

to an unbelieving and barren people,⁴² are ever lacerated into shreds.

(75) I can speak of another mystery in these things. When the almighty Lord of the universe began to legislate through the Word and decided to make His power visible to Moses, He sent Moses a divine vision with the appearance of light, in the burning bush. Now, a bramble-bush is full of thorns.⁴³ So, too, when the Word was concluding His legislation and His stay among men as their Lord, again He permitted Himself to be crowned with thorns as a mystic symbol; returning to the place from which He had descended, the Word renewed that by which He had first come, appearing first in the bush of thorns, and later being surrounded with thorns that He might show that all was the work of the same one power. He is one and His Father is one, the eternal beginning and end.

(76) But I have departed from the manner of the moralist and encroached upon the field of the teacher. Let me once more return to my own subject. We have already proved that even from a medical point of view we should not entirely renounce the pleasures that flowers afford, and the benefit there is in ointments and vapors, for the sake of our health, as well as, at times, by way of moderate relaxation. If anyone should ask, in the name of those who turn away from flowers, what good there is in them, let him know that myrrhs are prepared from flowers, and myrrh has many uses. Lily oil, made from white lilies and other kinds, imparts warmth, stimulates the appetite, draws [infections] to a head, moistens, purges, has the excellent quality of being composed of fine particles, flushes the bile, and softens the skin. The

⁴² Cf. Isa. 65.2.

⁴³ Cf. Exod. 3.2 This passage is taken from Philo, *De vit. Mos.* 1.63.

oil of the narcissus is just as beneficial as that of the lily. That from the leaf of the myrtle, and from its berry, is an astringent and checks the flow [of blood] from the body. Oil of roses invigorates. In a word, all these myrrhs have been created for our good. 'Hear me,' Scripture says, 'and bud forth as the rose planted by the brooks of water. Give ye a sweet-odor as frankincense, and bless the Lord in His works.'⁴⁴

This discussion could go on indefinitely, dwelling on the fact that these flowers and herbs have been created for our needs, not to be misused as luxuries. We concede room for some little indulgence, but it is sufficient if we enjoy their fragrance; we need not be decked out with them. The Father treats man with great care, putting at our disposal all His handiwork for this one purpose. Scripture says well: 'Water and fire and iron and milk, bread of flour and honey, the blood of the cluster of grape and oil and clothing. All these things shall be for good to the holy.'⁴⁵

Chapter 9

(77) Now we must discuss the way we are to sleep, still mindful of the precepts of temperance. After our dinner, once we have given thanks to God for having granted us such pleasures and for the completion of the day, then we should dispose our minds for sleep. We must forbid ourselves the use of expensive bedding, gold-sprinkled rugs and plain carpets embroidered in gold, rich purple bed robes or precious thick cloaks, purple blankets of elaborate art, with

⁴⁴ Cf. Eccli. 39.17-19.

⁴⁵ Eccli. 39.31,32.

fleecy cloaks thrown over them,¹ and beds 'too soft to be slept in.'² The habit of sleeping in soft down is injurious, apart from the danger of pampering the body, because those who sleep in it sink deep into the softness of the bed; it is not healthy for the sleeper who cannot move about in it because of the high elevation on either side of his body. Sleep is the time for digesting food, but such a bed causes the food simply to burn up and be destroyed, while those who can toss about on their beds, level as though a natural place of exercise during sleep, digest their food more easily and prepare themselves the better to face any contingencies.

Again, a bed with silver legs stands as an accusation of extreme ostentatiousness, and couches made of 'ivory, the product of a body separated from its living spirit, is not free from defilement,'³ and is for holy men only a resting place that encourages sloth. (78) We should not be too anxious for such things. Not that they who have them need to leave them unused, but they are forbidden to desire them excessively. *Happiness does not lie in that sort of thing. On the other hand, it is Cynic vanity to make a practise of sleeping like Diomedes, under whom 'was spread the hide of an ox of the field.'*⁴ Odysseus supported the weak part of his marriage couch with a wooden post.⁵ That is the degree of frugality and industry practised, not by a private citizen, but by a leader of the ancient Greeks. But, what further example do I need, when Jacob slept on the ground with a stone for his pillow?⁶ It was then that he was accounted worthy of beholding a vision beyond the power of man.

1 Cf. *Odysseus* 7.335.

2 Theocritus 5.51; 15.125.

3 Plato, *Laws* XII 956A.

4 *Iliad* 10.155.

5 Cf. *Odysseus* 23.195.

6 Cf. Gen. 28.11.

Following the dictates of reason, then, we should make use of a bed that is level and unadorned, yet affording some minimum of convenience: of protection, if it be summer; of warmth, if it be winter. Let the couch, too, be unadorned and its posts plain, for ornamented and molded wood readily and frequently becomes an easy path for creeping animals, providing them sure footing in the grooves carved by the craftsmen. But we must specially keep the softness of the bed within limits, for sleep is meant to relax the body, not to debilitate it. For that reason, I say that sleep should be taken not as self-indulgence, but as rest from activity.

