On the months

John the Lydian (c. AD 490–565)

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[Translated by Andrew Eastbourne]

MARCH

33. The Romans considered March the beginning of the year, as I have already said, and they dedicated it to Ares—it was previously named Zephyrites and Primus. For Rômus, the one who founded Rome and made in it a sanctuary of Ares in this very month, gave it the name ”Martius” [”Mars’ (city)”]—that is, Ares’ [city], in his ancestral speech. 34. The mythologists say: Zeus, by intercourse with his sister Hera, generated Ares—that is, the aether in contact with the aer squeezes out the aerial fire. But the natural philosophers say that Ares was so named, not, as the children of the grammarians say, from ”removal” [arsis] and ”destruction” [anairesis], but from the ”aiding” [arêgein] and ”helping” [syllambanein][1] given in occurrences of violence and fighting—or alternatively, as ”originative” [arktikon] and ”causative of change” [metabolês aition].[2] And as his exaltation, they gave him Capricorn.[3] The Romans [92] called Mars mors, that is, ”death”—either as being the one who sets crafts in motion, or as being Ares who is honored only by males [arrenes], or on the basis of ”fighting” [marnasthai] (according to Philoxenus). And in Egyptian he is called ”Ertôsi.”[4] This signifies generation of every kind and every essence and material in accordance with nature and an ordering, generative power.

Ares was the discoverer of bronze and of iron. The natural philosophers join Aphrodite sometimes to Ares, sometimes to Hephaestus—as it were, the fiery substance with the moist, obscurely hinting, presumably, that generation proceeds from wetness and heat—or indeed, because Scorpio is common to them [both], with Ares being the stinger and Aphrodite the claws.[5] And just as in the myth, Aphrodite turns away from Ares, since storms follow Ares in his own characteristic position, but Aphrodite is temperate. And so, they are opposite to each other, but not wholly so. For indeed, they seem to be connected to each other at adjacent times, since after the winter [storms][6] the spring returns. And Ares is worshipped by the sounds of weapons and by trumpets, and for this reason the Romans celebrated their first festival in his honor, calling it Armilustrium,[7] or ”purification of weapons,” when neither winter cold nor any other circumstance hinders the movement of weapons, on the Field of Mars.[8]

And his name according to the Egyptians is Pyroeis ["fiery / red-yellow"], hence also Xanthikos ["tawny"] among the Macedonians. But the Greeks, as I have said, addressed him as Ares, on the basis of his actions. [93] For no one would [ever] discover the proper appellation of a deity, nor indeed the true mark of [a deity's] nature—since the philosophers portray their forms now as male, now female—but they bestowed names on the basis of the [gods'] effects, portraying the creative powers as male deities, and the generative ones as females.[9] 35. The star of Ares [i.e., the planet Mars] is especially good—as is that of Cronus [i.e., Saturn],[10] if, that is, all things are good and nothing despicable, as Plato says.[11] Sublunar things decay, however, not being able to bear the divinity of these [stars], as Iamblichus says. The astrologers say that Ares is a worker of evil,[12] not because he is such by nature, but because he attends with the law of justice the souls that are descending toward their birth, and does to them what is just, in accordance with their merit—and one who is the ally of justice is good.

One can learn from Proclus Diadochus that evil is not in subsistence or existence; he says:[13] Evil is not even able to exist, without appearing contrariwise as good. For evil itself is for the sake of the good; but everything is for the sake of the good—and the divinity is not the cause of evil; for the evil is not evil because of it, but as a result of other causes, things whose generative action occurs not by virtue of capacity but by virtue of weakness.[14] It is for this reason, I think, that Plato placed all things around the king of everything,[15] and granted the existence of evil when appearing as good. For if it [i.e., divinity] is one of those things that truly exists, and it would thus be necessary to call it [94] the cause of all <good>[16] things—and not simply of all things, nor of evil things, but in fact not the cause of the latter and the cause of all that exists—then, the gods do not produce evil, but rather make [it first] as good, and [then] remove it as being evil.[17]

For evil is not defined as a living and animate substance, but as a disposition in the soul that is contrary to virtue and that comes to be there through carelessness on account of a falling away from the good. Therefore, a pious understanding of the so-called evil-working planets would be that they are not such by nature, but rather contribute toward the providential management of the universe. For if Cronus is cold, and Ares is hot,[18] then they contribute to [physical] generation, and by themselves they are destructive, but when mingled together they are salutary. 36. Ptolemy, in his Harmonics:[19] The numbers have been defined through which there arises a concordant harmony in all those things which are in agreement and attunement with each other. And nothing at all is able to harmonize with anything except by virtue of these numbers. They are as follows: 4/3; 3/2; 1/1;[20] 2/1; 3/1; 4/1.[21]

