our whole life, persuaded that God is altogether on every side present, we cultivate our fields praising; we sail the sea hymning; in all the rest of our conversation we conduct ourselves according to rule.....

For he is convinced that God knows and perceives all things — not the words only, but also the thought; since even our sense of hearing, which acts through the passages of the body, has the apprehension (belonging to it) not through corporeal power, but through a psychical perception, and the intelligence which distinguishes significant sounds But the susceptibility of the air, and the intensely keen perception of the angels, and the power which reaches the soul's consciousness, by ineffable power and without sensible hearing, know all things at the moment of thought. And should any say that the voice does not reach God, but is rolled downwards in the air, yet the thoughts of the saints cleave not the air

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only, but the whole world.

The Gnostic, then makes his prayer and request for the truly good things which appertain to the soul, and prays, he himself also contributing his efforts to attain to the habit of goodness, so as no longer to have the things that are good as certain lessons belonging to him, but to be good.

Prayer is, then, to speak more boldly, converse with God.

But if voice and expression are given us for the sake of understanding, how can God not hear the soul itself, and the mind, since assuredly soul hears soul, and mind, mind? Prayer, then, may be uttered without the voice, by concentrating the whole spiritual nature within on expression by the mind, in undistracted turning towards God.

But the Gnostic will ask the permanence of the things he possesses, adaptation for what is to take place, and the eternity of those things which he shall receive. And the things which are really good, the things which concern the soul, he prays that they may belong to him, and remain with him. And so he desires not anything that is absent, being content with what is present. For he is deficient in the good things which are proper to him; being already sufficient for himself through divine grace and knowledge. But having become sufficient in himself, he stands in no want of other things. But knowing the sovereign will and possessing as soon as he prays, being brought into close contact with the almighty power, and earnestly desiring the spiritual, through boundless love he is united to the Spirit.

Thus he, being magnanimous, possessing through knowledge, what is most precious of all, the best of all, being quick in applying himself to contemplation, retains in his soul the permanent energy of the objects of his contemplation, that is, the perspicacious keenness of knowledge. And this power he strives to his utmost to acquire by obtaining command of all the influences which war against the mind; and by applying himself without intermission to speculation by exercising himself in the training of abstinence from pleasures, and of right conduct in what he does; and besides, furnished with great experience both in study and in life, he has freedom of speech, not the power of a babbling tongue, but a power which employs plain language, and which neither for favour nor fear conceals aught of the things which may be worthily said at the fitting time in which it is highly necessary to say them

Whence, he is always mild and meek, accessible, affable, long-suffering, grateful, endued with a good conscience. Such a man is rigid, not alone so as not to be corrupted, but so as not to be tempted. For he never exposes his soul to submission or capture at the hands of Pleasure or Pain. If the Word, who is Judge, call, he, having grown inflexible, and not indulging a whit the passions, walks unswervingly where justice advises him to go; being very well persuaded that all things are managed consummately well, and that progress to what is better goes on in the case of souls that have chosen virtue, till they come to the Good itself And the Gnostic who has reached the summit will pray that Contemplation may grow and abide, as the common man will for continual good health. Nay, he will pray that he may never fall from virtue; giving his most strenuous co-operation in order that he may become infallible

But him, who from this has trained himself to the summit of knowledge and the elevated height of the

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perfect man, all things relating to time and place help on, now that he has made it his choice to live infallibly, and subjects himself to training in order to the attainment of the stability of knowledge on each side. But in the case of those in whom there is still a heavy corner, leaning downwards, even that part which has been elevated by faith is dragged down. In him, then, who by Gnostic training has acquired virtue which cannot be lost, habit becomes nature. And just as weight in a stone, so the knowledge of such an one is incapable of being lost Through care it becomes incapable of being lost. He will employ caution to prevent sinning, and consideration to prevent the loss of virtue

He rejoices in good things present, and is glad on account of those promised, as if they were already present. For they do not elude his notice, as if they were still absent, because he knows by anticipation what sort they are. Being then persuaded by knowledge how each future thing shall be, he possesses it. For want and defect are measured with reference to what appertains to one. If, then, he possesses wisdom, and wisdom is a divine thing, he who partakes of what has no want will himself have no want. For the imparting of wisdom does not take place by activity and receptivity, moving and stopping each other, or by aught being abstracted or becoming defective. Activity is therefore shown to be undiminished in the act of communication

Him God helps by honouring him with closer oversight.

From us, then, are demanded the things which are in our own power, and of the things which pertain to us, both present and absent; the choice, and desire, and possession, and use, and permanence.

Wherefore, also, he who holds converse with God must have his soul immaculate and stainlessly pure, it being essential to have made himself perfectly good ... And his whole life is a holy festival.