(79) We should sleep half-awake. 'Let your loins be girt,' Scripture says, 'and your lamps burning; and you like men awaiting their master when he returns from the wedding; that when he does come and knock, they may open straightway to him. Blessed are those servants whom the Master, when He comes, shall find awake.'⁷ A man who is asleep is not good for anything, any more than a man who is dead. Therefore, even during the night we should arouse ourselves from sleep often and give praise to God. Blessed are they who have kept watch for Him, for they make themselves like the angels whom we speak of as ever wakeful. 'No man who is asleep is good for anything, any more than if he were dead.'⁸ He who has the light stays awake, and the darkness does not overcome him, and if darkness does not, much less does sleep. Therefore, he who has been enlightened stays awake, and such a one lives. 'For what was in Him, was life.'⁹ 'Blessed is the man,' Wisdom adds, 'who hears me, and the man who watches at my ways, and lies awake daily at my gates, observing the posts of my entrance.'¹⁰ (80) 'There-

7 Luke 12.35-37.

8 Plato, *Laws* VII 808D.

9 Cf. John 1.5.4.

10 Prov. 8.34 (Septuagint).

fore, let us not sleep as do the rest,' Scripture tells us, 'but let us be wakeful and sober. For they who sleep, sleep at night, and they who are drunk, are drunk at night,' that is, in the night of ignorance, 'but let us, who are of day, be sober. For you are all children of the light and of the day. We are not of night nor of darkness.'¹¹ 'He who has the most respect for life and for reason will stay awake as long as he can, reserving only as much time for sleep as his health demands; much sleep is not required, if the habit of moderation be once rightly formed.'¹²

The care of discipline begets a constant alertness in our labors. Therefore, food ought not to make us heavy but enliven us so that sleep will harm us as little as possible. Incidentally, how capable a wineless meal is of lifting one from the very depths to the peak of wakefulness! Falling asleep, indeed, is like dying, because it renders our minds and our senses inactive, and, when we close our eyes, shuts out the light of day. So, let us who are the sons of the true light not shut out that light, but, turning within into ourselves, casting light upon the vision of the inner man, let us contemplate truth itself, welcome its rays and discover with clarity and insight what is the truth of dreams.

(81) But the belchings of the drunk, the wheezing of those who are stuffed with food, the snoring smothered by bed clothes, the rumblings of cramped stomachs, all these things obscure the clear-sightedness needed by the eye of the soul and fill the mind with a thousand imaginations. The blame must be placed on overindulgence in food, for it reduces reason to silliness. 'Much sleep is not helpful, either for our souls or

¹¹ 1 Thess. 5.6,7,8.5.

¹² Plato, *Laws* VII 808BC.

bodies, nor is it adapted to the actions it performs in its search for the truth, even if it is according to nature.'¹³

Let the just (for the present, I am going to pass over an explanation of the way of life demanded by the new birth) would not have been betrayed into unlawful intercourse if his daughters had not first made him drunk and overcome by sleep.¹⁴ Therefore, if we remove the cause for an excessive tendency to drowsiness, we shall sleep more soundly. Those who cultivate an alert mind ought not 'to sleep all night long.'¹⁵ We must keep vigil by night, especially when the days are short: one person, that he might study; another, that he might practise his trade; women, to devote themselves to their wool-spinning. In general, all of us must struggle against sleep, accustoming ourselves gently and gradually to utilize a greater proportion of our lives and not waste them in sleep. (Sleep, indeed, like a tax-collector, claims half the portion of our lives.) When we do manage to keep awake the greater part of the night, we should not allow ourselves, for any consideration, to take a nap during the day. Listlessness and drowsiness, stretching and yawning, are all distressing in a soul that is inconstant.

(82) There is another general principle that we should recognize, too, and it is this: it is not the soul that needs sleep (for it is ever-active); the body becomes relaxed when it takes its rest, and the soul ceases to operate in any bodily way, but continues to operate mentally in keeping with its nature. Then, if we consider the matter carefully, the truth that lies in dreams is the thinking of the soul, not drugged [by sleep], nor distracted here and there in sympathy for the body, but

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Cf. Gen 19.32-38.

¹⁵ Cf. *Iliad* 24.1159; Plato, *Laws* VII 808B.

making its own judgment for itself. To keep itself inactive would be for it to cease to exist. The soul, then, ever keeping its thoughts on God and attributing those thoughts to the body by its constant association with it, makes man equal to the angels in their loveliness. So, from its practise of wakefulness, it obtains eternal life.

Chapter 10

(83) It remains for us now to consider the restriction of sexual intercourse to those who are joined in wedlock. Begetting children is the goal of those who wed, and the fulfillment of that goal is a large family, just as hope of a crop drives the farmer to sow his seed, while the fulfillment of his hope is the actual harvesting of the crop. But he who sows in a living soil is far superior, for the one tills the land to provide food only for a season, the other to secure the preservation of the whole human race; the one tends his crop for himself, the other, for God. We have received the command: 'Be fruitful,'¹ and we must obey. In this role man becomes like God, because he co-operates, in his human way, in the birth of another man.

Now, not every land is suited to the reception of seed, and, even if it were, not, at the hands of the same farmer. Seed should not be sown on rocky ground nor scattered everywhere,² for it is the primary substance of generation and contains imbedded in itself the principle of nature. It is undeniably godless, then, to dishonor principles of nature by wasting them on unnatural resting places. In fact, you recall how Moses, in his wisdom, once denounced seed that

¹ Cf. Gen. 1.28.

² Cf. Matt. 13.3-24; Plato, *Laws* VIII 838E.

bears no fruit, saying symbolically: 'Do not eat the hare nor the hyena.'³ He does not want man to be contaminated by their traits nor even to taste of their wantonness, for these animals have an insatiable appetite for coition. As regards the hare, legend claims that it needs to void excrement only once a year, and possesses as many anuses as the years it has lived.⁴ Therefore, the prohibition against eating the hare is nothing else than a condemnation of pederasty. And with regard to the hyena, it is said that the male changes every year successively into a female, so that Moses means that he who abstains from the hyena is commanded not to lust after adultery.

(84) While I agree that the all-wise Moses means, by this prohibition just mentioned, that we should not become like these beasts, I do not entirely agree with the explanation given these symbolic prohibitions. A nature can never be made to change; what has been once formed in it cannot be reformed by any sort of change. Change does not involve the nature itself; it necessarily modifies, but does not transform the structure. For instance, although many birds are said to change their color and their voice according to the season (like the blackbird which changes its black feathers to yellow, and its melodious voice to a harsh one, or the nightingale which changes its plumage and song at the same time), even so, their nature itself is not so affected that a male becomes female. Rather, a new growth of feathers, like a new garment, is bright with one color, but a little later, as winter threatens, it fades away, like a flower when its color goes. In the same way, the voice, affected unfavorably by the cold, loses its vibrancy: the surface of the whole body contracts with the climate, and the bronchial tubes, narrowly constricted

³ Cf. Deut. 14.7; *Epistle of Barnabas* 10.6.