37. That which is perceptible comes to us from the sun; that which is physical,[22] from the lunar sphere; and this life of ours—well, our mode of living—has its existence by the special beneficence of these two lights. And the success of our actions is on the hand attributed to these two lights, and on the other, to the five planets. But some of these stars are beautifully united and joined with the lights [95] by the mediation of the higher numbers already mentioned, and no other numerical connection brings them together with the lights. Well

then, the stars of Aphrodite and Zeus [i.e., Venus and Jupiter] are united to each of the lights by these numbers, but the star of Zeus is joined with the sun by them all, with the moon by the majority; but the star of Aphrodite is brought into connection with the moon by all the numbers, with the sun by the majority. Hence, if each of these produces good, for the most part, nevertheless the star of Zeus is more beneficial when paired with the sun, and the star of Aphrodite with the moon. But the stars of Cronus and Ares [i.e., Saturn and Mars] do not have a conjunction with the lights in this way—nevertheless, by a certain final reflection / appearance of the numbers, Cronus looks toward the sun, and Ares toward the moon—and for this reason, they seem less beneficial to human life. But why, sometimes, are they themselves actually believed to provide riches and distinction to men?

This is appropriate to a further investigation. Now indeed Plotinus, in his book entitled "How the stars cause [events],"[23] giving his opinion about this, says that none of these things happens to human beings by virtue of [the stars'] power or authority, but rather, what the necessity belonging to divine providence has decreed is revealed as such by the forward motion, stopping, or retrograde motion of these seven bodies—just as birds, either spreading out or remaining stationary, knowingly indicate the future with their wings or their voices.[24] In the same discourse, [96] Plotinus says:[25] "Their symbolic power extends to the entire realm of sense, their efficacy only to what they patently do. For our part, nature keeps us upon the work of the Soul as long as we are not wrecked in the multiplicity of the Universe: once thus sunk and held we pay the penalty."

38. Likewise, Plotinus says:[26] To Plato the Spindle represents the co-operation of the moving and the stable elements of the kosmic circuit: the Fates with Necessity, Mother of the Fates, manipulate it and spin at the birth of every being, so that all comes into existence through Necessity. In the Timaeus,[27] the creating God bestows the essential of the Soul, but it is the divinities moving in the kosmos [the stars] that infuse the powerful affections holding from Necessity our impulse and our desire, our sense of pleasure and of pain—and that lower phase of the Soul in which such experiences originate. By this statement our personality is bound up with the stars, whence our Soul [as total of Principle and affections] takes shape; and we are set under necessity at our very entrance into the world: our temperament will be of the stars' ordering, and so, therefore, the actions which derive from temperament, and all the experiences of a nature shaped to impressions.

So then, what remains as 'us'? Precisely that which we truly are: beings to whom nature has granted, along with the passions, the power of also governing them.[28] Cut off as we are by the body,[29] God has yet given us, in the midst of all this evil, virtue the unconquerable, meaningless in a state of tranquil safety but everything where its absence would be peril of fall. Our task, then, is to work for our liberation from this sphere, severing ourselves from all that has gathered about us; the total man is to be something better than a body ensouled [97]—the bodily element dominant with a trace of Soul running through it and a resultant life-course mainly of the body—for in such a combination all is, in fact, bodily. There is another life, emancipated, whose quality is progression towards the higher realm, towards

the good and divine, towards that Principle which no one possesses except by deliberate usage but so may be in and live by It[30]—unless one choose to go bereaved of that higher Soul and therefore, to live fate-bound, no longer profiting, merely, by the significance of the sidereal system but becoming[31] as it were a part sunken in it and dragged along with the whole thus adopted.

For every human Being is of twofold character; there is that compromise-total and there is the Authentic Man: and it is so with the Kosmos as a whole; it is in the one phase a conjunction of body with a certain form of the Soul bound up in body; in the other phase it is the Universal Soul, that which is not itself embodied but flashes down its rays into the embodied Soul: and the same twofold quality belongs to the Sun and the other members of the heavenly system. 39. Because this universe has been finely and variously crafted with ineffable skill, and is full of blessed harmony, then it is necessary, I presume, that its nature has been, so to speak, ”harmonized together” out of shrill and deep, gentle and harsh sounds and rhythms and dynamics.

