



## *The Library of Alexandria*

Greek drama by Christian Lanciai (2010)

*The characters:*

Alexios  
Demetrios  
Orestes  
Hypatia  
Theon, her father  
Bishop Theophilus  
Bishop Cyril, his nephew  
Bishop Synesius  
Raphael Ben Esra, Jew  
Dolon, slave  
Linus, young Christian  
Augustine  
Servants and parabolans

The action is in Alexandria 390-415  
and in Hippo some years later

Act I scene 1.

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

*Demetrios* Still she is humble and will no more than discuss with us. That's her only way of teaching.

*Orestes* Which is why it is the more efficient. Already Socrates taught us that dialogue is the best way of developing enlightenment.

*Alexios* Your weakness for her is greater than any of the others'. Only you have dared to express your love for her, directly and bluntly.

*Orestes* And so she also made me suffer for it.

*Demetrios* Still it's not pride that makes her detached from love.

*Orestes* And what is it then if not pride?

*Demetrios* Shyness, modesty, natural virtue and unpretentiousness.

*Orestes* Is that what you think?

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

*Alexios* Don't start arguing about her again. You have done that quite enough unto nagging before.

*Demetrios* Here she comes. Now behave as good students, so that she may be proud and inspire us with her teachings.

*Hypatia (enters)* So early and already so committed in such intensive discussions? What is the subject?

*Orestes* We already discussed love, Hypatia.

*Hypatia* Is that so scientifically interesting?

*Alexios* There is nothing without interest to science.

*Hypatia* Quite right, Alexios. And what have you found out about love in your meticulous investigation?

*Demetrios* Nothing so far. We only arrived at some questions.

*Hypatia* Quite right. If you just find questions to ask, they have to eventually lead to some answers. You don't get an answer if you don't ask.

*Alexios* That's what I call logic.

*Demetrios* Impeccable as such.

*Orestes* I think we could all agree on that.

*Hypatia* Do you think it is funny? Logic is never funny, just objective.

*Orestes* Hypatia, you evade the subject.

*Hypatia* Be then so kind, Orestes, return us to the subject.

*Demetrios (cautiously)* I think it was about love.

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

*Hypatia* And why then do you think I would have evaded it?

*Demetrios* Because Hypatia is chaste.

*Alexios* No, because she is shy.

*Demetrios* No, she is prudent and polite.

*Alexios* So she avoids the issue out of prudence.

*Orestes* Then tell us, Hypatia, why you avoid the issue.

*Hypatia* I don't avoid it. You are jumping to conclusions and lose yourselves in speculations, the last thing to do in objective contexts, for then you risk losing the subject to never be able to retrieve it.

*Orestes* That's just what we feel you were about to do.

*Hypatia* Then I ask you again: why would I have done so? Wasn't it I who on the contrary tried to maintain objectivity?

*Alexios* Then we arrive at the very heart of the issue: can you be objective about love? Can love be objective?

*Hypatia* At last, Alexios, we are getting 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 exactly why I should be last.

*Demetrios* I think love by its very nature never can be objective. That's the last thing it could be.

*Orestes* I agree with Demetrios.

*Hypatia* Then I must claim the contrary. How did I respond to your declaration of love last week, Orestes? You confessed your love even at the theatre in public, and how did I respond?

*Orestes* I would rather not talk about it.

*Hypatia* Can't you be objective about it?

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

*Hypatia* You are ashamed to talk about it. But since I was accountable for the answer, I should stand up to it. I gave you a handkerchief, Orestes, which was stained with my menstruation blood, just to point out the facts of the case.

*Orestes* It almost killed me.

*Hypatia* Why? Why can't you be objective?

*Orestes* Because I love.

*Hypatia* Did you not understand the objective meaning of my answer?

*Orestes* I found the answer below your dignity, for I esteemed you too much to be able to accept such an unworthy answer.

*Hypatia* Why was it so unworthy? Was it unworthy in its objectivity? I didn't give you the handkerchief to make you disgusted but merely to demonstrate the back side of love. There is a back side of everything, and if you just remain objective all the back sides of life can be endured and survived. If you are not objective, it becomes more difficult.

*Alexios* What did you really try to say, Hypatia, with your bloody handkerchief, since we now try to be objective about it?

*Hypatia* At last you dare to approach the difficulty of the subject. I admit that my answer wasn't clear, since it could be interpreted in different ways, but above all I wanted to point out the fact that my menstrual blood proves that I am a virgin, and a virgin in divine service, as I am for life by my oath of fidelity to my vocation as a teacher in the greatest and foremost library in the world, I should remain untouched as a virgin and am thereby not fit to be a wife or mistress to anyone. That, my friends, is the closest I could come to what I really meant.

*Alexios* And we have to respect that, Orestes.

*Orestes* Haven't I respected it?

*Alexios* You could question that, when you publicly confessed your love and practically proposed to her in view of the whole city.

*Orestes* It was an expression of my honesty. Was that to compromise her?

*Hypatia* No, it wasn't, Orestes, since I could answer you. But it could have been compromising if I didn't have an answer.

*Demetrios* Why then must a servant to the gods and to culture be a virgin and not have sexual relationships?

*Hypatia* Because the god demands her total attention. If she splits her attention and concentration between her science and temptations of love, her studies and work results must suffer, and then she is not worthy the service of the god and of culture. Isn't this logic?

*Alexios* Absolutely.

*Orestes* So, Hypatia, we respect you, and the more for guarding your virginity and dedicating it to the gods and science.

*Hypatia* Thank you, Orestes, I take it as a compliment, but for me it is no self-sacrifice but only a duty, since my father once and for all educated me in the service of knowledge and culture.

*Demetrios* Does that conclude our treatise on love?

*Orestes* We'll never get finished with that, for love can never decrease, only expand.

*Hypatia* Like knowledge and culture.

*Orestes* Are they colleagues then?

*Hypatia* No, rather like brother and sister, but very different as such, like siblings often are.

*Alexios* We are now facing another problem. We respect you like all do who embrace our cultural heritage, but the Christians don't.

*Hypatia* Of what concern are the Christians to us? They have themselves detached themselves from our culture. So they should leave us in peace, like we leave them in peace with their one-sided blind alley of ignorance.

*Alexios* The problem is that they will not leave us in peace. They constantly grow in number, influence and ambitions of power.

*Hypatia* Are you viewing them as a threat?

*Alexios* In the long run, yes, and we should keep alert about their threat and not look the other way.

*Demetrios* I can't view them as a threat. They are eager and impulsive and somewhat presumptuous in their pretensions, but it will pass. I think they will mature by time.

*Orestes* Aren't you a Christian yourself, Demetrios?

*Demetrios* That has nothing to do with it.

*Alexios* Since we now are on the subject I think we should discuss it objectively. If we feel Christianity as a potential threat to our culture and science in the future, and if you are a Christian, Demetrios, although you take part in our gatherings and seminaries, why then has Christianity 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 lord protector. Does he not belong to religion?

*Demetrios* Since you press me, Alexios, I must confess that I prefer the Christian religion with its simple monotheism to the Greek mythology with its chaos of moral disorder. Plato also pointed out that problem of disorder.

*Hypatia* I find nothing wrong in Demetrios' argument. If he prefers the Christian religion to Homer's mythology, that's his affair, and as long as it doesn't conflict with science and philosophy, he might even defend science and philosophy against eventual Christians threatening them.

*Demetrios* As a matter of fact, science and philosophy could need defenders against the Christians in their own community with time.

*Alexios* Against the stupidity of the Christian fanaticism even the gods fight in vain.

*Orestes* You said it, Alexios.

*Demetrios* What do you mean by that?

*Orestes* That if one day we are compelled to choose between Christianity and the freedom of development and progress of our Hellenic heritage, we would rather discard Christianity.

*Demetrios* As the development progresses and more and more turns into Christians all the time, hardly anyone will be able to avoid it.

*Hypatia* Have those no right then to remain non-Christian who prefer that way?

*Demetrios* Of course, but it could be risky, and I would not recommend it.

*Alexios* I didn't know that you were a Christian, Demetrios, and the fact that you prove to be one makes me worried about 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 in our fantastic library, it is my primary duty as a Christian to always protect you and the library, Hypatia, against any threat or intolerance.

*Hypatia* Thanks for that. You would not be my student as a Christian if you had any other viewpoint.

*Orestes* Could we at last turn the Christians aside?

*Demetrios* They seem to irritate you.

*Orestes* Do you find that strange?

*Alexios* Orestes' irritation and my concern are justified, Demetrios, since the Christians constantly are getting more presumptuous and aggressive. Now they have started to form a militia of their own, which intentionally desecrate the old gods and and provoke the custodians of our ancient heritage by demanding the abolishment of the gods. I mean that the Christians have already gone too far. We can tolerate everything but never violence.

*Orestes* Alexios is right.

*Demetrios* Just because the Christians constantly are increasing in power and pretentiousness, you will need such Christians as myself who will be able to protect you and help you in holding them back.

*Alexios* Will you be able to hold them back, if you take sides with them? Isn't it rather the contrary, that they will demand your complete loyalty whatever they do?

*Orestes* Answer the question, Demetrios.

*Demetrios* What do you say, Hypatia?

*Hypatia* I think that our seminar has sidetracked and gone astray. We are here to study and improve our knowledge of science and philosophy. In order to do this without disturbances 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. All religions exist here side by side, none is locked out, but no religion could here insist on being more important than others. If that happens, we would lose our objectivity.

*Alexios* Bravo, Hypatia.

*Demetrios* Therefore I kept my Christianity out of here, but you brought it out for treatment. The risk is, that we will not be able to keep it out at length.

*Hypatia* We are only here to maintain our culture and expand our knowledge. Anything else is irrelevant, and we must keep out everything that would threaten this maintenance and guardianship of knowledge, for the sake of science and the freedom of our research. Or else they would not survive.

*Alexios* Hypatia is right as always.

*Orestes* Could you help us, Demetrios, in keeping Christianity out of this special sanctuary of freedom?

*Demetrios* I could try.

*Hypatia* That's enough, Demetrios. That's all I ask. You are always welcome here, Christian or not, like all students, Christians or Jews or Persians or whatever.

*Demetrios* Nothing is more sacred to me, Hypatia, than the knowledge and culture which you represent.

*Hypatia* That is our cultural heritage. Homer, Pythagoras, Plato and the others built our civilization by their spirits, and it will continue to grow as long as we keep their spirits alive.

*Alexios* Precisely.

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

*Demetrios* All you think of, Orestes, is pleasure, lust and pleasure.

*Orestes* Not at all. Then I would not be here but busy around the pleasure houses, which you Christians wish to shut down.

*Hypatia* The whorehouses and their controversies do neither belong here nor in the library, Orestes.

*Orestes* Exactly, that's why I suggested lunch, so that we could get away from the controversies of our discussion.

*Alexios* I think Orestes' suggestion is optimal.