⁴ *Ibid.*

in the throat, restrict the breath to the point that it is made quite muffled and capable of producing only harsh sounds. (85) Later on, in the spring, responding to the weather and relaxing, the breath is once again freed of all constraint and is carried through passages that were tightly closed but are now wide open. No longer does the voice croak in dying tones, but bursts forth clear, pouring out in full-throated voice, and now in springtime there arises melodious song from the throats of the birds.⁵

Therefore, we should not believe at all that the hyena changes its sex. Neither does it possess both the male and the female sexual organs at the same time, as some claim, conjuring up some freakish hermaphrodite and creating this female-male, a third new category halfway in between the male and the female. Erroneously they misconstrue the strategy of nature, mother of all and author of all existence. Because the hyena is of all animals the most sensual, there is a knob of flesh underneath its tail, in front of the anus, closely resembling the female sex organ in shape. It is not a passage, I mean it serves no useful purpose, opening neither into the womb nor into the intestines. It has only a good-sized opening to permit an ineffective sexual act when the vagina is preparing for childbirth and is impenetrable. (86) This is characteristic of both male and female hyena, because of hyperactive abnormal sexuality; the male lies with the male so that it rarely approaches the female. For that reason, births are infrequent among hyenas, because they so freely sow their seed contrary to nature.

This is the reason, I believe, that Plato, in excoriating pederasty in *Phaedrus*, terms it bestiality and says that these libertines who have so surrendered to pleasure, 'taking the

⁵ Cf. Aristotle, *Hist. Animal.* 11.49 632B.

bit in their own mouths, like brutish beasts rush on to enjoy and beget.'⁶ Such godless people 'God has given over,' the Apostle says, 'to shameful lusts. For the women change their natural use to that which is against nature, and in like manner the men, also, having abandoned the natural use of the women, have burned in their lusts one towards another, men with men doing shameful things, and receiving in themselves the fitting recompense of their perversity.'⁷ (87) Yet, nature has not allowed even the most sensual of beasts to sexually misuse the passage made for excrement. Urine she gathers into the bladder; undigested food in the intestines; tears in the eyes; blood in the veins; wax in the ear, and mucous in the nose; so, too, there is a passage connected to the end of the intestines by means of which excrement is passed off. In the case of hyenas, nature, in her diversity, has added this additional organ to accommodate their excessive sexual activity. Therefore, it is large enough for the service of the lusting organs, but its opening is obstructed within. In short, it is not made to serve any purpose in generation. The clear conclusion that we must draw, then, is that we must condemn sodomy, all fruitless sowing of seed, any unnatural methods of holding intercourse and the reversal of the sexual role in intercourse. We must rather follow the guidance of nature; which obviously disapproves of such practises from the very way she has fashioned the male organ, adapted not for receiving the seed, but for implanting it. When Jeremias, or, rather, the Spirit through him, said: 'The cave of the hyena is my home,'⁸ He was resorting to an expressive figure to

⁶ Cf. Plato, *Phaed.* 254, 250E.

⁷ Rom. 1.26,27.

⁸ Cf. Jer. 12.9. (Septuagint). The word for 'cave' (*spelaion*) also means 'privy.'

excortiate idolatry and to manifest His scorn for the nourishment provided for dead bodies. The house of the living God surely ought to be free of idols.

(88) Again, Moses issued a prohibition against eating the hare. The hare is forever mounting the female, leaping upon her crouching form from behind. In fact, this manner of having intercourse is a characteristic of the hare. The female conceives every month, and, even before the first offspring is born, she become pregnant again. She conceives and begets, and as soon as she gives birth is fertilized again by the first hare she meets. Not satisfied with one mate, she conceives again, although she is still nursing. The explanation is that the female hare has a double womb, and therefore her desire for intercourse is stimulated not only by the emptiness of the womb, in that every empty space seeks to be filled, but also, when she is with young, her other womb begins to feel lustful desires. That is why hares have one birth after the other. So the mysterious prohibition [of Moses] in reality is but counsel to restrain violent sexual impulses, and intercourse in too frequent succession, relations with a pregnant woman, pederasty, adultery, and lewdness.

(89) Moses forbade, too, in clear language and with his head uncovered, no longer under a figure: 'Thou shalt not fornicate, nor commit adultery, nor corrupt children.'⁹ This is the command of the Word; it must be obeyed with all our strength and not transgressed in any way; His commandments may not be set aside. Evil lust bears the name wantonness; Plato, for example, calls the horse representing lust 'wanton' when he writes: 'You have become in my eyes horses mad for the female.'¹⁰ The angels who visited Sodom reveal the

⁹ Cf. Exod. 20.14; *Ep. of Barn.* 19.4.

¹⁰ Cf. Plato, *Phaed.* 238A.

punishment reserved for wantonness. They struck down with fire those who attempted to dishonor them, and their city along with them.¹¹ Such a deed demonstrates clearly that fire is the reward of wantonness. As we have already said, the calamities that befell the ancients are described for our instruction that we may not imitate their example and merit the same punishment.

