

Quotations from early Christian writers

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1 Justin Martyr († in 165) – The first Apology

⚓ 1.1 From the first Apology

⚓ 8. Christians hope for the afterlife

And reckon ye that it is for your sakes we have been saying these things; for it is in our power, when we are examined, to deny that we are Christians; **but we would not live by telling a lie. For, impelled by the desire of the eternal and pure life, we seek the abode that is with God, the Father and Creator of all, and hasten to confess our faith, persuaded and convinced as we are that they who have proved to God by their works that they followed Him, and loved to abide with Him where there is no sin to cause disturbance, can obtain these things.** This, then, to speak shortly, is what we expect and have learned from Christ, and teach. And Plato, in like manner, used to say that Rhadamanthus and Minos would punish the wicked who came before them; and we say that the same thing will be done, but at the hand of Christ, and upon the wicked in the same bodies united again to their spirits which are now to undergo everlasting punishment; and not only, as Plato said, for a period of a thousand years. And if any one say that this is incredible or impossible, this error of ours is one which concerns ourselves only, and

no other person, so long as you cannot convict us of doing any harm.

‡ 15. Sayings of Christ about the chastity and charity

Concerning chastity, He uttered such sentiments as these: "Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart before God." And, "If thy right eye offend thee, cut it out; for it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of heaven with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into everlasting fire." And, "Whosoever shall marry her that is divorced from another husband, committeth adultery." And, "There are some who have been made eunuchs of men, and some who were born eunuchs, and some who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake; but all cannot receive this saying." So that all who, by human law, are twice married, are in the eye of our Master sinners, and those who look upon a woman to lust after her. **For not only he who in act commits adultery is rejected by Him, but also he who desires to commit adultery: since not only our works, but also our thoughts, are open before God. And many, both men and women, who have been Christ's disciples from childhood, remain pure at the age of sixty or seventy years; and I boast that I could produce such from every race of men. For what shall I say, too, of the countless multitude of those who have reformed intemperate habits, and learned these things? For Christ called not the just nor the chaste to repentance, but the ungodly, and the licentious, and the unjust; His words being, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." For the heavenly Father desires rather the repentance than the punishment of the sinner.**

‡ 16. Concerning patience and swearing

And concerning our being patient of injuries, and ready to serve all, and free from anger, this is what He said: "To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak or coat, forbid not. And whosoever shall be angry, is in danger of the fire. And every one that compelleth thee to go with him a mile, follow him two. And let your good works shine before men, that they, seeing them, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." **For we ought not to strive; neither has He desired us to be imitators of wicked men, but He has exhorted us to lead all men, by patience and gentleness, from shame and the love of evil. And this indeed is proved in the case of many who once were of your way of thinking, but have changed their violent and tyrannical disposition, being overcome either by the constancy which they have witnessed in their neighbours' lives, or by the extraordinary forbearance they have observed in their fellow-travellers when defrauded, or by the honesty of those with whom they have transacted business.**

And with regard to our not swearing at all, and always speaking the truth, He enjoined as follows: "Swear not at all; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." And that we ought to worship God alone, He thus persuaded us: "The greatest commandment is, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shall thou serve, with all thy heart, and with all thy strength, the Lord God that made thee." And when a certain man came to Him and said, "Good Master," He answered and said, "There is none good but God only, who made all things."

And let those who are not found living as He taught, be understood to be no Christians, even though they profess with the lip the precepts of Christ; for not those who make profession, but those who do the works, shall be saved, according to His word: "Not every one who saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. For whosoever heareth Me, and doeth My sayings, heareth Him that sent Me. And many will say unto Me, Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in Thy name, and done wonders? And then will I say unto them, Depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity. Then shall there be wailing and gnashing of teeth, when the righteous shall

shine as the sun, and the wicked are sent into everlasting fire. For many shall come in My name, clothed outwardly in sheep's clothing, but inwardly being ravening wolves. By their works ye shall know them. And every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire." And as to those who are not living pursuant to these His teachings, and are Christians only in name, we demand that all such be punished by you.