*Demetrios* We will all be tuned in better harmony with some good food for sustenance.

*Alexios* Enough of suggestions.

*Hypatia* So, my friends, lunch break.

Scene 2. At home.  
(*Hypatia comes home.*)

*Theon* Well, how was school today?

*Hypatia* It almost started to get heated, when the students embarked on the problems of love.

*Theon* That's an inexhaustible problem. Did you get anywhere?

*Hypatia* I tried to keep the discussion on an objective level, so that they to some extent could keep their heads cool, but things grew worse when one of them proved to be a Christian.

*Theon* Who?

*Hypatia* Demetrios.

*Theon* And no one knew about it?

*Hypatia* No, that was the last thing I could suspect any of my students of.

*Theon* There are without doubt more of them. The Christians have always been good at getting ahead under cover. How many do you think there are? How great a part?

*Hypatia* If Demetrios is one of them, who always was one of my best students and a favourite, I think at least a third of them might be.

*Theon* I fear you could be right.

*Hypatia* You were always afraid of the Christians. Why?

*Theon* Hypatia, they come from the Jewish sect. By centuries of oppression the Jews have learned humiliation and to be paragon world citizens wherever they appeared in the world, surviving by diplomacy and prudence, and they are a learned people. But the Christians are an entirely new sect without any history at all, and they have that very dangerous old Jewish zest, which could blaze out in any exaggerations, and they despise our old Homeric and Platonic cultural traditions, since they are of the idea that their Christianity turns older philosophies and traditions obsolete. That makes them enemies of wisdom. Therefore I am afraid of them, for wisdom is all that makes a civilization. That's the only thing humanity has got that matters. It is our link

and contact with eternity. If Christianity wants to drive it over, the only consequence must be barbarity, violence and decline, which to some degree is proved already all over the ancient Roman empire.

*Hypatia* Wisdom was always defenseless in its capacity of always insisting on being open to everyone.

*Theon* And it is the more defenseless and exposed, when its chief representative and leader is a young beautiful woman. Therefore I am doubly afraid of Christianity, for you are young and beautiful and defenseless, and you will be the leading beacon of the wisdom of Alexandria when I am gone.

*Hypatia* The Christians respect me as I respect them.

*Theon* Not all of them. You are right concerning the major part, most Christians are ordinary decent people who don't wish any harm to anyone, but the high priests are bringing up a militia of their own who are all potential fanatics who could take to violence and would not flinch to do so in the name of Christianity. They do not respect you but fear you instead and regard you with hatred, because you stand in their way and keep the library out of reach to Christian censure.

*Hypatia* It is my obligation to go on doing so.

*Theon* I brought you up for that purpose. But now you suggest, that there are Christians even among your students. Therefore I am glad that you no longer keep your classes at home in the garden, which is too secluded an environment. I know what rumours the Christians are spreading about your garden symposiums.

*Hypatia* Are the Christians so stupid as to put trust in the spread of rumours?

*Theon* Yes, Hypatia, that's how stupid they are, at least the worst of them, who are those who spread the rumours.

*Hypatia (looks down)* What have you heard?

*Theon* Do you really want to know?

*Hypatia* That's why I ask.

*Theon* All rumours are only base stupidities. The source of these rumours is your youth and innocence, your beauty and manifest integrity. As the virgin you are you appear traditionally as custom demands with your hair uncut at a constantly growing length, which only marks your obvious innocence as a virgin, which makes you even more susceptible to the favouring of bad rumours. You make men desire you, Hypatia, and that's the danger threatening you more than any other one. Those who are honest without other ulterior motives, like Orestes, who even has proposed to you, confess to their love and are not ashamed to expose it in public in all its fresh beauty and honesty, but the Christians suffer from limitations and imagine it to be a virtue to suppress their urges and feelings, which only makes them worse. The one who feels desire and does not show it is always many times more dangerous than any wild lover who confesses his love.

*Hypatia* So you will not tell me what rumours they are spreading about me?

*Theon* The worst of them believe you are a witch who casts a spell on men.

*Hypatia (smiles)* Like Medea and Circe?

*Theon* I understand that you are smiling. They were both irresistible for their beauty, wherefore myth turned them into witches and exaggerated their influence on men. Medea was more historically real, and she did not transform men into animals. Instead she became a victim of her fidelity to Jason.

*Hypatia* Do you think I could meet with a similar fate by, as the Christians say, my magic influence on men?

*Theon* I would rather not speculate on that.

*Hypatia* Father, I have no objection against becoming a victim if destiny demands it, and in that case I will be so like Medea out of fidelity to my vocation, which is the management and furthering of learning and wisdom. I need nothing else. Orestes

offered me the whole world in public last week at the theatre when he proposed to me in view of the whole city, whereupon I answered him by giving him my handkerchief soaked in my menstrual blood, just to demonstrate to him how unattractive sexual love is with everything that goes with it. I welcome romance, for it is spiritual in its essence, but sex is to me just an abomination of only deterring ingredients which only bring misery along.

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

*Hypatia* Yes, if that's how it works it should be all right, but I am too free to ever allow myself to be enslaved in my flesh. Knowledge is free, the intellect gives me wings to fly with, while bondage in a marriage could only deprive me of those wings. Is it then so strange that I choose the right thing?

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

*Hypatia* That's what makes it possible for me to exist and make a difference.

*Theon* Yes, and all you have to do is to carry on with it, and the only threat against you is the Christians

*Hypatia* I don't regard them as a threat.

*Theon* I do. In the future you might one day have to face the ultimatum that your only way to be able to carry on your activity would be to convert and become a Christian.

*Hypatia* That would be selling my soul.

*Theon* I just suggest the possibility.

*Hypatia* That would be the last thing for me to do.

*Theon* You would rather die?

*Hypatia* Yes, actually.

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

*Hypatia* Perhaps you can, if you survive death.

*Theon* That's what we know nothing about.

*Hypatia* (*lets go of his embrace*) In brief, father, we still have very much research to do, and I will never let go of that work.

*Theon* Just remember, child, that you could calmly trust those lovers who confess their love, while the only ones who could become dangerous to you are those who repress it unto covert sickliness which easily could turn into prejudice and hatred.

*Hypatia* I will beware of all Christian hypocrites with masks without smiles. Demetrios is not one of them, though, and neither anyone of my other Christian students.

*Theon* I also believe so. Therefore you could calmly go on educating them even in love.

*Hypatia* As long as I stay on the platform of objectivity.

*Theon* Don't you ever indulge in digressions?

*Hypatia* Only in heaven and space, only among the heavenly bodies and the universe. For me and such digressions, father, not the entire universe will ever be enough.

*Theon* That's good, my daughter. Shall we start for our dinner?

(*leads her out, like a good father his only and beloved daughter.*)

## Act II scene 1.

*Theophilus* Aren't our friends coming soon?



*Cyril* They should be here any moment.

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

*Cyril* Patience is a virtue, uncle.

*Theophilus* Don't you think I know that, petty master? Who are you to moralise to me? We may be full of all Christian virtues which does not prevent me from getting impatient and angry when I feel like it!

*Cyril* Isn't anger one of the seven deadly sins?

*Theophilus* Yes, if you are constantly angry, but you don't have to be that. To get really angry now and then is only healthy, especially if you give vent to your ire.

*Cyril* Here they come.

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

*Synesius (enters with Demetrios)* Is there hope for an imperial decree at last to settle the matter?

*Theophilus* What do you think we have been doing throughout the siege? Sitting rolling our thumbs? No, of course we have constantly assailed the emperor with petitions and complaints and peppered the Christian court with our reasonable arguments to have the disease extirpated once and for all.

*Synesius* Even if we get the temple pulled down the heathens will still remain.

*Theophilus* But the source of the rot will be removed, and that will be an important victory for all time 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, full of abominable idol monsters which must not be worshipped any more. We must show the world once and for all that the old gods are dead and never existed!

*Demetrios* By destroying harmless statues and works of art and desecrate a temple as sacred as any of our churches for a much longer period than the existence of Christianity?

*Synesius* He is arguing just for the sake of arguing, as he has been taught at school. He is still active as a student with Hypatia.

*Theophilus* And that is why you are so invaluable to us, for by you we can keep control of what is happening within the school and the library with all the old heathens' intrigues and conspiracies to reestablish their paganism and have us Christians removed, but we are here to stay, while their time is over.

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

*Theophilus* Any time. He can't back down from his own Christianity, and he is the most powerful man in the world and perhaps the last emperor of the entire Roman empire. It can't stick together any longer. It must be in his own interest to grant Christianity religious monopoly over the entire world, since it is the only true religion.

*Demetrios* Still it is rather meaningless and brutal to use force just for the sake of destruction to liquidate old harmless works of art. Innocent blood has been shed in this conflict, and no one is interested in having more of that sort.

*Theophilus* The heathens are themselves to blame. They provoked us.

*Demetrios* No, we provoked them.

*Theophilus* But they attacked us, and we responded with a vengeance, and consequently we now have Serapion under siege with all the old heathen librarians locked up in it. It is only decrepit old men who still care to defend the old classical world.

*Synesius* Don't forget Hypatia.

*Theophilus* And Hypatia is a woman, an insolent woman who refuses to bow down to the Christian rules and dress properly with her hair covered without jewels and offensive trappings.

*Demetrios* Hypatia never carried a jewel.

*Theophilus* But she walks around with her hair let loose and with her arms bare! She challenges every man in town! She is outrageous! She must be taught a lesson! I hope she will burn with the Serapion when we burn it down.

*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 greatest and best organised of all libraries. We have preserved 700,000 preserved for the benefit of the world.

*Theophilus* That was a long time ago. Already Julius Caesar burned down the library.

*Synesius* It was unintentional. It was a fire from the ships that spread to the library on shore. And most of it could be saved. It is the most stupid thing you could do, for thereby you make yourself an enemy to the Word. What would you say if the Jews or the tutors of the library got the idea to burn all Bibles?

*Theophilus* But the Bible is the only indispensable book. Therefore all other books are really redundant. There is everything in the Bible. In the writings of the Greek authors there is only irregularities and improprieties, the Athenian tragedians only wrote indecencies, which are harmful to morals, the philosophers just rambled and chatted, and the poems only induce you to sins, since most of them are shameless love poems.

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

*Theophilus* Very well, we will not burn it down. We will only cleanse it. We will liberate it from all the heathen idols and close it up for any service until we have turned it into a church. And we can't have any books left in a church, so we will just have to get rid of them, even if we don't have to burn them.

*A messenger* Your holiness, a decree from the emperor. (*presents a scroll*)

*Theophilus* At last! I feel this to be what we all have been waiting for! (*takes eagerly care of the document, opens it and reads*) Triumph! The emperor orders the library to be opened to the Christians! He orders the heathens to leave it! We have won! The siege is over!

*Demetrios* Give at least Hypatia and her father and the other servants of the library a possibility to save what's most important from there. Then no one will be able to stop the mob from plundering the rest anyway.