(90) We should consider boys as our sons, and the wives of other men as our daughters. We must keep a firm control over the pleasures of the stomach, and an absolutely uncompromising control over the organs beneath the stomach. If, as the Stoics teach, we should not move even a finger on mere impulse,¹² how much more necessary is it that they who seek wisdom control the organ of intercourse? I feel that the reason this organ is also called the private part¹³ is that we are to treat it with privacy and modesty more than we do any other member. In lawful wedlock, as with eating, nature permits whatever is conformable to nature and helpful and decent; it allows us to desire the act of procreation. However, whoever is guilty of excess sins against nature and, by violating the laws regulating intercourse, harms himself. First of all, it is decidedly wrong ever to touch youths in any sexual way as though they were girls. The philosopher who learned from Moses taught: 'Do not sow seeds on rocks and stones, on which they will never take root.'¹⁴ (91) The Word, too, commands emphatically, through Moses: 'Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind, for it is an abomination.'¹⁵ Again, further on, noble Plato advises:

¹¹ Cf. Gen. 19.1-25.

¹² Cf. Chrysippus, *Frag. moral.* 730 (Arnim).

¹³ That is, *aidoion*, derived from *aidomai* ('reverence').

¹⁴ Plato, *Laws* VIII 828E.

¹⁵ Lev. 18.22.

'Abstain from every female field of increase,'¹⁶ because it does not belong to you. (He had read this in the holy Scripture and from it had taken the Law: 'Thou shalt not give the coition of thy seed to thy neighbor's wife, to be defiled because of her.'¹⁷) Then he goes on to say: 'Do not sow the unconsecrated and bastard seed with concubines, where you would not want what is sown to grow.'¹⁸ In fact, he says: 'Do not touch anyone, except your wedded wife,'¹⁹ because she is the only one with whom it is lawful to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh for the purpose of begetting lawful heirs. This is to share in God's own work of creation, and in such a work the seed ought not be wasted nor scattered thoughtlessly nor sown in a way it cannot grow.²⁰ (92) As an illustration of this last restriction, the same Moses forbade the Jews to approach even their own wives if they happened to be in the period of menstruation.²¹ The reason is that it is wrong to contaminate fertile seed, destined to become a human being, with corrupt matter of the body, or to allow it be diverted from the furrow of the womb and swept away in a fetid flow of matter and excrement.

He discouraged the ancient Jews, also, from having relations with a wife already with child.²² Pleasure sought for its own sake, even within the marriage bonds, is a sin and contrary both to law and to reason. Moses cautioned them, then, to keep away from their pregnant wives until they be

16 Plato, *Laws* VIII 828E.

17 Lev. 18.20.

18 Plato, *Laws* VIII 839A

19 *Ibid.* 841D.

20 Literally, 'do not scatter seeds too hard to be cooked.'

21 Cf. Lev. 15.19.

22 In *Stromateis* III 11.71, Clement explains: 'You can produce no one of the ancients in the Scriptures who had relations with a pregnant woman.'

delivered. In fact, the womb, situated just below the bladder and above the part of the intestine known as the rectum, extends its neck in between the edges of the bladder, and the outlet of this neck, by which the sperm enters, closes tight when the womb is full, opening again only when delivered of the fetus. It is only when it has become empty of its fruit that it can receive the sperm again: (It is not wrong for us to name the organs of generation, when God is not ashamed of their function.) (93) The womb welcomes the seed when it yearns for procreation, but it refuses the seed when intercourse is contrary to nature; that is, once impregnated, it makes immoral relations impossible by drawing its neck tight together. All its instincts, up to now aroused by loving intercourse, begin to be directed differently, absorbed in the development of the child within, co-operating with the Creator. It is wrong, indeed, to interfere with the workings of nature by indulging in the extravagances of wantonness.

Wantonness has many names and is of many kinds. When it centers about sexual pleasure in a disorientated way, it is called lewdness, something vulgar and common and very impure, and, as its name suggests, preoccupied with coition. As this vice increases, a great swarm of diseases flows from it: gourmandizing, drunkenness, lust, and particularly dissipation and every sort of craze for pleasure in which lust plays the tyrant. A thousand-and-one like vices join the company and aid in effecting a thoroughly dissolute character. 'Whips are prepared for the unbridled,' Scripture says, 'and punishment for the shoulders of the intemperate,'²³ meaning by 'shoulders of the intemperate' both the strength of the intemperance and the length of its duration. So, Scripture also advises: 'Keep empty hopes, O Lord, from thy servants, and

23 Prov. 19.29.

avert unbecoming desires from me, and let not the greediness of the belly and lusts of the flesh take hold of me.²⁴ We must hold off at a great distance any excessive evil-doing, for it is not only the wallet of Crates, but also our own city, that 'no parasite, nor elegant bawd given over to unnatural vices nor immoral prostitute may enter,²⁵ nor, for that matter, any other hedonist of the same sort. Unmistakably good behavior should permeate our whole life.

(94) In my treatise on continence,²⁶ I have discussed in a general way the question whether we should marry or not (and this is the point of our investigation). Now, if we have to consider whether we may marry at all, then how can we possibly permit ourselves to indulge in intercourse each time without restraint, as we would food, as if it were a necessity? Certainly, we can see at a glance that the nerves are strained by it as on a loom and, in the intense feeling aroused by intercourse, are stretched to the breaking point. It spreads a mist over the senses and tires the muscles. This is obvious in irrational animals and in men in training. Of these last, those who practise abstinence while engaging in contests get the best of their opponents; while animals are easily captured if they are caught at and all but torn from coition, because then they are entirely emptied of strength and energy.

