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Theōria as Cure for Impiety and Atheism in Plato's Laws and Clement of Alexandria

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Abstract: The article examines the impact of Plato's views on atheism and impiety, relayed in the *Laws*, on Clement of Alexandria. Clement employed the adjectives godless (*atheos*) and impious (*asebēs*) often in his writings as accusations against pagan philosophers and/or heretics, but also in his defence of Christians against the very charge of atheism on account of their rejection of pagan gods (*Stromata* 7.1; cf. Tertullian's *Apologia* 10). I argue that Clement, perceptive of Plato's defence of philosophical contemplation (*theōria*) and its civic benefits in the *Laws*, reworked the latter's association of disbelief with excessive confidence in fleshly pleasures (*Leges* 888A) in tandem with his stipulation of virtue as the civic goal of his ideal colonists of Magnesia who ought to attune to the divine principles of the cosmos. Thus, Clement promoted the concept of citizenship in the Heavenly kingdom, secured through contemplation and its ensuing impassibility. For Plato and Clement, atheism was the opposite of genuine engagement with divine truth and had no place in the ideal state. Although Clement associated the Church with peace, his views were adapted by Firmicus Maternus to sanction violent rhetoric against the pagans in the fourth century when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Keywords: atheism; impiety; Plato; *Laws*; Clement of Alexandria; heavenly citizenship; religious violence; Firmicus Maternus



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Introduction

This article examines Plato's views on atheism and impiety,¹ as expounded in the *Laws* ([ed. Bury (Loeb)] 888A–D), and their reception by Clement of Alexandria whose theological legacy (using edns. from *Sources Chrét.*) shaped the early church and remains important to the Orthodox tradition to this day (cf. Yingling 2009, p. 93). I argue that Clement drew on Plato's *Laws* to defend Christians from the accusation of atheism that was allegedly levelled at them during the early days (*Stromata* [hereafter *Str*] [ed. Bouluec] 7.1.1.1–2).² Influenced by the civic context in which Plato rejected atheism,³ Clement emphasized faith in the Christian God as a key credential for gaining entrance in the Heavenly kingdom. While Clement did eventually refer to pagans as atheists (*Protrepticus* [hereafter *Protr*] [ed. Mondésert] 10.93.1–2),⁴ his refutation of their error remained a dialectical exercise of moderate tone (*Str* 4.1.2.3), typically urging the “ignorant” and “unjust” to convert to the Christian God. Clement's argument, in line with his own experience of the persecution of Christians at Alexandria under Septimius Severus, is nonviolent (*Protr* 10.93.1–2, with Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.1).⁵ By the fourth century, however, Christian thinkers, likely inspired by the newly-found proximity of state and religion promoted under Constantine and his sons, employed explicitly violent language against the heterodox as a means of safeguarding the Christian faith (Van der Heever 2018, p. 302; Drake 2011; Whitmarsh 2015, pp. 163–70). Thus, in the final section of this essay, I discuss the adaptation of Clement's Plato-inspired views on impiety by Firmicus Maternus, a Christian polemicist who urged the emperors Constantius and Constans to stamp out paganism completely (Marcos 2013, pp. 9–10; Rüpke 2014, pp. 192–200). His aggressive language,

however, did not necessarily aim at instigating physical violence; when placed in context (Van Nuffelen 2020, pp. 517–19; cf. Mayer 2013; Bremmer 2014), Firmicus Maternus' opinions seem to be inspired by contemporary political realities, primarily by his need to command the attention of the emperor(s).

1. Defending Contemplation: Impiety and Atheism in Plato's Laws

In earlier dialogues, especially the *Euthyphro*⁶ and the *Apology*,⁷ Plato comments on Socrates' indictment for impiety and his subsequent execution in 399 BCE.⁸ Plato spoke of the gods in abstract terms, promoting Socrates' *daimonion* and often citing tales about the traditional gods as examples of people's misapprehensions regarding what constitutes piety and/or impiety. In the late *Laws*, however, written in the shadow of his failed involvement in Sicilian politics (Brisson 2020; cf. Anagnostou-Laoutides 2020a), Plato unequivocally admitted the existence of gods, stating that "god controls everything, and alongside god, chance and occasion control all human affairs" (*Leges* [hereafter *Leg*] 709B7–8: Ὡς θεὸς μὲν πάντα, καὶ μετὰ θεοῦ τύχη καὶ καιρὸς, τὰνθρώπινα διακυβερνῶσι σύμπαντα). Further, he acknowledged the traditional pantheon (745B–E; 771D; 828B–D; 848D; 920D–921D; 946A–E), the gods of the Underworld and Moira (799D), as well as the cults of ancestors and heroes, all of which ought to be diligently honoured in the proposed colony of Magnesia. In the *Laws*, Plato described at length the legal code of the colony's constitution—a second model of the ideal city next to the Kallipolis of the *Republic* (hereafter *Resp*) [using ed. Shorey]⁹ and its day-to-day application(s), designed to support the educational model of the city and its goal of enabling its citizens to attune to the divine principles of the cosmos.¹⁰ Education in Magnesia relied on music as a main means of dispensing civic ethical training (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2022, pp. 12–13, 17). Since *nomos* meant both law and song/musical genre (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2022, p. 19, with n. 72) harmony, infused through civic education, should be also reflected in the laws of the city. Thus, the legal code of Magnesia was underpinned by profound belief in the existence of gods whose virtue the citizens ought to emulate (*Leg* 906A3–B4):

Since we have agreed among us that heaven is full of many good things, but also of their opposites, and that the not good things are more numerous, we say that such a battle is immortal, and needs incredible alertness (φυλακῆς θαυμαστῆς δεομένη); for the gods and daemons are our allies (σύμμαχοι δὲ ἡμῖν) and we the possession of the gods and daemons (ἡμεῖς δ' αὖ κτήμα θεῶν καὶ δαιμόνων); and injustice and insolence combined with folly destroys us (φθείρει δὲ ἡμᾶς ἀδικία καὶ ὕβρις μετὰ ἀφροσύνης), but justice and thinking soundly saves us combined with the wisdom (σώζει δὲ δικαιοσύνη καὶ σωφροσύνη μετὰ φρονήσεως) which resides in the animate powers of the gods (ἐν ταῖς τῶν θεῶν ἐμψύχοις οἰκοῦσαι δυνάμεσιν), while some small trace of them may be clearly seen here as also residing in us.

Plato's statement accords with his definition of the human mission to become as god-like as possible, as famously expounded in the *Theaetetus* (176B2–3),¹¹ but in the *Laws* Plato's conviction about the existence of the gods links human nature with political rule more explicitly, since the city-state provides the context in which citizens are required to nourish the divine elements of their souls. Thus, in *Leg* 712B5–8 Plato invoked "the presence of the God in the establishment of the state (Θεὸν δὴ πρὸς τὴν τῆς πόλεως κατασκευὴν ἐπικαλώμεθα), so that he may hearken, and hearkening he may come, propitious and kindly to us, to help us in developing the state and its laws" (ὁ δὲ ἀκούσειέν τε, καὶ ἀκούσας ἴλεως εὐμενῆς τε ἡμῖν ἔλθοι συνδιακοσμήσων τὴν τε πόλιν καὶ τοὺς νόμους), while in 713A2–5 he added: "... if the State ought to be named after any such thing, it should be given the name of the God who truly rules over those who are sensible" (τὸ τοῦ ἀληθῶς τῶν τὸν νοῦν ἐχόντων δεσπόζοντος θεοῦ ὄνομα λέγεσθαι).

Accordingly, Plato famously referred to impiety as a disease dangerous for the city (888B10: ταύτην τὴν νόσον ἔχοντες), arising from "greed for pleasure" (888A4: ὑπὸ λαίμαργίας ἡδονῆς) and corrupting the minds of those suffering from it (888A7: τοῖς οὕτω τὴν διάνοιαν

διεφθαρμένοις). Plato distinguished three types of impious men:¹² atheists who deny the existence of gods altogether and hardly ever maintain their youthful delusion until later in life (888C2–3: τὸ μηδένα πώποτε λαβόντα [...] ταύτην τὴν δόξαν περὶ θεῶν, ὡς οὐκ εἰσὶν, διατελέσαι πρὸς γῆρας μείναντα ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ διανοήσει); those who believe that gods exist but do not care about men (888C5–6: τὸ τοὺς θεοὺς εἶναι μὲν, φροντίζειν δὲ οὐδὲν τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων); and those who undermine the gods by thinking it is easy to bribe them with offerings (888C7–8: ὡς φροντίζουσι μὲν, εὐπαράμυθοι δ' εἰσὶν θύμασιν καὶ εὐχαῖς). Total denial of the gods is less common compared to the other two types of atheism. Importantly, the debate about the existence of the gods ought to be entrusted to the legislator (888C10–D6).¹³

Furthermore, Plato compares the lawgivers with musicians, and therefore with philosophers, whom he claims, were skilled in “the greatest form of music” (*Phaedo* [hereafter *Ph*] [ed. Fowler] 61A4–5; cf. *Resp* 591C1–D3; *Laches* 188D3–9; [Anagnostou-Laoutides 2021a; 2022](#), p. 19 and n. 73; [2023](#)). Plato was adamant that before becoming absolutely god-fearing (*Leg* 967D4–5: βεβαίως θεοσεβῆ), people ought to be convinced of two truths: first, “that the soul is oldest of all things that partake of generation” (967D6–7: ψυχὴ τε ὡς ἔστιν πρεσβύτατον ἀπάντων ὅσα γονῆς μετείληφεν), “and is immortal and rules over all bodies” (ἀθάνατόν τε ἄρχει τε δὴ σωματίων πάντων); second, that “reason controls what exists among the stars” (967D10: τὸν ... ἐν τοῖς ἄστροις νοῦν τῶν ὄντων), and that “the connection of these things follows the principles of music” (967E2: τὰ τε κατὰ τὴν μουσικὴν τούτοις τῆς κοινωνίας) which societies should “apply by fitting together moral practices and customs” (967E3–5: χρῆσθαι πρὸς τὰ τῶν ἡθῶν ἐπιτηδεύματα καὶ νόμιμα συναρμοστόντως), “while being able to give a rational explanation of all that admits of rational explanation” (ὅσα τε λόγον ἔχει, τούτων δυνατὸς ἢ δοῦναι τὸν λόγον). Earlier in the dialogue Plato had noted that legislating the use of such music “would be the task of a god or godlike man” (657A10–11: τοῦτο δὲ θεοῦ ἢ θεοῦ τινὸς ἀνδρὸς ἂν εἴη: cf. 669C–673D; 799A–B). Thus, Magnesia’s legislators were also envisaged as philosophers since they were expected to engage in what philosophers typically dedicate their lives to—becoming godlike.