*Synesius* That's reasonable, my archbishop.

*Theophilus* Who could withhold God's jealousy? Who could stop Christianity from triumphing all over the world? Who could resist the Christian mission? They may save what they want as well as they can, but we can't allow them any respite. Warn her as much as you will, Demetrios, but nothing can stop God's soldiers from making a clean sweep of old sins. The temple shall be purged with fire and sulphur if necessary, so it can be turned into the finest church of Alexandria!

*Synesius* Hurry, Demetrios, to warn her. (*Demetrios hurries out.*)

*Theophilus* To whom is he more loyal? To us or to that lewd woman?

*Synesius* My good archbishop, all people with any education at all have had Hypatia as their teacher. All Alexandria respects, loves and venerates her except you. She has knowledge like no one else, and all knowledge is sacred. No one has any right to touch a hair on her head, for she never did anything wrong.

*Theophilus* You also appear to be possessed by her.

*Synesius* Archbishop, isn't it the first and greatest command of Christianity that you should love your neighbour? Why is Hypatia excluded from the Christian charity, because she is the wisest and most endowed of all souls in Alexandria?

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

*Synesius* She is no enemy of Christianity. She is neutral.

*Theophilus* No, as long as she is pagan she is an enemy. Didn't Christ himself say that who isn't with us is against us? She must become one of us. Or else she will sooner or later be lost and has to be sacrificed like everything else outdated for the future.

*Synesius* You have got the key to the Serapion library, and the emperor has given you free hands to desanctify it as a pagan sanctuary. You may plunder and desecrate it as much as you wish, but let that be enough. Leave the people who have served there for generations since six hundred years in peace. They have done no evil, and it is quite enough for them to see the destruction of their life's work.

*Theophilus* One could almost believe that you defend the heathens.,

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

*Theophilus* Get back to your desert church at Cyrene, Synesius. There is nothing for you to do here. You are as enchanted by her as everyone else who had anything to do with her.

*Synesius* All important people of Alexandria have had her for a teacher. Only barbarians have missed her positive influence, and they cannot even read. Is that the only kind of people you want to keep in the city?

*Theophilus* Nothing can save the Serapion any more, Synesius, not even you, not even Orestes, even if he would become prefect of the city. We will extirpate paganism from the city, and just Serapion is not enough, for it is found everywhere.

*Synesius* Don't expect any other support from me but the purely spiritual one, which is part of our religion. If one day Hypatia would need defense against violence, then I would willingly stand for it myself even against the most powerful bishops of Alexandria. (*leaves*)

*Theophilus* He is lost. He is completely bewitched by her.

*Cyril* We have the Serapion, uncle. Let us start with extirpating paganism from there. All the rest will follow.

(*Theophilus takes his nephew by his shoulders, and they leave together.*)

## Scene 2. A desecrated temple.

*Broken statues and book scrolls torn asunder.*

*Hypatia (enters alone)* Everything is broken, the barbarians have been allowed to triumph, by force they have tried to strike out history, and by violence they have tried to replace the old culture with the narrowmindedness of fanaticism and the self-destructive vanity of superciliousness, and have they succeeded? They believe they have succeeded since they triumph. But who can trust the continuity of anyone's success in this world? Who could believe that anything in history could be annihilated and repressed? The ghosts are always there continuously revisiting the future, as they are the ones to reappear when new civilizations perish. Would Homer and Plato be dead? Never. Christianity may have overcome what they call paganism, but this triumph is just the self-coronation of Christianity as just another one of the vain dominating historical spectacle of fools. The bishops are already fighting among each other, tearing off each other's tiaras from their heads, quarrelling about splitting hairs and letters in what they call the holy writ, while they use their croziers for clubs imagining to represent God's own infallibility by their ridiculous offices. I am sorry, but I can't take you seriously, o new Christian world order, especially not when you

try everything to crush the thousand-year old world order and cultural world which in spite of all consistently was constructive until you came and destroyed it.

*Orestes (has entered, been standing for a while regarding Hypatia from some distance, before he appears)* Are you walking here alone among the ruins, Hypatia?

*Hypatia* What else would I do? The Christians forbid their own Christians to attend my lessons.

*Orestes* But the students you once had will always remain faithful as your students forever.

*Hypatia* Don't talk about eternity with me, Orestes. I know that you nowadays are a Christian yourself, like everyone else. Nothing sounds more blasphemous and absurd than all Christian talk about eternity, as if it was a personal monopoly of Christianity and more certain as such than even death.

*Orestes* You will last longer than Christianity with your integrity and humanistic example.

*Hypatia* Not if Christianity is allowed to decide, for it wants nothing more than to liquidate even me, as it has liquidated everything that I used to represent and live for. We all belong to perdition, Orestes, no matter how much and well you Christians may preach about eternity and its kingdom. Yes, you have introduced a new Christian world order, and it shines brightly, blinding the entire world with its folly, its division, its absurdity, its silliness and its arbitrary presumption. Your pretentiousness, Orestes, has let out barbarity loose across the world, and you yourselves are heading it.

*Orestes* I did not take part in the Christian destruction of Serapion, and you know it. I became Christian just to be able to help all those who chose not to be. Only as a Christian I could reach the power and influence making it possible for me to protect you so that you could survive.

*Hypatia* Hypocrisy, then, and opportunism. That's what Christianity is all about. Christianity is what counts, it's the latest religious fashion, so everyone must become Christian, or else they will not have any influence, position or any riches in this world.

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

*Hypatia* Faithful, in what way? Synerius is bishop of Cyrene and one of the leading supporting pillars of Christianity in Africa together with Theophilus and his ambitious nephew Cyril. There is a mighty holy trinity for you, ready to take charge of this whole continent. Then there will be no need any more for your antiquated fidelity to me.

*Orestes* Hypatia, nothing has changed. You succeeded in saving all that was most important out of the Serapion. The library still needs its personnel, its librarians and its teachers, and you are still the first of them.

*Hypatia* My father was the leading figure, but the ruthless destruction of the Serapion in the name of Christianity by the people of Alexandria broke his heart. He is dying after a stroke and lies chronically in bed. Nothing can restore the foremost librarian and cultural administrator in his total resignation concerning the fall of the people of Alexandria to the stupidity and ignorance of Christianity.

*Orestes* Carry on teaching, Hypatia. No one will be able to stop you with me as the prefect. I am yours. I gave my love to you by oath already as a young man, and I never abandoned it. Like you I never intend to marry. Your example gave me a sacred respect for virginity for life, and if you as a woman can maintain it, so can I as a man. I love you, Hypatia, and I never intend to fail you or our ideals, whatever happens.

*Hypatia* That's what you say now, but what will you say when the militant parabolans of the Christians will fill the streets demanding a lynching of everyone who thinks differently? They are like a swarm of locusts capable of anything, and nothing can stop them, for in that mood they will destroy everything in their way, like they destroyed this Serapion, our proudest library building. Do you intend to stand in their

way then, defend me and let them massacre you in the blindness and madness of their senseless mentality of insects?

*Orestes* Yes, I will, if that day ever comes. I would rather follow you, Hypatia, than the world and Christianity.

*Hypatia* You will get very busy if you as a prefect accept the defence of all those who the Christians please to persecute. Will you even be able to protect the Jews, the largest minority of Alexandria, which the Christians already wish to extirpate, although they are the foremost cultural elite of Alexandria, or perhaps for that very reason?

*Orestes* I don't know, Hypatia, but I will try. My first duty as a prefect will be to safeguard justice and the law.

*Hypatia* You are not the prefect yet. Wait until you are.

*Orestes* For the sake of you and all those who will not take part in the mob, I will become so, to be able to protect you, and therefore I am a Christian, which gives me immunity and makes me unassailable even for the hysteria of the Christian parabolans.

*Hypatia* I wish I could believe you.

*Orestes* It's our only chance, Hypatia. Or else we are lost and all our culture with all our knowledge and science, which are the ideals of our life and its only meaning.

*Hypatia* At least you know what you are talking about. No other Christian does, if it's not to impose their ambitions.

*Orestes* Don't bother about them. Leave the Christians in peace, mind your teaching profession, and they will leave you in peace, so that you can go on spreading your education and science. You have your research to live for. All Christianity is worthless against it.

*Hypatia* Thanks, Orestes. You give me strength to go on, even if it will be difficult without my father.

*Orestes* Is he really dying?

*Hypatia* It's just a question of time. He was violently attacked by a Christian. Wasn't it a Christian who abjured everyone to turn the other cheek under an attack? That won't be necessary now when Christianity rules the world in infallibility. Then you may calmly drive everyone over and beat them not just on the cheek but as much as you want without their even being able to defend themselves.

*Orestes* You are bitter.

*Hypatia* Only with Christianity, like everyone is who has seen its true nature how it has cheated all humanity and enslaved it with superstition and brainwash.

*Orestes* There is only one thing I would ask of you.

*Hypatia* Well?

*Orestes* You can be quite frank about the Christians with me, but please don't provoke them by your honesty, for that could never benefit anyone, least of all yourself.

*Hypatia* Instead you recommend the way of your hypocritical opportunism, so that the Christians will make you prefect?

*Orestes* For the protection of others.

*Hypatia* I can never pretend, Orestes. I only have one part to act in life, and that is truth. Everything else is lies which I can never have anything to do with.,

*Orestes* Try then to be careful and precautions. You have everything to gain by that.

*Hypatia* I have nothing to lose, Orestes, since the Christians already have taken our freedom of conscience away from us together with the right of our own faith, since they demand that you have to embrace Christianity as the only religion allowed in the world or die.

*Orestes* Not if I may have a say.

*Hypatia* Good luck, Orestes. You don't have to fight by my side. I can fight alone.  
*Orestes* I will never let you down, Hypatia. (*She leaves.*)

She stands for what she is, and such an example is at least as priceless as the one of Christ himself. But the Christians no longer see the outstanding examples they have in front of their eyes, since they are of the idea that Christ's example places everyone else in the shadow, since he was divine, but was he? Isn't that a myth like all the other myths of the Greek gods? To me Hypatia is more divine than any exaggerated cult of Jesus ever could be. (*leaves*)

Scene 3. Home. (*like Act I scene 2*)  
*Hypatia comes home.*

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

*servant* No improvement, madam.

*Hypatia* Any deterioration?

*servant* He is still alive.

*Hypatia* Is he of a sound mind?

*Servant* Perfectly.

*Hypatia* That's all that matters. Then there is hope, and he could get well again.

*servant* He seems to have given up though.

*Hypatia* I don't think so. No one gives up in our family.

*servant* The looting of the temple of Serapion broke him down.

*Hypatia* I know. It broke us all down. But we don't give up for that matter. Can he receive me?

*Servant* He has been waiting for your return.

*Hypatia* And I have been waiting to be by his side again.

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

*Theon* My daughter, I was afraid you would not be in time.

*Hypatia* Don't say that you are already going to leave us.