40. The ancients would burn the bodies after death, deifying as it were the body too, together with the soul. For just as the latter is fiery by nature and rushes upwards, so the body is heavy and cold and tends downwards. Therefore, they thought they were actually purifying the very image of the body by the rite of fire. For the account of Anaximander is not true [98]—he asserted that this universe is derived from fire, and that for this reason bodies were consigned to fire by the ancients—[nor are] the Stoics [correct], who turned the dead to ashes in advance, since they were awaiting the universal conflagration—for that sort of dissolution of bodies belongs to the most ancient by far of philosophical teachings. The teeth, however, not being of such a nature as to be consumed either by fire or length of time, they would leave behind on the very pyre, as being useless for the future—they were thinking of the doctrine of rebirth; for they themselves strongly accepted the account of this because of the fact that a person who was, it seemed, going to be reborn hereafter had no need of teeth in the mother’s womb.

41. There are no ”evil-working” stars; they are all good. But since the universe subsists in harmony, some of them are dry, others are moist; and others have some other quality in relation to their mixtures. For this reason, they seem to cause harm in their effects—but not on purpose—and because earthly things are harmed when, as sometimes happens, they cannot endure their unmitigated powers. So, for example, the eyes are harmed by an excess of light. 42. On the first day of March, they would honor Hera, as the moon, because of the new moon. And the priest would announce that everyone should partake of sweet drinks and foods, for the preservation of health. And the Romans would shake their weapons on the Field (or precinct) of Mars. [99] On this day, also, they would rest from toils, and those called matronae (”matrons”) among them—that is, the ”well-born”—would feast their household servants, just as at the Cronia it was customary for those who had slaves to do this. The former, by way of honoring Ares, acted as slaves to their male servants, because of their more powerful nature; and the latter, by way of performing an evil-averting service to

Cronus, would serve their own slaves, so as not to suffer some sort of retribution in reality and thereby fall into servitude to their enemies.

And everyone would take sustenance from the bean in March—the bean [kuamos] belongs to Ares, based on the ”conceiving” [kuein] of ”blood” [haima]. They would smear each others’ faces, using the oil of the bean in place of blood, and in this way worshipping Ares. Pythagoras very much avoided the bean; for when eaten, it stirs bodies up toward intercourse much more than the other fruits, and in this manner it draws souls downwards towards ”coming-to-be.”[32] And Heraclides Ponticus says that if someone places a bean in a common receptacle and covers it over with dung for forty full days, he will find that the bean has changed into the appearance of a fleshly man—and that for this reason the poet said: It is the same, I tell you, to eat beans as to eat the heads of your parents.[33]

And Diogenes says this in the 13th [book] of Incredible Things. [100] Then, [he says,] a man was congealed from the same putrefaction, and sprouted a bean. And he supplied clear proofs of this. For if someone should chew apart a bean, grind it with his teeth, and deposit it in the warmth of the sunlight for a little while, then get up and return not much later, he would find that it smells of human gore. And if, while the bean [plant] is blossoming in its growth, one should take a little of the flower as it is darkening and place it in an earthenware vessel, put a cover on top, bury it deep in the ground and watch over it for ninety days after it has been buried, and then after that dig it up, take it and remove the lid, he would find that in place of the bean, the head of a child has taken shape, or a woman’s genitals. Therefore, as Pythagoras says, one should abstain from beans, as well as from the so-called ”golden-greens,”[34] since their process of generation derives from women’s menses. For this reason, beans are cast into graves on behalf of human salvation.[35]

And the fact that the word ”bean” [kuamos] derives from ”blood” [haima] can be ascertained by experiment. For if someone soaks it for a night and a day, he will find the water in it [has become] blood. 43. And the bakers, being the makers of servile [i.e., coarse] [101] bread, would send ”Romulian provisions” to those of high repute—and so they called these, on account of their being offered by Romulus at the ninth hour as sustenance for his soldiers...For indeed, Valentinian was uneducated and only...very angry.[36] 44. On the 4th day before the Nones of March,[37] Eudoxus predicts that a fairly violent wind blows, in general. 45. On the 3rd day before the Nones of March,[38] the ”sailing of Isis” was celebrated, which is performed even to this day, and called the Ploiaphesia [”Ship-launching”]. ”Isis,” in the speech of the Egyptians, signifies ”old”—that is, [in reference to] the moon. And fittingly do they honor her as they begin to engage in sea-going travel, because she is in charge of the nature of the waters, as I said. And they say that she is also a giver of health, just as we say Asclepius is. And it would be the same thing.[39] For just as we, taking the sun as Asclepius after its setting, when night falls—being the cause of sleep and night and rest, they cause and giver of health...they relate...[40] And the Chaeronean [Plutarch] thinks Isis is the earth, and Osiris the Nile, Typhon the sea, into which the Nile falls and disappears.