The sophist of Abdera called intercourse 'a minor epilepsy,' and considered it an incurable disease. Indeed, does not lassitude succeed intercourse because of the quantity of seed lost? 'For a man is formed and torn out of a man.'²⁷ See

24 Cf. Eccli. 23.5.

25 Crates, *Frag.* 4, in H. Diels, *Poetarum philosophicorum fragmenta* 218.

26 Cf. above, p. 139 n. 12.

27 Cf. Democritus, *Frag.* 86, n. 32, in H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* 416.

how much harm is done. A whole man is torn out when the seed is lost in intercourse. 'This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh,'²⁸ Scripture says. Man is emptied of as much seed as is needed for a body that can be seen. After all, that which is separated from him is the beginning of a new birth. Besides that, the very agitation of matter upsets and disturbs the harmony of his whole body. (95) Wise indeed was he who replied to someone asking him his attitude toward the pleasures of sex: 'O man, quiet! I have been supremely happy in avoiding them as a fierce and wild tyrant.'²⁹

Yet, marriage in itself merits esteem and the highest approval, for the Lord wished men to 'be fruitful and multiply.'³⁰ He did not tell them, however, to act like libertines, nor did He intend them to surrender themselves to pleasure as though born only to indulge in sexual relations. Let the Educator put us to shame with the word of Ezechiel: 'Put away your fornications.'³¹ Why, even upreasoning beasts know enough not to mate at certain times. To indulge in intercourse without intending children is to outrage nature, whom we should take as our instructor. Her wise directions concerning the periods of life are meant to be obeyed; I mean that she allows us to marry at any time but after the advent of old age and during childhood (for she does not permit the one to marry yet, the other, any more). The attempt to procreate children is marriage, but the promiscuous scattering of seed contrary to law and to reason definitely is not. (96) If we should but control our lusts at the start and if we would not kill off the human race born and developing ac-

28 Cf. Gen. 2.23.

29 Sophocles. Cf. Plato, *Republic* I 329BC

30 Gen. 1.28.

31 Ezech. 43.9.

ording to the divine plan, then our whole lives would be lived according to nature. But women who resort to some sort of deadly abortion drug kill not only the embryo but, along with it, all human kindness.

Those whom nature has joined in wedlock need the Educator that they might learn not to celebrate the mystic rites of nature during the day, nor like the rooster copulate at dawn, or after they have come from church, or even from the market, when they should be praying or reading or performing the good works that are best done by day. In the evening, after dinner, it is proper to retire after giving thanks for the good things that have been received. (97) Sometimes, nature denies them the opportunity to accomplish the marriage act so that it may be all the more desirable because it is delayed. Yet, they must not forget modesty at night time under the pretext of the cover of darkness; like the light of reason, modesty must ever dwell in their souls. If we weave the ideals of chastity by day and then unravel them in the marriage bed at night, we do not better than Penelope at her loom.³² Certainly, if we are required to practise self-control—as we are—we ought to manifest it even more with our wives, in the way we avoid every indecency in intimate embraces. Let the reliability and trustworthiness of the husband's purity in his dealings with his neighbor be present also in his home. He cannot possibly enjoy a reputation for self-control with his wife if she can see no signs of self-control in such intense acts of pleasure. Love, which tends toward sexual relations by its very nature, is in full bloom only for a time, then grows old with the body; but sometimes, if immoral pleasure mars the chastity of the marriage bed, desire becomes insipid and love ages before the body does. The hearts of lovers have

³² Cf. *Odysseus* 2.104; 19.149.

wings; affection can be quenched by a change of heart, and love can turn into hate if there creep in too many grounds for loss of respect.

(98) We should not even mention the names of impurity: ribald speech, indecent behavior, sensuous love affairs and all such immoralities. Rather, let us obey the Apostle, who tells us explicitly: 'But all fornication and uncleanness and covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints.'³³ Someone has well said: 'Sexual intercourse does no one any good, except that it harms the beloved.'³⁴ Intercourse performed licitly is an occasion of sin, unless done purely to beget children, while Scripture says of that done illicitly: 'A hired wife shall be accounted as a sow, but one already married to a husband shall be a tower of death to those who use her.'³⁵ Impure passion makes a man resemble a boar or pig, and, according to Scripture, fornication with a kept prostitute is seeking death. (99) Even the poetry circulating among you condemns the city and house in which immorality reigns, saying: 'Wicked city, all unclean, adulteries and lawless lying with men and illicit effeminacy dwells in you.'³⁶ On the other hand, it admires the chaste 'who have neither base lust for lying with other's wives, nor passion for the loathesome and abominable sin committed with men,'³⁷ because it is contrary to nature. The greater number consider these sins of theirs simply as pleasure, while others, more virtuous, recognize that they are sins, even though they are overcome by the pleasure. For such as these, darkness is a veil to conceal their passion. Yet, he who seeks only sexual plea-

³³ Eph. 5.3.

³⁴ Epicurus, *Frag.* 62. in H. Usener, *Epicurea* (Leipzig 1887) 118.

³⁵ Gloss on Eccli. 26.22.

³⁶ *Orac. Syb.* 5.166-168.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 4.33.

sure turns his marriage into fornication. He forgets the words of the Educator: 'Every man that passeth beyond his own bed, who says in his soul: Who seeth me? Darkness compasseth me about, and the walls cover me, and no man seeth my sins: whom do I fear? The Most High will not remember.'³⁸ Such a man is most wretched, for he fears only the eyes of men, and thinks to hide from God. 'He knows not,' Scripture continues, 'that the eyes of the Most High Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding all the ways of men and looking into the most hidden parts.'³⁹ Another time, the Educator gives warning through Isaias: 'Woe to you who made your counsel in secret and say: Who seeth us?'⁴⁰

A light that can be seen by the senses may pass unnoticed, but that which illumines the mind cannot be ignored. Heraclitus remarks: 'How can anyone fail to notice that which never sets?'⁴¹ Let us not, then, allow ourselves to be swallowed up in any way by darkness, for light dwells in us: 'And the darkness,' Scripture says, 'did not overcome it.'⁴² Night is turned into day by chaste reasoning. Scripture calls the reason of a good man a lamp which cannot be extinguished.⁴³ (100) In fact, the very attempt to cover over what one is doing is a sign that the man is knowingly committing sin.

