

Bibliotekarien i Alexandria



The Librarian of Alexandria

drama by Christian Lanciai (2010)

The Characters:

Alexios
Demetrios
Orestes
Hypatia
Theon, her father
Bishop Theophilus
Bishop Cyril, his nephew
Bishop Synesius
Rafael Ben Esra, jew
Dolon, slave
Linus, young christian
Augustine
servants and parabolans

The action is in Alexandria, 390-415
and in Hippo a number of years later.

Act I scene 1.

Alexios Who could not love her? Everyone adores her and with every right, since she is our ideal both as a teacher and as a woman.

Demetrios Yet she is modest and wants nothing more than to discuss with us. That is her only teaching.

Orestes That is why it is the more efficient. Already Socrates taught us that dialogue is the best path to developing enlightenment.

Alexios You are weaker for her than anyone else. Only you have dared to express your love without hesitation and directly to her.

Orestes And for that I was damned.

Demetrios Still it is not pride that makes her refuse all love.

Orestes And what is it then if not pride?

Demetrios Shyness, humility, natural virtue and modesty.

Orestes Do you believe that?

Demetrios I know it, for I believe myself to know her better than you do.

Alexios Don't start again arguing about her. You have done that before quite enough to the point of nagging.

Demetrios Here she comes. Now behave as paragon pupils, to make her proud and inspired by us in her teaching.

Hypatia (enters) So early in the day and already so immersed in intensive discussions? What is the subject?

Orestes We have been discussing love, Hypatia.

Hypatia Is that such a scientifically interesting subject?

Alexios To science no subject is without interest.

Hypatia Quite right, Alexios. And what have you found out in your careful investigation?

Demetrios Nothing so far. We have just arrived at some questions.

Hypatia That is quite right. When you just ask questions, they have to lead to some answer in time. You get no answer unless you ask.

Alexios That's what I call logic.

Demetrios Undisputable as such.

Orestes I think we all can agree on that.

Hypatia Do you find that amusing? Logic is never amusing, just casual.

Orestes Hypatia, you are leaving the subject.

Hypatia Please return us then to the subject, Orestes.

Demetrios (cautiously,) It was about love, wasn't it?

Orestes Exactly, Demetrios, and that was the issue that Hypatia evaded.

Hypatia And why do you think then that I would have preferred to avoid it?

Demetrios Because Hypatia is chaste.

Alexios No, because she is prudent.

Demetrios No, because she is polite and prudent.

Alexios So she evades the issue out of delicacy.

Orestes Tell us then, Hypatia, why you evade the question.

Hypatia I don't evade it at all. It is you who jump to conclusions and lose yourselves in speculations, the last thing you may do in a factual context, because then you risk never getting back to the subject again.

Orestes That's exactly what we suggest that you were risking.

Hypatia And then I ask you again: why would I? Wasn't I rather the one who tried to keep you back on track?

Alexios Then we arrive at the very core of the issue: Can you be casual about love?

Hypatia At last, Alexios, we seem to get somewhere. Well, my friends, what do you think about it?

Demetrios You first, Orestes, who dared to bring up the issue.

Orestes No, that's the very reason why I should be last.

Demetrios I believe for my part that love for its very nature is such that it can never be casual or factual. That's the last thing it can be.

Orestes I agree with Demetrios.

Hypatia Then I must claim the opposite. How did I respond to your declaration of love the other week, Orestes? You confessed your love to me publicly at the theatre itself, and how did I respond to it?

Orestes I would rather not discuss it.

Hypatia Couldn't you be casual about it?

Demetrios We all know, Hypatia, how you responded to Orestes' public declaration of love, for we were all present, and the story has become a legend all over Alexandria.

Hypatia You are ashamed to talk about it. But since I was the one who was to blame for the answer, I should stand for it. I gave you a handkerchief, Orestes, which I defiled with my menstrual blood, just to emphasize the factual nature of the matter.

Orestes It almost killed me.

Hypatia Why? Why can't you be casual?

Orestes Because I love.

Hypatia Didn't you then understand the objectivity of my answer?

Orestes I found the answer below your dignity, for I held you in too high esteem to be able to accept such an undignified answer.

Hypatia Why was it undignified? What was the lack of dignity in my answer? I didn't give you the handkerchief to rouse your disgust but only to demonstrate the other side of love. Everything has a back side, and if you are only objective, all of life's back sides can be endured and survived. If you are not objective, it is more difficult.

Alexios What did you really wish to communicate by your blood-soaked handkerchief, Hypatia, since we are now making an effort to be objective on the subject?

Hypatia At last, you dare to approach the difficulty of the subject. I admit that the answer was unclear, as it could be interpreted in different ways, but above all I wanted to emphasize the fact, that my menstrual blood proves that I am a virgin, and that a virgin in service of the godhead, as I am in my oath of allegiance for life to my calling as a teacher of the world's foremost and largest library, should remain untouched as a virgin and is therefore not suitable as a wife or mistress to anyone. That, my friends, is the closest I can come to what I really meant.

Alexios And we must respect it, Orestes.

Orestes Haven't I respected it?

Alexios That could be questioned, since you publicly confessed your love for her in our theatre and practically proposed to her in front of the whole city.

Orestes That was an expression of my sincerity and honesty. Was that scandalizing her?

Hypatia No, it was not, Orestes, since I could answer you. But if I would have been without an answer, it could have been a scandal.

Demetrios Why should then a spirit of service in the service of the gods and education be virgin and not have sexual contacts?

Hypatia Because the god demands all her attention. If she splits her attention and concentration between her science and the joys of love, her studies and work results must suffer, and then she is not worthy of God's and the service of education. Is this not logical?

Alexios Absolutely.

Orestes So, Hypatia, we respect you, and all the more so because you guard your virginity and dedicate it to the gods and science.

Hypatia Thank you, Orestes, I take that as a compliment, but for me it is not a sacrifice, but I only see it as my duty, since my father has now once and for all raised me in the service of education and knowledge.

Demetrios Have we thus concluded our treaty of love?

Orestes That you can never do, because love can never be confined, only expand.

Hypatia Like knowledge and education.

Orestes Are they colleagues then?

Hypatia No, rather like siblings, but very different as such, as siblings often are.

Alexios We face another problem here. We respect you, like everyone who embraces our cultural heritage, but the Christians don't.

Hypatia Of what concern of ours are the Christians? They have detached themselves from our cultural heritage. So let them leave us alone, as we leave them alone with their ignorance and stupidity.

Alexios The problem is that they won't leave us alone. They are constantly increasing in number and constantly growing in influence and ambition for power.

Hypatia Do you view them as a threat?

Alexios In the long run, yes, and we should be wary of their threat and not put a blind eye to it.

Demetrios I don't view them as a threat. They are impetuous and impulsive and somewhat overconfident in their pretensions, but that will pass. I think they will mature over time.

Orestes Aren't you yourself a Christian, Demetrios?

Demetrios That has nothing to do with it.

Alexios Since we have entered the subject, I think we should discuss it objectively.

If we see Christianity as a potential threat to our culture and science in the future, and if you are a Christian, Demetrios, even though you participate in our symposia and seminars, why does Christianity have nothing to do with it?

Demetrios Christianity is a religion. We are here to study science and philosophy.

Alexios But our science and philosophy come from the traditions of Homer and Pythagoras, and Apollo is our supreme protector. Doesn't he belong to religion?

Demetrios Since you press me, Alexios, I must admit that I put the Christian religion with its easy-to-understand monotheism before the Greek mythology with its multitude of moral confusion. Even Plato said that it suffered from this.

Hypatia I see nothing flawed in Demetrios' reasoning. If he prefers the Christian religion to the mythology of Homer, that is his business, and as long as it does not

conflict with science and philosophy, he may even be able to defend science and philosophy against the possible Christians who might threaten them.

Demetrios In fact, science and philosophy may need defenders against the Christians in the Christians' own camp in time..

Alexios Against the stupidity of Christian fanaticism, the gods themselves struggle in vain.

Orestes You said it, Alexios.

Demetrios What do you mean by that?

Orestes That if one day we are forced to choose between Christianity and the freedom and right to development and advancement of our Hellenic cultural heritage, we would rather not choose Christianity.

Demetrios As development progresses, more and more people are becoming Christians all the time, so that in time hardly anyone can avoid becoming one.

Hypatia Don't they have the right to remain non-Christians who want to?

Demetrios Of course, but it could be risky, and I wouldn't recommend it.

Alexios I didn't know you were a Christian, Demetrios, and the fact that you prove so fills my heart with concern for the future.

Demetrios You have nothing to worry about.

Alexios That's what you say now.

Demetrios As a Christian and disciple of you, Hypatia, and as a student of our amazing library, it is my primary duty as a Christian to always protect you and the library, Hypatia, against every form of threat and intolerance.

Hypatia I thank you for that. You would not be my student as a Christian if you had any other position.

Orestes Could we at last leave the Christians aside?

Demetrios They seem to be an annoyance you.

Orestes Is that so strange?

Alexios Orestes' irritation and my concern are justified, Demetrios, as the Christians are constantly becoming more and more arrogant and aggressive. Now they have begun to form their own militia, deliberately insulting the old gods and provoking the guardians of our ancient heritage by demanding their abolition. I believe that the Christians have already gone too far. We can tolerate anything but never violence.

Orestes Alexios is right.

Demetrios Precisely because Christians are constantly growing in power and demands, you need Christians like me who can protect you and help you to hold them back.

Alexios If you take their side, can you hold them back? Isn't it the other way around, that they will demand your total loyalty, whatever they do?

Orestes Answer the question, Demetrius.

Demetrios What do you say, Hypatia?

Hypatia I think that our seminar has slipped into a sidetrack and gone somewhat astray. We are here to study and improve ourselves in knowledge and science. In order to do this undisturbed, we must keep religious controversies out of the library.

Orestes So Christianity has nothing to do in here.

Hypatia On principle, that's how it is, Orestes. Here all religions exist side by side, and no one is excluded, but no religion can claim to be superior and assert themselves more than others. Then we have lost our objectivity.

Alexios Bravo, Hypatia.

Demetrios Therefore I have kept my Christianity out of here, but you brought it in for treatment. The risk is that we cannot keep it out in the long run.

Hypatia We are here just to manage the culture and broaden our knowledge. Everything else is irrelevant, and anything that threatens this administration and the knowledge here we must keep outside, for the sake of science and our research. Otherwise they will not be able to survive.

Alexios Hypatia is right as always.

Orestes Can you help us, Demetrius, to keep Christianity out of this the sanctuary of freedom?

Demetrios I could try.

Hypatia That's enough, Demetrius. I ask for nothing more. You are always welcome here, Christian or not, as well as all students, Christians or Jews or Persians or whatever preferably.

Demetrios Nothing is more sacred to me, Hypatia, than the education and knowledge represented by you.

Hypatia It is our cultural heritage. Homer, Pythagoras, Plato and the others built our civilization by their spirits, and it can only be continued and carried on as long as we keep their spirits alive.

Alexios Exactly.

Orestes To the point. Isn't it time for lunch soon?

Demetrios You only think of pleasures, Orestes, lust and pleasures.

Orestes Not at all. Then I would not be here, but only out in the houses of joy in the city, which you Christians want to close up.

Hypatia Nor do they and their controversy belong here in the library, Orestes.

Orestes Exactly, and so I suggested lunch, so that we could get away from the controversies of our discussion.

Alexios I think Orestes' suggestion is good.

Demetrios We will all be tuned in a more harmonious mood with some good food in us.

Alexios Enough suggestions.

Hypatia So, my friends, lunch break.

Scene 2. Home
(*Hypatia arrives at home.*)

Theon Well, how was it at school today?

Hypatia It was on the brink of heating up, when the students entered on the problems of love.

Theon An inexhaustible topic. Did you reach at anything?

Hypatia I tried to keep the discussion at a factual level, so that they could keep their cool, but it got worse when one of them turned out to be a Christian.

Theon Who?

Hypatia Demetrios.

Theon And no one knew about it?

Hypatia No, it was the very last thing I could believe about any of my students.

Theon Without doubt there are more. The Christians have always been good at advancing under cover. How many do you think there are? How great a part?

Hypatia If Demetrios is one, who always was one of my best students and a favourite, a third of them will surely be of that party.

Theon I fear you could be right.

Hypatia You were always afraid of the Christians. Why?

Theon Hypatia, they come from the Jewish sect. For centuries, the Jews have been chastised and been subjected by oppression, so that they have become model citizens wherever they appear in the world and have learned to survive by diplomacy and prudence, and they are an educated people. But the Christians are an entirely new sect with no history at all, and with them dwells precisely the old dangerous Jewish fervour that can burst out in any exaggerations whatsoever, and they despise our Homeric and Platonic cultural traditions as they believe that their Christianity makes older philosophies and traditions superfluous. Therefore, they are enemies of learning. Therefore I am afraid of them, for learning is all that civilization is made up of. That's all humanity has. It is our contact with eternity. If Christianity wants to override it, it can bring forth barbarism, violence, destruction and disintegration, as it has already done to some extent throughout the ancient Roman Empire.

Hypatia Learning was always defenseless in its insistence to always be open to all.

Theon And it will be even more defenseless and vulnerable, when its main headmaster and mediator will be a young beautiful woman. That's why I'm doubly afraid of Christianity, for you are young and beautiful and defenseless, and you will become Alexandria's learning main guiding star when I am gone.

Hypatia The Christians respect me like I respect them.

Theon Not all. You are right about the majority, most Christians are ordinary decent people who do not mean any harm, but the chief priests are educating a militia, all of whom are potential fanatics who can resort to violence and do not shy away from applying it in the name of Christianity. These do not respect you but on the contrary

fear you and look at you with disgust, because you stand in their way and hold the library beyond the reach of Christian censorship.

Hypatia It is my mission to keep on doing so.

Theon I educated you for that purpose. But now you tell me there are Christians even among your students. That's why I'm glad you're no longer engaged in teaching at home in the garden, which is an overly sheltered environment. I know which rumors the Christians have spread about your symposia in the garden.

Hypatia Are Christians so stupid as to believe in rumours?