46. The Greeks write that Tyche is cow-faced. But I think she is the nature of moisture, and thus the Romans customarily call her Aqua [”water”], from her ”equality” [i.e., Lat. aequ(al)itas] [102]: water is homogeneous and equal in nature. And aqua was appropriately named by them, since by derivation from aqua they bestow the designation ”equality” and ”homogeneity.”[41]

47. ”Sibyl” is a Roman expression, translated ”prophetess” or ”seer,” whence the female seers were all named, by the single designation, ”Sibyls. And there have been ten Sibyls in various places and at various times.[42] First was the one called Chaldaean and Persian and (by some) Hebrew; her personal name was Sambethe, and she was of the family of the most blessed Noah—the one who is said to have predicted the events pertaining to Alexander the Macedonian; Nicanor the biographer of Alexander mentions her; she spoke very many oracles about the Lord God and his coming. But the others also harmonize with her, except that to her belong 24 books containing [messages] about every nation and land. And as to the fact that her verses are found to be incomplete and unmetrical, it is not the fault of the prophetess but of the stenographers, who were not able to follow along with the rush of her words—or even because they were uneducated and inexperienced in literacy. For the memory of what had been said ceased in her at the same time as the inspiration, and for this reason there are found to be incomplete verses and a halting sense—or else this happened by the providence of God, so that her oracles would not become known to the many who were unworthy. Second was the Libyan Sibyl.

Third, [103] the Delphian Sibyl, the one who was born at Delphi—she lived before the Trojan War and wrote oracles in verse during the time of the Judges, when Deborah was a prophetess among the Jews. Fourth, the Italian [Sibyl], who was in Cimmeria in Italy. Fifth, the Erythraean [Sibyl], from the city called ”Erythra”[43] in Ionia, who made predictions about the Trojan War. Sixth, the Samian [Sibyl], whose personal name was Phyto, about whom Eratosthenes wrote; she too lived in the time of the Hebrew Judges. Seventh, the Cumaean [Sibyl], also called Amalthaea and Herophile. Cumae is an Italian city, near which there is a cave, covered over and well-polished, in which this Sibyl lived and gave oracles to those who inquired of her. Eighth, the Gergithian [Sibyl]—Gergithium is a town near the Hellespont. Ninth, the Tiburtine [Sibyl], named Albunaea.

The Jewish Sibyl was also called Chaldaean. For indeed, Philo, writing his ”Life” of Moses, says that he [i.e., Moses] was a Chaldaean, but had been born in Egypt, since his ancestors had come down there because of a famine that had struck Babylon and the neighboring regions. And as it seems, the Canaanites were called this [i.e., Chaldaeans] from the beginning, or because Abraham had set out from there. And Philo likewise, with regard to the writings of Moses, says that they were written by him in the Chaldaean language, but later were translated into Greek by Ptolemy, surnamed Philadelphus, who was the third to receive Egypt after Alexander. And I read a book by this Hebrew Sibyl in Cyprus: in it she treats prophetically many things, including Greek affairs—and indeed even regarding Homer, that God will raise up a certain wise man, who will record the war of the heroes and

will praise the noblest of these. And she also prophesies about Christ and the events that happened after Christ's coming—and indeed even about those that will take place, until the very end; among these, she also gives a kind of ominous prophecy regarding Cyprus and Antioch: that the one will fall, as in battle, and will no longer rise up again; and the island will become under water. For she says:

Wretched Antioch, they will no longer call you a city, when you fall in among spears for your wicked-mindedness. And again: Alas, alas, miserable Cyprus, and a great wave will cover you with stormy darts—and the sea stirred up. This Sibyl anticipated the coming of Christ by 2000 years, and this is her verse predicting the precious cross: O blessed wood, by which God was stretched out. Tarquinius Priscus was the fourth king in Rome after the founder, Romus; and a certain woman, Amalthaea, came to him carrying with her three books, oracles [105] of the Cumaean Sibyl, and was wanting to give them to him for 300 gold coins. When he showed disdain, she became angry and burned one of the books, and once again approached him and requested 300 gold coins for the remaining two books. When he only despised her the more, she burned a second book, and then finally asked the very same price for the other, single book. So the king, guessing that it was essential for his kingdom, accepted it and gave her the 300 gold coins. He found written in it, especially and exclusively, the fortunes of the Romans; and he put these into the safekeeping of a group of 60 patricians.