⚓ 1.2 From the second Apology

⚓ 2. Urbicus condemns the Christians to death

⚓ A recent incident shows the injustice of judicial proceedings against the Christians

A certain woman lived with an intemperate husband; she herself, too, having formerly been intemperate. But when she came to the knowledge of the teachings of Christ she became sober-minded, and endeavoured to persuade her husband likewise to be temperate, citing the teaching of Christ, and assuring him that there shall be punishment in eternal fire inflicted upon those who do not live temperately and conformably to right reason. But he, continuing in the same excesses, alienated his wife from him by his actions. For she, considering it wicked to live any longer as a wife with a husband who sought in every way means of indulging in pleasure contrary to the law of nature, and in violation of what is right, wished to be divorced from him. And when she was overpersuaded by her friends, who advised her still to continue with him, in the idea that some time or other her husband might give hope of amendment, she did violence to her own feeling and remained with him. But when her husband had gone into Alexandria, and was reported to be conducting himself worse than ever, she—that she might not, by continuing in matrimonial connection with him, and by sharing his table and his bed, become a partaker also in his wickednesses and impieties—gave him what you call a bill of divorce, and was separated from him. But this noble husband of hers,—while he ought to have been rejoicing that those actions which formerly she unhesitatingly committed with the servants and hirelings, when she delighted in drunkenness and every vice, she had now given up, and desired that he too should give up the same,—when she had gone from him without his desire, brought an accusation against her, affirming that she was a Christian. And she presented a paper to thee, the Emperor, requesting that first she be permitted to arrange her affairs, and afterwards to make her defence against the accusation, when her affairs were set in order. And this you granted. And her quondam husband, since he was now no longer able to prosecute her, directed his assaults against a man, Ptolemaeus, whom Urbicus punished, and who had been her teacher in the Christian doctrines. And this he did in the following way. He persuaded a centurion—who had cast Ptolemaeus into prison, and who was friendly to himself—to take Ptolemaeus and interrogate him on this sole point: whether he were a Christian? And Ptolemaeus, being a lover of truth, and not of a deceitful or false disposition, when he confessed himself to be a Christian, was bound by the centurion, and for a long time punished in the prison. And, at last, when the man came to Urbicus, he was asked this one question only: whether he was a Christian? And again, being conscious of his duty, and the nobility of it through the teaching of Christ, he confessed his discipleship in the divine virtue. For he who denies anything, either denies it because he condemns the thing itself, or he shrinks from confession because he is conscious of his own unworthiness or alienation from it; neither of which cases is that of the true Christian. And when Urbicus ordered him to be led away to punishment, one Lucius, who was also himself a Christian, seeing the unreasonable judgment that had thus been given, said to Urbicus: "What is the ground of this judgment? Why have you punished this man, not as an adulterer, nor fornicator, nor murderer, nor thief, nor robber, nor convicted of any crime at all, but who has only confessed that he is called by the name of Christian? This judgment of yours, O Urbicus, does not become the Emperor Pius, nor the philosopher, the son of Caesar, nor the sacred senate." And he said nothing else in answer to Lucius than this: "You also seem to me to be such an one." And when Lucius

answered, "Most certainly I am," he again ordered him also to be led away. And he professed his thanks, knowing that he was delivered from such wicked rulers, and was going to the Father and King of the heavens. And still a third having come forward, was condemned to be punished.

3 (4) - Why the Christians do not kill themselves

But lest some one say to us, "Go then all or you and kill yourselves, and pass even now to God, and do not trouble us," I will tell you why we do not so, but why, when examined, we fearlessly confess. We have been taught that God did not make the world aimlessly, but for the sake of the human race; and we have before stated that He takes pleasure in those who imitate His properties, and is displeased with those that embrace what is worthless either in word or deed. If, then, we all kill ourselves, we shall become the cause, as far as in us lies, why no one should be born, or instructed in the divine doctrines, or even why the human race should not exist; and we shall, if we so act, be ourselves acting in opposition to the will of God.

But when we are examined, we make no denial, because we are not conscious of any evil, but count it impious not to speak the truth in all things, which also we know is pleasing to God, and be cause we are also now very desirous to deliver you from an unjust prejudice.

12 - The Christians proved innocent by their contempt of death.