Anyone who does sin, for example by fornication, wrongs not so much his neighbor as himself by the very act of fornicating; he decidedly becomes more immoral and loses the right to respect. The sinner becomes more immoral and loses the right to respect which he had before, to the extent that

38 Eccli. 23.25-26.

39 Eccli. 23.28.

40 Isa. 29.15 (Septuagint).

41 Heraclitus, *Frag.* 16, in H. Diels, *op. cit.*

42 John 1.5.

43 Cf. *Wisd.* 7.10.

he sins; yet, Lord knows, immorality is already present when a man gives in to base pleasure. Therefore, he who sins dies to God entirely, and is abandoned by the Word, as well as by the Spirit, and is without life. What is holy shrinks from being defiled, and rightly so; the pure are always the only ones who may handle what is pure. Let us, therefore, never divest ourselves of our modesty when we take off our clothes,⁴⁴ for a just man should never strip himself of chastity. 'Behold, this corruption shall put on incorruption,'⁴⁵ when the intensity of desire that degenerates into sensuality is educated to self-control and, losing its love for corruption, allows man to practise constant chastity. 'The children of this world marry and are given in marriage,'⁴⁶ but if we renounce the deeds of the flesh and clothe this pure flesh with incorruption, we are living a life like that of the angels.

Plato, who was so well versed in pagan philosophy, in his *Philebus* called those men atheists, in a mystical sense, who corrupt reason, the god dwelling with them, and defile it according to their ability by surrendering to their passions.⁴⁷ (101) We ought not to live only for this mortal life, for we are consecrated to God, nor should we, as Paul tells us, turn the members of Christ into members of a harlot,⁴⁸ nor make the temple of God into a temple of base passion.⁴⁹ Remember the four and twenty thousand who were rejected because of their fornication.⁵⁰ The punishment of those who fornicate is an example, as I have already said, to restrain our passions. Our Educator clearly warns us: 'Go not after

44 Cf. Herodotus 1.8.

45 1 Cor. 15.53.

46 Cf. Matt. 24.38.

47 Not in *Philebus*; probably *Republic* IX 589E.

48 1 Cor. 6.15.

49 Cf. 1 Cor. 3.16.17.

50 Cf. Num. 25.9.

thy lusts and abstain from thy desires. Wine and women make wise men fall, and he that joins himself to harlots shall become more foolhardy; rottenness and the worm shall inherit him, and he shall be lifted up for a great example.⁵¹ And in another place (for He never tires of helping us): 'He who defies pleasure crowns his life.'⁵² (102) It is unmistakably sinful to give in to sexual pleasure or to become inflamed by our lusts or to be excessively aroused by our unreasonable desires or to desire to dishonor oneself. Sowing seed is permissible only for the husband, as the farmer of the occasion, and even for him only when the season is favorable for sowing. Against every other sort of self-indulgence the best remedy is reason. It will be helpful, too, to avoid satiety, for in satiety desires wax strong and become unruly in their search for pleasures.

We should not seek for expensive clothes, either, any more than for elaborate dishes. In fact, the Lord Himself set Himself to give special counsel for the soul, for the body and for a third class, external things, all separately. He advised that external things were to be provided for the body, the body to be governed by the soul, and then instructed the soul: 'Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat nor for your body, what you shall put on. The life is more than the meat, and the body is more than the raiment.' Then He went on to illustrate His teaching: 'Consider the ravens, for they sow not, neither do they reap, neither have they storehouse or barn, and God feedeth them. Are not you more valuable than birds?' This is what He says about food, and He has much the same thing to say about clothing, which belongs to the third class of external things, too: 'Consider the lilies,'

⁵¹ Cf. Eccli. 18.30; 19.2.3.

⁵² Gloss on Eccli. 19.5.

He says, 'how they neither spin nor weave, but I say to you that not even Solomon was clothed as one of these.' Solomon took extravagant pride in his wealth; but what is more beautiful or of richer hue than a flower? (103) And what gives greater pleasure than a lily or myrrh or rose? 'Now if God clothe in this manner the grass that is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more you, O ye of little faith! And seek not what you shall eat or what you shall drink.'⁵³

In that last sentence, the pronoun 'what' excludes elaborateness of menu, and the meaning intended by Scripture is this: 'Be not solicitous for what sort of things you eat, or what sort of things you drink.'⁵⁴ To be solicitous about such things is gluttony and gourmandizing. In itself, eating should be understood simply as implying a necessity; but repletion suggests only desire, as we have said. But the 'what' indicates superfluity and superfluity comes from the Devil, according to the Scriptures. The phrase he adds explains what he means: 'Seek not what you shall eat or what you shall drink, and do not exalt yourselves.' It is ostentatiousness, a false imitation of the truth and extravagance that exalts us above and away from the truth; concentration on needless comforts also turns us away from the truth. Therefore, He shrewdly adds: 'After all these things, the heathens seek.' The heathen are they who are without discipline and without understanding. What does He mean by 'these things'? Needless comforts, self-pampering, highly spiced and rich foods, gourmandizing, gluttony. These are the things that correspond to the 'what.' But, when He speaks of plain fare, food and drink, that is a necessity, He says: 'Your Father knoweth that you need these.' If we have become sincere

⁵³ Luke 12.22-24,27-29.

⁵⁴ That is, *pota* ('what sort of things') instead of *ti* ('what thing').

seekers, let us not waste our efforts in a search for pleasure, but let us enliven them by the discovery of the truth. 'Seek the kingdom of God,' He insists, 'and these things'—food—'shall be given you besides.'⁵⁵

(104) Now, if Christ forbids solicitude once and for all about clothing and food and luxuries, as things that are unnecessary, do we need to ask Him about finery and dyed wools and multicolored robes, about exotic ornaments of jewels and artistic handiwork of gold, about wigs and artificial locks of hair and of curls, and about eye-shadowings and hair-plucking and rouges and powders and hair-dyes and all the other disreputable trades that practise these deceptions? Are we not reasonable in concluding that what He says about the grass is to be applied also to this disgraceful ostentation? The world is a field and we are the harvest watered by the grace of God; although we shall be cut down, we shall rise again, as I shall discuss in a treatise on the Resurrection.⁵⁶ But, grass is a figure of the ordinary multitude, who by nature indulge in feasting for a day and flourish for a short while, who love pretentiousness and grand show and everything but the truth, but who are fit, finally, only to be fuel for the fire.