48. On the Nones of March,[44] Varro says that Corona sets, and the north wind blows. 49. On the Ides of March,[45] there is a festival of Zeus, on account of the mid-month, and public prayers that the year will be healthful. And they would also sacrifice a 6-year-old bull on behalf of the mountain country, under the leadership of the high priest and the "reed-bearers"[46] of the Mother. And [106] a man clothed with a goat-skin would be led in, and they would strike him with long, slender rods, calling him "Mamurius." (This man was a craftsman involved in weapon-manufacture; in order that the ancilia that "fell from Zeus" should not decay from continuously being "moved,"[47] he crafted [new ones] similar to the originals.) Hence most people say proverbially, when they are mocking those who are being beaten, that those who are doing the beating are "playing Mamurius on him." For according to the story, the [original] Mamurius himself was beaten with rods and driven out of the city when, because of the removal of the original ancilia, difficulties had befallen the Romans.[48]

Metrodorus teaches that this day is bad. 50. The 16th day before the Kalends of April:[49] no work. On this day, Eudoxus says that Pisces rises and the north wind blows. 51. Liber, the name for Dionysus among the Romans, meaning "free"—that is, the Sun. Mysteries [mysteria], from the removal of impurity [mysos] as equivalent to[50] holiness. Dionysus, "because of whom [is] the race-post" [di' hon hê nyssa]—that is, the turning-post—and the cycles of time. Indeed, Terpander of Lesbos says that Nyssa nursed the Dionysus called "Sabazius" by some, who was born of Zeus and Persephone, and later [107] torn to pieces by the Titans. And it is also told concerning him, according to Apollodorus, that he was

born of Zeus and Earth, Earth being designated ”Semele” because all things have it as their foundation [katathemeliousthai]: By changing one letter, ’s,’ the poets have called her ”Semele.”

According to the poets, [there have been] five Dionysi:[51] First, the son of Zeus and Lysithea; second, the son of Nilus, who ruled over Libya and Ethiopia and Arabia; third, the child of Cabirus, who ruled over <Asia>, from whom come the Cabirian initiation; fourth, the child of Zeus and Semele, for whom the mysteries of Orpheus were performed, and by whom wine was mingled;[52] fifth, the son of Nisus and Thyone, who introduced the ”Triennial Festival.”[53] So far, the Greek [account]. But the Romans call Dionysus the ”Bacchanal of Cithaeron”—meaning, one who is in a Bacchic frenzy and runs up to the heavens, <which> they named ”Citharon” on the basis of the harmony[54] of the seven ”stars,” and hence Hermes mystically gives the cithara to Apollo, as the Logos grants the attunement of the universe to the Sun. And the mysteries in honor of Dionysus were conducted in secret, because of the fact that the sun’s shared association with the nature of the universe is hidden from everyone. [108] And in his sacred rites they would carry along phalli, as being the generative organs, and a mirror, as [representing] the translucent / radiant heavens, and a ball, as [representing] the earth. For Plato says in his Timaeus, ”to earth, the spherical form.”[55] For this reason also Pythagoras says that souls have been scattered in the ten spheres in this way, and in it [i.e., the earth].

And in the sacred rites, they would call him Pyrigenês [”fire-born”] and Pankratês [”all-powerful”], because on the one hand the sun is of a fiery nature, and on the other, it governs and rules over all. And they say that the panther receives its name from him, as [representing] the ”all-animal” [pan-thêr-os][56] earth which receives from him its life-giving and joy-bringing sustenance. And they depict his Bacchantes and Nymphs as [representing] the waters that obey him, and by the movement of the sun the nature of the waters is given life; and they give them cymbals and thyrsi[57] [to represent] the sound of the waters. And they depict the Maenads being driven off by Satyrs, as [representing] the production of thunder and noise when the waters are thrust away by the winds. And [they describe] Dionysus as the ”mind of Zeus,” as [representing] the soul of the cosmos; for we find everywhere that the entire cosmos is named ”Zeus,” on account of its eternal life and endlessness. They describe him as the son of Semele, as being hidden under earth and coming forth by virtue of Hermes, that is, the Logos; and being fostered in the thigh of Zeus, as lying hidden in the secret places of the cosmos; and they call him Dithyrambus[58] and Dimêtôr [”having two mothers”], the one who has two paths of procession, the [109] one, from the East toward the South, in winter, and the other, from the North toward the West, in summer. So much regarding Dionysus.

And on the day of the Bacchanalia, Democritus says that Pisces sets, and Varro teaches that there will be a ”fight of the winds.” All this, antiquity [has handed down] about the Dionysia. 52. When a disturbance had occurred on the Capitol, caused by the rioters, it is said that at that time, a shepherd seemed to appear in the place and decided that the people

should be gathered, and the commons should hurry to assemble; and when the workmen had been sent off thither by the shepherd, the people came to be at peace, and he himself disappeared.