*Theon* I am afraid it is time. My heart is stripped too deep in its roots to ever become whole again.

*Hypatia* Forget the lousy villains. Forget the violence they used against us. Forget their stupidity and nothingness. We still have our work.

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

*Hypatia* I have never been afraid, father.

*Theon* I know, and that makes me the more afraid for you.

*Hypatia* We still have powerful protectors. All the best and leading people of Alexandria are on our side against the detestable majority, who don't know what they are doing.

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

*Hypatia* What do you mean?

*Theon* We humanists, the defenders of what is good, the managers of common sense, the unhappy few who have to stand for all human clairvoyance in the general constant lack of it, those who are too good and wise to use violence, why we always have to suffer for it and become its prime victims, we the credulous, who are alone in trusting humanity with any good at all.

*Hypatia* Don't despair, father.

*Theon* We who give our lives to our work without salary for the idealism that brought forth Plato and Pythagoras, Homer and the tragedians, Herodotus and Cicero, we who concern ourselves about humanity and its education in spite of their foolishness and indolence, we who are unhappy enough to see what most people

never can 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 still much to do. Don't give up. Don't turn in, if you can avoid it.

*Theon* The only certain thing in life for all of us, no matter how Christian and divine we may imagine ourselves to be, is that we all must die, and that is the only mitigating circumstance of humanity. Thanks to death every man can still reconcile himself with life. By death everything is forgiven, and he pays his extreme penitence by giving up life. Death is for good and evil but perhaps more a blessing than anything else. Even that monster idiot Theophilus on his episcopal throne and his intolerable nephew have to die one day, no matter how much they may imagine that some heaven is expecting them. How childish they are, Hypatia, all those who believe in an after life! What does it matter? It's still only the present that counts. *That* is our trial, life at present is all that matters, everything else is irrelevant however it will turn out. Pythagoras and many others believed the soul could be reborn if it desired and that it constantly migrated from one existence to another, but even if that would be true it would be a vain argument, since nothing can be proved, nothing is certain, except the life and death of the present. Alas, Hypatia, the greatest danger and presumption for humanity lies in all speculation about eternity and what she calls God. What does it matter if there is a God or not? That is entirely our own responsibility, and we are only responsible to ourselves, not to God. Let him exist, whether he does or not, but it has no bearing on our lives and our life's trial. You are only happy if you may depart from life with a clear conscience, so that you have done more right than wrong, and that is all that matters. We tried to make the best of it, Hypatia, we resisted the Christian barbarity with its damaging brainwash and mental unidirection with superstition as a monstrous aberration, but we ended up terribly lonesome, since Christianity succeeded in bringing the masses into its mental slavery. When I pass away, Hypatia, you will be all alone, and that's the only thing I fear about my death. That's the only thing that makes me unwilling to part from life.

*Hypatia* Don't be afraid, father. As I said, we have powerful protectors, and all the just are on our side, first of all the bishop of Cyrene, my pious student 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 powerless and coward as even the high priests at the blind assault of the Christian locust storm.

*Hypatia* Can you see into the future?

*Theon* Yes, and I don't like what I see. Therefore I prefer not seeing it. We are the last ones, Hypatia. After us the Antiquity will die. We are the last ones who still have the common sense and mind of beauty to regard Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides as sacred. I am not ashamed to suggest that they are more sacred than Christ, who never wrote anything himself. They could write and create imperishable characters and instructive tales of destiny of timeless and universal validity. Christ could not. Nothing bad about him, he made himself into a powerful tale of destiny and timeless story of inexhaustible importance, but he could not write, only talk and preach. Nothing bad about that either, but the poets could establish their words and make them readable forever. Concerning Jesus we don't even know what he really said.

*Hypatia* Our work belongs to eternity, father. We have been custodians of eternity. We have done our duty, and best of all: we have no part in the Christian abuse of power, as it now constantly increases. When Christianity became a church of the state it was doomed to be corrupted by power, and all that the leading Christian bishops now are doing is to fight each other to each one for himself appear as the most infallible authority. Theophilus and Cyril went to a council at Constantinople only to overthrow

the holy Saint John Chrysostomus, perhaps the finest speaker and writer ever produced by Christianity.

*Theon* Did they succeed?

*Hypatia* Of course. The Christians always succeed in their destructive intentions. They only live for their corruption, which they are blind to how they are consumed by it and makes the whole church rot from the inside.

*Theon* Theophilus has also attacked Origen, the prime father of the church.

*Hypatia* He attacks anyone who dares to represent some sense and tolerance.

*Theon* Alas, how could the world become so damaged? The ultimate historical paradox is that Christianity with the intention to redeem the world by its holiness only succeeded in completely ruining it. Already the Roman emperors made thorough efforts to ruin it by their autocracies, but only the Christians have succeeded in accomplishing the ultimate destruction. Only because of that the entire Roman empire is now in disintegration.

*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 is full of inconsistencies, but it was nice and happy. Plato attacked his weaknesses and tried to introduce a higher level of morals and ethics and actually succeeded beyond all expectations, when Alexander as Aristotle's disciple brought the Hellenic enlightenment to the vast barbaric world in the east, and his successors the Ptolemies here in Egypt and their library of Alexandria with all the knowledge and wisdom that has benefited the whole world from here was the evidence of the Homeric world having been a good world. Why did the Christians then have to destroy it? Was it just envy?

*Hypatia* It was like a kind of perversion maybe as a result of some inferiority complex. They had to make it better at any price, and then they fell down to improper methods like violence and indoctrination, and thus the whole world turned into just arbitrary egoism.

*Theon* Christianity was a failure from the start.

*Hypatia* And only we are aware of it.

*Theon* Alas, my daughter, these concerns overwhelm me. It's they that smother me. I am sorry that I can't hold on any longer, but I simply don't have the strength any more.

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

*Theon* Hypatia, embrace me. Don't leave me. I want to stay with you. If my spiritual life goes on after death you may be certain that I will remain and protect you as far as possible.

*Hypatia* Father, all my life is just gratitude to you.

*Theon* Thank you, my love. 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*)

*Servant* It is over, madam.

*Hypatia* I know, Dolon. We will offer him all the decency he deserves for his funeral, and only his colleagues and friends will be invited, not one single Christian.

*Servant* It will not be received well by the high priests.

*Hypatia* Whatever you do, Dolon, it will be taken ill by the high priests. That's what they are for. Already Christ was ill received by the high priests. Don't worry. Your days are measured. Soon you will be free, when you no longer will be needed at our household.

*Servant* Will you set me free?

*Hypatia* Yes, Dolon, my father would have wished it. He did not want any slaves, but our position and high office demanded it. Now as we gradually are bereft of one



office after the other, we will soon no longer be able to afford any slaves. You will be the first one to be set free.

*servant* I never want to serve anyone else.

*Hypatia* Not even yourself?

*servant* I never did. I wouldn't know how to do it.

*Hypatia* Poor Dolon. But you still had some education in our house.

*servant* That's my only asset, I will always carry it with me and be grateful for it forever.

*Hypatia* That will be your licence. With that in your luggage you might accomplish anything out in the world.

*Servant* I am afraid I would just end up in some other service as a slave instead.

*Hypatia* With whom?

*servant* Pardon me, madam, but I am a Christian.

*Hypatia* Of course. You are a slave. All slaves are Christians, for the Christians promised them free citizenship if they would rebel against their masters. By Christianity, Spartacus will prevail at last, and he will have his will: the destruction of the Roman empire.

*servant* Pardon me, madam.

*Hypatia* There is nothing to pardon. It is your destiny. Not even I can help you with that, as I have to bear with my own destiny. Go now, Dolon, and let me grieve for my father in peace.

*(Dolon leaves obediently. Hypatia bends her head in sorrow again at her father's side.)*

Father, only you made life endurable. Without you I am afraid it will become much worse than even you with your prophetic eye for the future ever could imagine. I will grieve for you for the rest of my life until we meet and rejoin as colleagues again.

### Act III scene 1.

*Synerius* Pardon me, but I don't quite understand why you condemn the disciples of Origen. Aren't they as much Christians as we are?

*Theophilus* They are heretics, Synerius. Their faith is not pure. They compromise and wish to mix up their Christianity with pagan delusions. We can't compromise. Our faith can only be about God, no idols.

*Synerius* Was Origen wrong then, our foremost father of the Church?

*Theophilus* Let's say that he made some mistakes. He was not without his faults. He had weaknesses. The Christian faith must not demonstrate any weakness. It has to be absolutely consistent. Or else it is lost from the start.

*Synerius* And must then all Origen's disciples and followers be excluded from the Church and be branded as heretics just because Origen considered Platonism not incompatible with Christianity?

*Theophilus* He was a heretic, Synerius. He believed in reincarnation. He thought that Christ could not have died on the cross since he bled afterwards, but the gospels state expressly that he was dead and buried. Or else he could not have risen from the dead. As Saint Paul says, all Christianity rests on the definite foundation, that Jesus was dead when he resurrected from the dead. Or else there is no resurrection and no Christianity.

*Cyril* Still I think we have greater problems with the heathens and the Jews than with the heretic movement of Origen. As Synerius says, Origen and his disciples were still Christians.

*Theophilus* We can't allow the church to be divided by different heresies which each one claims its own version and interpretation of Christianity insisting on its being the only right one. Origen was as little a Christian as Solomon was a righteous Jew, when

he abandoned himself to thousands of wives and their pagan cults and demonolatry, like Origen wished to dilute Christianity with the pagan philosophies. Then we will have no Christianity any more. The Church must be united, and its faith must be uniform. Or else it is not sacred.

*Cyril* Shouldn't we still first take care of the heathens and the Jews?

*Theophilus* Do you have any good recipe of how to get the Jews expelled from Alexandria? If we just get rid of them it will then be easy to finish off the last remains of paganism.

*Cyril* Already Paul turned against the Jews. They were the ones who executed Christ and crucified him. The Jews are nothing but the murderers of Jesus.

*Theophilus* You said something there. Already Constantine the Great was at it when he drove the wedge between Jewry and Christianity by introducing Sunday as the day of rest instead of the Sabbath. We must follow that line. Christianity is now the state religion, but Jewry has no license. So by principle we could get all Jews declared outlawed if they stick to their Jewry, if we only get all humanity properly baptized first.

*Cyril* As you said, uncle, if we just get rid of the Jews and the last pagans baptized by force, it will be easy to get the last remnants of paganism forced to accept Christianity.

*Theophilus* Exactly. If we get rid of the Jews and the last heathens baptized by force, we will then only have left the dangerous Hypatia with her witchcraft left to dispose of.

*A servant* Your holiness, Orestes is here.

*Theophilus* What does he want?

*Cyril* Here is our chance to launch our policy. His influence is constantly increasing.  
(*enter Orestes.*)

*Theophilus* Greetings, Orestes! What gives us the honour?

*Orestes* I just wished to inform you of the present situation. I will be the next prefect of Alexandria, just for your information.