(105) 'Now there was a certain rich man,' the Lord declared, 'who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day,'—he was grass—'and there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who lay at his gate full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.'⁵⁷ He was the good harvest. The one, the rich man, was punished in hell and had his share of its fire, while the other gained new life in the bosom of his father.

⁵⁵ Cf. Luke 12.30,31.

⁵⁶ Not extant.

⁵⁷ Luke 16.19-20.

I admire the ancient city of the Lacedemonians for allowing only courtesans to wear brightly colored garments and gold ornaments; in this way, restricting such showy finery to that type of woman, they bred into their good women a reluctance to adorn themselves. On the other hand, in Athens, even the archons utterly forgot their manhood in their lust for the finer delicacies of life; they used to put on flowing tunics and load themselves with gold. The fashion was to wear their hair in a *crobulus*, a special kind of braid, set off by a brooch in the form of a golden cicada. Such esoteric extravagances, indicative of unnatural lust, simply put on public view their earthiness. The practise of the archons spread to other Ionians, for Homer speaks of them as 'robe-trailing,'⁵⁸ to imply their effeminacy. (106) Such men turn rather to imitation beauty, artificial ornamentation, than to Beauty itself, and are, therefore, image-worshippers in the true sense of the word. They must be considered strangers to the truth, who do no more than day-dream about the nature of truth, fashioning it more to their own fancy than according to knowledge. For them, this life is only a deep sleep of ignorance. But, as for ourselves, we must awaken from that sort of sleep and sincerely seek true beauty and the true adornment; we must long to possess that alone, and, ridding ourselves of the ornaments of this world, detach ourselves from it before we slip off into our final sleep.

I maintain that man needs clothing only for bodily covering, as a protection against excessive cold or intense heat, so that the inclemency of the weather may not harm him in any way. If that is the purpose of clothes, then one kind of garment surely should not be provided for men and another for women. The need for clothing, like the need for food and drink, is common to both, (107) and where the need is

⁵⁸ *Iliad* 6.442; 7.297.

common, our minds should turn to the same kind of means to fulfill it. Both have the same need of being protected; therefore, what they use as protection should be very similar, except, perhaps, that women ought to use a type of garment that will cover their eyes.⁵⁹ If the female sex is rightly allowed more clothing out of deference to its weakness, then the practise of a degenerate way of life must be censured which accustoms men to unworthy customs that so often make them more womanish than the women.

But we do not feel free to relax our strictness in any way. If we need to make any concessions, we might allow women to use softer garments, provided they give up fancy weaves, symptoms of vanity, and fabrics too elaborate in weave, or with gold thread, Indian silks and all products of the silk-worm. The silkworm is a worm only at its first stage; it turns into a hairy caterpillar, and then, in its third stage, into a larva (although some call it the nymph of the silk-worm); it is by this larva that the thread is spun, just as the spider spins its web. These flimsy and luxurious things are proof of a shallow character, for, with the scanty protection they afford, they do nothing more than disgrace the body, inviting prostitution. An overly soft garment is no longer covering, since it cannot conceal the bare outline of the figure; the folds of such a garment clinging to the body and following its contours very flexibly take its shape and outline the woman's form so that even one not trying to stare can see plainly the woman's entire figure.

(108) We disapprove also of dyed garments. They do not satisfy the demands either of necessity or of truth; besides, they give cause for defamation of character. They serve no useful purpose, for they do nothing to protect against

⁵⁹ The text is defective here.

the cold, nor do they add any advantage to that given by any other garment, save criticism alone. The enjoyment of these colors is injurious to the luxury-loving people who use them, to the point of provoking a strange eye-affliction. It is much more fitting that they who are pure and upright interiorly be clothed in pure white and plain garments. Daniel the Prophet, for instance, makes this observation clearly and simply: "Thrones were placed, and there sat on them, as if an Ancient of days, and his garment was white as snow."⁶⁰ The Lord, too, was seen in a vision clothed in the same color of vesture.⁶¹ The Apocalypse also says: "I saw under the altar the souls of them who had given testimony. And a white robe was given to every one of them."⁶²

If there is need for some other color, the natural color of real life is sufficient; garments colored like flowers should be left for the farces of the Bacchanals and of the pagan mystery rites. To this must be added what the comic poet says: "Purple and silver plates are good enough for tragedies, but not for life."⁶³ Our lives ought to be different from a play. But Sardinian dye and those other violet and green dyes, that compounded from the rose, and scarlet dye, and the thousand-and-one others have all been invented with so much eagerness the more to gratify demoralizing love of luxury. (109) These kinds of garments are not for clothing's sake, but for appearance. They must all be renounced, together with the art that produces them: gold embroideries, purple-dyed robes, those embroidered with figurines (all such vanity is but a puff of wind), as well as the saffron-hued

⁶⁰ Cf. Dan. 7.9.

⁶¹ Cf. Matt. 17.2.

⁶² Apoc. 6.9-11.

⁶³ Philémon, Frag. 105, CAF II 512.

Bacchic mantle dipped in myrrh, and the expensive multi-colored mantle of costly skins with figures dyed in purple. 'For what sensible or outstanding thing do these women accomplish,' the comic poet asks, 'who sit sparkling with colors, wearing their saffron dresses and so highly ornamented?'⁶⁴ Our Educator distinctly advises: 'Glory not in apparel, and be not lifted up in glory, since it does not endure.'⁶⁵ More explicitly, He speaks ironically of those who wear soft garments, saying in the Gospel: 'Behold, they who live in costly apparel and in luxury, are in the houses of kings.'⁶⁶ He means the palaces of earth, those which crumble away, where vanity and vainglory and sycophancy and error dwell. Those who serve the heavenly court, that of the King of all, sanctify their bodies, the untainted garment of their souls, and clothe it with incorruption.