For Plato, the goal of becoming godlike during life involved limiting as much as possible the interference of the body in our perception of virtue as preparation for embracing the survival of the soul after death. Thus, philosophers, striving to exceed the confines of the senses so to “behold truth with the eyes of the soul alone” (*Ph* 66D10–E1: καὶ αὐτῇ τῇ ψυχῇ θεατέον αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα; [Anagnostou-Laoutides 2022](#), pp. 23–29, with ns. 38–39), posed as the antithesis of atheists whose error, according to Plato, is rooted in their misplaced belief in materialism (*Leg* 891C–892B). Through constant and systematic contemplation, the philosophers (*Ph* 68C6–D1),¹⁴ keen to participate in the politics of the heavenly city alone (*Resp* 592B),¹⁵ were uniquely placed to advise the city on its progress. In Magnesia, philosophical *theōria*¹⁶ would be practised by the Nocturnal Council and their designated *theōroi*. The members of the Council, we are told, would dedicate their lives to examining the ethical principles of law by studying the nature of virtue and its various manifestations, such as self-control, courage, justice, and wisdom (*Leg* 964B3–6; 965C9–D3; [Anagnostou-Laoutides 2022](#), p. 18). Above all, the members of the Council would be responsible for debating theological matters, starting with the vexed question about the existence of gods and our ability to grasp their powers (*Leg* 966C1–D3), and moving on to the issue of the divine origin of the soul and the rational principle that brought about the order of the universe (966D10–E5).¹⁷ In addition, the Nocturnal Council would appoint citizens recognized for their wisdom as *theōroi*; the latter would be entrusted with tracing exceptional thinkers across good and bad cities for the privilege of conversing with them before reporting their opinions back to the Nocturnal Council for further deliberation (951B5–8). In essence, the *theōroi* would enable the regular reviewing of Magnesia’s constitution with the additional input of their external discussants. Plato deems this kind of reflection (*theōria*) as paramount for maintaining the perfect status of the city.¹⁸ Moreover, Plato made provisions for Magnesia’s average citizens to engage in *theōria*, not only through their musical education, as discussed above (and highlighted in *Resp* 349C5–D2), but also through the

so-called Test of the Wine. Characterized as “Dionysus’ *theōria*” (650A1), the Test was designed to encourage citizens to continuously monitor their ethical development.¹⁹

Notably, Plato insisted on the importance of addressing those who suffer from the disease of atheism “mildly and dispassionately” (*Leg* 888A: ἐν πράξει λόγοις; 888A7-9: πράως, σβέσαντες τὸν θυμόν), like a father or a teacher trying to admonish or teach a child (888A1: νοθετῶν ἅμα διδάσκειν; 888A10: Ὡ παῖ), aiming first and foremost at persuading them (890D). Nevertheless, he was conscious that provisions ought to be made for the punishment of obstinate atheists. Plato distinguished between atheists by nature and those whose atheism was the result of being enslaved to desires (899D–900C; cf. 864B). He deemed the damage inflicted by the latter as graver, since tyrants tend to rise from among this group of atheists: such examples result in weakening the cohesion of the citizenry, undermining its identity, and clouding its moral orientation. In his view, again, those who believe that the gods are indifferent to humans or easily bribed do so either out of folly or because they are evil. In all cases, however, convicted atheists should be removed from the civic group. First, they should be punished by imprisonment, while also closely coached by the Nocturnal Council that would oversee their progress, aiming at persuading them to change their minds and be rehabilitated in society. If, however, all else failed, atheists should be punished by death (908B1–910D). Hence, while not the preferred solution, Plato did allow for violence against atheists to be enshrined in the laws of Magnesia as the ultimate means of safeguarding the city against their insolence.

Clement, a thorough reader of Plato, further developed the civic framework of faith as analysed in the *Laws*, arguing that Christians ought to defend the law entrusted to them by God in anticipation of gaining citizenship in the heavenly Kingdom ([Anagnostou-Laoutides 2022](#), pp. 26–27).

2. Plato’s *Laws*, Impiety and Atheism in Clement of Alexandria

Clement of Alexandria expanded on Plato’s rejection of atheism by developing the notion of the heavenly city and its connection to our inner constitution in ways that, in my view, had a profound impact on the concept of citizenship in Christ, as a projection of Christian collective identity. Clement undertook a painstaking study of pagan intellectual traditions, in which Plato features prominently, often claiming that Greek philosophy was a corruption or an offshoot of the Mosaic Law.²⁰ The idea is introduced at the start of Clement’s *Stromata/Stromateis*, a title that alludes etymologically to the “layers” of meaning that he proposed to uncover for his discerning readers.²¹ According to Clement, “Moses was a prophet, a legislator, a military tactics expert, a war strategist, a politician, and a philosopher” (*Str* 1.24.158.1: Ἔστιν οὖν ὁ Μωυσῆς ἡμῖν προφητικός, νομοθετικός, τακτικός, στρατηγικός, πολιτικός, φιλόσοφος). His description aims to present Plato’s connection of legislation and civic religion, as we saw it in the *Laws*, as originating in Mosaic law. After comparing the wisdom that orders the divine things to the political skill that rules human affairs (1.24.159.4–5: τὰ μὲν θεῖα ἢ σοφία, τὰ ἀνθρώπεια δὲ ἢ πολιτική), Clement portrayed God as “a king who rules according to the laws and possesses the skill to rule over willing subjects” (1.24.159.5–6: βασιλεὺς τοίνυν ἐστὶν ὁ ἄρχων κατὰ νόμους ὁ τὴν τοῦ ἄρχειν ἐκόντων ἐπιστήμην ἔχων). In a universe regulated by God’s kingly skill, passions can be mastered through virtue and reason: by acquiring “self-restraint and moderation with holiness and sound knowledge with truth” (1.24.159.3–4: ἐγκράτειαν καὶ σωφροσύνην μεθ’ ὀσιότητος καὶ γνῶσιν ἀγαθὴν μετ’ ἀληθείας), the faithful attain piety toward God (τὸ τέλος εἰς εὐσέβειαν ἀναφέρων θεοῦ). Despite claiming that the Greeks are but children compared to the wisdom of the Jews, Clement cited both the *Statesman* and the *Laws* (the latter is, in fact, cited six times by name in the *Stromata*) in praise of Plato’s appreciation that both natural and civic law derive from God.²² Importantly, like Plato, Clement was explicit that the law ‘attunes’ (recognizing the affinity of the legislator and the musician, see below n. 22) and further ‘conducts’ those who follow it to God.²³ Accordingly, he explicitly compared a pagan city governed by law to the Church ruled

by the *logos*, making reference to the Heavenly model that inspired Plato's ideal state and (presumably) likewise the kingdom of God. Clement wrote (*Str* 4.26.172.2–3):

For a city is an important thing (σπουδαῖον γὰρ ἡ πόλις), and the people a decorous body (καὶ ὁ δῆμος ἀστειόν τι σύστημα), and a multitude of men regulated by law as the Church by the Word (καὶ πλῆθος ἀνθρώπων ὑπὸ νόμου διοικούμενον, καθάπερ ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑπὸ λόγου)—a city on earth impregnable, free from tyranny (ἀπολιόρητος ἀτυράννητος πόλις ἐπὶ γῆς), a product of the divine will on earth as in heaven (θέλημα θεῖον ἐπὶ γῆς ὡς ἐν οὐρανῶ). Images of this city the poets create with their pen (εἰκόνας τῆσδε τῆς πόλεως καὶ οἱ ποιηταὶ κτίζουσι γράφοντες). For the Hyperboreans, and the Arimaspians, and the Elysian plains, are polities of just men (αἱ γὰρ Ὑπερβόρειοι καὶ Ἀριμάσπειοι πόλεις καὶ τὰ Ἠλύσια πεδία δικαίων πολιτεύματα). And we know Plato's city placed as a pattern in heaven (ἴσμεν δὲ καὶ τὴν Πλάτωνος πόλιν παράδειγμα ἐν οὐρανῶ κειμένην).

