

XXV. - True Perfection Consists in the Knowledge and Love of God.

"Happy he who possesses the culture of knowledge, and is not moved to the injury of the citizens or to wrong actions, **but contemplates the undecaying order of immortal nature, how and in what way and manner it subsists.** To such the practice of base deeds attaches not," Rightly, then, Plato says, "that the man who devotes himself to the contemplation of ideas will live as a god among men; now the mind is the place of ideas, and God is mind." He says that he who contemplates the unseen God lives as a god among men. And in the Sophist, Socrates calls the stranger of Elea, who was a dialectician, "god." "Such are the gods who, like stranger guests, frequent cities. For when the soul, rising above the sphere of generation, is by itself apart, and dwells amidst ideas," like the Coryphaeus in Theaetetus, now become as an angel, it will be with Christ, being rapt in contemplation, ever keeping in view the will of God; in reality.

"Alone wise, while these flit like shadows."

"For the dead bury their dead." Whence Jeremiah says: "I will fill it with the earth-born dead whom mine anger has smitten." (Jer_33:5)

God, then, being not a subject for demonstration, **cannot be the object of science. But the Son is wisdom, and knowledge, and truth, and all else that has affinity thereto.** He is also susceptible of demonstration and of description. And all the powers of the Spirit, becoming collectively one thing, terminate in the same point - that is, in the Son. But He is incapable of being declared, in respect of the idea of each one of His powers. And the Son is neither simply one thing as one thing, nor many things as parts, but one thing as all things; whence also He is all things. For He is the circle of all powers rolled and united into one unity. Wherefore the Word is called the Alpha and the Omega, of whom alone the end becomes beginning, and ends again at the original beginning without any break. Wherefore also to believe in Him, and by Him, is to become a unit, being indissolubly united in Him; and to disbelieve is to be separated, disjoined, divided.

"Wherefore thus saith the Lord, every alien son is uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh" (that is, unclean in body and soul): "there shall not enter one of the strangers into the midst of the house of Israel, but the Levites." (Eze_44:9, Eze_44:10) **He calls those that would not believe, but would disbelieve, strangers. Only those who live purely being true priests of God. Wherefore, of all the circumcised tribes, those anointed to be high priests, and kings, and prophets, were reckoned more holy.** Whence He commands them not to touch dead bodies, or approach the dead; **not that the body was polluted, but that sin and disobedience were incarnate, and embodied, and dead, and therefore abominable.** It was only, then, when a father and mother, a son and daughter died, that the priest was allowed to enter, because these were related only by flesh and seed, to whom the priest was indebted for the immediate cause of his entrance into life. **And they purify themselves seven days, the period in which Creation was consummated.** For on the seventh day the rest is celebrated; and on **the eighth he brings a propitiation,** as is written in Ezekiel, according to which propitiation the promise is to be received. (Eze_44:27) **And the perfect propitiation, I take it, is that propitious faith in the Gospel which is by the law and the prophets, and the purity which shows itself in universal obedience, with the abandonment of the things of the world; in order to that grateful surrender of the tabernacle, which results from the enjoyment of the soul.** Whether, then, the time be that which through the seven periods enumerated returns to the chiefest rest, or the seven heavens, which some reckon one above the other; or whether also the

fixed sphere which borders on the intellectual world be called the eighth, the expression denotes that the Gnostic ought to rise out of the sphere of creation and of sin. After these seven days, sacrifices are offered for sins. For there is still fear of change, and it touches the seventh circle. The righteous Job says: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there;" (Job_1:21) not naked of possessions, for that were a trivial and common thing; but, **as a just man, he departs naked of evil and sin,** and of the unsightly shape which follows those who have led bad lives. For this was what was said, "Unless ye be converted, and become as children," (Mat_18:3) **pure in flesh, holy in soul by abstinence from evil deeds;** showing that He would have us to be such as also He generated us from our mother - the water. **For the intent of one generation succeeding another is to immortalize by progress.** "But the lamp of the wicked shall be put out." (Job_18:5; Pro_13:9) **That purity in body and soul which the Gnostic partakes of, the all-wise Moses indicated, by employing repetition in describing the incorruptibility of body and of soul** in the person of Rebecca, thus: "Now the virgin was fair, and man had not known her." (Gen_24:16) And Rebecca, interpreted, means "glory of God;" and **the glory of God is immortality. This is in reality righteousness, not to desire other things, but to be entirely the consecrated temple of the Lord.** Righteousness is peace of life and a well-conditioned state, to which the Lord dismissed her when He said, "Depart into peace." (Mar_5:34) **For Salem is, by interpretation, peace; of which our Savior is enrolled King, as Moses says, Melchizedek king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who gave bread and wine, furnishing consecrated food for a type of the Eucharist.** And Melchizedek is interpreted "righteous king;" and the name is a synonym for righteousness and peace. Basilides, however, supposes that Righteousness and her daughter Peace dwell stationed in the eighth sphere.

But we must pass from physics to ethics, which are clearer; for the discourse concerning these will follow after the treatise in hand. **The Savior Himself, then, plainly initiates us into the mysteries,** according to the words of the tragedy:-

"Seeing those who see, he also gives the orgies."

And if you ask,

"These orgies, what is their nature?"

You will hear again: -

"It is forbidden to mortal's uninitiated in the Bacchic rites to know."

And if anyone will inquire curiously what they are, let him hear: -

"It is not lawful for thee to hear, but they are worth knowing;

The rites of the God detest him who practices impiety."

Now God, who is without beginning, is the perfect beginning of the universe, and the producer of the beginning. As, then, He is being, He is the first principle of the department of action, as He is good, of morals; as He is mind, on the other hand, He is the first principle of reasoning and of judgment. **Whence also He alone is Teacher, who is the only Son of the Most High Father, the Instructor of men.**

~Clement- Stromata Book IV Vol. 2