The steadfastness of the Christians is the best proof for their integrity

For I myself, too, when I was delighting in the doctrines of Plato, and heard the Christians slandered, and saw them fearless of death, and of all other things which are counted fearful, perceived that it was impossible that they could be living in wickedness and pleasure. For what sensual or intemperate man, or who that counts it good to feast on human flesh, could welcome death that he might be deprived of his enjoyments, and would not rather continue always the present life, and attempt to escape the observation of the rulers; and much less would he denounce himself when the consequence would be death? This also the wicked demons have now caused to be done by evil men. For having put some to death on account of the accusations falsely brought against us, they also dragged to the torture our domestics, either children or weak women, and by dreadful torments forced them to admit those fabulous actions which they themselves openly perpetrate; about which we are the less concerned, because none of these actions are really ours, and we have the unbegotten and ineffable God as witness both of our thoughts and deeds. For why did we not even publicly profess that these were the things which we esteemed good, and prove that these are the divine philosophy, saying that the mysteries of Saturn are performed when we slay a man, and' that when we drink our fill of blood, as it is said we do, we are doing what you do before that idol you honour, and on which you sprinkle the blood not only of irrational animals, but also of men, making a libation of the blood of the slain by the hand of the most illustrious and noble man among you? And imitating Jupiter and the other gods in sodomy and shameless intercourse with woman, might we not bring as our apology the writings of Epicurus and the poets? But because we persuade men to avoid such instruction, and all who practise them and imitate such examples, as now in this discourse we have striven to persuade you, we are assailed in every kind of way. But we are not concerned, since we know that God is a just observer of all. But would that even now some one would mount a lofty rostrum, and shout with a loud voice, "Be ashamed, be ashamed, ye who charge the guiltless with those deeds which yourselves openly commit, and ascribe things which apply to yourselves and to your gods to those who have not even the slightest sympathy with them. Be ye converted; become wise."

✠ 2 Excerpts from the Apology of Athenagoras

⚓ 31 Confutation of the Other Charges Brought Against the Christians.

About the Christians' accountability to God and their hope for eternity

But they have further also made up stories against us of impious feasts and forbidden intercourse between the sexes, both that they may appear to themselves to have rational grounds of hatred, and because they think either by fear to lead us away from our way of life, or to render the rulers harsh and inexorable by the magnitude of the charges they bring. But they lose their labour with those who know that from of old it has been the custom, and not in our time only, for vice to make war on virtue. Thus Pythagoras, with three hundred others, was burnt to death; Heraclitus and Democritus were banished, the one from the city of the Ephesians, the other from Abdera, because he was charged with being mad; and the Athenians condemned Socrates to death. But as they were none the worse in respect of virtue because of the opinion of the multitude, so neither does the indiscriminating calumny of some persons cast any shade upon us as regards rectitude of life, for with God we stand in good repute. **Nevertheless, I will meet these charges also, although I am well assured that by what has been already said I have cleared myself to you. For as you excel all men in intelligence, you know that those whose life is directed towards God as its rule, so that each one among us may be blameless and irreproachable before Him, will not entertain even the thought of the slightest sin. For if we believed that we should live only the present life, then we might be suspected of sinning, through being enslaved to flesh and blood, or overmastered by gain or carnal desire; but since we know that God is witness to what we think and what we say both by night and by day, and that He, being Himself light, sees all things in our heart, we are persuaded that when we are removed from the present life we shall live another life, better than the present one, and heavenly, not earthly (since we shall abide near God, and with God, free from all change or suffering in the soul, not as flesh, even though we shall have flesh, but as heavenly spirit), or, falling with the rest, a worse one and in fire; for God has not made us as sheep or beasts of burden, a mere by-work, and that we should perish and be annihilated. On these grounds it is not likely that we should wish to do evil, or deliver ourselves over to the great Judge to be punished.**

⚓ 32 Elevated Morality of the Christians.

(About the purity in attitude)

It is, however, nothing wonderful that they should get up tales about us such as they tell of their own gods, of the incidents of whose lives they make mysteries. But it behoved them, if they meant to condemn shameless and promiscuous intercourse, to hate either Zeus, who begat children of his mother Rhea and his daughter Kore, and took his own sister to wife, or Orpheus, the inventor of these tales, which made Zeus more unholy and detestable than Thyestes himself; for the latter defiled his daughter in pursuance of an oracle, and when he wanted to obtain the kingdom and avenge himself. **But we are so far from practising promiscuous intercourse, that it is not lawful among us to indulge even a lustful look. "For," saith He, "he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart."** Those, then, who are forbidden to look at anything more than that for which God formed the eyes, which were intended to be a light to us, and to whom a wanton look is adultery, the eyes being made for other purposes, and who are to be called to account for their very thoughts, how can any one doubt that such persons practise self-control? For our account lies not with human laws, which a bad man can evade (at the outset I proved to you, sovereign lords, that our doctrine is from the teaching of God), but we have a law which makes the measure of rectitude to consist in dealing with our neighbour as ourselves. On this account, too, according to age, we recognise some as sons and daughters, others we regard as brothers