Thus, Clement wishes for the spirit of Christ to transport him to the heavenly Jerusalem (*Str* 4.26.172.2: ἐγὼ δὲ ἂν εὐξαίμην τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ περῶσαί με εἰς τὴν Ἱερουσαλήμ τὴν ἐμήν). According to Clement, Plato's aspiration of becoming godlike was perfectly compatible with Scripture and the Mosaic Law (2.19.100.3–4; 5.14.94.3–95.20), and a sound way of achieving piety to the true God.²⁴ Furthermore, as I have argued elsewhere ([Anagnostou-Laoutides 2022](#), pp. 26–27), Clement believed that the true gnostic (that is the wise Christian) would be conducted to the Heavenly kingdom through persistent practice of contemplation (*theōria*), which would act as purification from the senses, leading to impassibility.²⁵ Although Christian *theōria* ought to be mediated by faith,²⁶ the gnostic conducts himself like Plato's philosopher in the *Phaedrus*²⁷ and the *Phaedo* ([Anagnostou-Laoutides 2021b](#), pp. 219–24; [2023](#), pp. 29–33). Thus, through *theoria* he is able to reach better places and perfect his citizenship in God (*Str* 4.25.155.2).²⁸ Plato had reiterated this idea emphatically in the *Laws*, where he asserted that “when the soul achieves union with divine virtue (ὁπόταν μὲν ἀρετῆ θεῖα προσμείξασα), it becomes eminently virtuous (γίγνηται διαφερόντως τοιαύτη) and moves to an eminent region, transported by a holy road to another and better region” (διαφέροντα καὶ μετέβαλεν τόπον ἅγιον ὅλον, μετακομισθεῖσα εἰς ἀμείνω τινὰ τόπον ἕτερον; *Leg* 904D8–E1). Similarly, Clement affirmed in *Str* 7.3.13.1–2 that:

the gnostic souls (τὰς γνωστικὰς ψυχὰς) which surpass in the grandeur of contemplation the mode of life of each of the holy ranks (τῆ μεγαλοπρεπείᾳ τῆς θεωρίας ὑπερβαινούσας ἐκάστης ἁγίας τάξεως τὴν πολιτείαν), are assigned by lot among whom the blessed abodes of the gods (καθ' ἃς αἱ μακάριαι θεῶν οἰκῆσεις διωρισμέναι διακεκλήρωνται), reckoned holy among the holy (ἁγίας ἐν ἁγίοις λογισθείσας), transferred entire from among the entire (μετακομισθείσας ὅλας ἐξ ὅλων), reaching places better than the better places (εἰς ἀμείνους ἀμεινόνων τόπων τόπους ἀφικομένης), embracing the divine vision (τὴν θεωρίαν ἀσπαζομένης τὴν θεῖαν) [...] in the transcendently clear and absolutely pure insatiable vision which is the privilege of intensely loving souls (ἐναργῆ δὲ ὡς ἔνι μάλιστα καὶ ἀκριβῶς εἰλικρινῆ τὴν ἀκόρεστον ὑπερφυῶς ἀγαπώσας ψυχὰς ἐστιωμένης θεῶν), holding festival through endless ages (ἀίδιως ἀίδιον εὐφροσύνην ἀκόρεστον καρπουμένης), remain honoured with the identity of all excellence (εἰς τοὺς ἀτελευτήτους αἰῶνας ταυτότητι τῆς ὑπεροχῆς ἀπάσας τετιμημένης διαμένειν). Such is the vision attainable by the pure in heart (αὕτη τῶν καθαρῶν τῆ καρδία ἢ καταληπτικῆ θεωρία).

As Dominic O'Meara (2003, p. 162) notes,

To become members of the Church, the 'initiated' must receive instruction in the 'divine way of life' (ἡ ἔνθεος πολιτεία) so as to live this life, purifying themselves of the life of vice (ἡ ἐν κακία πολιτεία). They thus require teaching and a moral reform, followed by purification which leads to a contemplative mode

of life exemplified at its highest level, in the order of the ‘initiated,’ by the rank of monks.

In this context, Clement defined the purpose of book 7 of the *Stromata* as demonstrating that “the gnostic alone is truly pious” (7.1.1.1: μόνον ὄντως εἶναι θεοσεβῆ τὸν γνωστικόν), a notion he reiterated a paragraph later, where we read that the true Gnostic “alone is holy and pious, and worships the true God in a manner worthy of Him” (7.1.2.1: ... μόνον τὸν γνωστικὸν ὁσίον τε καὶ εὐσεβῆ, θεοπρεπῶς τὸν τῷ ὄντι θεὸν θρησκευόντα). Accordingly, Clement attacked pagan philosophers as “unworthy of partaking of the power of believing” (7.1.1.2: μηδέπω ἀξίους ἑαυτοὺς μεταλαβεῖν τῆς τοῦ πιστεῦσαι δυνάμεως παρεσχήκασιν). He further added (7.1.4.3) that,

He ... who is persuaded that God is omnipotent (ὁ τοίνυν θεὸν πεπεισμένος εἶναι παντοκράτορα) and has been instructed in the divine mysteries from His only-begotten Son (καὶ τὰ θεῖα μυστήρια παρὰ τοῦ μονογενοῦς παιδὸς αὐτοῦ ἐκμαθών),” cannot be an atheist (πῶς οὗτος ἄθεος;). “An atheist is someone who believes that God does not exist (ἄθεος μὲν γὰρ ὁ μὴ νομίζων εἶναι θεόν) and is superstitious because he dreads the demons (δεισιδαίμων δὲ ὁ δεδιώς τὰ δαιμόνια); it is him who deifies all things, both wood and stone (ὁ πάντα θειάζων καὶ ξύλον καὶ λίθον); and reduces to bondage spirit, and man who possesses the life of reason” (καὶ πνεῦμα ἄνθρωπον τὸν <μῆ> λογικῶς βιοῦντα καταδεδουλωμένον).

Clement employed the same rhetoric against those he regarded as heretics, such as those who followed Valentinus, Marcion, or Basilides, and many others (*Str* 7.17.108.1–2), whom he described as “mystagogues of the soul of the impious” (7.17.106.3: μυσταγωγοὶ τῆς τῶν ἀσεβῶν ψυχῆς). Their followers, he warned, will not enter the kingdom of God (7.17.106.1–2):

Those, then, who adhere to impious words (Οἱ τοίνυν τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀπτόμενοι λόγων) and dictate them to others (ἄλλοις τε ἐξάρχοντες), without applying the divine words correctly but erroneously (μηδὲ εὖ τοῖς λόγοις τοῖς θείοις, ἀλλὰ ἐξημαρτημένως συγχρώμενοι), neither themselves enter into the kingdom of heaven (οὔτε αὐτοὶ εἰσίσσιν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν), nor allow those whom they have deceived to attain the truth (οὔτε οὖς ἐξηπάτησαν ἐῷσιν τυγχάνειν τῆς ἀληθείας).

Furthermore, Clement is of the opinion that the divine constitution (the *entheos politeia*) must be ruled by laws that aim to teach as much as to punish (1.27.171.1). Clement resorts once more to Plato and the *Laws* to support the view that “the unbeliever is one to whom voluntary falsehood is agreeable” (ὁ δὲ ἄπιστος, ᾧ φίλον ψεῦδος ἐκούσιον; *Str* 4.18.1–2).²⁹ Such men are senseless, faithless, and ignorant. Clement quotes *Laws* 730C4–7 (cf. 705A) where the Athenian Stranger claims that “the man who loves the voluntary lie is untrustworthy (ὁ δὲ ἄπιστος ᾧ φίλον ψεῦδος ἐκούσιον), while the man who loves the involuntary lie is senseless” (ὅτω δὲ ἀκούσιον, ἄνους),³⁰ adding that “everyone who is either faithless or foolish is friendless” (ἄφιλος γὰρ δὴ πᾶς ὁ γε ἄπιστος καὶ ἀμαθής). Such men corrode the coherence of the civic group. Unlike them, Clement argues (*Str* 4.18.3–4),

those who believe in Christ both are and are called Chrestoi (good) (αὐτίκα οἱ εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν πεπιστευκότες χρηστοὶ τε εἰσὶ καὶ λέγονται), as those who are cared for by the true king are kingly (ὡς τῷ ὄντι βασιλικοὶ οἱ βασιλεῖ μεμελημένοι) ... those who belong to Christ the King are kings, and those that are Christ’s Christians (ὡς γὰρ οἱ σοφοὶ σοφία εἰσὶ σοφοὶ καὶ οἱ νόμιμοι νόμῳ νόμιμοι, οὕτως οἱ Χριστῷ βασιλεῖ βασιλεῖς καὶ οἱ Χριστοῦ Χριστιανοί).

Clement cites here Plato’s authority once more to argue that “following the law” is a way to actively emulate God and achieve assimilation with him. Unlike the great natures that are free from passions and can immediately grasp the truth, average people must rely

on observing the law. Furthermore, the divine law trains man especially to self-restraint, laying this as the foundation of the virtues (cf. *Str* 1.24.159.3–6 cited above).

Thus, Clement follows Plato in associating impiety with faithlessness and atheism (see *Resp* 580A),³¹ a heinous crime that lawgivers must eliminate from the ideal society, following the example of God who converts his enemies by chastising them. In *Stromata* 7.16.102.4–5 Clement insists that God, acting like a teacher or like a father (ἀλλ' ὡς πρὸς τοῦ διδασκάλου ἢ τοῦ πατρὸς οἱ παῖδες), as we saw in Plato's *Laws*, does not punish but chastises. For, while punishment is retaliation for evil (ἔστι γὰρ ἡ τιμωρία κακοῦ ἀνταπόδοσις), chastisement is for our benefit, collectively and individually (κολάζει μέντοι πρὸς τὸ χρήσιμον καὶ κοινῇ καὶ ἰδίᾳ τοῖς κολαζομένοις). Using Platonic vocabulary Clement explains that “the source of all transgressions are two, ignorance and weakness” (7.16.101.6: δύο εἰσὶν ἀρχαὶ πάσης ἀμαρτίας, ἄγνοια καὶ ἀσθένεια; cf. 7.16.102.6), and God intervenes as a doctor to heal those willing to lend their ears to him. The unabashed, Clement comments, “have the penalties that are on record” (7.16.105.6: ἔγγραφα ἔχουσι τὰ ἐπιτίμια). Of course, Clement realizes that fear of punishment or hope for reward are not genuine enough motives for the true Gnostic who aims to practice piety for the sake of the good alone (4.22.145.2),³² nevertheless it is an efficient means of keeping the average Christian alert to the ever-lurking danger of sin.