Theon Yes, Hypatia, they are that stupid, at least the worst of them, who are the ones spreading rumours.

Hypatia (looks down) What have you heard?

Theon Do you want to know?

Hypatia That's why I am asking.

Theon All rumours are just about base stupidity. The origin of the spread of rumours is your youth and innocence, your beauty and high integrity. As the virgin you are, you walk traditionally, as custom requires, with your hair uncut at an ever-growing length, which only highlights your obvious innocence as virgin, which makes you even more susceptible to the cultivation of base rumours. You arouse desire in men, Hypatia, and it is that danger that threatens you more than any other. Those who are honest and without dangerous ulterior motives, such as Orestes, who even publicly proposed to you, stands for his love, and is not ashamed to show it publicly in all its healthy beauty and sincerity, but Christians suffer from inhibitions and prejudice, and imagine a virtue in repressing their urges and feelings, which only makes them worse. He who feels desire and does not show it is always many times more dangerous than any savage lovers who profess their love.

Hypatia So you don't want to tell me what rumours they spread about me?

Theon The worst think you are charming the men and consequently are a witch.

Hypatia (smiles) Like Medea and Circe?

Theon I understand your smile. They were both irresistible by their beauty, which is why the fairy tale tradition turned them into witches and exaggerated their influence on men. Medea was more historically real, and she did not turn men into animals. Instead, she became a sacrifice for her allegiance to Jason.

Hypatia Do you think I might have a similar fate, as the Christians say, by my magical influence on men?

Theon That's what I prefer not to speculate in.

Hypatia Father, I have no objection against becoming a victim, if fate wills it that way, and in so becoming I will be like Medea out of fidelity to my calling, which is the stewardship and the dissemination of learning and science. I don't need anything else. Orestes offered me the whole world and in public last week at the theatre, when he proposed to me before the whole city, and I gave him an answer by the gift of my handkerchief drenched in my menstrual blood, just to demonstrate to him how uncomfortable sexual love is with everything that goes with it. I will gladly accept

romance, because it is spiritual in essence, but sex is for me only an abomination of merely deterrent ingredients that will only bring misery.

Theon Yet you, as my daughter, came into being by marital intercourse, which for your parents was not just unpleasant.

Hypatia Yes, if it works that way it should be all right, but I am too free to ever want to be enslaved in the flesh. Knowledge is free, and the intellectual power gives me wings to fly with, while slave service in a marriage can only deprive me of those wings. Is it so strange that I make the right choice?

Theon I am as always proud of you, my daughter, for your uncompromising integrity.

Hypatia It is the one that makes it possible for me to exist in order to make a contribution.

Theon Yes, and it's just for you to keep following that direction, and the only thing that threatens you in it are the Christians.

Hypatia I don't see them as a threat.

Theon I do. In future, you may one day be faced with the ultimatum that your only way to be able to continue your ministry would be to convert and become a Christian yourself.

Hypatia That would be selling my soul.

Theon I am just presenting you with the possibility where your way could lead.

Hypatia That's the last thing I will do before dying.

Theon Would you rather die?

Hypatia Yes, actually.

Theon (*embraces her*) Then you are my daughter. (*kisses and hugs her, watches her closely*) I only wish I could continue protecting you when I am gone.

Hypatia Maybe you can, if you survive death.

Theon That's what we don't know anything about.

Hypatia (*lets go of the embrace*) In short, father, we have a lot of research left to do, and I will never let go of that work.

Theon Just remember, my child, that the lovers who profess their love you may calmly trust as your friends, while the only ones who can become dangerous to you are those who represses it into hidden morbidity that easily turns into prejudice and disgust.

Hypatia I will beware of all Christian disguisers with masks without smiles. However, Demetrios is not one of those, and neither is any other of my Christian students.

Theon I think so too. Therefore, you can safely continue to teach them at large and even in love.

Hypatia As long as I stay within objectivity.

Theon Don't you ever indulge in any licence?

Hypatia Only off reality, only in space, only among the celestial bodies and the universe. For such licentiousness, father, the whole universe is not enough for me.

Theon That's good, my daughter. Shall we start going to dinner? (*Escorts her out, like a good father his one and only beloved daughter.*)

Act II Scene 1.

Theophilus Will not our friends be here soon?

Cyril They should be here any moment.

Theophilus If there is anything I hate, it is to have to wait, and I have been obliged to keep waiting all my life.

Cyril Patience is a virtue, father.

Theophilus Don't you think I know that, you prig? Who are you to moralize to me? We may be stuffed with Christian virtues, but that can't stop me from being impatient and angry when I feel like it!

Cyril Isn't anger one of the seven mortal sins?

Theophilus Yes, if you are constantly angry all the time, but you don't have to be that. To be really angry now and then is only good for your health, especially if you give vent to it.

Cyril Here they come.

Theophilus At last! Welcome, my dear sons! At last we are getting somewhere!

Synesius (enters with Demetrios) Is there any hope that there will finally be some imperial decree that could decide the matter?

Theophilus What do you think we have been doing throughout the siege? Sitting and rolling our thumbs? No, of course we have been cudgelling Caesar all the time with petitions and complaints and peppered the Christian court with our reasonable arguments for uprooting the disease once and for all.

Synesius Even if we'll have the temple taken down, the pagans will still remain.

Theophilus But the source of the rot will be removed, and that will be an important victory for all times for Christianity over paganism!

Demetrios But it is just a library.

Theophilus No, Demetrios, it is much more than just a library. It is a disgrace to Alexandria as its most conspicuous temple, which is full of disgusting idols and beasts that may not be worshipped any more. We must show the whole world once and for all that all the old gods are dead and never have existed!

Demetrios By destroying harmless statues and works of art and defiling a temple which has been regarded as sacred as any of our churches for much longer than Christianity has existed?

Synesius He is arguing just for the sake of arguing, like he is used to at school. He is still an active student of Hypatia's you know.

Theophilus That is why you are so invaluable to us, since by you we can keep track of what is going on in the school and the library and all the old established intrigues and conspiracies of the pagans to re-establish their paganism to get rid of us Christians, but we are here to stay, while their time is up.

Synesius Is it then so certain that the imperial decree will arrive?

Theophilus Any time now. He cannot back away from his own Christianity, and he is the world's most powerful man and perhaps the last emperor of the entire Roman

Empire we'll ever see. It can't hold together any more. It must be in his own interest that Christianity must have a religious monopoly throughout the world. It's the only true religion.

Demetrios Nevertheless, it is quite pointless and brutal to use violence for the sake of destruction only to liquidate harmless old works of art. Innocent blood has been shed in this conflict, and no one is interested in any more of that.

Theophilus The pagans must blame themselves. They provoked us.

Demetrios No, we provoked them.

Theophilus But they attacked us, and we retaliated with a vengeance, and that is why we now have Serapion besieged with all the old pagan librarians trapped in it. It's only old powerless old men who still defend the old ancient world.

Synesius Don't forget Hypatia.

Theophilus And Hypatia, a woman, a rude woman, who refuses to yield to the Christian rules and dress modestly with her hair covered and without jewellery and offensive baubles.

Demetrios Hypatia has never worn a piece of jewellery.

Theophilus But she walks around with her hair let loose and with bare arms! She is challenging every decent man in the whole city! She's outrageous! She must be taught a lesson! I hope she is burned inside Serapion when we burn it.

Synesius Archbishop Theophilus, that would be the most foolish thing we could do. The library of Alexandria is famous all over the world as the largest and most well stocked of all libraries. We had 700,000 scrolls preserved for the benefit of the world's future.

Theophilus That was long ago. Already Julius Caesar burned the library.

Synesius It was unintentional. It was a fire from the ships that spread to the library ashore. And most of it could be saved. Destroying books is the stupidest thing one can do, for in doing so one shows himself an enemy of the Word. What would you say if the Jews or the library teachers got the idea to burn all Bibles?

Theophilus But the Bible is the only indispensable book. Therefore, all other books are really superfluous. Everything is in the Bible. In the writings of the Greek writers, there was only indecency and obscenity, the Athenian tragedies only wrote scurrilous dirt that is harmful to morality, the philosophers just floundered, and the poems are only seductive to sin, as most of them are shameless love poems.

Synesius Still, it would be stupid to burn the Serapion library.

Theophilus Very well, we shall not burn it. We must only cleanse it. We will liberate it from all idolatrous images and close it to further worship, until we have turned it into a church. And we can't have any books left in a church, so we just have to get rid of them, even if we don't have to burn them.

A Messenger Your Holiness, a proclamation from Caesar. (*delivers a parchment roll*)

Theophilus Finally! I feel that this is what we all have been waiting for! (*eagerly takes care of the document, opens it and reads*) Triumph! The Emperor commands that the library

will be opened to Christians! He commands the Gentiles to leave it! We have won! The siege is over!

Demetrios At least give Hypatia and her father and the other servants of the library the opportunity to save all the most important items from there. Then no one can prevent the Christian mob from plundering the rest.

Synesius That is reasonable, my archbishop.

Theophilus Who can hold back God's zeal? Who can prevent Christianity from triumphing all over the world? Who can resist the Christian mission? They may save what they want as best as they can, but we can't give them breathing space. Warn her as much as you want, Demetrius, but nothing can stop God's soldiers from cleansing a house of old sins. The temple is to be cleansed, with fire and brimstone if necessary, so that that it may become the most magnificent church in Alexandria!

Synesius Hurry up, Demetrius, and warn her. (*Demetrius rushes out.*)

Theophilus Whom is he more faithful to? Us or that lewd woman?

Synesius Archbishop, all people with any education at all have had Hypatia for a teacher. All of Alexandria respects, loves, and reveres her, except you. She has knowledge that no one else has, and all knowledge is sacred. No one has any right to touch a hair on her head, for she has never done anything wrong.

Theophilus You also seem to be obsessed with her.

Synesius Archbishop, is not the first and greatest commandment of Christianity that you should love your neighbour? Why is Hypatia excluded from Christian love, because she is wisest and most gifted of all souls in Alexandria?

Theophilus Her influence is harmful as long as she remains pagan. Let her be baptized, and I also will respect her. I can't defend an enemy of Christianity.

Synesius She is not an enemy of Christianity. She is neutral.

Theophilus No, as long as she is a pagan, she is an enemy. Did not Christ himself say that he who is not with us is against us? She has to become one of us. Otherwise, she's sooner or later lost, and she must be sacrificed with all other things of the past for the future.

Synesius You have been given the key to the Serapion Library, and have been given free hands by the emperor to desanctify it as a pagan shrine. You may plunder and desecrate it however much you want, but let that be enough. Leave the people who worked there in generations since six hundred years in peace. They have done nothing evil, and it is more than enough that they get to see their life's work destroyed.

Theophilus You could almost get the idea that you are defending the pagans.

Synesius They are human beings as much as we are. They are human. What right do we have to be inhumane?

Theophilus Go back to your desert church in Cyrene, Synesius. You have nothing to do here. You are as enchanted by her as anyone else who has had anything to do with her.

Synesius All the important people in Alexandria have had her as their teacher. She is the most beloved virgin of the whole city. It is only barbarians who have escaped her

positive influence, and they can't even read. Is it only such people you want to keep in the city?

Theophilus Nothing can save Serapion any more, Synesius, not even you, not even Orestes, even if he were to become the prefect of the city. We shall exterminate paganism from the city, and Serapion is not enough, because it is found everywhere.

Synesius Do not count on any other support from me except the purely spiritual one that belongs to our religion. If one day Hypatia would have to be defended against excessive violence, I would gladly do it alone even against the most powerful of bishops of Alexandria. (*leaves*)

Theophilus He is lost. He is completely enchanted by her.

Cyril We have got Serapion, uncle. Let's start by eradicating paganism from there. The rest will follow. (*Theophilus takes his nephew by the shoulders, and they go out together.*)

Scene 2. A ruined temple.

Broken statues and book rolls torn to shreds.

Hypatia (enters alone) Everything is broken, the barbarians have been allowed to triumph, by violence they have tried to draw a line across history, and by violence they have tried to replace the old culture with the narrowness of fanaticism and the vain self-destructiveness of pride, and have they succeeded? They consider themselves to have succeeded when they triumph. But who can believe in the permanence of any success in this world? Who can believe that anything in history can be annihilated and suppressed? The ghosts are always there and always will revisit the future anew, as they are the ones who emerge when new civilizations perish. Are Homer and Plato dead? Never. Christianity may have triumphed over what it calls paganism, but this triumph is only Christianity's self-coronation, as yet another of history's vain dominating farces. Already the bishops are fighting among themselves and tearing the tiaras from each other's heads and arguing about hair-splitting and letter details in what they call the Holy Scripture, while they use their crutches as clubs to beat hell out of each other and imagine they represent God's own infallibility by their silly offices. I am sorry, but I cannot take you seriously, O new Christian world order, especially not when you are trying to crush the thousand-year-old world order and cultural world, which after all was consistently constructive until you came and destroyed it.

Orestes (has arrived, stood for a while and looked at Hypatia from a distance, before he appears)
Are you walking here alone among the ruins, Hypatia?

Hypatia What else would I do? – since the Christians are forbidding their Christians to attend to my lessons.

Orestes But the students you once had will ever remain faithful to you and remain your students forever.

Hypatia Don't talk to me about eternity, Orestes. I know you are now a Christian yourself, like everyone else. Nothing sounds more blasphemous and absurd than all Christian talk about eternity, as if it were the personal monopoly of Christianity and more certain as such than death itself.

Orestes You will outlive Christianity with your integrity and your humanistic example.

Hypatia Not if Christianity is allowed to decide, for it would like nothing better than to liquidate me as well, as it has liquidated everything I represented and lived for. We all belong to mortality, Orestes, no matter how much you Christians may talk about eternity and its kingdom. Yes, you have introduced a new Christian world order, and it shines over the whole world with its folly, its division, its absurdity, its stupidity and its tyrannical arrogance. Your pretensions, Orestes, have let barbarism loose over the world, and you yourselves have been at the forefront of it.