and sisters, and to the more advanced in life we give the honour due to fathers and mothers. On behalf of those, then, to whom we apply the names of brothers and sisters, and other designations of relationship, we exercise the greatest care that their bodies should remain undefiled and uncorrupted; for the Logos again says to us, "If any one kiss a second time because it has given him pleasure, [he sins];" adding, "Therefore the kiss, or rather the salutation, should be given with the greatest care, since, if there be mixed with it the least defilement of thought, it excludes us from eternal life."

‡ 33 Chastity of the Christians with respect to marriage.

Therefore, having the hope of eternal life, we despise the things of this life, even to the pleasures of the soul, each of us reckoning her his wife whom he has married according to the laws laid down by us, and that only for the purpose of having children. For as the husbandman throwing the seed into the ground awaits the harvest, not sowing more upon it, so to us the procreation of children is the measure of our indulgence in appetite. **Nay, you would find many among us, both men and women, growing old unmarried, in hope of living in closer communion with God. But if the remaining in virginity and in the state of an eunuch brings nearer to God, while the indulgence of carnal thought and desire leads away from Him, in those cases in which we shun the thoughts, much more do we reject the deeds. For we bestow our attention; not on the study of words, but on the exhibition and teaching of actions,-that a person should either remain as he was born, or be content with one marriage; for a second marriage is only a specious adultery. "For whosoever puts away his wife," says He, "and marries another, commits adultery;" not permitting a man to send her away whose virginity he has brought to an end, nor to marry again. For he who deprives himself of his first wife, even though she be dead, is a cloaked adulterer, resisting the hand of God, because in the beginning God made one man and one woman, and dissolving the strictest union of flesh with flesh, formed for the intercourse of the race.**

‡ 35 The Christians Condemn and Detest All Cruelty.

(Christians detest murder — condemnation of abortion)

What man of sound mind, therefore, will affirm, while such is our character, that we are murderers? For we cannot eat human flesh till we have killed some one. The former charge, therefore, being false, **if any one should ask them in regard to the second, whether they have seen what they assert, not one of them would be so barefaced as to say that he had.** And yet we have slaves, some more and some fewer, by whom we could not help being seen; but even of these, not one has been found to invent even such things against us. **For when they know that we cannot endure even to see a man put to death, though justly; who of them can accuse us of murder or cannibalism?** Who does not reckon among the things of greatest interest the contests of gladiators and wild beasts, especially those which are given by you? But we, deeming that to see a man put to death is much the same as killing him, have abjured such spectacles. How, then, when we do not even look on, lest we should contract guilt and pollution, can we put people to death? **And when we say that those women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder, and will have to give an account to God s for the abortion, on what principle should we commit murder? For it does not belong to the same person to regard the very foetus in the womb as a created being, and therefore an object of God's care, and when it has passed into life, to kill it;** and not to expose an infant, because those who expose them are chargeable with child-murder, and on the other hand, when it has been reared to destroy it. But we are in all things always alike and the same, submitting ourselves to reason, and not ruling over it.

⚓ 3 Excerpts from Minucius Felix “Octavius”