53. There has been and still is much disagreement among the theologians[59] regarding the god who is worshipped by the Hebrews. For the Egyptians—and Hermes [i.e., Trismegistus] first of all—theologize that he is Osiris, "the one who exists," about whom Plato says in the Timaeus: "What is it that always exists, and has no 'coming-to-be'; and what is it that comes to be, but never exists?"[60] But the Greeks say that he is the Dionysus of Orpheus, because, as they themselves say, at the holy place[61] of the temple in Jerusalem, from both pillars vines fashioned from gold used to hold up[62] the curtains that were variegated with purple and scarlet: On the basis of this, they supposed that it was a temple of Dionysus. But Livy asserts in his general Roman history that the god worshipped there is unknown.[63] Following him, Lucan [110] says that the temple in Jerusalem belongs to an "obscure / unseen"[64] god.[65] And Numenius says that he is "incommunicable / unique,"[66] and the father of all the gods, who does not consider it worthy for any to share in his honor. And also the Emperor Julian, when he was going on his expedition against the Persians, wrote to the Jews as follows: "For I am raising the temple of the Most High God with all enthusiasm."[67] For this reason[68]—and also because of circumcision—some of the uneducated even consider him to be Cronus: For they say that Cronus [i.e., Saturn] is the most elevated of the planets.

But they do not understand that circumcision is a symbol of the purification of the spiritual soul, as the more initiated[69] Hebrews believe, and that circumcision is not a ritual of Cronus. Those of the Arabs who are called "Scênitae" ["tent-dwellers"] circumcise their own sons at the age of thirteen, as Origen says,[70] although they are honoring Astartê, not Cronus. And also the Ethiopians mark the knee-caps of the young for the sake of Apollo. Porphyry, however, in his commentary on the Oracles, considers the one honored by the Jews to be the "twice transcendent," that is, the creator of the universe, whom the Chaldaean theologizes as the second after the "once transcendent," that is, the Good. Of course, the schools of Iamblichus and Syrianus and Proclus[71] think he is the creator of the perceptible world, calling him the god of the "four-element [world]. But the Roman Varro, [111] when discussing him, says that among the Chaldaeans, in their mystical [writings], he is called "Iaô," meaning "mentally perceived light" in the language of the Phoenicians, as Herennius [Philo] says. And he is frequently called "Sabaôth," meaning the one who is "above the seven heavenly spheres"[72]—that is, the creator. So then, there are many opinions about him; but those who theorize that he is unknown and obscure are predominant. They are mistaken, who consider him to be Dionysus, on the basis of the vines which held up the curtains, as mentioned above—and further, on the basis of a conviction (from whatever source) that the profane[73] among the Hebrews abstain from wine.

This mistake can be perceived from their very own laws. For they reveal that it is not the profane, but the consecrated who do this, as follows: ”Wine and strong drink you shall not drink...when you enter into the tent.”[74]

54. On the 15 day before the Kalends of April,[75] Euctemon says that various winds blow. And one might call Athena ”cephalic prudence.” For indeed, prudence is said to reside near the ”roots” of the human brain, in the front of the head, opposite the back of the head[76]—hence, Homer represented Achilles becoming angry, [then] seized by Athena from the front of the head, as follows: ”And she seized the son of Peleus by his tawny hair.”[77] [112] And they write that she is ”gleaming-eyed” [glaukôpis][78] on account of her fieriness, and for her bird they attribute to her the owl [glaux], which stays awake all through the night, as though one were saying that [she represents] the human soul, not idle at any time—for indeed, it is immortal and ever-moving by nature. As Plato says, ”That which...ceases to move ceases to live.”[79] 55. On the 14 day before the Kalends of April,[80] it was the custom for the Salian [priests], whom Numa established, to ”put in storage”[81] the weapons that ”fell from Zeus,” the ones which they called ancilia. It was customary for these to be ”moved,” in honor of Ares, on that day on which it is said that a voice from the heavens was heard, saying that the city would be kept safe as long as the ancilia were kept safe.

56. Also in Rome, they would laugh at the sinful citizen women on wagons, and lead them out unseen in accordance with the practice of the Athenians, who would threaten the sinners with saying the things ”from the wagon.” 57. On the 14 day before the Kalends of April,[82] there was a festival which was honored among the Romans not because it was Roman but because it held the highest honor among the Egyptians, for the following reason: When the Nile once refused to provide the yearly beneficence of its waters, and thus the Egyptians were perishing, a certain good daemon appeared as a man, his whole body covered in mud [pepêlômenos] and proclaimed to the Egyptians that the Nile had gushed forth, and he himself had fallen in its waters. When they disbelieved him, but then found that it was really the truth, a festival was established among them and among the Greeks, called Pêlousion.