*Theophilus* Is it already a fact?

*Orestes* By the highest order from Rome.

*Theophilus* Isn't Alexandria under the jurisdiction of Constantinople?

*Orestes* Not yet. It's enough for one emperor to issue an order, and the other will keep quiet. Rome has spoken on this issue. Constantinople has therefore remained silent.

*Theophilus* *Roma locuta est, causa finita est.*

*Orestes* That's about it.

*Theophilus* And are you then coming to warn us about your new policy? Will you commit the same mistake as Julian the apostate and imagine you could restore paganism? In that case you are a greater fool than he.

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

*Theophilus* Or else you would not have become prefect.

*Orestes* I did not embrace Christianity to become a prefect, as little as you became a Christian to become archbishop. I was made a prefect as a reward for my contributions, and I was a Christian before that by my own conviction.

*Theophilus* In that case it is your duty to solve the pagan and Jewish problem of Alexandria.

*Orestes* That's the very reason why I am here, to make it clear to you how I intend to deal with the problem.

*Theophilus* It pleases us that you are aware that they present a problem.

*Orestes* The problem is not them but you, who persecute them. I intend to solve the problem by putting an end to all persecutions. It was quite enough how the

Christians were persecuted by the anti-Christian emperors. I will not allow the Christian establishment of Alexandria to become cruel persecutors like them.

*Theophilus* They are the ones who make trouble and not we, which you are very well aware of. It was their attack on us which made our conquest and destruction of the Serapion library necessary.

*Orestes* But you provoked it.

*Theophilus* They were stupid enough to get provoked and fall to the temptation to resort to violence. You use violence only in emergencies to maintain order, and that is what we did, since their attack threatened the order of Alexandria. I think we are on the same side in this.

*Orestes* Yes, if you abstain from further violence and persecutions. The Jews of Alexandria constitute the foundation for its welfare, commerce, shipping and high level of culture and civilization. Don't forget that it was the Jews of Alexandria who first translated the Bible to Greek under the Ptolemies.

*Theophilus* We persecute no one. We only defend ourselves when needed.

*Orestes* You are clever, Theophilus, and your invidious double standards are well known to all Jews and non-Christians. They know what you are and will not be provoked to more violations from you, and as a prefect of this city it is now my duty to protect them, especially now when they are a minority.

*Theophilus* So you have come to warn us?

*Orestes* Exactly. Not one hair must be touched on the heads of any Jew or non-Christian.

*Theophilus* You are enchanted by the dangerous witch Hypatia. You are in her bondage as her slave.

*Orestes* She is the wisest and most learned woman of Alexandria. If there is anyone who the maintaining order has to protect it is her and her activity for the higher education of Alexandria.

*Theophilus* She is a heathen and heretic, and all aberrations and heresies in this city can be derived from her.

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

*Synerius* No one has any right to judge anyone without a legal trial for anything but regular crimes. Judge ye not, and you shall not be judged, as Christ said himself.

*Orestes* I have had my say, gentlemen, and I have warned you, and the bishop of Cyrene has confirmed my warning. I simply ask you to leave the Jews and the non-Christians in peace, as I will warrant that they will always leave you in peace.

*Theophilus* They wouldn't dare anything else.

*Cyril* Even you are possessed by Hypatia, Synerius, as her disciple.

*Synerius* Not possessed, only enlightened, and I regret that you two have missed that enlightenment, which above all stresses the importance of tolerance, which also Origen did.

*Theophilus* Get lost, Synerius. Go home to your Cyrene and its deserts.

*Orestes* Your attitude is noted, gentlemen, and we will keep you under observation.

*Theophilus* No one can do anything about the triumph of the victorious church over all heathens and non-believers. We are irresistible and will reach religious monopoly and unrestricted power over all the world.

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

*Synerius* The prefect is backed by all the government of the city. You have to obey him, and his policy of tolerance is the only sensible one.

*Theophilus* He may have the actual power, but we have all the Christian community behind us, and we lead the masses.

*Synerius* So you want trouble and will make it.

*Theophilus* Who said so? Keep 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. Orestes will be more difficult. As a prefect he will compromise as little with civil justice as we as we can compromise with our faith.

*Theophilus* Inevitable conflict, in other words?

*Cyril* Sooner or later.

*Theophilus* Let's start with the Jews. If we only get them out of the way, the rest will be easy. As long as you proceed one step at a time you walk safe and can only get ahead. Time is working for us, and nothing can stop our parabolans.

*Cyril* Let's not take any risks.

*Theophilus* Exactly. My good nephew. We have the masses in our hands, and let's lead them forward with caution, so that our invincibility will remain total.

## Scene 2. The palace of the prefect.

*servant* With whom do we have the honour?

*Raphael* I have come for the sake of Hypatia. I am Raphael Ben Esdras from the Jewish community.

*servant* What might then be your business?

*Orestes (enters)* It's all right, Pylon. I will take care of him. I presume, my good Raphael, that you come here more for the reason that the Jewish community is threatened by the Christians than for the sake of Hypatia, who has nothing to do with your Jewish community.

*Raphael* That is true, my good master and prefect, and we have had extensive discussions about what can be done about it. As a consequence, my community has sent me here to you with a proposition.

*Orestes* I am all ears.

*Raphael* The Roman empire is disintegrating, and if there would be extensive troubles here, which is most likely, since the Christians are eager to remove all non-Christian elements, first of all Jews and Greeks of the old school, or have them forcibly baptized, the Roman authorities would hardly be able to offer any protection for those persecuted or be able to come to any assistance, especially as the imperial throne nowadays is and is likely to remain Christian.

*Orestes* I still haven't heard any proposition.

*Raphael* The whole city knows how much you love Hypatia, a love that you never relinquished, no matter how often Hypatia turned you down both publicly and privately. We would ask you once more to try to persuade Hypatia to enter an alliance with you. As a legally united couple the whole city would look up to you, and the Christians would lose their initiative. Against love they would stand powerless. Together with Hypatia you would be able to extend your power and influence across all Africa, and the Roman emperor, the weak Honorius, would perhaps even feel relieved of the responsibility for the Africa torn asunder by Christian sects, where they would only cause chaos and civil strife along the entire coast...

*Orestes* Do I understand you correctly? So you want me to persuade Hypatia to marry me, so that we as a couple could manage an indestructible order according to old traditions, which all Africa could accept and acknowledge as perhaps a kingdom of its own, since the Roman empire already has split into two parts...

*Raphael* Yes, you have got me right.

*Orestes* There is only one hitch. Hypatia would never agree to marriage. She demands her total freedom.

*Raphael* But if all the life of Alexandria, all remaining heathens and the entire Jewish community would be at stake, don't you think then that argument could persuade her to agree to that self-sacrifice? Let her state any conditions. We believe a legal union between the two of you could save Alexandria.

*Orestes* And you might be right. No one could accuse you of having thought wrong, but the risks are obvious. It would be a tremendous venture. The greatest risk would be if the Christians started to regard me as much an enemy to them as Hypatia, for having been persuaded into marrying her.

*Raphael* No one fears the masses as much as the Christian high priests do, just because they now hold the masses in their hands. But a noble and beautiful couple of beauty and stability, where both would be the most popular persons in the city, not even the Christian high priests would dare to attack. You could carry through what Julian failed in, because he was alone and unmarried. You are two persons and have the entire Hellenic culture to manage the responsibility of. What we beg of you is to accept that responsibility, save Alexandria, its reputation, importance and culture, so that we Jews could remain here and continue working for the benefit of the finest and greatest city of the east.

*Orestes* Your suggestion is undoubtedly constructive and interesting. Naturally only Hypatia herself could make the final decision about it. I will visit her and propose it to her.

*Raphael* If she does not accept, I fear it would mean the end both for the Jews and the remaining representatives of culture in Alexandria.

*Orestes* You might be right, and that risk is greater than that your plan could backfire. It's a wild venture but perhaps the only one that could save Alexandria. Thank you, Raphael Ben Esdras, for coming here and daring to present your bold idea. Tell your Jewish community, that whatever the Christians will do, you will always have the respect of myself and of all representatives of culture.

*Raphael* Thank you, master Orestes. Then I have done my duty and can only 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 and could be God's own offered solution to the problem, and honestly speaking I can see no other possible solution.

### Scene 3. Hypatia's home.

*Dolon* There is a man from the Jewish community looking for you.

*Hypatia* What could he want from me? I have as little to do with them as with the Christians.

*Dolon* He insists. He says it's a matter of life and death.

*Hypatia* That sounds slightly hysterical. Show him in.

*(Dolon fetches Raphael.)*

My friend, it is extremely rare that I am visited by the Jewish community. You usually keep to yourselves in your self-complacent isolation. You know you are God's own chosen people, why you don't feel a necessity to be in touch with anything else.

*Raphael* My lady, you jeer at our god-fearing piety, but I actually come to you with a prayer that only you could answer.

*Hypatia* If not even your God could answer it, how then would I be able to?

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

*Hypatia* Are you suggesting that we are more threatened than usual?

*Raphael* Unfortunately that is exactly how it is. The Christians intend to expel all of us Jews from Alexandria to then undisturbedly be able to extirpate all the so called paganism still remaining, primarily your schools and the library with its management and employees.

*Hypatia* Where have you heard this? Does Theophilus and Cyril really nourish such radical plans?

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

*Hypatia* And how do you mean that I could neutralize this threat?

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

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

*Raphael* But this time the arguments are not just about him and you but even more about Alexandria and its future, if their Jews and learning traditions would be able to survive at all.

*Hypatia (more serious)* You mean, that if I marry Orestes the two of us could together manage such an influence that the Christian threat would lose its point?

*Raphael* Exactly. We find no other possibility to thwart it. We beg you to consider the welfare of Alexandria, its future and its ethnic richness ahead of your own preferences.

*Hypatia (finds no answer while she digests Raphael's proposition)*

*Dolon (enters)* My lady, the imperial prefect is here.

*Hypatia* He is expected. Show him in.

*(Dolon fetches Orestes.)*

Have you agreed on this strategy together, or is it just a Jewish effort at a solution of a problem?

*Raphael* My lady, we Jews have worked out the idea, but I would never have dared to propose it to you without having the prefect included in the confidence.

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

*Raphael* Pardon me for anticipating you, but I wanted to do my best to prepare Hypatia even before you would enter.

*Orestes* So Hypatia is already familiar with the entire idea?

*Hypatia* Raphael has asked me to accept you in marriage so that we with our united forces could save the future of Alexandria and hold back the Christian aggression.

*Orestes* Hypatia, you know that you are my only love for life. Make any conditions you wish. I know that you prefer a life without sex, and if you accept me as your husband, I will guard your virginity with the same fervour as a real husband would do the opposite. But we are no ordinary people. We are chosen by destiny to settle this together for the most important city in the world, which today after the fall of Rome is the cultural leader and fortress of the world. It is our responsibility to do what we can for our beloved city, which destiny has entrusted in our hands. Let us take it on. Accept me as your man and protector, and the Christians will no more dare any violations against the human rights of all free citizens of Alexandria.