⚓ 3.1 From Caecilius’ accusation

8. Therefore, since the consent of all nations concerning the existence of the immortal gods remains established, although their nature or their origin remains uncertain, I suffer nobody swelling with such boldness, and with I know not what irreligious wisdom, who would strive to undermine or weaken this religion, so ancient, so useful, so wholesome, even although he may be Theodorus of Cyrene, or one who is before him Diagoras the Melian, to whom antiquity applied the surname of Atheist,—both of whom, by asseverating that there were no gods, took away all the fear by which humanity is ruled, and all veneration absolutely; yet never will they prevail in this discipline of impiety, under the name and authority of their pretended philosophy. When the men of Athens both expelled Protagoras of Abdera, and in public assembly burnt his writings, because he disputed deliberately rather than profanely concerning the divinity, why is it not a thing to be lamented, that men (for you will bear with my making use pretty freely of the force of the plea that I have undertaken)—that men, I say, of a reprobate, unlawful, and desperate faction, should rage against the gods? **Who, having gathered together from the lowest dregs the more unskilled, and women, credulous and, by the facility of their sex, yielding, establish a herd of a profane conspiracy, which is leagued together by nightly meetings, and solemn fasts and inhuman meats—not by any sacred rite, but by that which requires expiation—a people skulking and shunning the light, silent in public, but garrulous in corners. They despise the temples as dead-houses, they reject the gods, they laugh at sacred things; wretched, they pity, if they are allowed, the priests; half naked themselves, they despise honours and purple robes. Oh, wondrous folly and incredible audacity! they despise present torments, although they i fear those which are uncertain and future; and while they fear to die after death, they do not fear to die for the present: so does a deceitful hope soothe their fear with the solace of a revival.**

9. And now, as wicked things advance more fruitfully, and abandoned manners creep on day by day, those abominable shrines of an impious assembly are maturing themselves throughout the whole world. Assuredly this confederacy ought to be rooted out and execrated. **They know one another by secret marks and insignia, and they love one another almost before they know one another. Everywhere also there is mingled among them a certain religion of lust, and they call one another promiscuously brothers and sisters, that even a not unusual debauchery may by the intervention of that sacred name become incestuous: it is thus that their vain and senseless superstition glories in crimes.** Nor, concerning these things, would intelligent report speak of things so great and various, and requiring to be prefaced by an apology, unless truth were at the bottom of it. I hear that they adore the head of an ass, that basest of creatures, consecrated by I know not what silly persuasion,—a worthy and appropriate religion for such manners. Some say that they worship the virilia of their pontiff and priest, and adore the nature, as it were, of their common parent. I know not whether these things are false; certainly suspicion is applicable to secret and nocturnal rites; and he who explains their ceremonies by reference to a man punished by extreme suffering for his wickedness, and to the deadly wood of the cross, appropriates fitting altars for reprobate and wicked men, that they may worship what they deserve. Now the story about the initiation of young novices is as much to be detested as it is well known. An infant covered over with meal, that it may deceive the unwary, is placed before him who is to be stained with their rites: this infant is slain by the young pupil, who has been urged on as if to harmless blows on the surface of the meal, with dark and secret wounds.

Thirstily—O horror!—they lick up its blood; eagerly they divide its limbs. By this victim they are pledged together; with this consciousness of wickedness they are covenanted to mutual silence. Such sacred rites as

these are more foul than any sacrileges. And of their banqueting it is well known all men speak of it everywhere; even the speech of our Cirtensian testifies to it. On a solemn day they assemble at the feast, with all their children, sisters, mothers, people of every sex and of every age. There, after much feasting, when the fellowship has grown warm, and the fervour of incestuous lust has grown hot with drunkenness, a dog that has been tied to the chandelier is provoked, by throwing a small piece of offal beyond the length of a line by which he is bound, to rush and spring; and thus the conscious light being overturned and extinguished in the shameless darkness, the connections of abominable lust involve them in the uncertainty of fate. Although not all in fact, yet in consciousness all are alike incestuous, since by the desire of all of them everything is sought for which can happen in the act of each individual.

12. Neither do you at least take experience from things present, how the fruitless expectations of vain promise deceive you. Consider, wretched creatures, (from your lot) while you are yet living, what is threatening you after death. Behold, a portion of you—and, as you declare, the larger and better portion—are in want, are cold, are labouring in hard work and hunger; and God suffers it, He feigns; He either is not willing or not able to assist His people; and thus He is either weak or inequitable. Thou, who dreamest over a posthumous immortality, when thou art shaken by danger, when thou art consumed with fever, when thou art torn with pain, dost thou not then feel thy real condition? Dost thou not then acknowledge thy frailty? Poor wretch, art thou unwillingly convinced of thine infirmity, and wilt not confess it? But I omit matters that are common to all alike. Lo, for you there are threats, punishments, tortures, and crosses; and that no longer as objects of adoration, but as tortures to be undergone; fires also, which you both predict and fear. Where is that God who is able to help you when you come to life again, since he cannot help you while you are in this life? Do not the Romans, without any help from your God, govern, reign, have the enjoyment of the whole world, and have dominion over you? **But you in the meantime, in suspense and anxiety, are abstaining from respectable enjoyments. You do not visit exhibitions; you have no concern in public displays; you reject the public banquets, and abhor the sacred contests; the meats previously tasted by, and the drinks made a libation of upon, the altars. Thus you stand in dread of the gods whom you deny. You do not wreath your heads with flowers; you do not grace your bodies with odours; you reserve unguents for funeral rites; you even refuse garlands to your sepulchres—pallid, trembling beings, worthy of the pity even of our gods! Thus, wretched as you are, you neither rise again, nor do you live in the meanwhile.** Therefore, if you have any wisdom or modesty, cease from prying into the regions of the sky, and the destinies and secrets of the world: it is sufficient to look before your feet, especially for untaught, uncultivated, boorish, rustic people: they who have no capacity for understanding civil matters, are much more denied the ability to discuss divine.