Clement explicitly refers to fear of punishment as fundamental and deeply pedagogical (2.6.30.3–4),³³ especially since the divine plan involves the salvation of both believers and unbelievers (7.2.6.6); punishment is, in fact, presented as the way to conversion which is preferable to death. Citing once more Plato's *Laws* (=715E8–716A3), Clement further stresses the association of fear with the divine Law, referring to justice as the “avenger of those who rebel against the divine Law” (*Str* 2.22.132.2–3):

Thus, he says in the *Laws* (ἐν τοῖς Νόμοις·); God indeed, as per the ancient saying (ὡσπερ καὶ ὁ παλαιὸς λόγος), occupying the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things (ὁ μὲν δὴ θεὸς ... ἀρχὴν τε καὶ μέσα καὶ τελευτήν τῶν πάντων ἔχων), brings them straight to their natural end while encircling them (εὐθειᾶν περαίνει κατὰ φύσιν περιπορευόμενος)· and he is always attended by justice (τῷ δὲ αἰεὶ ξυνέπεται δίκη), the avenger of those who rebel against the divine law (τῶν ἀπολειπομένων τοῦ θεοῦ νόμου τιμωρός). You see how he also associates fear with the divine law (ὄρας ὅπως καὶ αὐτὸς εὐλάβειαν προσάγει τῷ θεῷ νόμῳ).

Furthermore, while persistently discussing Plato's analysis of marriage laws, now elaborated with Scriptural examples, Clement summarizes the capital punishments for adultery, aimed at checking the impulsiveness of the passions (2.23.147.1: πρὸς ἀναστολήν τῆς εὐεπιφορίας τῶν παθῶν), before concluding ominously that “the law is not at variance with the Gospel, but agrees with it” (2.23.147.2: οὐ δὴ μάχεται τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ ὁ νόμος, συνάδει δὲ αὐτῷ). Importantly, although in the *Protrepticus* Clement refers to the “peaceful soldiers of Christ” (*Protr* 11.116.3–4: τοὺς εἰρηνικοὺς στρατιώτας τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ), in *Stromata* 3.4.32.1 we are assured that those who disobey the laws become hated both “to human lawgivers and to the law of God” (ἤδη δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρωπίνους νομοθέταις καὶ τῷ θεῷ νόμῳ ἀπεχθάνονται παρανόμως βιοῦν ἐπανηρημένοι); Clement cites here the Old Testament Book of Numbers (25:7–14; cf. 25:17) where “the man who thrust his spear into the fornicator is evidently blessed by God” (*Str* 3.4.32.2: ὁ γοῦν ἐκκεντήσας τὸν πόρνον εὐλογούμενος πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ δείκνυται ἐν τοῖς Ἀριθμοῖς). Similar views are expressed in Clement's fragments, for example his comments of the Epistle of Jude or the First Epistle of John 2.2, which at the same time illustrate the reception of his views in later Christianity; for example, Cassiodorus in the sixth century refers to Clement's comments in his *Adumbrationes in Epistolas Catholicas* (Dainese 2016).

3. Clement and the Violent Turn of Religious Rhetoric in Late Antiquity

Clement defined scepticism as the result of the “changeability and instability of the human mind” (*Str* 8.7.22.1–2: ... ἐν μὲν τὸ πολὺτροπον καὶ ἄστατον τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης γνώμης) in conjunction with “the discrepancy that exists in things” (δεύτερον δὲ ἢ ἐν

τοις οἷσι διαφωνία). This is why, Clement argued, God, “having equipped some of the barbarians with the commandments and some with philosophy” (7.2.11.2: τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἐντολάς, τοῖς δὲ φιλοσοφίαν παρασχών), “he shut up on all sides the disbelief in his advent” (συνέκλεισεν τὴν ἀπιστίαν εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν), “on account of which anyone who does not believe is inexcusable” (ὄθεν ἀναπολόγητός ἐστι πᾶς ὁ μὴ πιστεύσας).³⁴ Repentance is the only avenue Clement afforded to sinners to escape their predicament (*Str* 7.2.12.5). His position, embraced by members of his immediate circle such as his student Origen (*Contra Celsum* 1.71), was notably influential among Christian authors. Hence, Clement’s views are well-known to Eusebius, certainly the fifth book of the *Stromata* that focuses on faith and is excerpted in *PE* 13.13, but also to Athanasius³⁵ and later to Cyril of Alexandria (*Grant* 1964). The latter adopts a notably hard line in his works, for example in his Commentary on John, determining that those who do not believe in Jesus are bound to “die in their sins”.³⁶ Cyril’s language is, on this occasion at least (*Crawford* 2023), notably hostile and threatening against those who do not believe in Jesus, anticipating the violent expulsion of the Jews from Alexandria in 415.³⁷ These were volatile times during which individuals and communities face numerous crises and feel the need to display their identities in dramatic ways (*Anagnostou-Laoutides* 2024). Furthermore, this is the time when Christianity, having found a champion in Constantine, is preoccupied with resolving its dogmatic disputes; the process left little room for the theological debates of the second and third centuries when Christianity posed as a philosophy, or rather as the “true philosophy” (*Löhr* 2010, pp. 168–70) and Christian teachers were confident in engaging with the intellectual traditions of the heterodox.³⁸

In my view, these new circumstances that demanded of Christians to negotiate the ways in which the State would promote and even enforce Christianity dictate the style of Firmicus Maternus’ polemic *Error of the Pagan Religions*. However, although he draws as we shall see on Clement and ultimately on Plato’s views on atheism and impiety, Firmicus is more intent on attracting the attention of the emperors by using bold language. In his work, the philosopher assured the emperors that “ordered by the law of the Greatest God, your (i.e., their) severity should prosecute the evil deeds of idolatry” (29.1–2: *hoc vobis dei summi lege praecipitur, ut severitas vestra idolatriae facinus omnifariam persequatur*). Furthermore, closely paraphrasing the Book of Deuteronomy 13 on worshipping other gods³⁹ he urged the leaders of the Byzantine theocracy to:

Hear and perceive with your holy senses what God commands you about this deed (*de isto facinore*): do not to pity either the son or the father, and through the loved members of a spouse, he thrusts the vindicating sword (*Nec filio iubet parci nec fratri, et per amata coniugis membra gladium vindicem ducit*). He also persecutes the friend with lofty severity and all the people are armed for breaking up the bodies of the sacrilegious (*Amicum quoque sublimi severitate persequitur, et ad discernenda sacrilegorum corpora omnis populus armature*) (*Errore* 29.1 [ed. Oster, p. 133]).

The Old Testament God, Firmicus continues, further adapting Deuteronomy 13 (at 29.2 [p. 116])⁴⁰ sanctioned even the extermination of whole cities when suggestions of worshipping new, unfamiliar gods were put forward:

... killing (*interficiens*), you shall murder everyone who is in the city with a destruction by the sword (*necabis omnes quiqui sunt in civitate caede gladii*) and you shall burn the city with fire (*incendes civitatem igni*) and it shall be without habitation (*et erit sine habitaculo*) and nothing shall be built there forever (*non aedificabitur in aeternum*).

Notably, Clement, on whom Firmicus often relied (*Turcan* 1982, pp. 51–52; cf. *Wagner* 1971, p. 212, n. 5), quoted Deuteronomy 13:4 twice in the *Stromata* (2.19.100.3–101.1; 5.14.94.3–95.2), while discussing Plato’s views on our aptitude to become godlike. The difference in tone between the verses quoted by Firmicus and Clement is striking. Clement, in his usual style, weaved together pagan philosophical tenets (especially Platonic), with

the Mosaic Law and Scriptural paradigms to defend the correlation of civic and divine law across intellectual traditions, with emphasis on the open-mindedness and peaceable nature of those perceptives of divine principles (*Str* 2.19.100.4):

For the law says (φησὶ γὰρ ὁ νόμος), Walk after the Lord your God (ὀπίσω κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ ὑμῶν πορεύεσθε) and keep my commandments (καὶ τὰς ἐντολάς μου φυλάξετε = Deut. 13.4). For the law defines assimilation (i.e., the Platonic assimilation) as following (τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἐξομοίωσιν ὁ νόμος ἀκολουθίαν ὀνομάζει) and such following assimilates those who follow the law as far as possible (ἢ δὲ τοιαύτη ἀκολουθία κατὰ δύναμιν ἐξομοιοῖ).⁴¹ Become, says the Lord, merciful and compassionate (γίνεσθε, φησὶν ὁ κύριος, ἐλεήμονες καὶ οἰκτίρμονες), like your heavenly father is compassionate (ὡς ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος οἰκτίρμων ἐστίν).

Despite using Proverbs 2:21–22 to warn his readers that “the transgressors shall be rooted out from the earth” (2.19.102.2–3: οἱ δὲ παρανομοῦντες ἐξολοθρευθήσονται ἀπ’ αὐτῆς [i.e., τῆς γῆς]), Clement also insisted that it is “the image of God is really the man who does good” (2.19.102.2: τῷ γὰρ ὄντι εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος εὐεργετῶν). He also cited a prophecy according to which God ascertains that he will look “on him who is mild and gentle, and trembles at his words (2.19.101.2: ἐπιβλέψω ... ἐπὶ τὸν πρᾶον καὶ ἡσύχιον καὶ τρέμοντά μου τοὺς λόγους). This assimilation, he continued, refers to people’s ability to approximate the mind and reason of God (2.19.102.6: κατὰ νοῦν καὶ λογισμόν), rather than His appearance, and is reflected both on doing good and, importantly, on ruling over others (2.19.102.6–7: ᾧ καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὸ εὐεργετεῖν καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὸ ἄρχειν ὁμοιότητα προσηκόντως ὁ κύριος ἐνσφραγίζεται). Clement concludes his chapter with a reference of notable Platonic hue to the contribution of holy men to the management of cities and households (2.19.102.7: βουλαῖς γὰρ ἀνδρῶν ὁσίων εὖ μὲν οἰκοῦνται πόλεις, εὖ δ’ οἶκος).