*Raphael* We beg our queen Hypatia in deepest humility and sincerest pleading to carefully consider the proposition.

*Hypatia* If I would only think of myself and my duties, my school and my education, my soul and my own blessedness, the answer would be no without hesitation, but you involve all Alexandria and its future in the issue and makes it an issue of universal importance. If I then would include the future and welfare of Alexandria in the matter the answer could only be positive.

*Alexios (enters unannounced)* Pardon me, madam, but I was asked to immediately bring the news that new troubles have broken out in the old city.

*Hypatia* What has happened?

*Alexios* The Christians are looting all the shops of the Jews and ordering them to leave the city.

*Hypatia (to the perturbed Orestes and Raphael)* Gentlemen, unfortunately the Christians seem to have anticipated us.

*Alexios* I was sent here for the very reason that the prefect and Raphael Ben Esdras also should have the news the quickest way possible.

*Orestes* Are the Christians using violence? Has anyone been murdered?

*Alexios* No, they act under strictest discipline. The parabolans have the strictest order that no Jew must be harmed, just driven out of the city with all their property expropriated.

*Raphael* It is the foulest violence and outrageous robbery.

*Hypatia* What can you do, Orestes?

*Orestes* The question is how far it has gone and how overbearing the Christian power is. How many are the militant parabolans, who have enforced this?

*Alexios* Bishop Cyril has tonight assembled thirty thousand parabolans for this operation, according to a report.

*Orestes* That's too many.

*Raphael* I must immediately hurry home to my own. I am sorry, my lady, that we acted too late. (*hurries out*)

*Hypatia* What do you think, Orestes? Did they know about the plans hatched by Raphael and his friends to anticipate them?

*Orestes* They can't have known anything about it. The planning has been extremely secret - only Raphael and his closest men have known about it except I. But the Christians have long been planning to strike against the Jews.

*Alexios* They have no choice. Everything is being taken away from them. The only way for them to save anything is to bring it along with them when they leave town.

*Hypatia* Doesn't Christianity claim to be the religion of love? What then do they have against the Jews, since they obviously hate them so intensely, that they won't even grant them any human rights as citizens? Aren't they human like themselves and all the rest of us? They have already suffered enough during their long and difficult history. Are they then to be punished even further for having been with us so long?

*Orestes* The Christians will hardly be able to answer your question.

*Hypatia* The Christians have consistently from the beginning allied themselves with barbarity, as soon as they got the power to act by their own initiative when the emperor Constantine made them an official state religion. Since then they have grown into a worse tyranny than the Roman emperors. These perished by their hubris and their follies, but the Christians only cultivate them and establish them with the hysterical and thoughtless applause of the masses. They are the first religion in the world to raise hubris to a dogma of infallibility which completely effaces every possibility of self-criticism and detachment. There is no katharsis, no suffering, no self-examination in Christianity, only ruthless lust for power.

*Orestes* Hypatia, we stay on. We don't surrender. We don't accept their barbarity and violence.

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

*Orestes* The stronger I will still stay by your side, Hypatia, more now in the hour of trial than ever. Not all Christian masses in the world have any authority to set up against the imperial prefect. I accept that the argument for our marriage has fallen, but the more sincerely I will worship you for what you are and stand guard for your inviolability as a virgin, as long as I live.

*Hypatia* The Christians worship virginity in itself. Why then can they not respect me?

*Orestes* Prejudice and envy, nothing else. They view your position as an obstacle in the way for their monopoly of power.

*Hypatia* What made them so avaricious? Wasn't Jesus and his disciples poor and honest men?

*Orestes* Unfortunately, Hypatia, that was long ago. The Christian bishops and leaders of today are intoxicated by the power to be able to lead a world church of a state religion of the world's greatest empire.

*Hypatia* And in that intoxication they take for granted that they are saints and have eternal life, the reckless vanity of which they prove by canonising themselves.

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

*Hypatia* Yes, we must. Is it then asking too much of them to also tolerate us?

*Alexios* The expulsion of the Jews is just the beginning of their intolerance. If they have taken such a first step the next one must be worse, and on the road to perdition you don't stop until you have reached the bottom.

*Hypatia* Unfortunately you are right, Alexios. They have already plundered and ruined the Serapion library, they managed to get their most brilliant church father John Chrysostomus banned and exiled, they have got the writings of Origen declared heretic and all who read him as heretics, and now they instigate a universal persecution of the Jews, who helped in turning Alexandria into what it is. When and where will they stop? When they have reduced Alexandria to an irreparable waste?

*Orestes* They can go at any length, but not as long as we stand in the way. We can still stop them.

*Hypatia* By all means except their own. We can only meet their violence and intolerance with love and tolerance, we can only meet their barbarity with education and learning, and their impulsive stupidity and reckless fanaticism with the cool common sense of reasonable self control.

*Orestes* We can save the world that way.

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

*Orestes* My imperial bodyguard will always be at your disposal.

*Hypatia* I won't need it. I always managed by myself.

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

*Hypatia* The same to you, Orestes. Keep your imperial bodyguard. You will need it better than I. Now go back to your palace. I must mind my students.

*Orestes* Call me any time. We will stay in touch on a daily basis.

*Hypatia* Whenever needed. Thanks, Orestes. We'll manage.  
(*Orestes bows deep and respectfully, gathers his cloak and leaves.*)

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

*Alexios* They will insist on exterminating all pagan statues and pictures.

*Hypatia* Masterworks of Praxiteles and Lysippus, noble statues of Apollo and Aphrodite, just because they are naked and idealize idols? Are the Christians then blind to the fact that our so called pagan statues only depict idealised people?

*Alexios* No, they can't.

*Hypatia* Could you be my spy with the Christians, Alexios, and report to me what they think and plan?

*Alexios* I will then have to declare myself a Christian.

*Hypatia* Is that against your nature?

*Alexios* In the highest sense, but I would gladly do it for truth's sake.

*Hypatia* I only fear Cyril, for he is the future of the Christians, and has dangerous ambitions. His old uncle Theophilus, who ruined the Serapion library and its temple



is at the end of his tether and has played out his role, but Cyril will be archbishop after him. Then anything could happen.

*Alexios* We will be prepared.

*Hypatia* I hope so, Alexios. Come now and join my class. I like your critical questions.

*Alexios* I only try to help you on in the general research.

*Hypatia* That's the very thing I am grateful for.

*(They leave together.)*

#### Act IV scene 1.

*Theophilus (on his deathbed)* My tale is soon all told. You must do something about the remaining problem of that lousy paganism.

*Cyril* It is hopeless, uncle. They are obstinate like sins, and they refuse to come out of their schools, their ghettos of learning, their dry traditions and their false gods of delusions.

*Theophilus* Yet we have crushed them and broken all their lousy gods, which are so absurd in their want of life and power, they cannot see, they cannot speak or react, they are sensual and sinful idols made beautiful to lead men astray by seduction and lies. All such seductive idols must be broken and smashed to pieces. All paintings and frescoes of gods must be deleted and hacked to cinders, so that people never will know that they ever existed, for they must be brought up in the only proper faith, that God is everything and that he never can be depicted. To make images of the divine being is blasphemy and desecration. You must redeem humanity, nephew. That will be your life's mission as the archbishop of Alexandria when I am gone.

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

*Theophilus* No, that's not enough. You must not just try and demonstrate your good will, no, you must be consistent and implement the total cleansing of all the pagan past. Nothing must be spared. Or else you will never prevail.

*Cyril* Alexandria has grown considerably poorer after the banishment of the Jews.

*Theophilus* What does it matter? It's only our blessedness and holiness that counts. We can purge the whole world and bring it into our one single church with the only God of the universe, and everyone resisting the necessity of the operation are God's enemies and have to be liquidated and eliminated. Or else we will never prevail.

*Cyril* Uncle, you are dying. You have to rest. Just take it easy, don't work yourself up, and you might still have some time left on earth.

*Theophilus* No, I am finished with worldly affairs. Now I am ready for the heavenly reward, all that I lived for all my life, and if I just get established and canonized as a holy saint forever, I will be content. The worldly life doesn't matter.

*Cyril* Still you managed to make the church of Alexandria into the richest and mightiest in all Christianity.

*Theophilus* Rome and Antioch and Constantinople with Jerusalem will certainly try to bring us down to their lower status.

*Cyril* We have gained our position as the leading church in the world for keeps.

*Theophilus* That sounds more like it. Rome has been sacked and is powerless, we can forget it, and if we only speak nicely with the other three with condescending grace we will probably be able to maintain that position.

*Cyril* We cannot fail.

*Theophilus* We only have to crush the heathens. That will be your primary task.

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

*Theophilus* Orestes is an opportunist in love with himself. 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 loved and respected person of our city.

*Theophilus* But she is pagan.

*Cyril* But perhaps the most learned one in the world. She could solve the riddles of the universe.

*Theophilus* That won't be necessary. We have the Bible. Everything is there. Everything else is without importance, especially those matters that are not dealt with there.

*Cyril* We cannot touch her. She is inviolable in her untouchable virtue, virginity and honour as the foremost teacher of the city with a world wide reputation.

*Theophilus* So even you are enchanted by that reckless woman?

*Cyril* She is a teacher and as such the highest in the city. She is indispensable as such.

*Theophilus* She is just a woman. No woman is invincible or indispensable.

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

*Theophilus* Force her into Christianity. Then she may live, if she cooperates and proves her submission. If not, she has to be isolated and bereft of all influence and punished, until she gives in. At length the only thing that can save her is for her 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 all arrive there when the whole city ends up entirely Christian.

*Theophilus* That will be entirely on your responsibility.

*Cyril* I will surely execute your will.

*Theophilus* That's the spirit. Then may I die in peace at last.

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

*Theophilus* Do what you will, but christen the city, so that no one gets away!

*Cyril* Yes, dear uncle. Just grant yourself some patience, and you will see the whole world become Christian enough.

*Theophilus* It is your responsibility!

*Cyril* Yes, uncle archbishop, I will assume that responsibility. I swear it by your nimbus as a saint.

*Theophilus* Now let me die. I have nothing more to say. But I trust you will get even with paganism and that witch who defends and represents it.

*Cyril* Uncle, I have sworn by your nimbus as a saint. What more can you ask?

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

*Cyril* No risk. We are established as the official religion in almost the whole world.

*Theophilus* Still I sense a lurid danger. All these free sects must be extirpated.

*Cyril* Of course.

*Theophilus* We have only started, and we still have an endless way to go, if we ever get there... (*dies*)

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

Scene 2.