⚓ 3.2 From Octavius' speech of defence

⚓ 28. (Christians have a pure conscience)

BUT how unjust it is, to form a judgment on things unknown and unexamined, as you do! **Believe us ourselves when penitent, for we also were the same as you, and formerly, while yet blind and obtuse, thought the same things as you; to wit, that the Christians worshipped monsters, devoured infants, mingled in incestuous banquets. And we did not perceive that such fables as these were always set afloat by those (newsmongers), and were never either inquired into nor proved; and that in so long a time no one had appeared to betray (their doings), to obtain not only pardon for their crime, but also favour for its discovery: moreover, that it was to this extent not evil, that a Christian, when accused, neither blushed nor feared, and that he only repented that he had not been one before.** We, however, when we undertook to defend and protect some sacrilegious and incestuous persons, and even parricides, did not think that these (Christians) were to

be heard at all.

Sometimes even, when we affected to pity them, we were more cruelly violent against them, so as to torture them when they confessed, that they might deny, to wit, that they might not perish; making use of a perverse inquisition against them, not to elicit the truth, but to compel a falsehood. And if any one, by reason of greater weakness, overcome with suffering, and conquered, should deny that he was a Christian, we showed favour to him, as if by forswearing that name he had at once atoned for all his deeds by that simple denial. Do not you acknowledge that we felt and did the same as you feel and do?...

⚓ 30. (Condemnation of murder and abortion)

And now I should wish to meet him who says or believes that we are initiated by the slaughter and blood of an infant. **Think you that it can be possible for so tender, so little a body to receive those fatal wounds; for any one to shed, pour forth, and drain that new blood of a youngling, and of a man scarcely come into existence? No one can believe this, except one who can dare to do it.** And I see that you at one time expose your begotten children to wild beasts and to birds; at another, that you crush them when strangled with a miserable kind of death. **There are some women who, by drinking medical preparations, extinguish the source of the future man in their very bowels, and thus commit a parricide before they bring forth.** And these things assuredly come don from the teaching of your gods. ...

⚓ 31. (About chastity, modesty and brotherly love of Christians)

And of the incestuous banqueting, the plotting of demons has falsely devised an enormous fable against us, to stain the glory of our modesty, by the loathing excited by an outrageous infamy, that before inquiring into the truth it might turn men away from us by the terror of an abominable charge. It was thus your own Fronto acted in this respect: he did not produce testimony, as one who alleged a charge, but he scattered reproaches as a rhetorician. For these things have rather originated from your own nations. Among the Persians, a promiscuous association between sons and mothers is allowed. Marriages with sisters are legitimate among the Egyptians and in Athens. Your records and your tragedies, which you both read and hear with pleasure, glory in incests: thus also you worship incestuous gods, who have intercourse with mothers, with daughters, with sisters. With reason, therefore, is incest frequently detected among you, and is continually permitted. Miserable men, you may even, without knowing it, rush into what is unlawful: since you scatter your lusts promiscuously, since you everywhere beget children, since you frequently expose even those who are born at home to the mercy of others, it is inevitable that you must come back to your own children, and stray to your own offspring. Thus you continue the story of incest, even although you have no consciousness of your crime. **But we maintain our modesty not in appearance, but in our heart we gladly abide by the bond of a single marriage; in the desire of procreating, we know either one wife, or none at all. We practise sharing in banquets, which are not only modest, but also sober: for we do not indulge in entertainments nor prolong our feasts with wine; but we temper our joyousness with gravity, with chaste discourse, and with body even more chaste (divers of us unviolated) enjoy rather than make a boast of a perpetual virginity of a body. So far, in fact, are they from indulging in incestuous desire, that with some even the (idea of modest intercourse of the sexes causes a blush.** Neither do we at once stand on the level of the lowest of the people, if we refuse your honours and purple robes; and we are not fastidious, if we all have a discernment of one good, but are assembled together with the same quietness with which we live as individuals; and we are not garrulous in corners, although you either blush or are afraid to hear us in public. And that day by day the number of us is increased, is not a ground for a charge of error, but is a testimony which claims praise; for, in a fair mode of life, our actual number both continues and abides undiminished,