Clement also cited Deuteronomy 4:12 where Israel is reminded of their duty to be loyal to their God (*Str* 4.26.170.4):

now what does God your Lord require of you (νῦν, Ἰσραήλ, τί κύριος ὁ θεός σου αἰτεῖται παρὰ σοῦ) but to fear God your Lord (φοβεῖσθαι κύριον τὸν θεόν σου) and walk in all His ways (καὶ πορεύεσθαι ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ), and love Him (καὶ ἀγαπᾶν αὐτόν) and worship Him alone? (καὶ λατρεύειν αὐτῷ μόνῳ).

However, not only did Clement cite here numerous additional paradigms from the Pythagoreans, the Stoics, and Plato (see *Str* 4.26.172.2–3 cited above), alongside pagan poets such as Euripides, always interspersed with examples from Scripture, but he insisted that it is Israel who has “the power of choosing salvation” (<τοῦτο> αἰτεῖται παρὰ σοῦ, τοῦ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἔχοντος ἐλέσθαι τὴν σωτηρίαν). Clement returned to the issue of free will in Book Five of the *Stromata*, claiming that faith is a choice: “for who is such a god-denier to disbelieve God and demand of him proof as from men?” (5.1.6.1: τίς οὖν οὕτως ἄθεος <ὡς> ἀπιστεῖν θεῷ καὶ τὰς ἀποδείξεις ὡς παρὰ ἀνθρώπων ἀπαιτεῖν τοῦ θεοῦ).⁴² A few paragraphs later, Clement cited Deuteronomy once more, this time 6:4, reiterating to Israel that “God is one and you shall worship only Him” (*Str* 5.14.115.5: ἀκουε, φησὶν, Ἰσραήλ, κύριος ὁ θεός σου εἷς ἐστίν, καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις). But Clement, “a particularly irenic thinker, who affirms seeds of truth wherever he finds them” (Kovacs 2009, p. 263), would have never gone so far as to imagine the imperial army led by Constantine and/or his sons, as the extended hand of the Lord’s punishment against the heterodox (Gassman 2020, pp. 66–75). Unlike Firmicus Maternus who rejected vehemently philosophical allegories (Gassman 2020, pp. 57–61), intent “to develop a new approach to anti-pagan polemic, which treats Christianity and traditional cult as opposing theological and ritual systems” (Gassman 2020, p. 67), Clement repeatedly referred to Christianity as the “true philosophy” (*Str* 5.11.82.2).⁴³ Thus, it seems, by the time of Firmicus Maternus there was need for Christianity to be translated into clear-cut dicta that emphasized

its superiority and did not tolerate the interfaith erudition put on display by Clement and his followers.

Conclusions

As Socrates claims in the *Apology* (23D), people typically assumed that philosophers, too preoccupied with providing a rational explanation to everything and crafting fanciful arguments, “do not believe in gods” (θεοὺς μὴ νομίζειν). Plato seems to respond to this accusation in the *Laws* where he defends the civic benefits of philosophical contemplation, now entrusted in the Nocturnal Council and their appointed *theōroi*. He went further by inviting the average citizens to engage in this kind of *theōria* through the practical Test of Dionysus which would allow them to monitor their ethical stamina, while urging them to contribute to the city’s goal of emulating the virtue of the gods reflected in the cosmic order.

Clement painstakingly employs Plato’s views to counter-suggest the Kingdom of God, the New Jerusalem, as the ideal state that Christians should aspire to, provided they followed the law of the Christian God and were willingly faithful to him. However, contemplation, philosophical or Christian, is an activity that accords with the educated elites that typically claimed senatorial positions. From this perspective, the crowds incited to violence by Firmicus Maternus—unlikely to be trained, interested, or trusted with deciphering philosophical allegories, appear to be pawns in a battle between Senate and Church representatives vying for securing influence on the emperors (Gassman 2020, pp. 116–17).

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Notes

- ¹ N.B.1 I am grateful to the three reviewers of the article for their generous and constructive feedback which has helped me sharpen my arguments. For a definition of atheism in Plato’s *Laws* (understood as not believing in the existence of god/s), see Soneira Martínez (2020, pp. 313, 326) (with Soneira Martínez 2018, pp. 34–35; Roubekas 2014; Bremmer 2020a, p. 58) who prefers the term unbelief as more compatible with ancient religiosity: “The modern notion of atheism as a phenomenon outside of the religious sphere—or opposite to it—cannot be applied in Ancient Greece, nor can a romanticized view of it as a subversive phenomenon”. Also see (Meert 2017, pp. 47–49) claiming that Plutarch (*Superst.* 165c) was the first ancient author to use the term ἀθεότης with a meaning close to that of modern atheism, in connection with *apistia* (disbelief) and the notion of denying divine Providence. Plutarch borrows *atheotēs* (meaning “godlessness” or “ungodliness”) from Plato (for which see n. 4 below). Meert cites the work of (Fahr 1969; Buckley 1987; Rankin 1983). On ἀσέβεια and related terms meaning impiety in ancient Greece, see (Soneira Martínez 2020, p. 320) with n. 44 citing among others (Cohen 1988; Bowden 2015). Plato explores the meaning of impiety in the *Euthyphro* relating the events prior to Socrates’ trial of 399 BCE.
- ² Clement, *Stromata* [hereafter, *Str*], 7.1.1.1–2: “so that by learning who is a true Christian (τίς ἐστὶν ὁ τῷ ὄντι Χριστιανός), the philosophers may realize their own ignorance (τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἀμαθίας καταγνώσασθαι) in rashly and haphazardly persecuting the [Christian] name (εἰκὴ μὲν καὶ ὡς ἔτυχεν διώκοντας τοῦνομα), and falsely calling impious those who know the true God” (μάτην δὲ ἀθέους ἀποκαλοῦντας <τούς> τὸν τῷ ὄντι θεὸν ἐγνωκότας). See (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2020b, p. 81, n. 1) with more bibliography; also, (Kovacs 2016, pp. 337–41); however, as (Whitmarsh 2017, esp. p. 290) notes, “the accusation of atheism develops primarily within a Christian discourse, rather than being levelled at Christians from the outside”.
- ³ As Meert (2017, p. 48) claims, in Plato’s *Statesman* 309A *atheotēs* denotes lack of virtue and self-restraint. In the *Laws* (967A–B), again, Plato relates *atheotēs* to denying the immortality of the soul and naturalism; he further ascribes a combination of both meanings to the sophists in book 10 of the *Laws* (888D–889; 890A, 908C–908D). Buckley (1987, p. 9) and Rankin (1983, p. 135) stress the connection of ancient Greek atheism with “taking different views of deity from one’s fellow citizens”. For *atheos* in connection to impious behaviour toward organized Greek religion, see Pindar, *Pythian Odes* 4.164; Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 151; Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 1036; Euripides, *Andromache* 491, relying here on (Meert 2017, p. 48, n. 106).
- ⁴ The text reads: “Let us convert and change (μετανοήσωμεν οὖν καὶ μεταστῶμεν) from ignorance to knowledge (ἐξ ἀμαθίας εἰς ἐπιστήμην), from insensibility to sensibility (ἐξ ἀφροσύνης εἰς φρόνησιν), from incontinence to continence (ἐξ ἀκρασίας εἰς ἐγκράτειαν), from injustice to justice (ἐξ ἀδικίας εἰς δικαιοσύνην), from atheism to God” (ἐξ ἀθεότητος εἰς θεόν); following (Bremmer 2007, pp. 21–22; Karamanolis 2012, 2021, p. 109); cf. (Herrero de Jáuregui 2008, pp. 19, 47, 145–47, 161, 184–85, 195–96, 245).