Orestes I did not participate in the Christian destruction of Serapion, and you know that. I became a Christian only to be able to help all those who chose not to convert. Only as a Christian can I attain the power and influence that will enable me to protect you, so that you can survive.

Hypatia Hypocrisy, then, and opportunism. That is all Christianity is about. It is Christianity that counts, it is the latest religious fashion, so everyone must become Christians, otherwise they can have no influence, no position of power and no wealth in this world.

Orestes I will be the next prefect of Alexandria, Hypatia, and I will remain faithful to you, as will all your former students, who will all become leading forces in the administration.

Hypatia Faithful, in what way? Synerius is bishop of Cyrene and one of the main pillars of Christianity in Africa, along with Theophilus and his ambitious nephew Cyril. There you have a powerful holy trinity ready to take control of this entire continent. Then your ancient loyalty to me will no longer be needed.

Orestes Hypatia, nothing has changed. You managed to save all the most important things from Serapion. The library still requires its staff, its librarians and its teachers, and you are still the foremost of them.

Hypatia My father is the foremost, but the Alexandrian people's arbitrary destruction of Serapion in the name of Christianity broke his heart. He is dying and is chronically bedridden. Nothing can any longer restore the complete resignation of Alexandria's foremost librarians and guardians of learning regarding the Alexandrian people's decline into the stupidity and ignorance of Christianity.

Orestes Continue teaching, Hypatia. No one will be able to stop you with me as a prefect. I am yours. I swore my love to you as a young man, and I have never betrayed it. Like you, I will never marry. Your example gave me a sacred respect for lifelong virginity, and if you can as a woman, so can I as a man. I love you, Hypatia, and I never intend to abandon you and your and our ideals, no matter what.

Hypatia That's what you say now, but what will you say when the militant parabolans of the Christians march through the streets and demand the lynching of all dissenters? They are like a swarm of locusts capable of anything, and nothing can stop them, but when they are in that mood they destroy everything in their way, as they have destroyed this Serapion, our proudest library building. Are you going to stand in their way, defend me, and let yourself be massacred by the total blindness and madness of their insect mentality?

Orestes Yes, I intend to do so, if that day comes. I would rather follow you, Hypatia, than I would follow the world and Christianity.

Hypatia You will have plenty to do if you as head of the department take on the defense of all those whom Christians are pleased to persecute. Will you even be able to protect the Jews, the largest minority in Alexandria, whom the Christians already want to exterminate, although they are Alexandria's foremost cultural elite, or maybe just because of it?

Orestes I don't know, Hypatia, but I'm going to try. My primary duty as the head of the department will be to safeguard justice and the law.

Hypatia You are not the head of your department yet. Wait until you are.

Orestes For your sake and for the sake of all those who detach themselves from the mob, I intend to be one, in order to protect you, and therefore I am a Christian, which gives me immunity and makes me unassailable even to the hysteria of the Christian parabolans.

Hypatia I wish I could believe you.

Orestes It's our only chance, Hypatia. Otherwise, we are lost and the whole culture and all that is called education and knowledge and science, which ideals are our lives and its only meaning.

Hypatia At least you know what you're talking about. No other Christian does, if it is not to highlight their ambitions.

Orestes Don't pay attention to them. Leave the Christians alone, devote yourself to your teaching, and they will leave you alone, so that you can continue to spread your education and science further. You have your research to live for. All of Christianity is useless to it.

Hypatia Thank you, Orestes. Despite everything, you give me the strength to keep going, even if it becomes difficult without my father.

Orestes Is he really dying?

Hypatia It's only a matter of time. He was violently attacked by a Christian. Was it not a Christian who urged everyone to turn the other cheek when attacked? It is not needed now that Christianity is world-dominating and infallible. Then you can calmly run over everyone else and don't just strike them on the cheek as much as you want without them even being able to defend themselves.

Orestes You are bitter.

Hypatia Only against Christianity, but everyone is who has seen its true essence and who see how it has deceived all mankind and enslaved them with superstition and brainwashing.

Orestes I just want to ask you one thing.

Hypatia Now?

Orestes In front of me, you can be sincere about the Christians, but do not provoke them with your sincere opinions, because it can never benefit anyone, least of all yourself.

Hypatia You recommend instead your hypocritical opportunistic path, so that the Christians could make you prefect?

Orestes To be able to protect others.

Hypatia I can never pretend, Orestes. I only have one role to play in life, and that is the truth. Everything else is lies that I can never deal with.

Orestes Try to be careful and modest, though. You have everything to gain from that.

Hypatia I have nothing to lose, Orestes, as the Christians have already taken our freedom of conscience and our right to our own beliefs away from us. They demand that you have to embrace Christianity as the world's only permitted religion or die.

Orestes Not if I may rule.

Hypatia Good luck, Orestes. You don't have to fight by my side. I can fight alone.

Orestes I will never fail you, Hypatia. *(She leaves.)*

She stands for what she is, and such an example is at least as valuable as Christ's own. But Christians no longer see the outstanding examples they have in front of their eyes, as they believe that Jesus' example puts all others in the shadow, as he was divine; but was he really? Isn't it a myth like all other myths about the Greek Gods? To me, Hypatia is more divine than any exaggerated cult of Jesus can be. *(leaves)*

Scene 3. Home. (like act I scene 2)

Hypatia comes home.

Hypatia (to a servant she meets) How is he?

servant No improvement, ma'am.

Hypatia Any change for the worse?

Servant He is still alive.

Hypatia Is he still in his right mind?

Servant Completely.

Hypatia That's all that matters. Then there is hope, and he can be well again.

Servant He appears to have given up, though.

Hypatia I don't think so. In our family you never give up.

Servant The looting of the Serapion temple broke him down.

Hypatia I know. It broke us all down. But we don't give up anyway. Could he receive me?

Servant He has been waiting only for your return.

Hypatia And I have only been waiting for being again at his side.

(A wall slides apart, and Hypatia goes in to her father, who is dying in bed.)

Theon My daughter, I was afraid you wouldn't make it.

Hypatia Don't tell me you're going to leave us already, father.

Theon: I'm afraid it's time. My heart has cracked too deep in the roots to ever be able to heal again.

Hypatia Forget the bad guys. Forget the violence they have exercised against us. Forget their stupidity and vanity. We still have our work to do.

Theon You still have it, and the only thing that still keeps me here and makes me postpone my parting is my fear of leaving you alone.

Hypatia I've never been afraid, father.

Theon I know, and it makes me all the more afraid for you.

Hypatia We still have powerful protectors. All of Alexandria's best and leading people are on our side against the abominable majority, who do not know what they are doing.

Theon Alas, my daughter, we are a dying race, and we always have been.

Hypatia What do you mean?

Theon We humanists, the defenders of the good, the stewards of reason, the unfortunate few who represent all human clarity in all its constant scarcity, those who are too good and wise to use violence, which is why we always perish from it and become its first victims, we the gullible, who are alone in believing humanity to be good after all.

Hypatia Do not despair, father.

Theon We who give our lives for our work without reward for the idealism that brought forth Plato and Pythagoras, Homer and the tragedians, Herodotus and Cicero, we who are concerned about humanity and its culture despite its stupidity and laziness, we who are unfortunate enough to be able to see what most people can never see or grasp, the meaning of life, the value of beauty in its spirituality, and the wealth of knowledge, which is the only true wealth and power.

Hypatia Father, we have much to do. Do not give up. Do not give in if you can avoid it.

Theon The only certainty in life for all of us, no matter how divine and Christian we may imagine ourselves to be, is that we will all die, and that is humanity's only redeeming feature. Thanks to death, however, every person can reconcile himself to life. With death, everything is forgiven him, and he makes his ultimate penance by giving up life. Death is for better or worse, but perhaps more of a blessing than anything else. Even the jubilant idiot Theophilus on his episcopal throne and his insufferable nephew must one day die, no matter how much they may imagine that some heavenly kingdom awaits them. How childish they are, Hypatia, all those who believe in a life after this! What does it matter? It is only the present life that counts. It is our purgatory and trial, it is the only life in the present that counts, everything else is irrelevant, whatever it may be. Pythagoras and many others held that the soul could be reborn if it wished, and that it wandered from existence to existence, but even if that were true, it is a vain discussion, since nothing can be

proven, nothing is certain, except the life and death of the present. Alas, Hypatia, the greatest danger and most dangerous arrogance of men lies in all the speculations about eternity and what they call God. What does it matter whether there is a God or not? Let him exist, whether he does or not, but that has nothing to do with our life and our trials in life. That is entirely our own responsibility, and we are only responsible to ourselves, not to God. One is happy only if one can part from life without a guilty conscience, so that one has done more right than the opposite, and that is all that counts. We tried to make the best of it, Hypatia, we resisted Christian barbarism with its dangerous brainwashing and mental one-sidedness with superstition as monstrous blind faith, but we became terribly lonely in the end, when Christianity succeeded in bringing the masses into its mental slavery. When I go, Hypatia, you will be all alone, and that is the only thing I fear in the face of death. That is the only thing that makes me part from life reluctantly.

Hypatia Do not be afraid, father. As I said, we have powerful protectors, and all the righteous ones are on our side, especially the bishop of Cyrene, my pious pupil Synerius, and Orestes, who will probably be the next imperial prefect.

Theon They are not enough, Hypatia. When the crisis comes, they will be as impotent and cowardly as the high priests themselves before the blind onslaught of the Christian locust swarm.

Hypatia Do you see into the future?

Theon Yes, I do, and I do not like what I see. Therefore I prefer not to see it. We are the last, Hypatia. After us, Antiquity is dying out. We are the last who still have a mind and sense of beauty enough to consider Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides as saints. I am not ashamed to say that they are holier than Christ, who never wrote anything himself. They could compose and create imperishable verses and instructive tales of fate of timeless and universal validity. Christ could not. No shame on him, he made himself a mighty tale of fate and timeless story of inexhaustible significance, but he could not compose, only talk and preach. No harm in that either, but the poets could consolidate their words and have them read for eternity. Of Jesus, we do not even know what he actually said.

Hypatia Our work belongs to eternity, Father. We have been the stewards of eternity. We have done our duty, and best of all: we have no part in the abuse of power of Christianity, as it is now constantly increasing. When Christianity became the state religion, it was doomed to the corruption of power, and all what the leading Christian bishops now do, is to fight each other to appear as the most infallible authority. Theophilus and Cyril went to a council in Constantinople only to overthrow St. John Chrysostom, perhaps the greatest orator and writer that Christianity has ever had.

Theon Did they succeed?

Hypatia Of course. The Christians always succeed in their destructive designs. They live only for their corruption, which they are too blind to see how it consumes themselves and rots the whole Church from within.

Theon Theophilus has also attacked Origen, the foremost of all the Church Fathers.

Hypatia He attacks all who dare to represent a modicum of sense and tolerance.

Theon Alas, how could the world become so corrupt? The ultimate historical paradox is that Christianity, intending to save the world with its holiness, has only succeeded in completely corrupting it. The Roman emperors already tried to corrupt it with their dictatorship, but it is only the Christians who have succeeded in bringing about total corruption. That is the only reason why the entire Roman Empire is now in disarray.

Hypatia Let them rot. We have nothing to do with them.

Theon Still we did have a good world once upon a time. Homer's world was full of irregularities, but it was good and happy. Plato attacked his weaknesses and tried to introduce a higher morality and actually succeeded beyond all expectations, when Alexander, as a disciple of Aristotle, brought the Hellenic enlightenment to the entire barbarian world in the East, and his successors the Ptolemies here in Egypt and their library here in Alexandria with all the learning that has come from here for the benefit of the entire world were proof that the Homeric world was a good world. Why then did the Christians have to ruin it? Was it just envy?

Hypatia It was like a kind of perversity, perhaps as a result of an inferiority complex. They would make it even better at any cost, and so they fell into improper methods such as violence and indoctrination, and so the whole world became just corruptive arbitrariness and egoism.

Theon Christianity has failed from the beginning.

Hypatia And only we know that.

Theon Alas, my daughter, these worries overwhelm me. They are the ones that crushed me. I regret that I cannot hold out any longer, but I simply cannot.

Hypatia You are allowed to die, father. It is a human right, and in our earthly suffering it is always perhaps our only prospect of well-deserved liberation.

Theon Hypatia, embrace me. Do not leave me. I want to remain with you.

If my spiritual life continues after my death, you can be sure that I will remain and protect you as best I can.

Hypatia Father, my whole life is nothing but gratitude to you.

Theon Thank you, my beloved. You were my only child, and my happiness was that I could never have had anything better. (*dies*)

Hypatia (*buries her head by his side and cries silently*)

The servant It is over, ma'am.

Hypatia I know, Dolon. We shall give him all the decency that is due to him at his funeral, and only his friends and colleagues shall be invited, not a single Christian.

servant It will not be taken well by the high priests.

Hypatia Whatever you do, Dolon, it will not be taken well by the high priests. That is what they are for. Even Christ was badly treated by the chief priests. Don't worry. Your days will not last. Soon you will be free, when you are no longer needed in our household.

Servant Will you set me free?

Hypatia Yes, Dolon, because that is what my father would have wanted. He never wanted any slaves, but our position and high office demanded it. Now that we are gradually being deprived of one duty after another, we will soon no longer be able to afford any slaves. You will be the first to be set free.

Servant I never want to serve anyone else.

Hypatia Not even yourself?

servant I have never done that. I would not know how to behave,

Hypatia Poor Dolon. But you still received a certain upbringing and education in our house.

servant That is my only wealth, and I carry it with me and am grateful for it forever.

Hypatia It will be your passport of freedom. With it in your luggage you can achieve anything in the world.

servant I am afraid I would just end up in some other slave service instead.

Hypatia With whom?

servant Forgive me, ma'am, but I am a Christian.

Hypatia Of course. You are a slave. All slaves are Christians, because the Christians have promised them civil freedom if they rebel against their masters. Through Christianity, Spartacus will finally triumph, and he will get his way: the downfall of the Roman Empire.

servant Forgive me, madam.

Hypatia There is nothing to forgive. It is your fate. Even I cannot help you with that matter, as I must bear my own fate. Go now, Dolon. Let me mourn my father in peace.