and strangers increase it. **Thus, in short, we do not distinguish our people by some small bodily mark, as you suppose, but easily enough by the sign of innocency and modesty. Thus we love one another, to your regret, with a mutual love, because we do not know how to hate. Thus we call one another, to your envy, brethren: as being men born of one God and Parent, and companions in faith, and as fellow-heirs in hope.** You, however, do not recognise one another, and you are cruel in your mutual hatreds; nor do you acknowledge one another as brethren, unless indeed for the purpose of fratricide.

⚓ 35. (About the Christians' purity and integrity)

And yet men are admonished in the books and poems of the most learned poets of that fiery river, and of the heat flowing in manifold turns from the Stygian marsh,-things which, prepared for eternal torments, and known to them by the information of demons and from the oracles of their prophets, they have delivered to us. And therefore among them also even king Jupiter himself swears religiously by the parching banks and the black abyss; for, with foreknowledge of the punishment destined to him, with his worshippers, he shudders. Nor is there either measure termination to these torments. There the intelligent fire burns the limbs and restores them, feeds on them and nourishes them. As the fires of the thunderbolts strike upon the bodies, and do not consume them; as the fires of Mount AETna and of Mount Vesuvius, and of burning where, glow, but are not wasted; so that penal fire is not fed by the waste of those who burn, but is nourished by the unexhausted eating away of their bodies. But that they who know not God are deservedly tormented as impious, as unrighteous persons, no one except a profane man hesitates to believe, since it is not less wicked to be ignorant of, than to offend the Parent of all, and the Lord of all. And although ignorance of God is sufficient for punishment, even as knowledge of Him is of avail for pardon, yet if we Christians be compared with you, although in some things our discipline is inferior, yet we shall be found much better than you. For you forbid, and yet commit, adulteries; we are born men only for our own wives: you punish crimes when committed; with us, even to think of crimes is to sin: you are afraid of those who are aware of what you do; are even afraid of our own conscience alone, without which we cannot exist: finally, from your numbers the prison boils over; but there is no Christian there, unless he is accused on account of his religion, or a deserter.

⚓ 36. (About poverty and endurance in afflictions)

But that many of us are called poor, this is not our disgrace, but our glory; for as our mind is relaxed by luxury, so it is strengthened by frugality. And yet who can be poor if he does not want, if he does not crave for the possessions of others, if he is rich towards God? He rather is poor, who, although he has much, desires more. Yet I will speak according as I feel. No one can be so poor as he is born. Birds live without any patrimony, and day by day the cattle are fed; and yet these creatures are born for us—all of which things, if we do not lust after, we possess. **Therefore, as he who treads a road is the happier the lighter he walks, so happier is he in this journey of life who lifts himself along in poverty, and does not breathe heavily under the burden of riches. And yet even if we thought wealth useful to us, we should ask it of God. Assuredly He might be able to indulge us in some measure, whose is the whole; but we would rather despise riches than possess them: we desire rather innocency, we rather entreat for patience, we prefer being good to being prodigal;** and that we feel and suffer the human mischiefs of the body is not punishment –it is warfare. For fortitude is strengthened by infirmities, and calamity is very often the discipline of virtue; in addition, strength both of mind and of body grows torpid without the exercise of labour. Therefore all your mighty men whom you announce as an example have flourished illustriously by their afflictions. And thus God is neither unable to aid us, nor does He

despise us, since He is both the ruler of all men and the lover of His own people. **But in adversity He looks into and searches out each one; He weighs the disposition of every individual in dangers, even to death at last; He investigates the will of man, certain that to Him nothing can perish. Therefore, as gold by the fires, so are we declared by critical moments.**

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