- ⁵ (Moss 2020, p. 584; Bremmer 2020b, pp. 58–59, ns. 65–66). Although Clement accuses those who refuse martyrdom as heretics with “an impious and cowardly love of life” (*Str* 4.4.16.3: τινές δὲ τῶν αἰρετικῶν τοῦ κυρίου παρακηκοότες ἀσεβῶς ἅμα καὶ δειλῶς φιλοζωοῦσι), he becomes increasingly critical of those too willing to become martyrs, trying to defend a middle position; (Middleton 2006, pp. 18–25, 28–30).
- ⁶ See *Euthyphro* 5D–6B with (Soneira Martínez 2020, pp. 322–3); cf. *Euthyphro* 15A; see also (Rosen 1968; Cohen 1971; Edwards 2016).
- ⁷ See *Apology* 35B–D with (Burnyeat 2012); Also see (Van Harten 2011, p. 182) with n. 43 on Socrates’ belief that the gods are good; cf. (Lännström 2013; Filonik 2013, pp. 52–57).
- ⁸ (Bremmer 2007, pp. 14, 19; Whitmarsh 2015, pp. 91–99). On Socrates’ trial, also see (Soneira Martínez 2020, p. 331, n. 112) citing (Ferguson 1913; Connor 1991; Brickhouse and Smith 1989, 2002, 2004; Ralkowski 2013).
- ⁹ I am very grateful to Prof. Daryl Kaytor for pointing out that while in the *Republic* we come across the famous myth of the Cave (514A–520A), the *Laws* begins precisely with three elderly men walking to the cave of Zeus on Mt Ida in Crete (625A–B). Thus, while it exceeds the scope of the present paper, it seems that Plato is here preoccupied with the same agenda as in the *Republic*.
- ¹⁰ Plato had developed the connection between the political and the natural cosmos already in the *Respublica* (hereafter *Resp*) (e.g., 430D–432A), while in the *Laws* he explicitly claims that the gods pitying human misery bestowed on them “the pleasurable perception of rhythm and harmony” as a means of ethical training (653C8–9: δεδωκότας τὴν ἔνρρυθμόν τε καὶ ἐναρμόνιον αἴσθησιν μεθ’ ἡδονῆς) which allows us to become the “fellow-dancers” (665A5: τοὺς θεοὺς συγχορευτὰς) of our divine choir leaders, Apollo, the Muses, and above all Dionysus (665A5–7); cf. *Leg* 653A7–654A5. Also see (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2021a, 2023, pp. 29–33).
- ¹¹ Φυγὴ δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῶν κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν· ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὄσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι (“and to escape [from material bonds] is to become godlike, as much as possible; and to become godlike is to become just and blessed with wisdom”). See n. 24 below on Clement’s reception of Plato’s text.
- ¹² *Leg* 885B7–10: Ἀλλὰ ἐν δὴ τι τῶν τριῶν πάσχω, ἢ τοῦτο, ὅπερ εἶπον, οὐχ ἡγούμενος, ἢ τὸ δεύτερον ὄντας οὐ φροντίζειν ἀνθρώπων, ἢ τρίτον εὐπαράμυθους εἶναι θυσίαις τε καὶ εὐχαῖς παραγομένους. Note that the first category is alluded to as “those who disagree with what I just said”, without explicitly admitting the existence of atheists, something he adds a few lines further, at 885C6–11, with the excuse of an imagined counterargument: ταῦτα τάχ’ ἂν ἐρεσηλοῦντες εἶποιεν ... ἡμῶν γὰρ οἱ μὲν τὸ παράπαν θεοὺς οὐδαμῶς νομίζομεν, [...], οἱ δὲ οἴους ὑμεῖς λέγετε (“let’s imagine what they would say in derision ... Some of us do not believe in gods at all; others believe in gods such as of the kind you mention”).
- ¹³ The text reads: Περιμενεῖς, ἀνασκοπῶν εἴτε οὕτως εἴτε ἄλλως ἔχει, πυνθανόμενος παρά τε τῶν ἄλλων καὶ δὴ καὶ μάλιστα καὶ παρὰ τοῦ νομοθέτου (“wait, while considering whether the matter stands thus or otherwise, making enquiries alongside all others especially from the lawgiver” ... πειρατέον γὰρ τῷ τοὺς νόμους σοι τιθέντι νῦν καὶ εἰς αὐθις διδάσκειν περὶ αὐτῶν τούτων ὡς ἔχει. (“... for it must be the task of him who sets the laws both now and in hereafter to instruct you how these matters stand”).
- ¹⁴ Plato writes: Οὐκοῦν καὶ ἡ σωφροσύνη, ἣν καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ ὀνομάζουσι σωφροσύνην, τὸ περὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας μὴ ἐπτοῆσθαι ἀλλ’ ὀλιγῶρως ἔχειν καὶ κοσμίως, ἃρ’ οὐ τούτοις μόνοις προσήκει, τοῖς μάλιστα τοῦ σώματος ὀλιγωροῦσιν τε καὶ ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ ζῶσιν; (“therefore *sōphrosynē*, what the many also refer to as *sōphrosynē*, that is, not being excited by the passions but be indifferent to them and behaving in a seemly manner, does it not suit uniquely those who despise the body above all and pass their lives in philosophy?”). For philosophy as preparation for death, also, see *Ph.* 81A2: μελέτη θανάτου; cf. 63E9–64A8; 67E4). Socrates insists that only philosophers are keen to achieve the separation of the body from the soul; *Ph.* 65E6–66A8: ὀρθῶς, καὶ τὸ μελέτημα αὐτὸ τοῦτό ἐστιν τῶν φιλοσόφων, λύσις καὶ χωρισμὸς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος· and 67d5–9: Λύειν δέ γε αὐτήν, [...], προθυμοῦνται ἀεὶ μάλιστα καὶ μόνοι οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες.
- ¹⁵ The text reads: “... perhaps there is a pattern of it [i.e., the ideal city] laid up in heaven (ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσως παράδειγμα ἀνάκειται) for him who wishes to contemplate it (τῷ βουλομένῳ ὀρᾶν) and so beholding to constitute himself its citizen (καὶ ὀρῶντι ἑαυτὸν κατοικίσειν). But it makes no difference whether it exists now or ever will come into being (διαφέρει δὲ οὐδὲν εἴτε πού ἐστιν εἴτε ἔσται). The politics of this city only will be his and of none other” (τὰ γὰρ ταύτης μόνῃς ἂν πράξειεν, ἄλλῃς δὲ οὐδεμιᾶς).
- ¹⁶ (Hull 2019); for *theōrialepopteia* in the *Phaedrus* where Plato employs the language of the mysteries to refer to philosophical meditation, a necessary stage for gaining philosophical insight, see (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2022, pp. 10–12, 17–21) with more bibliography; also (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2024).
- ¹⁷ Given that in *Euthyphro* 6A Socrates claims that his gods are perfectly just and good, the “debate” that Plato mentions here as a key duty of the Nocturnal Council is about ensuring that the city aligns constantly to divine virtue and the core belief in the existence and providence of the gods; cf. (McPherran 2010, p. 117). From this perspective, Plato’s principle of philosophical/theological contemplation would be appealing for Clement.
- ¹⁸ (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2022, p. 17) citing *Leg* 951C3–5 where the Athenian Stranger concludes: “without this inspection and enquiry” (ἀνευ γὰρ ταύτης τῆς θεωρίας καὶ ζητήσεως), “the city will not remain perfect for ever” (οὐ μένει ποτὲ τελέως πόλις).
- ¹⁹ Plato encouraged the citizens to drink wine to determine their alcohol consumption limit. Fearful of the ridicule they would endure if seen drunk publicly, the citizens were likely to leave a dinner party before exceeding their limit. Thus, they would train

themselves in self-control initially with regard to wine drinking but gradually with regard to all civic matters. See (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2022, pp. 11–12).