(Dolon goes obediently. Hypatia again lowers her head in sorrow at her father's lap.)

Father, you alone made life bearable. Without you, I fear it will be much worse than even you, with your prophetic vision of the future, could ever have imagined. I will mourn you for the rest of my life until we meet and become colleagues again.

Act III scene 1.

In the left-overs of the Serapion.

Synerius Excuse me, but I don't really understand why you condemn Origen's disciples. Aren't they just as much Christians as we are?

Theophilus They are heretics, Synerius. They are not pure in faith. They compromise and want to mix their Christianity with the delusions of the pagans. We cannot compromise. Faith can only apply to God, no idols.

Synerius Was Origen wrong as the foremost church father of our church?

Theophilus Let's say he made mistakes. He was not without error. He had weaknesses. The Christian faith must not show any weaknesses. It must be absolutely consistent. Or else it is lost from the beginning.

Synerius And are all Origen's disciples and followers to be excluded from the church and branded as heretics just because Origen considered that Platonism was not incompatible with Christianity?

Theophilus He was a heretic, Synerius. He believed in reincarnation. He believed that Christ could not have died on the cross because he bled afterwards, but the Testaments explicitly state that he was dead and buried. Or else he could not have risen from the dead. As Paul says, all of Christianity rests on the ultimate foundation stone, that Jesus was dead when he rose from the dead. Or else there is no resurrection and no Christianity.

Cyril Yet I think we have a bigger problem with the pagans and the Jews than with Origen's heretical movement. As Synerius says, Origen and his disciples were still Christians.

Theophilus We cannot let the church be split by different heresies, each one of which claims its own version and interpretation of Christianity and promotes it as the only correct one. Origen was no more a Christian than Solomon was a devout Jew when he indulged in the pagan cults and idolatry of his thousands of wives, just as Origen wanted to dilute Christianity with pagan philosophies. Then we no longer have Christianity. The church must be one, and its faith must be one. Or else, it is not holy.

Cyril Shouldn't we first deal with the pagans and the Jews?

Theophilus Do you have a good recipe for how to get the Jews expelled from Alexandria? If we can just get rid of them, it will then be easy to put an end to the last remnant of paganism.

Cyril Paul already turned against the Jews. After all, it was they who had Christ executed and crucified. The Jews are nothing more than the murderers of Jesus.

Theophilus You said something there. Constantine the Great was already on it when he drove a wedge between Judaism and Christianity with the introduction of Sunday as a holiday instead of the Sabbath. We must follow that line. Christianity is now the state religion, but Judaism has no authority. So we can in principle have all Jews declared infidels and stateless if they remain in their Judaism, if we only get the whole of humanity properly baptized first.

Cyril As you said, uncle, if we just get rid of the Jews, it will be an easy match to have the last remnants of paganism forcibly affiliated with Christianity.

Theophilus Exactly. If we get rid of the Jews and the last pagans forcibly baptized then we only have the dangerous Hypatia with her witchcraft left to deal with.

a servant Your Holiness, Orestes is here.

Theophilus What does he want?

Cyril Here is our chance to launch our policy. His influence is growing all the time.

(Orestes enters.)

Theophilus Greetings, Orestes. What brings us this honour?

Orestes I only thought to inform you of the current situation. I will be the next prefect of Alexandria, just for your information.

Theophilus Is it already decided?

Orestes At the highest seat of Rome.

Theophilus Is Alexandria not subject to Constantinople?

Orestes Not yet. It is enough for one emperor to issue an order, and the other is silent. Rome has spoken on this matter. Constantinople has therefore been silent.

Theophilus *Roma locuta est, causa finita est.*

Orestes Something like that.

Theophilus And are you thus coming to warn us of your new policy? Are you going to make the same mistake as Julian the Apostate and think that you can reintroduce paganism? If so, you are a worse fool than he.

Orestes I am a Christian myself, and you know it.

Theophilus Or else you could not have become prefect.

Orestes I did not become a Christian to become a prefect, any more than you became a Christian to become an archbishop. I became a prefect as a reward for my services, and I was a Christian before that by my own conviction.

Theophilus In that case, it is your duty to fix the pagan and Jewish problem in Alexandria.

Orestes That is exactly why I am here, to make it clear to you how I intend to deal with that problem.

Theophilus We are glad that you are aware that they are a problem.

Orestes They are not the problem, but you are, who persecute them. I intend to fix the problem by putting an end to all persecution. It was quite enough how the Christians were persecuted by the anti-Christian emperors. I do not intend to let the Christian establishment in Alexandria become as cruel persecutors as they were.

Theophilus It is they who are quarrelling and not we, and you know that very well. It was their attack on us that prompted our conquest and destruction of the Serapion library.

Orestes But you provoked it.

Theophilus They were foolish enough to allow themselves to be provoked and to succumb to the temptation of resorting to violence. Violence is only used in cases of necessity to preserve order, and that is what we did when their attack threatened the order of Alexandria. I believe we are on the same side in this regard.

Orestes Yes, if you refrain from further violence and persecution. The Jews of Alexandria are the foundation of its prosperity, trade and shipping and high cultural level. Do not forget that it was the Jews of Alexandria who first translated the Bible into Greek under the Ptolemies.

Theophilus We do not persecute. We only defend ourselves when necessary.

Orestes You are cunning, Theophilus, and your insidious double standards are notorious among all Jews and non-Christians. They know what you are up to and will not allow themselves to be provoked by you to further abuses from you, and as prefect of this city it is my duty to protect them, especially now that they are a minority.

Theophilus So you have come to warn us?

Orestes Precisely. Not a hair may be curled on the head of any Jew or non-Christian.

Theophilus You are under the spell of the dangerous witch Hypatia. You walk in her bonds and are her slave.

Orestes She is the most learned and wisest woman in Alexandria. If there is anyone whom the police are obliged to protect, it is her and her work for the higher education of Alexandria.

Theophilus She is a pagan and a heretic, and all the errors and heresies in this city can be traced back to her.

Orestes Why do you hate her? Your prejudice against her is, to say the least, irrational, and you are quite alone in it. Ask our friend the bishop of Cyrene here. Is Theophilus right in his condemnation of Hypatia, Synerius?

Synerius No one has the right to judge anyone without legal trial for anything other than regular crimes. Judge not, that you may not be judged, as Christ Himself said.

Orestes I have said my piece, gentlemen, I have warned you, and the bishop of Cyrene has authenticated my warning. I simply ask you to leave the Jews and the non-Christians in peace, as I can guarantee that they will always leave you in peace.

Theophilus They would only dare to do otherwise.

Cyril You too are obsessed with Hypatia, Synerius, as her pupil.

Synerius Not obsessed, just enlightened, and I regret that you two have missed that enlightenment, which above all emphasizes the importance of tolerance, as Origen also did.

Theophilus Behave, Synerius. Go home to your Cyrene and its deserts.

Orestes Your attitude is noted, gentlemen, and we will observe you.

Theophilus No one can do anything about the triumph of the victorious Church over all pagans and non-believers. We are irresistible and will achieve religious monopoly and unlimited power over the whole world.

Orestes Gentlemen, I have warned you. (*leaves*)

Synerius The prefect has the entire leadership of the city behind him. You must obey him, and his policy of tolerance is the only sensible one.

Theophilus He may have the actual power, but behind us is the entire Christian community, and we are the ones leading the masses.

Synerius So you want trouble and will start it.

Theophilus Who said that? Stay out of the way, Synerius, at a safe distance in Cyrene, and we will take care of Alexandria. (*Synerius leaves*)

What do you think, my nephew? Can we trust him?

Cyril He will not stop us. We can do what we want. It will be worse with Orestes. As prefect, he will no more compromise secular justice than we can compromise our faith.

Theophilus An inevitable conflict then?

Cyril Sooner or later.

Theophilus Let us begin with the Jews. As long as we get them out of the way, the rest will be easy. As long as you take one step at a time, you will go safely and can only move forward. Time is working for us, and nothing can stop our parabolans.

Cyril Let us take no risks.

Theophilus Exactly, my good nephew. We have the masses in our hands, and let us carefully guide them forward, so that our invincibility remains total.

Scene 2. The Prefect's Palace.

Servant Whom may we greet?

Raphael Tell me that I have come for Hypatia's sake. I am Raphael Ben Ezra of the Jewish congregation.

Servant What may your business be?

Orestes (entering) That is good, Pylon. I will take care of him. I suppose, my good Raphael, that you have come more for the reason that the Jewish congregation is threatened by the Christians than for Hypatia's sake, who has nothing to do with your Jewish congregation.

Raphael True, my good master and prefect, and we have had extensive discussions about what can be done about the matter. Therefore, my congregation has sent me to you to make a proposal.

Orestes I am all ears.

Raphael The Roman Empire is in disintegration, and if there were to be widespread unrest here, which is highly probable, since the Christians would rather remove all non-Christian elements, especially Jews and Greeks of the old school, or have them forcibly baptized, the Roman authorities would hardly be able to offer any protection to the persecuted or come to any rescue, especially since the imperial throne is now and will remain Christian.

Orestes I have not yet heard any proposal.

Raphael The whole city knows how much you love Hypatia, a love that you have never renounced, however much and often Hypatia has rejected it both publicly and privately. We wanted to ask you to try once again to persuade Hypatia to enter into a covenant with you. As a married couple, the whole city would look up to you, and the Christians would lose the initiative. They would be powerless against love. Together with Hypatia, you would be able to extend your power and influence over all of Africa, and the emperor in Rome, the weak emperor Honorius, would perhaps even be delighted to be relieved of the responsibility for Africa, so tainted by Christian sects, where they have only caused chaos and internecine fighting along the entire coast...

Orestes Have I understood you correctly? So you want me to persuade Hypatia to marry me, so that as a couple we could represent an unshakable order according to ancient traditions, which all of Africa could look up to and celebrate as perhaps its own kingdom, since the Roman Empire has already been split in two...

Raphael Yes, you have understood the matter correctly.

Orestes There is only one catch. Hypatia would never agree to marriage. She demands her complete freedom.

Raphael But if the lives of all the remaining pagans of Alexandria and the entire Jewish community were at stake, don't you think that you could use that as an argument to

persuade her to make that sacrifice? Let her set whatever conditions she wants. We believe that a legal union between you two could save Alexandria.

Orestes And you may be right. No one can accuse you of thinking wrongly, but the risks are obvious. It is an enormous gamble. The ultimate risk would be if the Christians were to begin to regard me as much as an enemy as Hypatia, because I allowed myself to be persuaded into marriage with her.

Raphael No one fears the masses as much as the Christian high priests, precisely because they now have the masses in their hands. But a genuine and beautiful couple of beauty and stability, where both would be the most popular people in the city, even the Christian high priests would not dare to oppose. You could accomplish what Julian failed to do, because he was alone and unmarried. There are two of you and you have the entire Hellenic culture to manage and take responsibility for. What we ask of you is to take that responsibility, save Alexandria, its reputation, importance and culture, so that we Jews can stay and continue to work for the benefit of the foremost city of the East.

Orestes Your proposal is undeniably constructive and interesting. Of course, only Hypatia herself can take the decisive position on it. I will seek her out and present it to her.

Raphael If she does not accept it, I fear it will mean the end for both the Jews and the remaining cultural administrators in Alexandria.

Orestes You may be right about that, and that risk is greater than the fact that your plan could backfire. It is a wild gamble but perhaps the only one that could save Alexandria. Thank you, Raphael Ben Ezra, for coming and daring to present your bold proposal. Greet your Jewish congregation, that whatever the Christians do, you will always enjoy the respect of my and all cultural representatives.

Raphael Thank you, Master Orestes. Then I have done my duty and have only to wish you good luck. *(bows humbly and sincerely and leaves)*

Orestes (alone) Hypatia, we can still save the city. This is a chance, but it comes from God's own people of origin and may be God's own offered solution to the problem, and honestly I can see no other possible solution.

Scene 3. Hypatia's home.

Dolon It is a man from the Jewish congregation who is asking for you.

Hypatia What can such a man want with me? I have no more to do with them than with the Christians.

Dolon He insists. He says it is a matter of life or death.

Hypatia That sounds a bit hysterical. Show him in.

(Dolon brings Rafael in.)

My friend, it is extremely unusual for me to receive a visit from the Jewish congregation. You usually just keep to yourselves in your self-righteous isolation. You

know that you are God's chosen people, which is why you think you don't need contact with anything else.

Raphael My lady, you are making fun of our godliness and piety, but I actually come to you with a prayer that only you can answer.

Hypatia If even your God cannot answer it, how could I?

Raphael My lady, you have the power and the opportunity to save both Alexandria and its future with its Jewish and ancient population.

Hypatia Do you think we are more threatened than usual?

Raphael Unfortunately, that is exactly what we are. The Christians intend to drive all of us Jews to a man out of Alexandria in order to then be able to eradicate all the so-called paganism that still survives, especially your schools and the library with all its administration and employees.

Hypatia Where did you get this from? Are Theophilus and Cyril really consorting with such radical plans?

Raphael You will soon hear it confirmed from the mouth of the prefect Orestes himself.

Hypatia And how do you think I could neutralize this threat?

Raphael Marry Orestes. He will be here any moment to once more ask for your hand.

Hypatia (smiles) My friend, you are pulling my leg. The whole world knows that I have consistently always rejected all marriage proposals, especially all those from Orestes.

Raphael But the arguments this time, concern not only him and you but also Alexandria and its future, if its Jews and learning are to survive at all.

Hypatia (more serious) You mean that if I marry Orestes, we two could together exercise such an influence that the Christian threat will be removed?

Raphael Exactly. We see no other way to curb it. We ask you to think of the good of Alexandria, its future and its ethnic wealth before your own preferences.

Hypatia (is speechless as she digests Raphael's proposal)

Dolon (enters) My wife, the emperor's prefect is here.

Hypatia He is expected. Show him in.

(Dolon brings in Orestes.)

Have you agreed on this strategy together, or is it merely a Jewish attempt at problem-solving?

Raphael My lady, we Jews have prepared the proposal, but I would never have dared to present it to you without having informed the prefect.