58. Philadelphia in Lydia was built by the Egyptians. The school of Proclus called Philadelphia ”little Athens” because of their enthusiasm for it, on account of its festivals and the sacred rites of its idols. 59. On the 11th day before the Kalends of April,[83] a pine tree would be carried on the Palatine by the dendrophori [”tree-bearers”]. The festival was established by the Emperor Claudius, a man so just in his judgments that he ordered a mother who was denying her own child to be married to him [i.e., the child], on the grounds that she was a stranger to him; but by her refusal he determined that she was the mother. 60. On the 10th day before the Kalends of April,[84] there is trumpet-purification[85] and movement of the weapons, and honors for Ares and Nerinê—a goddess so named in the Sabine language, who they understood to be Athena or else Aphrodite. For nerinê means ”courage” and the Sabines call the courageous nerônas. And Homer demonstrates that she does take the lead in warfare, along with Ares: ”All these things will be the concern of quick Ares and Athena.”[86] For those who consider Nerinê to be Aphrodite are mistaken, and Homer

is equally a witness on this point: ”My child [i.e., Aphrodite], warlike deeds have not been given to you.”[87] [114]

61. Philip says that on the 9th day before the Kalends of April,[88] the Hyades set, along with a south wind; but Metrodorus says they rise. On the 8th day before the Kalends,[89] the spring equinox. 62. A vault is a kind of building having the form of a half-cylinder. 63. Demeter is one who makes the beginning of a city, as being the earth. And hence, they depict her bearing a tower.[90] And the earth is also called Cybele, from its cubic shape in accordance with geometry—although the Stoics define it as spherical. [1] This term seems to have been added as a synonym of the previous, not because it has any significant phonetic sequence of its own. [2] As before, this term seems to have been added as a synonym of the previous, not because it has any significant phonetic sequence of its own. [3] Cf. Ptolemy, Tetrabiblos 1.19. ”Exaltation” (Greek hupsôma) indicates that the planet is supposed to be particularly powerful in this sign.

[4] Not elsewhere attested. [5] The ”claws” of Scorpio = Libra. For the associations, cf. Ptolemy, Tetrabiblos, 1.17. [6] The Greek term here means both ”winter” and ”storms.” [7] Oct. 19, according to others, but see section 42 below. [8] I.e., the Campus Martius. [9] ”Creative” (dêmiourgikos) in the sense of craftsman-like fashioning of materials, ”generative” (zôogonos) as the ”life-giving” reproductive function. [10] Saturn, like Mars, is classified as ”maleficent” (cf. Ptolemy, Tetrabiblos 1.5). [11] Timaeus 30a. [12] Cf. Ptolemy, Tetrabiblos 1.5. [13] Proclus, De malorum subsistentia 61 (ed. Boese, Tria opuscula [Berlin, 1960]; cf. also the recent translation by Opsomer and Steel, Proclus: On the Existence of Evils [Ithaca, 2003])—the text presented by John Lydus, however, truncates and diverges a little from Proclus’ work. [14] The basic point appears to be that evil per se is a deficiency, a lack, rather than a positive substance in its own right. The phrase kata dunamin, however, appears to derive from Tim. 30a, where it has the meaning, ”as far as possible.” That is, the phraseology here seems to be based on a misreading of Plato.

[15] Cf. Plato, Epistle 2.312e. At this point, John’s quotation begins to diverge more significantly from Proclus’ text. [16] Here, the term ”good” does not appear in Wuensch’s text, but is present in the text of Proclus and the passage of Plato still being alluded to; although John’s ”quotation” of Proclus is quite free at this point, the word ”good” does seem to be required by the sense. [17] The last phrase, ”and [then] remove it as being evil,” is not present in any form in the text of Proclus. [18] Cf. Ptolemy, Tetrabiblos 1.4. [19] Not a precise quote from a known passage. [20] Gk. spondeios, that is, the ”spondee” in which the relationship between the two long feet is 1:1. (The first proportion in the list, 4/3, is also a metrical term, epitritos, long-long-short-long, in which the relationship between the first two syllables and the last two syllables is 4:3.

[21] These ratios also represent musical intervals: the perfect fourth, the perfect fifth, the octave, etc. [22] Greek physikos. Lit., ”natural,” or ”innate.” [23] Enneads 2.3: ”Concerning whether the stars cause [events].” [24] Cf. Enn. 2.3.3 (end) on birds; otherwise, this is not a very close paraphrase of Plotinus’ argument. [25] Enn. 2.3.8 (tr. MacKenna and

Page). The translation of MacKenna and Page is available online at: http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/plotenn/index.htm [26] Enn. 2.3.9 (tr. MacKenna and Page—lightly edited as indicated in the footnotes). [27] 30b. [28] I have altered the translation of MacKenna and Page here, which reads: ”What, after all this, remains to stand for the ”We”? The ”We” is the actual resultant of a Being whose nature includes, with certain sensibilities, the power of governing them.” [29] Here John Lydus' text is slightly shorter than the extant text of Plotinus, and so I have altered the translation of MacKenna and Page, which reads: ”...by the nature of the body.”