- 20 *Str* 1.1.10.2: ἐν γοῦν τοῖς Νόμοις ὁ ἐξ Ἑβραίων φιλόσοφος Πλάτων κελεύει (“and do in the *Laws* Plato, the philosopher who learned from the Jews, commands ...”); 1.22.150.1: κατηκολούθηκε δὲ καὶ ὁ Πλάτων τῆ κατ’ ἡμᾶς νομοθεσίᾳ (Plato also followed the laws imparted to us); 1.25.165.1–166.1: Πλάτων δὲ ὁ φιλόσοφος ἐκ τῶν Μωυσέως τὰ περὶ τὴν νομοθεσίαν ὠφελήθεις (“Plato the philosopher having benefited by the books of Moses about legislation ...”). The notion is frequently repeated throughout the *Stromata*; e.g., *Str*.1.26.170.3; 1.28.176.1; cf. 5.5.28.4; 5.5.30.1; 5.11.67.3–4; 5.14.97.7).
- 21 Following Numenius, Clement presented Plato as a Pythagorean who spoke in allegories for fear of being misunderstood by the uninitiated; see Numenius, *Frg. 24, ll. 57–62* (ed. Des Places, p. 64 = Eusebius, *Preparatio Evangelica* [hereafter, PE] 14.5.7 = *Patrol. Graec.* [hereafter, PG] vol. 21, cols. 1197a6–13). Clement reported that Numenius (whom he also described as a Pythagorean) had compared Plato to “Moses speaking in Attic Greek” (*Str* 1.22.150.4 = *Frg. 8* [p. 51]: τί γὰρ ἐστὶ Πλάτων ἢ Μωυσῆς ἀττικίζων; cf. Eusebius. *PE* [col. 873b9–14]).
- 22 *Str* 1.29.182.1–2: “Whether then, it be the law which is received at birth (τὸν ἅμα τῇ γενέσει ... νόμον) or that given afterwards (τὸν αὐθις δοθέντα), but from God (πλὴν ἐκ θεοῦ), both the law of nature and that of instruction are one (ὁ τε τῆς φύσεως ὁ τε τῆς μαθήσεως νόμος, εἷς). Thus, Plato also says in *The Statesman* that the lawgiver is one (ὡς καὶ Πλάτων ἐν τῷ Πολιτικῷ ἕνα τὸν νομοθέτην φησίν); and in *The Laws*, that he who shall understand music is one (ἐν δὲ τοῖς Νόμοις ἕνα τὸν συνήσοντα τῶν μουσικῶν); teaching by these words that the Word is one (διὰ τούτων διδάσκων τὸν λόγον εἶναι ἕνα), and God is one” (καὶ τὸν θεὸν ἕνα).
- 23 *Str* 1.26.167.1–2: καὶ τοῦτον κυρίως θεσμὸν (...) τὸν ὑπὸ θεοῦ διὰ Μωυσέως παραδεδομένον. ἔχει γοῦν τὴν ἀγωγὴν εἰς τὸ θεῖον; cf. 7.3.19.4–7.3.20.2: “For the laws of the state are perchance able to restrain bad actions (οἱ νόμοι γὰρ οἱ πολιτικοὶ μοχθηρὰς ἴσως πράξεις ἐπισχεῖν); but persuasive words, which but touch the surface (οἱ λόγοι οἱ πειστικοὶ ἐπιπόλαιοι ὄντες), cannot produce a scientific permanence of truth (οὐδὲ ... ἐπιστημονικὴν τῆς ἀληθείας διαμονὴν παράσχοιεν ἄν). Greek philosophy, as it were, purges the soul, and prepares it beforehand for the reception of faith (φιλοσοφία δὲ ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ οἷον προκαθαίρει καὶ προεθίζει τὴν ψυχὴν εἰς παραδοχὴν πίστεως), on which Truth builds up the edifice of knowledge” (ἐφ’ ἣ τὴν γνῶσιν ἐποικοδομεῖ ἡ ἀλήθεια).
- 24 Clement presents Plato’s *Theaetetus* (*Str* 2.9.45.4–7) as compatible with Matthias’ now lost (gospel-like) *Paradoseis*, noting that one is assimilated to God “I mean, God our Saviour, having served the God of all things through his high priest, the Logos, by whom we distinguish which are the just and honest things according to the truth; for piety is a practice that follows and corresponds to God” (καθὸ καὶ ὁμοιοῦται τις θεῷ, θεῷ λέγω τῷ σωτήρι, θεραπεύων τὸν τῶν ὄλων θεὸν διὰ τοῦ ἀρχιερέως λόγου, δι’ οὗ καθορᾶται τὰ κατ’ ἀλήθειαν καλὰ καὶ δίκαια. εὐσέβεια ἔστι πρᾶξις ἐπομένη καὶ ἀκόλουθος θεῷ). Clement returns to Plato’s “escape/flight from the world” in *Str*. 2.22.133.3–4; cf. n. 11 above.
- 25 Clement refers to complete or perfect(ed) persons of faith as true Gnostics; see (Rankin 2022) discussing how Clement revamps the term that was typically reserved for those deemed heretics; cf. (Le Boulluec 2022). On the problem of Gnosticism in the early Church and Clement’s response to it, see (Chadwick 1966, pp. 7–9, 53–64), and (Kovacs 1978) discussing the antithesis between Clement’s true Gnostic and the Valentinian Gnostics who claimed superior access to gnosis unlike most Christians who simply followed the church’s teaching and observed the inferior god of the law. For Clement, faith not gnosis/esoteric knowledge is the key to salvation. Also, see (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2022, p. 27) with *Str* 4.6.40.1: “when he who partakes gnostically of the holy quality (ὅταν ... ὁ γνωστικῶς μετέχων τῆς ἀγίας ποιότητος), dedicates himself to contemplation (ἐνδιατρίψῃ τῇ θεωρίᾳ) by connecting purely with the divine (τῷ θεῷ καθαρῶς ὁμιλῶν), he comes closer to identifying with the state of impassibility” (προσεχέστερον ἐν ἔξει γίνεται ταυτότητος ἀπαθοῦς). For more references in Clement insisting on the importance of *theōria* to see God “face to face” (*Str* 1.19.94.6; 5.11.74.1; 7.10.57.1 in (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2022, p. 24), also see *Str* 6.17.154.4; 6.17.155.3; 7.10.56.5–6 and 7.3.13.1–2 (cited below). Cf. *Str*. 5.11.67.2 where the gnostic’s impassibility follows the example of Christ and the apostles. For gaining the heavenly kingdom through impassibility, see *Str* 3.6.59.2; 3.7.59.4; 3.15.99.4; 4.6.34.6.
- 26 In *Str*. 2.22.136.6, Clement argues that “through assimilation to God a man becomes as far as possible just and holy with insight” (τὴν ἐξομοίωσιν τοίνυν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὅσον οἷόν τε ἦν δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι), adding that “he lays down the aim of faith, for the end is the restitution of the promise which is effected by faith” (σκοπὸν τῆς πίστεως ὑποτίθεται, τέλος δὲ τὴν ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ἀποκατάστασιν). (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2022, pp. 26, 54, n. 93) for more references to how Clement distinguishes between the vanity of pagan philosophers and the true gnostic; cf. n. 34 below.
- 27 Socrates repeatedly refers to himself and those philosophizing as initiates (*Phaedrus* [hereafter, *Phdr.*] 249C8–9; 250B7–C1; 250E1; 251A3; 253C3) linking mystic *mania* with Dionysian *teletai* (25B4: Διονύσου δὲ τελεστικὴν ... μανίαν). (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2022, p. 48, ns. 41–42).
- 28 The text reads: “Plato rightly says (εἰκότως οὖν καὶ Πλάτων ... φησι) that the man who devotes himself to the contemplation of the ideas (τὸν τῶν ιδεῶν θεωρητικόν) will live as a god among men (θεὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ζήσεσθαι); now the mind is the place of ideas (νοῦς δὲ χώρα ιδεῶν), and God is mind (νοῦς δὲ ὁ θεός). Thus, he has said (εἶρηκεν) that he who contemplates the unseen God (τὸν <οὐν> ἀοράτου θεοῦ θεωρητικόν) lives as a god among men” (θεὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ζῶντα).
- 29 The whole text reads: “Plato the philosopher, too, says in the *Laws* (ἀλλὰ καὶ Πλάτων ὁ φιλόσοφος ἐν τοῖς Νόμοις ... φησίν) that he who will be blessed and happy (τὸν μέλλοντα μακάριόν τε καὶ εὐδαίμονα γενέσθαι), must be right from the beginning

a partaker of the truth (τῆς ἀληθείας ἐξ ἀρχῆς εὐθὺς εἶναι μέτοχον χρῆναι), so as to live true for as long as possible (ἴν' ὡς πλείστον χρόνον ἀληθῆς ὦν διαβιώῃ); for he is a man of faith (πιστὸς γάρ). But the unbeliever is one to whom voluntary falsehood is agreeable (ὁ δὲ ἄπιστος, ὃ φίλον ψευδὸς ἐκούσιον); and the man to whom involuntary falsehood is agreeable is senseless (ὄτω δὲ ἀκούσιον, ἄνους); neither of which is desirable (ὦν οὐ ζῶν οὐδέτερον οὖν ζηλωτόν). For he who is devoid of friendliness, is faithless and ignorant" (ἄφιλος γάρ πᾶς ὁ γε ἄπιστος καὶ ἀμαθής). (Osborn 1994, p. 5).

30 On the remarkable difference between Plato's endorsement of the "noble lie" in the *Republic* and his outright rejection of the voluntary lie in the *Laws*, see (Williams 2013, esp. p. 389) claiming that Plato ought to reject the use of lies/myths in Magnesia to make it more functional than his Kallipolis.

31 Cf. 580A discussing the qualities of the tyrannical man: ἀνάγκη καὶ εἶναι καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον γίγνεσθαι αὐτῷ ἢ πρότερον διὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν φθονερῷ, ἀπίστῳ, ἀδίκῳ, ἀφίλῳ, ἀνοσίῳ καὶ πάσης κακίας πανδοκεῖ τε καὶ τροφεῖ ("he is necessarily and likely to become even more than before because of his power envious, faithless, unjust, friendless, impious, a vessel and nurse of all iniquity").

32 Clement writes: Ὁ δὲ ψιλῆ κλήσει καθὼς κέκληται ὑπακούων οὔτε διὰ φόβον οὔτε διὰ ἡδονὰς ἐπὶ τὴν γνῶσιν ἵεται. ("he who obeys the call, as he is called, plainly neither for fear, nor for pleasures, is on his way to knowledge").

33 The text reads: "For love (ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀγάπη), because of its affability with faith (τῇ πρὸς τὴν πίστιν φιλία), makes men believers (τοὺς πιστοὺς ποιεῖ); and faith (ἡ δὲ πίστις), the foundation of love (ἔδρασμα ἀγάπης), advances in turn the doing of good (ἀντεπάγουσα τὴν εὐποιαν); since fear (ὅτε καὶ ὁ ... φόβος), the pedagogue of law (τοῦ νόμου παιδαγωγός), is also believed to be fear by those by whom it is believed" (ἀφ' ὧν πιστεύεται, καὶ φόβος εἶναι πιστεύεται); cf. *Str* 6.6.46.2–4: "since God's punishments are saving and pedagogical (ἐπεὶ σωτήριοι καὶ παιδευτικαὶ αἱ κολάσεις τοῦ θεοῦ), leading to conversion (εἰς ἐπιστροφὴν ἄγουσαι), and choosing the repentance of a sinner rather than his death (καὶ τὴν μετάνοιαν τοῦ ἁμαρτωλοῦ μᾶλλον ἢ τὸν θάνατον αἰρούμεναι); and the souls that are released from their bodies (τῶν σωμάτων ἀπηλλαγμένων ψυχῶν) are able to perceive these things more clearly (ταῦτα καθαρώτερον διορᾶν δυναμένων), despite being darkened by passions (κὰν πάθεισιν ἐπισκοτῶνται), because they are no longer obstructed by the flesh" (διὰ τὸ μηκέτι ἐπιπροσθεῖσθαι σαρκίῳ). Also, see (Van den Hoek 2016, pp. 183–85) on Clement's inspiration from Proverbs 1:7 referring to "fear of god as the beginning of wisdom" (ἀρχὴ σοφίας φόβος θεοῦ).

34 Thus, Clement continues, God "leads to perfection through faith through different pathways of progression, Greek as well as barbarian" (ἄγει γὰρ ἐξ ἐκατέρας προκοπῆς Ἑλληνικῆς τε καὶ βαρβάρου ἐπὶ τὴν διὰ πίστεως τελείωσιν). However, he adds (*Str* 7.2.11.3) "If any of the Greeks (Εἰ δέ τις Ἑλλήνων), crossing over from Greek philosophy which arose beforehand (ὑπερβὰς τὸ προηγούμενον τῆς φιλοσοφίας τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς), embraced the true doctrine straightaway (εὐθέως ὥρμησεν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀληθῆ διδασκαλίαν), (...), he left the others well behind him (ὑπερέδιδκευσεν οὗτος), since he has opted for the shortcut of salvation by faith that leads to perfection" (τὴν ἐπίτομον τῆς σωτηρίας διὰ πίστεως εἰς τελείωσιν ἐλόμενος).