Orestes (enters) Raphael? Are you here as well?

Raphael Excuse me for anticipating you, but I wanted to do my best to prepare Hypatia even before you broke in.

Orestes Then Hypatia already knows the full extent of the proposal?

Hypatia Raphael has asked me to accept a marriage with you so that together we could save Alexandria's future and hold back Christian aggression.

Orestes Hypatia, you know that you are my only love for life. Set whatever conditions you wish. I know that you prefer a sex-free life, and if you accept me as your husband,

I will guard your virginity as zealously as an ordinary husband would do the opposite. But we are not ordinary people. We are chosen by fate to decide this together for the most important city in the world, which today, after the fall of Rome, is the cultural leader and stronghold of the world. It is our responsibility to do what we can for our beloved city, which fate has entrusted to our care. Let us preserve it. Accept me as your husband and protector, and the Christians will no longer dare to violate the human rights of all the free citizens of Alexandria. *Raphael* We ask our Queen Hypatia with the deepest humility and heartfelt appeal to carefully consider the proposal.

Hypatia If I were to think only of myself and my duties, my school and my teaching, my soul and my own salvation, the answer would undoubtedly be no, but you are bringing the whole of Alexandria and its future into the question and making it a question of universal importance. If I am then to include the future and welfare of Alexandria in the picture, the answer can only be yes.

Alexios (entering unannounced) Forgive me, my lady, but I was sent to bring you the news immediately that fresh unrest has broken out in the old city.

Hypatia What has happened?

Alexios The Christians are plundering all the shops and homes of the Jews and forcing them to leave the city.

Hypatia (to the dismayed Orestes and Raphael) Gentlemen, it seems that the Christians have anticipated us.

Alexios I was sent here precisely so that the prefect and Raphael Ben Ezra could also get the news in the quickest way.

Orestes Are the Christians committing violence? Has anyone been murdered?

Alexios No, they act under the strictest discipline. The Parabolans have the strictest orders that no Jew may be harmed, only to be driven out of the city and deprived of all their property.

Raphael It is violence at its worst. It is pure robbery.

Hypatia What can you do, Orestes?

Orestes The question is precisely how far it has gone and how great the Christian superiority is. How many are the militant parabolans who are carrying this out?

Alexios Bishop Cyril has gathered thirty thousand parabolans for this operation last night, according to reports.

Orestes There are too many.

Raphael I must go home to my people immediately. Excuse me, my lady, that we acted too late. *(hurries out)*

Hypatia What do you think, Orestes? Did they know about the plans that Raphael and his friends had put together to prevent them?

Orestes They cannot have known. The planning has been extremely secret – only Raphael and his closest associates except me have known about it. But the Christians have long been preparing a decisive killing blow against the Jews.

Alexios They have no choice. Everything is taken from them. The only way for them to save something is to take it with them when they leave the city.

Hypatia Doesn't Christianity claim to be the religion of love? What do they have against the Jews, since they apparently hate them so boundlessly that they won't even grant them any civil or human rights? Aren't they people like themselves and the rest of us? They have already suffered enough during their long and difficult history. Should they then be punished further just because they have been around longer?

Orestes The Christians are unlikely to be able to answer your question.

Hypatia The Christians have consistently allied themselves with barbarism from the beginning, as soon as they were given the power to act on their own initiative by the Emperor Constantine making them the state religion. Since then they have grown into a worse tyranny than the Roman emperors. The latter succumbed to their hubris and their follies, but the Christians only cultivate them and establish them under the hysterical and thoughtless approval of the masses. They are the first religion in the world to elevate hubris to a dogma of infallibility and to completely suppress all possibility of self-criticism. There is no purification, no catharsis, no suffering, no self-examination in Christianity, only ruthless lust for power.

Orestes Hypatia, we remain standing. We don't give in. We do not accept their barbarity and violence.

Hypatia Unfortunately, however, the argument for our marriage, that it would save the Jews of Alexandria, has completely fallen.

Orestes All the more strongly do I stand by your side, Hypatia, more now in this time of trial than ever. Not all the Christian masses in the world have any authority to oppose the emperor's prefect. I accept that the argument for our marriage has fallen, but all the more fervently will I worship you for what you are and guard your inviolability as a virgin as long as I live.

Hypatia The Christians worship virginity itself. Why then can't they respect me?

Orestes Prejudice and jealousy, nothing else. They see your position as an obstacle to their monopoly of power.

Hypatia What made them so cunning? Weren't Jesus and his disciples poor and honest men?

Orestes Unfortunately, Hypatia, that was a long time ago. Today's Christian bishops and leaders are intoxicated by the power of leading the world church, the state religion of the world's largest empire.

Hypatia And in that intoxication they take for granted that they are saints and have eternal life, which immoderate vanity they prove by canonizing themselves.

Orestes Christianity is already a world religion, and we must tolerate it.

Hypatia Yes, we must. Is it too much to ask that they also tolerate us?

Alexios The expulsion of the Jews is only the beginning of their intolerance. If they have taken such a first step, the next one must be worse, and on the path of destruction one does not stop until one has reached the bottom.

Hypatia Unfortunately, you are right, Alexios. They have already plundered and destroyed the Serapion Library, they have had their most lucid Church Father, John Chrysostom, excommunicated and banished, they have had the writings of Origen declared heretical and all who read him excommunicated as heretics, and now they

are engaging in a universal persecution of the Jews, who helped make Alexandria what it is. Where and when will they stop? When they have reduced Alexandria to irreparable decay?

Orestes They can go as far as they wish, there are no limits to their expansion hunger, but not as long as we stand in their way. We can still stop them.

Hypatia By all means except their own. Their violence and intolerance can only be met with love and tolerance, their barbarity with education and learning, and the stupidity and unbridled fanaticism of their impulsiveness with the common sense of a cool head and sensible moderation and self-control.

Orestes We can save the whole world with that.

Hypatia At least as long as we live. We have much to do.

Orestes My imperial bodyguard shall always be at your disposal.

Hypatia I don't need it. I have always managed by myself.

Orestes Hypatia, never take any risks. We need you.

Hypatia Thank you all the same, Orestes. Keep your imperial bodyguard. You need it more than I do. Now go back to your palace. I must devote myself to my students.

Orestes Call me at any time. We shall be in daily contact.

Hypatia Whenever necessary. Thank you, Orestes. We shall manage.

(Orestes bows deeply and reverently, gathers his cloak and leaves.)

What do you think will be the Christians' next step, Alexios?

Alexios They will insist on the extermination of all pagan statues and images.

Hypatia Masterpieces by Praxiteles and Lysippos, noble statues of Apollo and Aphrodite, just because they are naked and represent idols? Can't the Christians see that our so-called statues of gods only represent idealized people?

Alexios No, they can't.

Hypatia Can you be my spy among the Christians, Alexios, and report to me what they are thinking and planning?

Alexios Then I must pretend to be a Christian myself.

Hypatia Does that invite you?

Alexios Very much so, but I will gladly do it for the sake of the truth.

Hypatia I only fear Cyril, for he is the future of the Christians, and he has dangerous ambitions. His old uncle Theophilus, who destroyed the Serapion Library with its temple, is singing on his last verse and has played out his role, but Cyril will become archbishop after him. Then anything may happen.

Alexios We shall be prepared.

Hypatia I hope so, Alexios. Now come and participate in my class. I enjoy your critical questions.

Alexios I am only trying to help you further in your general research.

Hypatia That is precisely what I am grateful for.

(They go out together.)

Act IV scene 1.

Theophilus (on his deathbed) My tale is almost over. You must do something about the remaining problem of the wretched paganism.

Cyril It is hopeless, uncle. They are stubborn as sin, and they refuse to come out of their schools, their ghettos of learning, their dry traditions and their over-confidence in false gods.

Theophilus Yet we have broken them and crushed all these wretched gods, who are so absurd in their lifelessness and powerlessness, they cannot see, they cannot speak or react, they are sensual and sinful images made beautiful to lead people astray with seduction and lies. All such images must be crushed and destroyed. All paintings and frescoes of gods must be obliterated and hacked to pieces, so that people will never know that they ever existed, for they must be brought up in the one faith, that God is everything, and He can never be depicted. To make images of the essence of divinity is a blasphemy and sacrilege. You must save humanity, nephew. That will be your life's task as Archbishop of Alexandria when I myself am gone.

Cyril I will do what I can and all my best, uncle.

Theophilus No, that is not enough. You must not merely try and defend your good will, no, you must be consistent and carry out the total purification and its revolution with the complete settlement of all the pagan past. Nothing must be spared. Or else you will never be able to triumph.

Cyril Alexandria has become noticeably poorer since we expelled the Jews.

Theophilus What does it matter? It is only our salvation and holiness that count. We can purify the whole world and bring it into our one church with the one God of our universe, and all who resist the necessity of the operation are enemies of God and must be liquidated and eliminated. Or else we will never be victorious.

Cyril Uncle, you are dying. You must rest. Just take it easy, and don't get excited, and you may still have some time on earth left.

Theophilus No, I am finished with this world. Now I am ready for heaven, the only thing I have lived for in life, and if only I am established and canonized as holy and a saint for all eternity, then I am satisfied. The world is of no matter.

Cyril However, you have managed to make the church in Alexandria the richest and the most powerful in all of Christendom.

Theophilus Rome and Antioch and Constantinople and Jerusalem will probably try to bring us down to their more humble status.

Cyril We have won a position as the leader of the churches of the whole world in order to keep it.

Theophilus That's how it should be. Rome has been plundered and is powerless, we can forget about all that, and if we just speak kindly to the other three with condescending grace, we will probably keep our position.

Cyril We cannot fail.

Theophilus We only have the pagans left to crush. That will be your main task.

Cyril They are insignificant. The prefect himself is a Christian.

Theophilus Orestes is a selfish opportunist. But you are right. We could ignore him if he didn't have that witch by his side.

Cyril Uncle, the librarian of our library is the most beloved and respected person in our city.

Theophilus But she is a pagan.

Cyril But perhaps the most learned teacher in the world. She may solve the mysteries of the universe.

Theophilus That is not necessary. We have the Bible. In it there is everything. Anything else is of no importance, especially the mysteries that are not dealt with there.

Cyril We cannot disturb her. She is unassailable in her invulnerable virtue, virginity and honor as the city's foremost teacher with a reputation throughout the world.

Theophilus Are you also bewitched by that disgraceful slut?

Cyril She is a teacher and as such the city's foremost. She is indispensable as such.

Theophilus She is just a woman. No woman is invulnerable or indispensable.

Cyril And how do you want us to deal with her?

Theophilus Force her to become a Christian. Then she can live, if she cooperates and shows us her submission. If not, she must be isolated and deprived of all influence and punished until she gives in. In the long run, the only thing that can save her is to become a Christian.

Cyril No one has been able to bend her will.

Theophilus The church must bend everyone!

Cyril Uncle, take it easy.

Theophilus I will take it easy when I am dead. Until then, I will preach.

Cyril We will probably get to the point where the whole city ends up completely Christian.

Theophilus That will be entirely your responsibility.

Cyril I will fulfill your will.

Theophilus Well, that's how it should be. Then I can still die peacefully in the end.

Cyril You will have the most magnificent funeral Alexandria has ever seen.

Theophilus Do whatever you want, but Christianize the city, so that no one escapes!

Cyril Yes, my dear uncle. Just give yourself a little patience, and the whole world will probably become Christian.

Theophilus It shall be your responsibility!

Cyril Yes, my uncle Archbishop, I will take on that responsibility. I swear by your holy glory.

Theophilus Let me die now. I have nothing more to say. But I trust that you will overcome paganism and the witch who represents and defends it.

Cyril Uncle, I have sworn by your holy glory. What more can you ask for?

Theophilus I just want to be sure. Christianity must not fail humanity.

Cyril No risk. We are established as the state religion in almost the entire world.

Theophilus Yet I sense a sneaky danger. All these free sects must be exterminated.

Cyril Of course.

Theophilus We have only begun, and we have an infinite distance to go if we ever reach the end... (*dies*)

Cyril There he died at last. Well, the order of Alexandria is mine now, I have all the Christian masses in my hand, and I can command them as I please. But a wise strategist does not use his power until he knows that he can do nothing but prevail.

Scene 2

Demetrios I must warn you, Hypatia. The Christians have no good intentions towards you.

Hypatia They never had, my friend. It is nothing new. Do you want to warn me? Of what? Of a pure abstraction? That is all that all religions and philosophies are, mere pure abstractions, which can be taken seriously only as such. The moment they begin to be taken bloody seriously, they are finished, they lose all credibility and become absurd, and when they finally resort to tangible actions out of fanaticism, as the Christians have done ever since they were established as the state church, they have no more justification for their existence, but become reprehensible and ridiculous delusions that can only end in their mutual destruction in division and discord, jealousy and self-destruction.

Demetrios I only wanted to warn you of the cunning craftiness, which now that archbishop Theophilus has left the world is taking more insidious and more covert forms.

Hypatia Yes, I know. They revel in slander and the spreading of rumours, since their new ambition, now that the Jews have been expelled, is to liquidate all other dissenters as well. They would rather conform everyone according to archbishop Cyril's catechism, so that no one may have any thoughts other than those which the archbishop decides. Thus Christianity has already become completely absurd and untenable, at least here in Alexandria.

Demetrios Don't joke, noble lady. They are not funny.

Hypatia I don't laugh at them. But the last people in this world who can be taken seriously are those who can't stand a joke and can't laugh. It's only the Christians now.

(A beggar comes forward and stands in the way.)

Beggar Madam, you are not too proud to give a destitute beggar any alms?

Hypatia My friend, I have nothing to give. My wealth is only learning, I have nothing else.

Beggar Yet you are considered the most well-off and respectable lady in this city. Your family has always been more than just noble.

Hypatia What do you want? To mock me with obsequious flattery?

Beggar My lady, we are colleagues. Soon you will be on the same ruined level as I am.

Hypatia What do you mean?

Beggar I mean that the Christians intend to ruin all who do not want to become Christians.

Hypatia I am not afraid of them. However, I fear that you may be an agent of those who have been sent here only to ensnare me.