Consequently, therefore through disease, and accident, and what is most terrible of all, death, come upon the Gnostic, he remains inflexible in soul — knowing that all such things are a necessity of creation, and that, also by the power of God, they become the medicine of salvation, benefiting by discipline those who are difficult to reform

He never cherishes resentment or harbours a grudge against anyone, though deserving of hatred for his conduct. For he loves him who shares life, pitying and praying for him on account of his ignorance. He, indeed, partakes of the affections of the body, to which susceptible as it is of suffering by nature, he is bound. But in sensation he is not the primary subject of it.

Accordingly, then, in involuntary circumstances, by withdrawing himself from troubles to the things which really belong to him, he is not carried away with what is foreign to him. And it is only to things that are necessary for him that he accommodates himself, in so far as the soul is preserved unharmed. For it is not in supposition or seeming that he wishes to be faithful; but in knowledge and truth, that is, in sure deed and effectual word. Wherefore he not only praises what is noble, but endeavours himself to be noble; changing by love from a good and faithful servant into a friend, through the perfection of habit, which he has acquired in purity from true instruction and great discipline.

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In all circumstances, then, is the soul of the Gnostic strong, in a condition of extreme health and strength, like the body of an athlete.

For he is prudent in human affairs, in judging what ought to be done by the just man; having acquired moderation in bodily pains and pleasures. And he struggles against fears boldly, trusting in God

Such an one consequently withstands all fear of everything terrible, not only of death, but also poverty and disease, and ignominy, and things akin to these; being unconquered by pleasures, and lord over irrational desires. For he well knows what is and what is not to be done; being perfectly aware what things are really to be dreaded and what not. Whence, he bears intelligently what the Word intimates to him to be requisite and necessary; intelligently discriminating what is really safe (that is, good) from what appears so, such as death, disease, and poverty; which are rather so in opinion than in truth

He has everything dependent on himself for the attainment of the end. For those accidents which are called terrible are not formidable to the good man, because they are not evil. And those which really to be dreaded are foreign to the gnostic Christian, being diametrically opposed to what is good, because evil; and it is impossible for contraries to meet in the same person at the same time. He, then, who faultlessly acts the drama of life knows both what is to be done and what is to be endured.

Neither, then, enduring lesser dangers from fear of greater, like other people, nor dreading censure at the hands of their equals, and those of like sentiments, do they continue in the confession of their calling; but from love to God they willingly obey the call and not for the sake of the reward of their toils.

But love is to be chosen for itself, and for nothing else.

And the same holds with self-control. For it is neither for love of honour, as the athletes for the sake of crowns and fame; nor, on the other hand, for love of money, as some pretend to exercise self-control, pursuing what is good with terrible suffering. Nor is it from love of the body for the sake of health. Nor any more is any man who is temperate from rusticity, who has not tasted pleasures, truly a man self-control. Certainly those who have led a laborious life, on tasting pleasures, forthwith break down the inflexibility of temperance into pleasures. Such are they who are restrained by law and fear. For on finding a favourable opportunity they defraud the law, by giving what is good the slip. But self-control, desirable for its own sake, perfected through knowledge, abiding ever, makes the man lord and master of himself

Thus the Gnostic is never, on the occurrence of an emergency, dislodged from the habit peculiar to him.

Just as death is the separation of the soul from the body, so is knowledge, as it were, the rational death urging the spirit away, and separating it from the passions, and leading it on to the life of well-doing

But, as seems, ignorance is the starvation of the soul, and knowledge its sustenance.

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Whenever, then, one is righteous, not from necessity or out of fear or hope, but from free choice, this is called the royal road, which the royal race travel. But the byways are slippery and precipitous.

Such is the Gnostic labourer, who has the mastery of worldly desires, even while still in the flesh; and who, in regard to things future and still invisible, which he knows, has a sure persuasion, so that he regards them as more present than things within reach. This able workman rejoices in what he knows, but is cramped on account of his being involved in the necessities of life; not yet deemed worthy of the active participation in what he knows. So he uses this life as if it belonged to another — so far, that is, as is necessary.

Nor is he ashamed to die, having a good conscience, and being fit to be seen by the Powers.

And in the attempt to persuade and lead to the truth those who are not entirely incurable, I have made use of these words. For there are some who cannot bear at all to listen to those who exhort them to turn to the truth; and they attempt to trifle, pouring out blasphemies against the truth, claiming for themselves the knowledge of the greatest things in the universe, without having learned, or inquired, or laboured, or discovered the consecutive train of ideas — whom one should pity rather than hate for such perversity.

But if one is curable, able to hear (like fire or steel) the outspokenness of the truth which cuts away and burns their false opinions. let him lend the ears of the soul.