35 Christian authors such as Athanasius also had independent knowledge of Plato; (Meijering 1968, pp. 114–31).

36 Cyril of Alexandria, *Evangelium Ioannis Commentaria* 2.18 (=John 8:24): Εἶπον οὖν ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν ("For I said that you will die in your sins"); on which he adds (2.19): δεῖν γὰρ πάντως ἐν ἁμαρτίαις ἀποθανεῖν τοὺς ἀπειθοῦντάς φησι, τὸ δὲ τεθνάναι πεφορτισμένον τοῖς πλημμελήμασιν, ὅτι φλογὶ τῇ παμφάγῳ παραδώσει τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴν, οὐκ ἀμφίλογον. Ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ πιστεύητε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν ("for he said, that in any case those who disobey him will die in their sins, their death having been burdened by their errors, for it is beyond dispute that he will deliver the soul of man to the all-consuming fire. If you do not believe that I am (the Messiah), you will die in your sins"; my trans.).

37 Kaplow (2005), discusses three violent conflicts in the fourth and early fifth century Alexandria: one resulting in the death of the Arian bishop George of Cappadocia in 361 BCE, one resulting in the destruction of the Serapeum in 391 CE, and finally, the conflict of Cyril with the Alexandrian Jews resulting in the death of Hypatia. The author warns against placing these events "into a narrative of the triumph of Nicene Christianity", pointing instead to "an interplay of relations" between the various communities which are unable to "to resist retaliating and to turn the other cheek" (p. 2).

38 Lühr (2010, pp. 176–80, 185–87) also noting that once Christian philosophical schools stopped existing, an irreparable breakage happened between Christianity and practising the philosophical *bios*, an experience now reserved for monks and their ascetic life.

39 [LXX] Deut. 13:6–10: ἐὰν δὲ παρακαλέσῃ σε ὁ ἀδελφός σου ἢ πατὴρ σου ἢ μητὴρ σου ἢ ὁ υἱός σου ἢ ἡ θυγάτηρ σου ἢ ἡ γυνὴ ἢ ἡ κόλπω σου ἢ ὁ φίλος ὁ ἴσος τῆς ψυχῆς σου λάθρα λέγων βαδίσωμεν καὶ λατρεύσωμεν θεοῖς ἑτέροις οὓς οὐκ ἤδεις σὺ καὶ οἱ πατέρες σου ἀπὸ τῶν θεῶν τῶν ἐθνῶν τῶν περικύκλω ὑμῶν τῶν ἐγγιζόντων σοὶ ἢ τῶν μακρὰν ἀπὸ σοῦ ἀπ' ἄκρου τῆς γῆς ἕως ἄκρου τῆς γῆς οὐ συνθελήσεις αὐτῷ καὶ οὐκ εἰσακούσῃ αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐ φείσεται ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐκ ἐπιποθήσεις ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐδ' οὐ μὴ σκεπάσῃς αὐτὸν ἀναγγέλλων ἀναγγελεῖς περὶ αὐτοῦ αἱ χεῖρές σου ἔσονται ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἐν πρώτοις ἀποκτεῖναι αὐτὸν καὶ αἱ χεῖρες παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ ἐπ' ἐσχάτῳ καὶ λιθοβολήσουσιν αὐτὸν ἐν λίθοις καὶ ἀποθανεῖται ὅτι ἐζήτησεν ἀποστήσασε ἀπὸ κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου τοῦ ἐξαγαγόντος σε ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου ἐξ οἴκου δουλείας. ("if your brother from your father or mother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you hold in your embrace, or the friend you love as yourself urges you, by asking you to deviate from your path and worship alien gods, unknown to you and your fathers, gods of nearby nations that live close to you or gods of far off nations from one side of the earth to the other, do not consent to them, do not obey them. *Your eye will not spare them, you will not be overwhelmed with emotion for them, you will not cover them. Revealing,*

you will reveal about them and your hands will be cast upon them to kill them first, and the hands of all the people will be cast upon them last. They will kill them by stoning, and they will die for they tried to stir you away from the Lord, your God who rescued you from the slavery of Egypt"; my trans. and my emphasis).

40 [LXX] Deut. 13:12–18: ἐὰν δὲ ἀκούσης ἐν μιᾷ τῶν πόλεων σου ὧν κύριος ὁ θεός σου δίδωσίν σοι κατοικεῖν σε ἐκεῖ λεγόντων ἐξήλθοσαν ἄνδρες παράνομοι ἐξ ὑμῶν καὶ ἀπέστησαν πάντας τοὺς κατοικοῦντας τὴν πόλιν αὐτῶν λέγοντες πορευθῶμεν καὶ λατρεύσωμεν θεοὺς ἑτέροις οὓς οὐκ ἤδειτε καὶ ἐρωτήσεις καὶ ἐραυνήσεις σφόδρα καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀληθῆς σαφῶς ὁ λόγος γεγένηται τὸ βδέλυγμα τοῦτο ἐν ὑμῖν ἀναιρῶν ἀνελεῖς πάντας τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ ἐν φόνῳ μαχαίρας ἀναθέματι ἀναθεματεῖτε αὐτήν καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ πάντα τὰ σκῦλα αὐτῆς συναξέεις εἰς τὰς διόδους αὐτῆς καὶ ἐμπρήσεις τὴν πόλιν ἐν πυρὶ καὶ πάντα τὰ σκῦλα αὐτῆς πανδημει ἐναντίον κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου καὶ ἔσται ἀοίκητος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα οὐκ ἀνοικοδομηθήσεται ἔτι οὐ προσκολληθήσεται ἐν τῇ χειρὶ σου οὐδὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀναθέματος ἵνα ἀποστραφῇ κύριος ἀπὸ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ δώσει σοι ἔλεος καὶ ἐλεήσει σε καὶ πληθυνεῖ σε ὡς τὸν τρόπον ὧμοσεν κύριος τοῖς πατράσιν σου ἐὰν ἀκούσης τῆς φωνῆς κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου φυλάσσειν πάσας τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ὅσας ἐγὼ ἐντέλλομαι σοι σήμερον ποιεῖν τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ ἀρεστὸν ἐναντίον κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου. (“If you hear reports that in one of the towns which the Lord your God gives you to inhabit unlawful men arose among you and led astray everyone living in the city, by saying, ‘let us go and worship other gods’, whom you have not known, then you must question and investigate it thoroughly, and if verify clearly that the report is true that this disgrace has been committed among you, you must take it upon yourself and put to the sword all who live in that town. You will devote the city and everything in it to destruction, and you will gather all its plunder in its streets, and you will burn the city and all its plunder by fire in one mass in the face of the lord your god. And this city will remain uninhabited forever and will not be rebuilt and none of the accursed things shall be found in your hands so that the Lord will turn from his fierce anger and will give you mercy and have compassion on you and increase your numbers in the way he swore to your fathers; if you listen to the voice of the lord your God to keep all of his commands that I give you today, do what is good and right in the eyes of the lord your god”; my trans).

41 Clement reiterates his views in *Str* 5.14.94.6–5.14.95.2: “if you wish to grasp the assimilation [to God] by another name (ἐτέρω δ’ εἰ βούλει παραλαβεῖν ὀνόματι τὴν ἐξομοίωσιν), you will find it in Moses where it is called a divine following (εὐροις ἂν παρὰ τῷ Μωυσεῖ τὴν ἀκολουθίαν ὀνομαζομένην θείαν). For he says (φησὶ γάρ)· Walk after the Lord your God (ὀπίσω κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ ὑμῶν πορευέσθε), and keep His commandments (καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ φυλάξατε). And I regard all the virtuous (οἶμαι ... πάντες οἱ ἐνάρετοι) as servants and followers of God (ἀκόλουθοι δ’ ... καὶ θεραπευταὶ θεοῦ). Hence the Stoics say that the end of philosophy is to live agreeable to nature (ἐντεῦθεν οἱ μὲν Στωϊκοὶ τὸ τέλος τῆς φιλοσοφίας τὸ ἀκολουθῶν τῇ φύσει ζῆν εἰρήκαστι); and Plato, likeness to God, as we have shown in the second book of the *Stromata*” (Πλάτων δὲ ὁμοίωσιν θεῶ ὡς ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ παρεστήσαμεν Στρωματεῖ).

42 Clement argues that the gnostics arrive at faith through contemplation (*Str* 5.1.1.5: γνωστικοὶ δὲ οὐ λόγῳ, ἔργα ἀπογραφόμενοι, ἀλλ’ αὐτῇ τῇ θεωρίᾳ); also, see 5.13.83.5 and esp. 5.1.7.1 on free choice: Ἐπεὶ δὲ οἱ μὲν ἄπιστοι, οἱ δὲ ἐριστικοὶ, οὐ πάντες τυγχάνουσι τῆς τελειότητος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ. οὐτε γὰρ ἄνευ προαιρέσεως τυχεῖν οἶόν τε ... (“but since some people are unbelieving, and some are disputatious, not all achieve the perfection of the good. For it is not possible to attain it without free choice ...”).

43 See also *Str*. 5.11.67.2, citing Socrates’ description of philosophy as preparation for death: καὶ μὴ τι εἰκότως μελέτη θανάτου διὰ τοῦτο εἴρηται τῷ Σωκράτει ἡ φιλοσοφία· ὁ γὰρ μήτε τὴν ὄψιν παρατιθέμενος ἐν τῷ διανοεῖσθαι μήτε τινὰ τῶν ἄλλων αἰσθήσεων ἐφελκόμενος, ἀλλ’ αὐτῷ καθαρῷ τῷ νῷ τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐντυγχάνων τὴν ἀληθῆ φιλοσοφίαν μέτεισιν; cf. n. 14 above; also, see *Str* 1.18.90.2; 1.29.182.3; 2.11.48.1; 3.18.110.3; 5.14.141.4; 6.1.1.1; 6.11.89.3, etc.

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