The beggar It's not that bad, for it's far worse. Don't you recognize me?

Hypatia Have I known you? Are you a student who has gone astray in this life?

The beggar No, I was a teacher like you but not in the same school. I am one of ten thousand impoverished, expelled Alexandrian Jews.

Hypatia Raphael!

The beggar Well, finally!

Hypatia So you are left! But you are quite alone. All your brothers and your people have fled.

The beggar We did not flee. We were forced into exile, we, who built the city and laid the foundation for its greatness, learning, glory and beauty with the good Ptolemies. We lived here in peace and enjoyed contributing to Alexander's city becoming the most prominent after Rome in the world, until the last Ptolemaic monarch Cleopatra was forced to ruin by the Romans. Then our library burned for the first time.

Hypatia Alas, you don't need to remind me of that. What do you want? Have you just come to visit to risk your life?

Rafael We never thought that Christians could be so cruel. Their holy inhumanity becomes, through their fanaticism, an infallible power of evil that will never cease to spread the darkness of ignorance over the world until they have suffocated all science and knowledge and all freedom of thought in general.

Hypatia That is why it is important that we stand against them.

Rafael Do you know what rumours they are spreading? They have branded you in the people's minds as a witch and sorceress and as a prostitute and harlot, who is ruining the whole city and bringing it down to the level of Sodom and Gomorrah. They point you out as the Whore of Babel, described in detail in the Apocalypse.

Hypatia Poor children. They then believe that fairy tales were for real and confuse them with reality. It is madness to let imagination and fantasies replace reason. The whole world depends on cold reason and on those who bear responsibility for the course of the world being objective and realistic. No Christian can ever be that. By condemning me, they condemn themselves.

Demetrios We see greater dangers for your life and work than you do, who are too gullible and naive to be able to see through evil properly.

Hypatia I can never accept evil and take it seriously. It is too absurd. I do not believe that it exists. If it does exist, it is merely a mental illness that will pass. The essence of evil is an unnatural stranger in the rational world and should be rejected as such. Whoever does not do so is not right in his head.

Raphael Are all your fairy tales and mythologies then a healthier and more sensible world of imagination?

Hypatia My friend, now you pose a reasonable question. Let me return to what I just said. Everything that is merely intellectual is harmless and healthy and wholesome to

deal with. Although you are a Jew, are you familiar with Plato's teaching about the ideal and idealistic world of ideas? An ideal stands above everything worldly precisely because it can never be realized, but it exists nevertheless and all the more clearly, since everyone strives for it all the more. It is really the only thing that all humanity strives for: the mirages of the ideal, which, like the Promethean mission, gave humanity hope and enlightenment that they could get better and that the world could be made better. The hope is there, even if we never succeed, but the mere fact that it exists makes it worth all the effort to work and strive for its realization. And it is in art that we most glimpse these ideals, in the beauty of the wonderful creations of our painters and sculptors, sometimes more alive than the people themselves, in music in its harmony and uplifting melodies, and in poetry most of all, in fairy tales and our mythology, which teem with the most incredible and wonderful feats, which give us insights into the mechanisms of fate and how it can make human life more strange and into something higher than everyday reality, and into stories that never cease to enchant, fascinate and grant man higher insights into life. It is the soul that I am talking about, about which all life and the whole world are really only about, and which in fact governs them, which Christians believe they can control, monopolize and master, while the soul and its mysterious universal power are in fact what master us and without us being fully aware of how. This is what fairy tales, mythologies and fables will never cease to teach us, even though Christians want to abolish them and burn all books. They can never succeed, just as foolishness can never outshine and defeat truth and reason. Let those fools try. When it is too late and Christianity has gone bankrupt morally and politically, they will realize that they were all wrong from the beginning, and then their grief and gnashing of teeth will be severe for eternity.

Raphael Tell that to the Archbishop His Holiness Cyril.

Hypatia Do you think he could be enlightened? No, not even when he sits alone in his old age on the ruins of his miserable life's work of destruction, will he understand that his infallibility was lacking from the beginning. No Christian will understand that, while the Church holds on to its infallibility and its enslaving dogmas. They are slaves. We are free who stand outside, and intend to continue doing so.

Demetrios Hypatia, I believe your school awaits you.

Hypatia I believe so too. You have delayed me, my good Rafael Ben Esra, but it was worth it. Perhaps I could give you some instruction on your way, at the very best, perhaps even some kind of compensation in spiritual form for all the material damage that the Christians have caused you.

Rafael (bowing chivalrously) I thank you, my mistress, for the gold of your instruction, which is more valuable than any earthly wealth.

Hypatia Then I thank you for your ambush and ask to return the compliment.

Welcome back in better times, when the Christians no longer disturb and threaten us.

(leaves with Demetrios)

Raphael God grant that that day may come one day and not too late, and not after a thousand years of spiritual and dogmatic darkness, tyranny and slavery. *(leaves)*

Scene 3.

Cyril This is not acceptable. We cannot go on like this. As long as she has the Emperor's Prefect in her hands and his power, we cannot achieve complete victory over paganism and Alexandria.

Demetrius Archbishop, with respect, but it is out of the question that we will in any way commit violence against her. She is protected not only by the Prefect but by the law, which is written and which everyone must follow, including ourselves, no matter how Christian we are.

Cyril You mention the law. Yes, that is the correct procedure. She will be brought before us. We just have to get her here, but who will get her?

A parabolan Can't we send someone there to spy and probe her and, as her disciple, get him to bring her here? We just want to talk to her.

Cyril Yes, that is exactly it. We just want to talk to her.

Linus I have always been curious about her.

Cyril You could be the right person. Do you feel up to the task?

Linus Yes.

Cyril What do you think?

the parabolan Linus is a novice and green and unspoiled by the comforts and temptations of our city. He would surely arouse her notorious interest in naive young handsome men.

Cyril We trust you, Linus, as one of us, a brother and a son. Your only mission will be to bring her to us. It doesn't matter how you get her here, but we want to deal once and for all with the evil paganism that she still constitutes a hotbed for in Alexandria, and which the emperor's prefect protects, as the slave he is to her under the power of her sorcery.

Linus I will gladly help you bring her here, so I will have a chance to get to know her. She is so famous that I have become curious about her.

Cyril Can we trust you not to be seduced by her?

Linus No one can seduce me, least of all a woman.

Cyril Thus speaks a true Christian. Go with God, my son, and place yourself with her, so that she will trust you and agree to whatever you please to propose.

Demetrius He is too young. He does not know what he is getting himself into.

Cyril Perhaps his greatest advantage is precisely that he is so ignorant and pure. His incorruptibility can give her complete confidence in him, while at the same time making him completely immune to her arts.

Demetrius Is it not better that I go myself, who already know her, and simply say that you wish to speak to her here?

Cyril Brother, you surprise me. Do you think she would come? Would she not be suspicious? You know her, and you yourself are under the spell of her charm and influence. She would suspect a cunning scheme, become suspicious, and refuse to come. No, this requires innocence and naivety and the cluelessness of inexperience.

She would never think anything bad of Linus.

Linus I am ready for the mission of trust.

Cyril Good, my brave boy. We have full confidence in you, as she should have, so that you cannot fail. Just get her here, and we will probably have her under our control in the end. She just has to compromise and give in and not stubbornly remain the only one in Alexandria who resists the hegemony of the new world order of Christianity.

Demetrios I can be Linus' companion and mentor and introduce him to Hypatia.

Cyril Yes, you could, but let Linus do the persuasion. You would only warn her, or that would be the effect of your interference in the matter.

Demetrios She shall have nothing to fear. If our brother Linus persuades her to come, I will guarantee her safety.

Cyril Do so. We look forward to seeing the Librarian here with you soon.

Demetrios I only wish you could come to an agreement.

Cyril My son, that is the only thing we all wish for.

(Demetrios takes Linus in his arms, and they go out.)

What do you think, friends? Can he do it?

Parabolan If we can get her here, she will probably learn to cooperate.

Cyril No violence. That is the last resort. Demetrios is right. We must respect the law and cannot cross its limits.

parabolan But that law is abused to protect and preserve paganism with all its abominations.

Cyril That is precisely what we must deal with properly in the necessary confrontation with Hypatia. No one may have intercourse with paganism and idols in the world any more, now that we have the Son of God as king over the whole world. No one may oppose the holy world order.

parabolan Therefore the woman must be chastized.

Cyril No, my friend, only repent and be spoken to piously, so that she understands and follows us. She must simply be brought to a pious understanding of her own good.

Sven 4. *Hypatia's garden.*

Alexios I can't believe anything good of them.

Hypatia You are too distrustful, Alexios. If you have to believe the worst about everyone, and if your distrust has to include everyone, how can you be anything but lonely and unhappy? You have to give yourself a chance. Life is dualistic. If you can't believe in the other party, you can never believe in yourself either.

Alexios Here comes that scoundrel with another Christian in tow.

(Demetrios enters with Linus.)

Hypatia Demetrios, who are you bringing to me as a proselyte? Another Christian whom you want to see if I can convert him to the one true faith of paganism?

Demetrios He only wished to get to know you, Hypatia. He comes from Cyril, who

has given him permission to come here, as a kind of messenger between you and him.

Hypatia What does he want?

Demetrios He wants you to come to him, so that you can sort out your differences.

Hypatia Do you think that's all they want? They tried to force Orestes and all the leading Old Believers of the city to receive baptism. They gave them no choice, but Orestes refused and went out and was almost attacked on the way. They don't know what they're doing, Demetrios. They only lust for power and to enslave all the spirits that still dare to be free.

Linus No, Hypatia, they only want everyone to embrace the one true faith.

Hypatia And what is the one true faith, my young man? To slavishly follow dictatorial high priests, who demand exclusive rights to all spirituality and spiritual authority in this world, in order to gain dominion over worldly power all the more easily?

Linus They only want to come to terms with you, my lady.

Hypatia What is there to come to terms about? That I can never embrace their faith, and that they cannot embrace mine? Under such circumstances, anyone can see that it would be best if we left each other alone, right? I let you have your faith, but you will not let me have mine. Is that fair?

Linus You do not understand, my lady. They only wish you well.

Hypatia If they only wished us well, they would leave me alone, and they would not have plundered the Temple of Serapion but left it alone as well.

Linus They want to discuss the faith with you.

Hypatia What faith? I believe in nothing except the inviolable freedom of the spirit. The rest I demand to know. That is why I am studying the stars and planets and trying to understand why they move backwards and why they are sometimes larger and sometimes smaller. There you have much greater mysteries than your childish superstition in resurrections of the flesh and temporary miracles of saints.

Linus But you believe in the pagan gods and worship them.

Hypatia Do I? Have you seen me kneel before them and sacrifice to them, as you sacrifice flesh and blood for your worshipped Son of God, whom you do not understand was only a man like all the others?

Linus My lady, you blaspheme.

Hypatia Do I shock you, poor young man? What do you really know about life? Who has made you their slave? Were you even freeborn?

Linus I come from very simple circumstances, but that does not give you the right to offend me.

Hypatia And how can you offend me for sticking to the old religion without knowing anything about it? I will explain to you what the old religion is. No one has believed for centuries that Apollo and Hermes and Aphrodite and the others were living gods who could accomplish anything. No, they are just symbols of everything they stand for, Apollo for beauty and creativity, Hermes for communication and its vital importance for man, Aphrodite for love and the inevitable lovemaking, Zeus for the ultimate supremacy of nature through the most terrifying natural forces, Poseidon for the immeasurable greatness of the sea and the elements, Hades for the unknown

afterlife, Demeter for cultivation and agriculture and the indispensability of daily bread, Artemis for the hunt and the freshness of chastity, Athena for wisdom and knowledge, and so on. They are just symbols and beautiful and inspiring as such. They are not images or idols, while you have made the crucified one your idol by worshipping him as the son of God. In the same way, you have also begun to worship his mother Mary as a divinity and any number of other so-called saints. We of the old religion, who pay more attention to philosophy, judge such things as irrational and unwise. The idolatry that you Christians have consolidated and established as a forced cult through the religious monopoly of the state church is more pagan and superstitious than our respect for nature and for all the symbolic forms of our cultural life. Your Jesus never rose from the dead, since he was never dead, which is proven by the fact that he bled when he was taken down from the cross, which even Origen confirms.

Linus Origen was a heretic!

Hypatia And who condemned him to that? Who gave him any chance to defend himself? Was he ever brought to trial, so that he could explain himself? No, it was only after his death that he was cowardly declared a heretic, when he could no longer defend himself, simply because some of his books and ideas were unpleasant to certain church leaders like your archbishop Cyril. He was too superior to you in his clear-sightedness and tolerance, for you intolerant fools to do anything but dismiss all his wisdom as heretical just because you did not understand it.

Alexios Here comes Orestes.

Orestes I have heard a rumor that archbishop Cyril demands your presence in Caesarium to make a defence on certain questions of faith. Do not go there, Hypatia. They wish you no good.

Hypatia I am just trying to explain to our young friend here why I do not intend to comply with the archbishop's wishes. If Origen had not been branded a heretic, young man, I would probably have become a Christian like everyone else. But now you Christians are pleased to condemn your own wisest teachers for daring to present initiatives and ideas of their own, and thus I must regard your Christianity as doomed and a hopeless case. It cannot survive. Doctrines survive precisely by being discussed and doubted, debated and critically analyzed, so that irregularities and lies can be cleared out, but instead you want to silence all objections with force and dictatorial decrees. As a democrat I can never accept that.

Orestes Who are you, young man, who has been sent out to set a trap for Hypatia? What do you really want? What did Archbishop Cyril give you for an assignment?

Linus Only that I should persuade Hypatia to come with me to Caesarium to answer certain questions.

Orestes What is she accused of?

Linus Nothing.

Orestes What then is she to be held accountable for?

Linus (*unresponsive*)

Alexios Go home, Linus. You have no business here, unless you wish to become a student like all the others, who are only here to benefit from Hypatia's teachings.

Linus Thank you, my friend, but I would like to learn what Hypatia can teach me, for the priests of the archbishop only want to teach me what I already know. I am more interested in what surpasses their learning.