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

*Hypatia* They never had, my friend. That's no news. What do you want to warn me of? For some mere distraction? For that's all what all religions and philosophies are, just mere abstractions, which only can be taken seriously as such. The moment they are taken seriously they are finished, they lose all credibility and become absurd, and when finally they resort to violence, as the Christians have done ever since they were established as a state religion, there is no justification for their existence any more but become objectionable and ridiculous distractions, which only can end up by their destroying each other in division, envy, corruption and self-destruction.

*Demetrios* I only wished to warn you against evil intrigue, which now when archbishop Theophilus has left the world will assume more nasty and covert forms.

*Hypatia* I know. They wallow in abuse and spreading rumours, since their new ambition now that the Jews have been banished is to liquidate all other free thinkers as well. They wish to adjust everyone to the the catechism of archbishop Cyril, so that no one may have any other thoughts than what the archbishop decides. Thereby Christianity has already made itself completely absurd, untenable and intolerable, at least here in Alexandria.

*Demetrios* Don't joke about it, dear lady. It is no joke.

*Hypatia* I don't laugh at them. But the least to be taken seriously in this world are those who can't take a joke and can't laugh. Only the Christians are like that.

*(enter a beggar who comes up to block the way)*

*beggar* Noble lady, you don't hold yourself too noble to grant an impoverished beggar an alimony?

*Hypatia* My friend, I have nothing to give. My richness is only knowledge, and I have nothing else.

*Beggar* Still you are considered the most prosperous and respectable lady here in the city. Your family has always been more than just noble.

*Hypatia* What do you want? Mock me with flattery or obsequiousness?

*beggar* My lady, we are colleagues. Soon you will be at the same level of ruin as I.

*Hypatia* What do you mean?

*beggar* I mean that the Christians intend to ruin everyone who will not become a Christian.

*Hypatia* I am not afraid of them. I fear though that you might be an agent sent here by them just to ensnare me.

*Beggar* It's not that bad. It is much worse. Don't you recognize me then?

*Hypatia* Have I known you? Are you a student of mine who has hit the wrong path in life?

*beggar* No, I was a teacher like you but not in the same school. I am one of ten thousand exiled Jews from Alexandria.

*Hypatia* Raphael!

*beggar* Well, at last!

*Hypatia* So you are still here! But you are rather lonesome. All your brothers and your people have escaped.

*beggar* We did not escape. We were forced into exile, we, who built the city and founded its greatness, wisdom, glory and beauty with the good Ptolemies. We lived here in peace and enjoyed contributing in making Alexander's city the finest after Rome in the world, until the last Ptolemaic monarch Cleopatra was forced by the Romans to destruction. Then our library was burned for the first time.

*Hypatia* Alas, you don't have to remind me. What do you want? Have you only come to risk your life for a visit?

*Raphael* We never thought the Christians could become so cruel. By their fanaticism, their unholy inhumanity becomes an infallible power of evil which never will stop spreading the darkness of ignorance across the world until they have quashed all science and knowledge and freedom of thought.

*Hypatia* That is why it is important for us to resist them.

*Raphael* Do you know what rumours they are spreading? They have branded you as a witch and enchantress and as a procuress and harlot, who is corrupting the whole city and dragging it down to the level of Sodom and Gomorrah. They have labelled you the whore of Babylon who is so carefully described in the Apocalypse.

*Hypatia* Poor children. They believe then those fancy stories have occurred in reality and confuse them with reality. It is insanity to let fancies and fantasies replace reason and common sense. The whole world is dependent on common sense and of that those who carry the responsibility for the course of the world are objective and realistic. A Christian can never be that. By condemning me they condemn themselves.

*Demetrios* We observe graver dangers to your life and activity than you do yourself, who is too credulously naïve to be able to discern evil correctly.

*Hypatia* I can never accept evil and take it seriously. It is too absurd. My opinion is that it does not exist. If it exists it is just a mental disease which will pass. The nature of evil is an unnatural alien in the rational world and should be turned out as such. Those who don't are not quite right in their heads.

*Raphael* Are all your tales and mythologies then a sounder and more reasonable world of ideas?

*Hypatia* My friend, now you pose a reasonable question. Let me return to what I just said. Everything intellectual is sound and harmless and beneficial to handle. Although you are a Jew you must be familiar with the teachings of Plato about the ideal and idealistic world of ideas? An ideal stands above everything mundane just because it never can be made real, but it is still there and the more evident since everyone strives for it. That's actually the only thing humanity is aiming for: the mirages of ideals, like the promethean mission gave humanity hope and enlightenment about that they and the world could be made better. The hope for it is there even if we never succeed, but just the fact that it is there makes its realization worth working and striving for. And most of all we catch glimpses of these ideals in art, in the beauty of the wonderful creations of our painters and sculptors, sometimes more alive than people themselves, in music in its harmony and uplifting melodies, and in poetry most of all, in the tales and our mythology, swarming with the most incredible and wonderful events, giving us insights in the mechanisms of destiny and how that can make life more remarkable and something higher than humdrum everyday life, and stories that never cease to fascinate, enchant and offer man higher aspects of life. It's the soul I am talking about, which all life and all the world really is all about and which really is what runs and guides them, which the Christians believe they can control, get monopoly of and rule, but which actually is ruling them, while the soul and its mystical universal power in fact is what controls us without our understanding how. That is what the tales, the mythologies and the fables never ever will stop educating us in, although the Christians want to abolish them and burn all books. They will never succeed, as little as folly ever will be able to outshine and vanquish reason and common sense. Let the fools just try. When it is too late and Christianity has gone bankrupt morally and politically, they will realize that they were wrong from the beginning, and then their remorse and gnashing of teeth will be hard forever.

*Raphael* Tell that to the archbishop his holiness Cyril.

*Hypatia* Do you think he could be enlightened? No, not even when he as an old man sits alone on the ruins of his miserable life's work will he realize, that his infallibility fell short from the beginning. No Christian will understand it, while the

church will stick to its infallibility and its enslaving dogmas. They are slaves. We are free standing outside, and will remain standing that way.

*Demetrios* Hypatia, I think your school is waiting for you.

*Hypatia* I think so too. You have kept me over time, my good Raphael Ben Esdras, but it was worth it. I could perhaps give you some education on your way, at best perhaps even some sort of compensation in spiritual form for all the material damage caused you by the Christians.

*Raphael (bows valiantly)* I thank you, my mistress, for the gold of your education, which is more worth than any mundane wealth.

*Hypatia* Then I thank you for your ambush and beg to return the compliment. Welcome back when times get better, when the Christians no longer will disturb and threaten us. *(leaves with Demetrios)*

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

### Scene 3.

*Cyril* This is not acceptable. We can't go on like this. As long as she has the imperial prefect in her hands and power, we cannot achieve complete victory over paganism in Alexandria.

*Demetrios* Archbishop, with respect, but it is out of the question that we in any way should use force or violence on her. She is not only protected by the prefect but by the law, which is written for everyone to follow, even we, no matter how Christian we are.

*Cyril* You mention the law. Yes, that is the right procedure. She shall be brought to our court. We must just have her brought here, but who will do it?

*a parabolon* Can't we send someone there to spy on her, investigate her secretly and in the capacity of a disciple make him bring her here? All we want is to talk with her.

*Cyril* Yes, precisely. We just want to talk with her.

*Linus* I was always curious about her.

*Cyril* You could be the right person. So you would like the mission?

*Linus* Yes.

*Cyril* What do you think?

*parabolon* Linus is a novice and green and uncorrupted by the comfort and temptations of our city. He would surely appeal to her notorious interest in naïve young and handsome men.

*Cyril* We trust you, Linus, like one of us, a brother and a son. Your only mission will be to get her here. It does not matter how you get her here, but we have to once and for all settle with the evil paganism which she still maintains and is a hotbed of in Alexandria which the imperial prefect protects, as the slave he is to her under the spell of her power of witchcraft.

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

*Cyril* Can we rely on that you will not let yourself be seduced by her?

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

*Cyril* Thus speaks a true Christian. Go with God, my son, appeal to her graces, so that she gets some confidence in you and agrees to whatever you may suggest.

*Demetrios* He is too young. He does not know what he is in for.

*Cyril* That is maybe his best advantage, that he is so ignorant and pure. His incorruptibility might inspire her with full confidence while at the same time it gives him immunity against her arts.

*Demetrios* Isn't it better that I go myself, who already know her, to simply convey that you wish to speak here with her?

*Cyril* Brother, you amaze me. Do you really think she would come then? Wouldn't she become suspicious? You know her, and you are yourself under the spell of her influence and charm. She would suspect some trap and refuse to come. No, here we need innocence and naïvity and the credulousness of inexperience. She would never suspect anything about Linus.

*Linus* I am ready for the confidential mission.

*Cyril* Good, my brave boy. We have confidence in you, as she also will have it, so that you cannot fail. Just get her here, and we will finally get her under our control in the end. She only has to compromise and give in and not obstinately remain the only one in Alexandria resisting the hegemony of the new Christian world order.

*Demetrios* I could be Linus' companion and Mentor and introduce him to Hypatia.

*Cyril* Yes, you could, but leave the persuasion to Linus. You would only warn her, or that would be the effect of your getting mixed up in the mission.

*Demetrios* She will have nothing to fear. If our brother Linus can make her come, I will guarantee her security.

*Cyril* Please do. We look forward to soon having the librarian here with you.

*Demetrios* I only wish you could reach an agreement.

*Cyril* My son, that's the only thing we all wish for.

*(Demetrios takes care of Linus, and they leave.)*

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

*parabolan* If we just get her here she will certainly learn to cooperate.

*Cyril* No force. No violence. That's the very last measure. Demetrios is right. We must respect the law and may not cross any limits.

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

*Cyril* That's just what we must come to terms with in the necessary confrontation with Hypatia. No one must have any association with paganism and idols in the world any more, now when we have God's Son as king of the whole world. No one must oppose the new sacred world order.

*parabolan* That's why the woman must be chastised.

*Cyril* No, my friend, only converted and piously corrected, so that she will understand and follow us. She must simply be brought to piously understand what's best for her.

#### Scene 4. Hypatia's garden

*Alexios* I can't believe anything good about them.

*Hypatia* You are too mistrustful, Alexios. If you have to think the worst of all, and your mistrust must comprise everyone, how could then but end up lonesome and miserable? You have to give yourself a chance. Life is dualistic. If you can't believe and trust the other part, neither can you ever believe in yourself.

*Alexios* Here comes that knave with another Christian to follow. *(enter Demetrios with Linus.)*

*Hypatia* Demetrios, who are you bringing to me as a proselyte? Another Christian who you wish to find out if I can convert him to the only proper faith of paganism?

*Demetrios* He only wanted to get to know you, Hypatia. He comes from Cyril, who has given him leave to come here, as a kind of messenger between the two of you.

*Hypatia* What does he want?

*Demetrios* He wants you to present yourself at his court, so that you could discuss your differences.

*Hypatia* Do you think that is all he wants? They tried to make Orestes and all the old believers of the city to accept baptism by force. They didn't leave them any choice,

but Orestes refused and left and was almost attacked on his way. They don't know what they are doing, Demetrios. They are just greedy for power and for the enslavement of all souls who still dare to prefer freedom.