Now, a woman who is not wed is concerned with God alone, and her mind is not distracted every which way; the chaste woman who is wed divides her life between God and her husband;⁶⁷ but one of a different mind gives herself wholly to her married life, that is, to her passion. In the same way, I believe, the chaste wife practises true, unfeigned love of God by busying herself for her husband, but, if she turns to vanities, she proves false both to God and to the chastity of her married life; she values finery more than her husband, just like the Argive harlot, Eriphyle, 'who took precious gold as the price of the life of her own dear husband.'⁶⁸

(110) I like the description that the Ceian Sophist gave

64 Aristophanes, *Lys.* 42-44.

65 Eccli. 11.4.

66 Luke 7.25.

67 Cf. 1 Cor 7.32-34.

68 *Odysseus* 11.327.

of the similar and corresponding figure of good and of evil.⁶⁹ The one he pictured standing simply, clothed in white, pure: this is virtue, adorned only with her modesty (that is the way fidelity ought to be, virtuous and modest); the other he describes as just the contrary: wrapped in many robes, decked out in outlandish colors, with a movement and posture best calculated to insure her own enjoyment in company with other shameless women. Now, one who obeys reason will not associate in any way with base pleasure; therefore, he ought to prefer the sort of garment that is useful. Even the Word says about the Lord, in David's psalm: 'The daughters of the king have delighted thee in thy glory; the queen stood on thy right hand, clothed in a garment interwoven with gold and in a golden-fringed tunic,'⁷⁰ referring not to a garment of luxury, but to the ornament the Church wears, woven out of faith, undefiled, composed of those who have obtained mercy. In that Church, the sinless Jesus 'shines out as gold,' and the elect as golden fringes.⁷¹

(111) But we must moderate our severity for the sake of the women. We say, then, that their garment may be woven smooth and soft to the touch, but not adorned with gaudy colors, like a painting, just to dazzle the eye. For, just like a picture which fades with time, so the constant rinsing and steeping of these woolen robes in plant juices serving as dyes deteriorates the garments, wears them out, weakens the weave, and is definitely opposed to economy. It is the height of vanity to let oneself be fascinated by the flowing robes and gowns and cloaks and mantles and tunics 'that cover nakedness,'⁷² as Homer says. I am really ashamed to see so much

69 Prodicus the Sophist; cf. Xenophon, *Mem.* II 21-34.

70 Cf. Ps. 44.9,10,14.

71 Cf. 1 Pet. 2.22.

72 *Iliad* 2.262.

money squandered just to cover the private parts. Of old, man fashioned a covering for his shame out of branches and leaves from the garden,⁷³ but, now that we have sheep for our use, let us not imitate the sheep in their stupidity, but follow the guidance of reason and refuse to have anything to do with expensive clothing, insisting: 'Wool, you belong to the sheep.' Even if Miletus does boast, even if Italy prides itself, and even if the wool is fortified by hides, and the people go madly after them, let us at least not covet them.

(112) The blessed John disdained sheep's wool because it savored of luxury; he preferred camel's hair and clothed himself in it, giving us an example of simple, frugal living.⁷⁴ Incidentally, he also ate only honey and locusts, food that is sweet and with a spiritual significance. So it was that he prepared the way of the Lord, and kept it humble and chaste. He fled from the false pretenses of the city and led a peaceful life in the desert with God,⁷⁵ away from all vanity and vainglory and servitude. How could he possibly have worn a purple mantle? Elias used a sheepskin for his garment, and girded it tight with a belt made of hair.⁷⁶ Isaias, another historic Prophet, went 'naked and without sandals,'⁷⁷ and often put on sack-cloth as a garment of humility. (113) If you protest and make mention of Jeremias, he wore only a girdle made of linen.⁷⁸ Just as the bare framework of the body is revealed once the accumulated tissue is stripped away, so magnificent beauty of character will become manifest if only it be not shrouded in the nonsense of vanity.

73 Cf. Gen. 3.7.

74 Cf. Matt. 3.4.

75 The text is defective here.

76 Cf. 1 Kings 19.13,19.

77 Isa. 20.2.

78 Cf. Jer. 13.1.

But to trail around garments that reach down even to the feet is nothing more than ostentatiousness. Besides, it is actually a hindrance in walking, for such a garment sweeps up piles of dirt after it on the ground, like a broom. Not even dancers, with all their elegance, permit themselves such flowing robes as they engage in their silent and unnaturally lewd performance on the stage, although the meticulous arrangement of their costumes, the folds of their dresses, as well as the studied rhythm of their every gesture, manifest the unspeakable languidness with which they drag themselves around, so to speak. If someone should remind us of the full-length robe of the Lord, [we reply that] His multicolored tunic really represents the brilliance of wisdom, the manifold and unfading value of Scripture, words of the Lord that glow with rays of truth. For this reason, the Spirit clothed the Lord with another similar garment when it said in the psalm of David: 'I will put on praise and beauty, clothed with light as with a garment.'⁷⁹

(114) Therefore, we must avoid any irregularity in the type of garment we choose. We must also guard against all waywardness in our use of them. For instance, it is not right for a woman to wear her dress up over her knees, as the Laconian maidens are said to do, because a woman should not expose any part of her body. Of course, when someone tells her: 'Your arm is shapely,'⁸⁰ she can always cleverly make the witty reply: 'But it is not public property'; to 'Your legs are beautiful,' this reply: 'But they belong to my husband'; or if he says: 'Your face is lovely,' she can answer: 'But only for him to whom I am married'; still, I am unwill-

79 Ps. 103.1.

80 The Scholion remarks this was said of a Spartan woman, because of the sleeveless dress worn there.