Hypatia That is enough, Linus, you are admitted, but your Christian co-religionists will say that I have seduced you as I have seduced everyone else. I hope you do not see me as a risky warlock of bewitchment.

Linus You are far too beautiful and good to be evil, and you are too open and straightforward to do any harm.

Alexios Then you are one of us, Linus. Welcome. Do you know anything about the planets and space?

Linus Nothing.

Alexios That is what Hypatia is going to teach us about now. You came just at the right time. *(takes hold of him and leads him towards the classroom)*

Hypatia What do you think, Orestes? Is Cyril on the warpath?

Orestes They're just messing with us, but we have nothing to fear. We obey the law, and they won't do that if they want to forcibly convert and baptize those who don't want to. Stick to your office and your work, Hypatia, and nothing in the world will harm you as long as I live.

Hypatia Do I dare to go out into the street and into the square?

Orestes You dare anything, as long as you never show that you're afraid. That's the last thing you're allowed to do, because when they see you're afraid, they act like animals and attack immediately.

Hypatia I've never been afraid, but I have to think about my safety, for the sake of my students.

Orestes As long as you are not afraid, Hypatia, no one can harm you. And no matter how Cyril calls you, you have no reason to go to them and appear before them, for they have no legal mandate as prosecutors. Legally, they are incompetent dilettantes. Such people are only dangerous if you meet them. You just have to ignore them.

Hypatia And if they send their own people here to spy on me and try to persuade me, like this Linus?

Orestes Then it is only up to you to convert them from their superstitious delusion to your cold and logical reason. You can do that as the best teacher in the world.

Hypatia I will see what I can do for him.

Orestes Without doubt, he will stay here as your student. He already thinks as much of you as everyone else.

Hypatia Good, Orestes, as long as we don't have to get married, I am satisfied.

Orestes We are already married as allies and twin souls. That is enough.

Hypatia Far beyond the false eternity and false heaven of the Christians.

Orestes They are more mortal than we are.

Hypatia I wish I could believe in you.

Orestes You don't have to believe. Just devote yourself to your science. That alone will last longer than Christianity.

Hypatia Thank you, Orestes. I must go. My students are waiting for me. (*leaves*)

Orestes (alone) I only worship her the more because I never can have her.

Act V Scene 1.

Cyril We have to get her here.

parabolan 1 But how are we going to get her here without using force?

Demetrios You can never get her here by force. It won't work. She wouldn't agree to come here on command, and if you really used force to get her here, the conflict would only get worse.

Cyril But the situation as it is, is unacceptable.

2 Let's simply bring her here and put her on trial, and then once and for all get her to cooperate.

Demetrios Don't you understand? The slightest violence against her would only further distance her from us.

Cyril Her faithful disciple Demetrios suggests a diplomatic solution. That way, the bickering can go on forever. We won't get anywhere with the situation just by talking, Demetrios. We have to reach a decision. She has to cooperate, or we have to get rid of her.

Demetrios How? By murdering her?

Cyril We could force her into exile. The world is large, and Alexandria is not the only city in the world.

Demetrios Whatever you do can only make the situation worse.

Cyril Is it better to do nothing then?

Demetrios Yes.

Cyril That is the worst thing we can do. That would be to let her win. As long as we do nothing, her influence will only increase with Orestes, our powerful prefect, constantly covering her back. He has sworn to go to any lengths to protect her against any Christian aggression. Therefore, we must get her here, so that we can talk to her and reason with her. That is the only solution.

2 Let's just go and get her. We'll give her an armed escort here. She can't refuse.

Cyril No, she must be persuaded. It must be done properly. No force must be applied. We can only reach her by talking to her. We can only win her by persuasion. Everything else is doomed to fail.

Demetrios I'm glad you're at least wise enough to realize that.

Cyril Demetrios, appoint some good Christian diplomats and brothers to a delegation, through whom we can visit her to simply ask her for a conversation, nothing more.

Demetrios And if she asks us and you to visit her instead?

Cyril I can't leave my church. I can't leave my responsibility. She's more at liberty. If she's as noble and liberal and tolerant as she's praised for being, she'll be happy to come here for a friendly conversation for better relations between her and Orestes' party and us. We must come to an agreement. Or else, the tensions and conflicts and street brawls will only continue to increase.

Demetrios I will try, of course. Linus can be included in the delegation, but I don't think she wants to come, and Orestes will definitely dissuade her. *Cyril* Keep the prefect out, and she will come.

Demetrios Do you think so?

Cyril She must. (Demetrios leaves.)

Scene 2. At Hypatia's home.

Hypatia They insist that I come to them, so that we can jointly bring peace to the city.

Orestes They have nothing good in their minds, Hypatia. They only want you in their power.

Hypatia They can never get that no matter how they try.

Orestes Fanaticism can never control itself. It cannot take no for an answer. If you talk to them and they find that you do not bend to their will, they can, in anger and blindness, become as crazy as possible and worse than animals.

Hypatia Are they not Christians? Isn't Christianity the religion of love and tolerance? If they want to resort to coercion in any way, they are counteracting their own religion.

Frankly, I don't understand what they want. They think that by talking to me they can get better order in the city in the name of peace. I am the last person who would want to stand in the way of peace. What they don't seem to understand is that I am on their side. The difference between us is, that they are dogmatic while I am not. They want to force everyone under the law of the Christian religion while I believe that no religion can be made into law, since religion and justice are two entirely different things. It is an intellectual and objective question, and if they want to deal with it objectively I have nothing against it.

Orestes That is what I fear they are incapable of.

Hypatia The danger is that you are worrying in vain.

Orestes Hypatia, I have always offered you my maximum protection with my life as a guarantee. My arms are always open, and my house has always longed to welcome you as its mistress. Together we would have nothing to fear from Christian fanaticism. We could control it and keep it in check. But you alone can do nothing against it, and without you, I also would be defenseless against it. Together we can resist it and defend our ancient traditions with success. The Christians would only dare to cower before our common established respectability.

Hypatia Are you offering me marriage again?

Orestes That would be the best protection for both of us.

Hypatia You cannot take no for an answer either. I have said no from the beginning, and I have given you my full reasons from the beginning. I cannot compromise my freedom. I must be allowed to be independent as a teacher. Otherwise I would become biased and a slave to politics. In order to work, I must be allowed to work in peace without external influence, without binding duties, without responsibility for house and servants and without having to show any regard for the world order. Knowledge demands a higher sovereignty, freedom and independence than anything else. You can never have me, Orestes, and no one else either, least of all the Christians, even if they were to threaten me, and least of all then.

Orestes Do you want to be a martyr then?

Hypatia Frankly, Orestes, the whole success of Christianity rests solely on martyrdom. Without the crucifixion, Christ would be nothing, just another Jewish prophet or teacher or philosopher like so many others, and Christianity's ever-continued harvest of martyrdoms is what makes it triumph. Martyrdom is a privilege. If I were made a martyr for resisting Christianity in defense of the much older and nobler traditions of Homer, Pythagoras, and Plato, I would consider it the greatest possible honour of my life. In short, I would have no objection against it.

Orestes You are brave.

Hypatia No, Orestes, just objective.

Dolon A delegation from the Christians requests precedence, madam.

Hypatia Who are they?

Dolon Demetrius, Linus, and some Parabolans.

Orestes Send them away at once. They have no business here.

Hypatia No, Orestes, I want to hear what they have to say. No one will ever be able to say of Hypatia that she was unwilling to listen. - Show them in, Dolon. *(he leaves)*

Orestes Beware of giving them a little finger.

Hypatia I give them no more than an ear, which they may not touch.

Demetrius (entering with Linus and three parabolans) Honorable teacher, Archbishop Cyril hereby invites you to a little talk in his church for the healing of all disagreements that may exist between his Christians and the rulers of the city.

Hypatia A talk between four eyes?

Demetrius You are used to speaking in public, and more than he would certainly want to hear what you have to say.

Hypatia About what?

Demetrius About what we can all do together to bring peace to the city.

Hypatia I am only a teacher. I do nothing to cause unrest in the city. I only teach such knowledge as is useful both practically and for the soul. My work is only intended to be constructive. All unrest and discord in the city are instigated by the Christians, and you know that very well, Demetrius. Why then do the Christians turn to me to make peace, when they can only do it themselves, who started the quarrel, as when they expelled all the Jews?

Demetrius (to the others) There you see. I knew it. She has nothing to add.

Parabolan 1 (politely) We would nevertheless ask you to show our archbishop the good will to at least talk to him, if you could solve the conflict problems of the city together.

Hypatia Only me, not the prefect?

2 The prefect is not needed.

Hypatia What do you say to that, Orestes? The Christians believe that the prefect is not needed.

1 For the talks, that is. For this time.

Hypatia But another time?

1 Certainly.

Hypatia And why does Archbishop Cyril think that I, better than the city's ruling prefect, could help him solve the city's conflict problems?

2 Because you are guilty of them.

Hypatia Is it I who expelled the Jews? Is it I who plundered and destroyed the Serapion with its priceless book collections? Is it I who did all this in the name of Christianity?

1 We ask you to speak to him. He is the one who least of all wants any more abuse to take place in the city.

Hypatia Yet all abuses in the city have consistently been committed through his authority.

2 Are you accusing him?

Hypatia No, I am only stating the facts.

Orestes Go away, you cods. You have no business here. You have only come to pick a quarrel with Hypatia. Don't you realize that it is impossible, that she is the one who least wants to start a fight in the whole city?

Hypatia I am not afraid of them, Orestes. I will give the archbishop a chance to explain himself and what he really wants with his reign of terror. He cannot harm me. I am only a lonely woman. If I can in any way contribute to better harmony within the city between its disparate factions, then it will be my honour to try to do so. I cannot see that anyone could have anything to lose by it.

Orestes Don't go, Hypatia. They only want to force you to dance to their tune.

Hypatia Do you think it will work? – Come, Demetrios and Linus. Escort me with your parobolan brothers to your archbishop, so that together we may come one step closer to a reconciliation between us all, which we all really desire.

Demetrios I personally guarantee your complete safety, noble lady.

Hypatia I have always believed in my students. Come, let's go.

Orestes I will keep my troops ready for the slightest hint of trouble.

Hypatia I do not think I can get a better escort than these pious Christians.

Send your soldiers home, Orestes. They are no longer needed. Perhaps it is as the Christians believe: If only Cyril and I can come to an agreement, we may have peace in the city. – Come, my friends. I trust you. (*Exits with Demetrius, Linus and the other Christians.*)

Orestes I do not like this. When the Christians see that nothing can shake her rock-solid reason and objectivity, they can do anything.

Scene 3. In church.

Cyril They will never manage to get her here. She is not that stupid. She is the most stubborn head in all of Alexandria.

parabolan 3 Do we not believe in miracles? Cannot anything happen? What really stands between her and Christianity? Doesn't her philosophy encompass all religions with her tolerance? She has no religion at all, really, except philosophical tolerance. So she should be completely open to the one universal religion.

Cyril The time of idealism is over, Isidor. We are no longer idealists. We are realists and must think about guarding what we have managed to bring home after almost four centuries of struggle. But here comes someone. Demetrios! Is she not coming?

Demetrios (entering, quite distant) She is coming. Just be calm. Just remember your promise now: She must not be harassed.

Cyril We would never have invited her here if there was even any risk that she would get hurt. The main thing is that she comes. How did she behave?

Demetrios She agreed on the condition that it would just be a friendly conversation in an attempt to resolve the tensions that exist – nothing else.

Cyril And she has no Orestes in her back pocket?

Demetrios Orestes was there. He advised her not to come. He watches her closely. If anything happens to her with you, he will hold you responsible before all of Christendom.

Cyril You worry too much. Nothing can happen. What could happen? She is almost as holy as we are. All that is missing is her small, short step to baptism.

Demetrios You cannot force her.

Cyril But we can persuade her. She must be made to understand that she has the best chance of getting by and being able to continue her teaching as one of us.

Isidor Here they come.

(Hypatia enters escorted by a group of parabolans. She is simply dressed in white with her hair covered, as befits a Christian virgin.)

Cyril Welcome, my lady. At last we may meet and speak to each other.

Hypatia Father Metropolitan, I have come only to try to persuade you to put a stop to your abuses and persecutions of all those who have not converted to your community.

Cyril It was you who first persecuted us. Don't forget that. That was only twenty years ago. As severely as we were persecuted then, and for two hundred years before that, is it not so strange if some Christians are attacked by the desire for revenge?

Hypatia It is not Christian to give in to feelings of revenge.

Cyril Have you come here to preach to us?

Hypatia I have come here at your invitation to talk to settle all differences. I thought it was in both our interests that they could be settled. You seem not entirely willing to put a stop to the continuous abuses of your Christians.

Cyril To tell you the truth, my lady, I do not have complete control over them. I am only a priest. The parabolans do as they please. They obey neither me, nor your friend the prefect Orestes, nor any other order.

Hypatia Then they are lawless.

Cyril They are Christians and obey Christian law or none at all.

Hypatia They are Christians in name only if in the name of Christianity they persecute non-Christians.

Demetrius I beg you, Hypatia, do not provoke the Archbishop.

Hypatia I am only trying to stick to the point. But it seems to me that he is mostly trying to get away from it.

Cyril And I am trying to present reality to you, Hypatia. We are now, first of all, realists who have an immeasurable responsibility for an immeasurable number of Christian souls. It is our primary duty to maintain this responsibility. This work is made more difficult by the resistance that the non-Christians still offer us, although we are the most powerful group in the city, incited by you.

Hypatia I am not inciting anyone.

Cyril During your lessons you provide anti-Christian propaganda for your students in order to manipulate them into never wanting to become Christians.

Hypatia Do you want to forbid me from teaching?

Cyril I would like to ask you to think more carefully about what you are teaching.

Hypatia I teach astronomy, astrology, mathematics, geometry and other sciences except classical philosophy and languages and literature. Is that wrong? Are there any subjects that displease you?

Cyril Not the subjects as such, but in your teaching you sneak inappropriate anti-Christian propaganda.

Hypatia As what then?

Cyril Demetrios, what has she said against Christianity?