[30] Here MacKenna and Page seem to have expanded the text of Plotinus, and so I have shortened their translation to reflect the text as quoted by John Lydus; their translation reads: ”...except by deliberate usage but so may appropriate, becoming, each personally, the higher, the beautiful, the Godlike, and living, remote, in and by It...” [31] The translation here is needlessly obscure; more simply, ”not only do the stars give him indications, but he himself becomes...” [32] Or, ”generation”—that is, the physical world of ”coming-to-be” (and sexual reproduction) rather than the non-corporeal world of true ”being.” [33] Orph. fr. 263 Abel. [34] Also called atraphaxys and andraphaxys in Greek, in English orach [LSJ]. [35] Or ”safety,” but John Lydus here clearly seems to indicate that the practice is meant to guarantee a better afterlife. [36] Some text is missing here. [37] 4 March. [38] 5 March. [39] I.e., they have the same function / significance.

[40] Missing text here: ”they relate the same things about Isis” must be the thought. [41] This appears to contradict the previous sentence, where John claimed that water (aqua) was named after ”equality,” not the other way around; however, if, in his view, aqua ”means” equal, then the derivations can work in either direction. [42] For this list, cf. Lactantius, Divine Institutes, 1.6. [43] Should be ”Erythrae.” [44] 7 March. [45] 15 March. [46] Wuensch's text here gives kanêphoroi, ”basket-bearers,” but this is commonly understood as an intended reference rather to kannophoroi, ”reed-bearers,” especially given the entry in the Calendar of Philocalus for 15 March (Canna intrat, ”the reed enters”). See Showerman, ”Canna Intrat and the Cannophori,” Classical Journal 2.1 (1906), p. 28 n. 1; Fishwick, ”The Cannophori and the March Festival of Magna Mater,” Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association 97 (1966), pp. 193-202. [47] ”Moving” the ancilia was the term used for the act of carrying them in procession.

[48] For Mamurius, cf. (e.g.) Plutarch, Numa 13; Ovid, Fasti 3.383ff. In the Calendar of Philocalus, 14 March (not the Ides) is designated Mamuralia. [49] 17 March. [50] Or, ”instead of.” [51] For this list, cf. Cicero, De Natura Deorum 3.23 (58). [52] I.e., who first invented wine, although the words could be taken to indicate the invention of mixing wine with water. [53] At Thebes. [54] The association envisioned here is with the ”harmony” represented by the cithara (”lyre”). [55] Tim. 55d, but the standard text reads ”cubic” rather than ”spherical.” [56] According to LSJ, citing this passage alone, this epithet means, ”supporting all animals.” [57] I.e., the fennel-stalks topped by pine-cones that were brandished in Dionysian worship. [58] As though from di- [”two”] and thura [”door”]. [59] Gk. theologoi,

used for pagan writers about the gods as well as Christian theologians. [60] Tim. 27d. [61] Gk. adyton. [62] Or, ”hold back” (?).

[63] Not in the extant text of Livy, but perhaps in a section now lost. [64] Gk. adêlos. [65] Pharsalia 2.592-3: dedita sacris incerti Iudaea dei. [66] Gk. akoinônêtos. [67] Ep. 134 Bidez (= Bidez, Lettres, p. 197). For this fragment, cf. Bowersock, Julian the Apostate, pp. 120-22; W. C. Wright (tr.), Works of the Emperor Julian, LCL, vol. 3, p. xxi. [68] I.e., because of the designation ”Most High.” [69] Gk. mystikoi; that is, ”having to do with mysteries.” [70] Philocalia 33. [71] Lit., ”those around Iamblichus ” etc.—a frequent periphrasis, in fact, for the simple ”Iamblichus” (etc.). [72] Gk. poloi. [73] I.e., the non-priestly, or those not consecrated in some special way. [74] Lev. 10.9. [75] 18 March. [76] The spatial relationships here are not particularly clear. [77] Iliad 1.197. [78] Traditionally, ”grey-eyed.” [79] Phaedrus 245c. [80] 19 March. [81] ”Storing” the ancilia was the term used for returning them after the yearly procession, the ”moving” of the ancilia.

[82] 19 March. [83] 22 March. [84] 23 March. [85] Equivalent to the Lat. tubilustrium. [86] Iliad 5.430. [87] Iliad 5.428. [88] 24 March. [89] 25 March. [90] I.e., wearing the so-called ”mural crown” representing the walls and towers of a city. This is more standard for the goddess Cybele.

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