Demetrios She has only taught the right of all religions and philosophies to exist and assert themselves across all borders.

Hypatia That's right. I have no religion, only religious tolerance.

Cyril Didn't she say that Jesus was not the Son of God?

Hypatia Is that why I am here? Is that what you accuse me of? Do you want to put me on trial for my opinion that Jesus could not have been a greater god than Apollo, Zeus, Athena and Poseidon? If we accept and tolerate Jesus and his teachings, why don't you Christians want to accept and tolerate our much older philosophical and religious traditions, as they have been inherited through various schools of philosophy over a thousand years?

Cyril Do you not understand, my lady, that your gods are dead? Homer only fantasized and fabled. Your pagan gods never had any power and could never accomplish anything. They were only figments of the imagination. Paganism is dead. It is the one God that counts, who rules over the entire universe. That is what the contradictions between us are about. We demand that there is only one God, but you demand unhealthy alternatives.

Hypatia So you demand that I, with my school, submit to your one God and his omnipotence and sovereign control over the lives of all people. Is there then no other living being than this zealous autocratic god? Is there not a free nature with all kinds of living beings, such as dolphins and lions and eagles, perhaps also pegasi and centaurs and unicorns, who are just as alive as your god of power? Isn't everything alive actually a part of the universal divinity, which I, along with Plato, am the first to accept?

Cyril We can't have your sensual excesses in religious disguise in the world any more, Hypatia. The world order must be moral in order to function, and Greek mythology is not moral. Plato already pointed that out.

Hypatia Why he wanted to exclude Homer from his ideal state, his only mistake. If you exclude any free spirit, any creativity, any imagination and any spiritual joy of any kind, you exclude God. That is my opinion.

Cyril But you yourselves exclude Christ.

Hypatia We can't exclude him. He already exists in our world as the foreground figure of the established state church. We will never get rid of him as what you have made him out to be, but I think he was actually something completely different than a man of power.

Cyril What do you think he was then?

Hypatia One of us, an ordinary person, a fellow traveler, a teacher and perhaps the highest representative of the best of the ancient traditions of the Jewish school.

Cyril So you don't think he was the Son of God?

Hypatia No.

Cyril She has blasphemed!

a number of parabolans She has blasphemed! She has blasphemed!

Demetrios (intervening) Hold on! One step closer to her, and Orestes will send his troops here! You don't touch her!

Cyril We never intended to touch her.

Demetrios But here and now, Father Metropolitan, you have just made an overt attempt to incite all your parabolans against her!

Cyril Not at all. She is the one who has committed blasphemy. Didn't you ask her yourself not to provoke us?

Demetrios You tricked her into making a statement that was compromising for you!

Cyril She did it herself.

Demetrios Don't you see that you are setting up a fake trial that is just as crazy as the one that Annas and Caiaphas used against Jesus? They also tricked him into making a statement that was blasphemous in their eyes!

Cyril Do you mean to compare Jesus and his trial with this woman's?

Demetrios Don't you see that it is exactly the same thing!

Cyril You are completely confused, my son. There are no parallels at all. She is a woman, he was a man, she is an ordinary commoner, he was the king of the Jews, she is a pagan, he was the first Christian, and so on. On the contrary. They are the opposites of each other. Jesus was not guilty of blasphemy. He only spoke the truth, but this

woman has actually blasphemed God and deliberately done so by virtue of her logic and reason. Therefore it is unforgivable.

Demetrios And how do you intend to judge her then?

Cyril We do not intend to judge her at all. That will be left to others.

Demetrios As the chief priests handed over the judgment to Pontius Pilate.

Cyril You are completely confused, my son. You who have assimilated Greek education with its fairy tales and unrealistic fantasies live in a dream world that has nothing to do with reality. Your world is populated by heroes and deities, false ideals and mirages of misleading dreams, with the philosophy of Plato and Pythagoras you want to indulge in spiritual debauchery and therefore think you have every right to devote yourself to full-time parasitism while others work for you, which is why you have slaves. We Christians exist to free all slaves and free the world from all false dreams. There are no noble and beautiful supermen, Demetrios. There are only selfish survivors who are prepared to run over and sacrifice anything that belongs to others for their own interests. It has always been that way, but this has been constantly exacerbated in history. Today it is the Christian Church that is the master of the land, and that is our position. In that position we must reject all who would oppose that position. In this city, the most important in the world, there is only Hypatia. We simply ask her to cooperate, become a Christian and accept our spiritual authority, then she can continue as usual. But she is stubborn and refuses to cooperate. She does not accept Jesus as the Son of God and the King of the world.

Hypatia He was only a man, but you have made him an idol and an image, which you worship and degrade into a more superstitious cult than any Greek temple god ever was.

Isidore Now she is blaspheming again!

Hypatia No, I am telling the truth. The Gospels were written long after his death, and their mutual disagreements indicate that they were all largely fabricated. Thus, the myth of him as a God-man may also be pure poetry. What we know for sure is that he was born and died as a man. Period. The rest are constructions. You have made him a cult in order to cultivate your position of power. Emperor Constantine elevated Christianity to the state religion only because he could thereby reunite the entire Roman Empire. There was no other way. Yes, Cyril, your religion is only about power and egoism and its survival as a monopoly in the world among its religions, but you will never succeed in wiping out a single other religion or sect in this world, no matter how you try to persecute dissenters and exterminate them with the insidious means of your bliss.

Isidore Hear how she blasphemes!

Cyril You understand, my lady, that with such talk I can no longer protect you?

Hypatia For telling the truth?

Demetrios Hypatia, I beg you, apologize to the Archbishop!

Hypatia For what? For telling the truth? Your Jesus with all your pictures of him are just as dead idols as all our sculptures and paintings of our gods were, which were more beautiful, though, because our craftsmen knew their art. You don't.

Cyril (no longer in contact with her) I wash my hands. (pulls out)

Isidor You have heard her blasphemy! Can we tolerate such things in the church?

the Parabolans No!

Demetrios Don't touch her!

Alexios (entering) My lady, Orestes is on his way with his bodyguards. Get out of here before it's too late!

Isidor Another pagan! Throw him out! (the Parabolans throw him out by force)

Demetrios This is going out of control. They don't know what they're doing.

Hypatia (walks up to the altar, turns to the crowd) My friends, listen! I am only a human being! I am only a woman! And a virgin too!

voices Virgin! She!

Others Hasn't she been in a relationship with the prefect?

Others Down with the prefect! Down with Hypatia!

Demetrios (trying to step in to protect her) No! (he is immediately overwhelmed and disappears under their feet, then thrown out after Alexios.)

Hypatia My friends and brothers! I came here only for a friendly chat with your Archbishop! But your Archbishop has fled! Is it my fault?

one Parabolans Yes, it's your fault!

another Everything is your fault!

a third It is you who has seduced this whole city, so that it can never become Christian!

others Witch! Bitch! Whore! Bloody bitch!

other On to her!

(Suddenly they attack her, she disappears into the crowd, but she clings to the altar, as it turns out, with her clothes torn off. She rises at the altar completely naked.)

Hypatia I appeal to your God! By what right have you attacked me? What have I done to you? What proof do you have for your accusations that I am not a virgin? Don't you realize that you yourselves are contradicting your own Christianity? Wasn't Christianity the religion of love? Why do you hate me then?

one voice The witch is trying to bewitch us!

others On to her! Tear her apart! We have had enough of this!

(They attack again, and now it gets bloody. Finally they retreat when it has gone too far.

Hypatia lies massacred and bloody still in contact with the Lord's altar. Then Orestes and his troops burst in. They stop in horror at the entrance. The Parabolans retreat.)

Orestes We came too late. The Archbishop must be held responsible for this. Where is he?

Linus He left when things went wrong. He is innocent.

Orestes No one is innocent here. Everyone is equally guilty here who let this happen. This can never be erased from the history of our city. Do you realize what you have done? You have defiled the purest innocence in the world! Out with you, all of you!

(Everyone disperses, Parabolans, soldiers, all of them. Orestes is left alone with the dead Hypatia.)

Orestes (kneels before her without touching her) My beloved, I am the most accountable of all, for I saw most clearly how this was happening, and I could not stop it. I constantly refused to believe that it could happen, but it has happened. I can do nothing about the terrible damage that has been done here, but I can promise you that the Christian Church will never cease to be held responsible for it. This is a murderous blow to the very sanctity and beauty of life, and the Christian Church alone is guilty. I will accuse it for eternity. (removes his red cloak and covers her with it. Finally he cannot help himself, falls on her, embraces her and weeps bitterly and incessantly, until the stage is extinguished and the curtain falls.)

Scene 4. Many years later. A desolate place in Algeria.

Augustine A mendicant monk, you say?

his servant In a rather bad shape, it seems.

Augustine Where does he come from?

the servant From the East.

Augustine Does he know me?

the servant Everyone knows who you are, father.

Augustine Well, he can hardly wish me any harm. This world has been so much harmed in the past century that it can hardly be done any greater harm. Show him in.

(The servant goes and shows in a hermit.)

Augustine Do I know you?

the hermit Nobody knows me, but everyone knows you.

Augustine Should I know you? Why have you come to me?

the hermit Because you are today the leader of the Christian church.

Augustine Am I? Most unwillingly so.

the hermit The ancient world with its bright world order has fallen, trampled to pieces by barbarians, wild Goths and Vandals. There is almost only the Church left, and you are its highest authority.

Augustine The Bishop of Rome stands above me.

the hermit Because you have given him that authority.

Augustine Why have you come?

The Hermit To inform you that by undermining and causing the fall of the pagan world, you have only undermined and condemned your own Christianity to death. Your Christianity could have become an enlightened and world-unifying religion, but it chose to become the opposite by the forced introduction of intolerance by dogmas and sectarian persecution. You have succeeded in your intention to overthrow the Roman world order, which you have now taken over, but your world order will be a worse lie than the Roman one.

Augustine Who are you? What right do you have to speak to me like that? With what authority do you threaten me and the Catholic Church?

The Hermit I was present when your church destroyed the holiest thing in the world, a certain librarian in Alexandria, whose only crime was to administer the old Hellenic traditions of knowledge, research and philosophy, tolerance and freedom of thought.

Augustine Hypatia! Alexandria has never risen again after that!

the hermit While before that it was the center of the world and the hub of all the world's foremost enlightenment and wealth of knowledge. You burned its library and murdered its trustees.

Augustine I was not there.

the hermit I do not accuse you. I accuse the world Christianity, and I will do so forever.

Augustine You have not yet told me who you are.

the hermit Call me the Wandering Jew. I was one of the Jews who were expelled by your Christians from Alexandria after we had cultivated the city and its knowledge and treasures of books for five hundred years. My real name was Raphael Ben Ezra.

Augustine That name means nothing to me.

the hermit That is what I meant. I knew it would mean nothing to you. No Jewish names mean anything to you Christians, for you have repressed us and treat us as if we had never existed, while it is we who carry the leadership of all Christianity, while you only take care of its power and tyranny with the intransigence of tolerance as an inhuman weapon against all humanity.

Augustine The prefect Orestes disappeared from Alexandria after the tragedy. Do you happen to know what happened to him?

The hermit He became like me, a beggar, a mad beggar, who could never again wear clean clothes or put shoes on his feet. He followed my example, because he found that there was nothing more sensible in the world for him to do.

Augustine Is he still alive?

The Hermit That is beyond my knowledge. Unfortunately I am still alive, and it is more than I can bear. So. My mission is accomplished. I have brought the eternal curse of the ever-wandering Jew upon the Christian Church, and you will never escape it, for it will be harder than ours.

Augustine Why will it be harder than yours?

The Hermit Because we became only your victims. We never had anything on our conscience. But you will carry the heaviest conscience in the world forever. You would have escaped it, if only you had not massacred Hypatia, the last librarian in the Library of Alexandria.

(Gets up and walks away, limping with his staff.

Augustine looks stupidly after him in horror.)

Augustine So Christianity went wrong from the beginning, and Hypatia confirmed the mistake. Yet the church lives on, and the Jews in its darkest shadow, and we will never escape each other forever. Was that what the hermit meant? In that case, it seems that Hypatia escaped happily as a martyr for a higher ideal and freedom than

Christianity will ever be able to encompass. (*Immerses himself in his writings and broodings.*)

The end.

(Gothenburg 3.3.2010,
Translated in November 2025.)

Comment

The drama is based, like Alejandro Amenábar's excellent film, which directly inspired it, on Charles Kingsley's 500-page novel "Hypatia" from 1851, but like the film, we have also chosen to distance ourselves from the novel's most fictional ingredients, especially some unlikely characters, such as the old Miriam and the Goths that appear. The film has chosen to fill in these gaps in the story with highly credible speculations about what Hypatia was doing in her teaching and research, while we have chosen to try to concentrate the drama entirely on the purely human elements. To some extent, Orestes' fondness for Hypatia has been romanticized, but that is all. All the characters in the drama except Hypatia herself, Orestes, her father Theon and the bishops Theophilos and Cyril are fictional, while they nevertheless represent types that must have existed in her vicinity. Of the notorious parabolans, officially nurses and poor people but in reality the church's self-indulgent militia, no individual has been identified except for the occasional so-called "saint", who was probably the opposite, Archbishop Cyril himself.

No one was held accountable for the murder of Hypatia, as so many and only Christians participated in it. In reality, she was lynched to death and essentially skinned alive and then immediately cremated, after which the ashes were thrown into the sea - nothing of the body was left. This cannot be presented either on stage or on film, which is why we, like Amenábar, have chosen a humanization of her end.

The novel inspired a painting of Hypatia by the painter Charles William Mitchell, which directly depicts her as the novel describes her minutes before her death. This picture could very well be a successful reconstruction of the real Hypatia. No one knows what she looked like, we don't even know how old she was when she was lynched to death by the Christians, but she was probably in her 40s but may have been older. We have chosen this particular picture as the play's illustration, as we find that it is entirely consistent with the impression that Hypatia gives historically as a perhaps as respectable victim of intolerance and fanaticism as Jesus himself.

It is entirely intentional that Hypatia is the only female role in the play.