*Linus* No, Hypatia, they just want everyone to embrace the only proper faith.

*Hypatia* And what is then the only proper faith, young man? To slavishly follow autocratic high priests, who demand all rights of spirituality and spiritual authority here in this world, in order to the easier get in control of all earthly power?

*Linus* They just want to reach an agreement with you, my lady.

*Hypatia* What is there to agree about? That I never will be able to embrace their faith, and that they never will accept mine? Under such circumstances anyone can see that the best thing would be for us to leave each other in peace, wouldn't it? I leave you to your faith, but you won't leave me to mine. Is that fair?

*Linus* You don't understand, madam. They only wish you well.

*Hypatia* If they only wished us well, they would leave me in peace, and they wouldn't have looted the temple of Serapion but also left that in peace.

*Linus* They want to discuss the matter of faith with you.

*Hypatia* Which faith? I don't believe in anything except the inviolable freedom of the spirit. All else I demand to know. Therefore I study the stars and the planets and try to understand why they move backwards and why they sometimes are greater and sometimes smaller. There you have considerable greater mysteries than your childish blind faith in resurrection of the flesh and temporary miracles of saints.

*Linus* But you believe in the heathen gods though and worship them.

*Hypatia* Do I? Have you seen me kneeling to them and sacrificing to them, like you sacrifice flesh and blood for your worshipped God's Son, whom you don't understand that just was a human being like everyone else?

*Linus* My lady, you are blaspheming.

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

*Linus* I come from very simple circumstances, but that does not give you any right to insult me.

*Hypatia* And how can you then insult me for sticking to the old religion without you 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 something. No, they are just symbols for what they stand for, Apollo for beauty and creativity, Hermes for communication and its vital importance to man, Aphrodite for love and the inescapable sexual part of life, Zeus for the supreme power of nature by the most terrifying natural forces, Poseidon for the immeasurable greatness and vastness of the sea and the elements, Hades for the unknown afterlife, Demeter for cultivating the earth and agriculture and the necessity of our daily bread, Artemis for hunting and other sports and for the freshness of chastity, Athena for wisdom and knowledge, and so on. They are just symbols and beautiful and inspiring as such. They are no idols, while you have made the crucified one into your idol by worshipping him as a son of God. In the same way you have also started adoring his mother Mary as a divinity and any number of other so called saints. We of the old religion, who rather appraise philosophy, consider such practices as irrational and unwise. The idolatry that you Christians have established as a cult of force by the religious monopoly of the national church is more pagan and superstitious than our respect of nature and all symbolic forms of our cultural life. Your Jesus never resurrected from the dead, since he never died, which is proved by the fact that he was bleeding after being removed from the cross, which even Origen confirms.

*Linus* Origen was a heretic!

*Hypatia* And who decided that? Who gave him any chance of any defence? Was he ever brought to trial, so that he could explain himself? No, not until after his death

he was cowardly branded a heretic when he no longer could defend himself, just because some of his books and ideas were unpleasant to certain church leaders, like your archbishop Cyril. He was too superior with his clairvoyance and tolerance for you intolerant dumbbells to be able to do anything else than discard his wisdom as heretic because you failed to understand It.

*Alexios* Here comes Orestes.

*Orestes* I have heard a rumour that archbishop Cyril wants your presence in Caesarium to answer some questions concerning the faith. Don't go there, Hypatia. They wish you no good.

*Hypatia* I am just trying to explain to our young friend here why I don't intend to satisfy the archbishop's wishes. If Origen had not been branded as a heretic, young man, I would probably have become as Christian as anyone of you. But now you Christians please to condemn your own wisest teachers for daring to present initiatives and ideas of their own, and thereby I must consider your Christianity a doomed and hopeless case. It can't survive. Teachings survive by being discussed and doubted, questioned and critically analysed, so that anomalies and lies could be cleansed, but you wish instead to silence all objections by force and autocratic decrees. I can never accept that as a democrat.

*Orestes* Who are you, young man, who thus has been sent forth to set a trap for Hypatia? What do you want? What task has archbishop Cyril given you?

*Linus* Just to persuade Hypatia to come along with me to Caesarium to answer certain questions.

*Orestes* What is she accused of?

*Linus* Nothing.

*Orestes* What is she then called to answer for?

*Linus (can't answer)*

*Alexios* Go home, Linus. You have nothing to do here, unless you wish to become a student like everyone else here, who are only here to benefit by Hypatia's instruction.

*Linus* Thank you, my friend, but I would rather learn what Hypatia could have to teach me, for the priests at the archbishop only teach me what I already know. I am more interested in what transcends their knowledge.

*Hypatia* That's enough, Linus, you are accepted, but your Christian fellow believers will say that I seduced you like I seduce everyone else. I hope you don't view me as a witch.

*Linus* You are far too good and beautiful to be evil, and you are too open and righteous to be capable of anything evil.

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

*Linus* Nothing.

*Alexios* That's what Hypatia now will lecture us about. You came just at the right moment. *(takes care of him and brings him along to the lecture room)*

*Hypatia* What do you think, Orestes? Is Cyril on the war path?

*Orestes* They just want a reason for messing with us, but we have nothing to fear. We follow the law, and they don't, if they want to convert us by force and baptize those who are not willing. Stick to your office and work, Hypatia, and nothing in the world will be able to do you any harm, as long as I live.

*Hypatia* Dare I show myself in the street and at the market?

*Orestes* You will dare anything, as long as you don't show you are afraid. That's the last thing you may do, for if they notice you are afraid, they will act like animals and attack you directly.

*Hypatia* I have never been afraid, but I have to think of my security for the sake of my students.



*Orestes* As long as you are not afraid, Hypatia, no one can harm you. And whatever Cyril may call you, you have no reason to go to them and satisfy their wishes, for they have no legal mandate for a prosecution. Juridically they are incompetent dilettantes. Such are dangerous only if you comply with them. The only thing to do is to ignore them.

*Hypatia* And if they send some of their own here to spy me out and try to persuade me, like this Linus?

*Orestes* Then it's just for you to convert them from the superstitious error to your cold logical common sense. You know such things as the best teacher in the world.

*Hypatia* I will see what I can do for him.

*Orestes* He will undoubtedly stay here as your student. He already likes you as much as everyone does.

*Hypatia* Good, Orestes. As long as we don't marry, I am satisfied.

*Orestes* We are already married as allies and twin souls. That's enough.

*Hypatia* Even beyond the false eternity of the Christians and absurd deceit of heaven.

*Orestes* They are mortal more than we are.

*Hypatia* I wish I could believe you.

*Orestes* You don't have to believe. Just mind your science. It will reach further than Christianity.

*Hypatia* Thanks, Orestes. I have to go. My students are waiting for me. (*leaves*)

*Orestes (alone)* I only adore her the more for never being able to have her. The Christians and their hysterical fanaticism is like locusts and flies against a swan, who is Hypatia and her righteous sincerity. Take no risks, Hypatia, and I shall always be protecting you. (*leaves*)

#### Act V scene 1.

*Cyril* We must get her here.

*parabolan 1* But how would we get her here without force?

*Demetrios* You can never get her here by force. It will not work. She would neither come here by order, and if you really used force to get her here the conflict would only grow worse.

*Cyril* But such as the situation is, it is unacceptable.

*2* Let's quite simply fetch her here and let her stand trial and thus once and for all make her cooperate.

*Demetrios* Don't you understand? The slightest force against her would only increase her detachment from us.

*Cyril* Her faithful disciple Demetrios suggests a diplomatic solution. In this manner the argument would go on forever. We get nowhere just by talk, Demetrios. We have to reach a settlement. She must cooperate, or we must get rid of her.

*Demetrios* How? By murdering her?

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

*Demetrios* Whatever you do it could only worsen the situation.

*Cyril* Is it better then to do nothing?

*Demetrios* Yes.

*Cyril* That's the worst thing we could do. That would be to let her win. As long as we do nothing her influence will only increase by Orestes, our mighty prefect, constantly backing her up. He has sworn to go to any lengths to protect her against any Christian aggression. That's why we must get her here, to have it out with her and speak some sense into her. That's the only way.

2            Let's simply go and fetch her. We will bring her here under armed escort. She couldn't refuse that.

*Cyril*        No, she must be persuaded. It must be done correctly. No force must be used. We can only reach her by speaking to her. We can only win her by persuasion. Everything else is doomed to fail.

*Demetrios*    I am glad that at least you are wise enough to realize as much.

*Cyril*        Demetrios, choose some good Christian diplomats and brothers for a delegation, by which we could visit her and simply ask her for a conversation, nothing else.

*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 is freer. If she is as noble and liberal and tolerant as they say she is, she will gladly come here for a friendly talk to improve relationships between her and Orestes' party and us. We must reach an agreement. Or else the tensions and conflicts and street troubles will only increase.

*Demetrios*    I will naturally make an effort. Linus may take part in the delegation, but I don't think she will come, and Orestes will definitely advise against it.

*Cyril*        Keep the prefect out of it, and she will come.

*Demetrios*    Do you think so?

*Cyril*        She must.

*(Demetrios leaves.)*

## Scen 2. At home with Hypatia.

*Hypatia*      They insist on my coming to them, so that we together could achieve peace in the city.

*Orestes*      They have no good intentions, Hypatia. They only want you under their control.

*Hypatia*      They will never achieve that, no matter how hard they try.

*Orestes*      Fanaticism can never control itself. They can't take no for an answer. If you come to speaking terms with them and they find that you won't bend to their will, they might in blind wrath go at any length in madness and become worse than animals.

*Hypatia*      Are they not Christian? Isn't Christianity the religion of love and tolerance? If they in any way would resort to violence, they oppose their own religion. Honestly speaking, I don't understand what they want. They think they could bring better order in the city in the name of peace by speaking to me. I am the last one 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 wish to force us all under the law of the Christian religion, while my opinion is that no religion can be made a compelling law, since religion and justice are two very different things. It's an intellectual and objective issue, and if they want to settle it objectively I have nothing against it.

*Orestes*      That's what I fear they are not capable of.

*Hypatia*      The risk is that you worry in vain.

*Orestes*      Hypatia, I always offered you my maximum protection with my life as a guarantee. My bosom has always been open to you, and my house has always longed to welcome you as its mistress. Together we would have nothing to fear of the Christian fanaticism. We could control it and keep it at bay. But alone you can do nothing against it, and without you I would also be powerless against it. Together we could resist it and defend our old honourable traditions with success. The Christians would only dare to bow to our common established respectability.

*Hypatia* Are you offering me marriage again?

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

*Hypatia* You can also not take a no for an answer. I told you no from the beginning, and I have given you perfect reasons from the beginning. I must remain independent as a teacher. Or else I would be partial and a slave to politics. In order to be able to work I must be left in peace without exterior pressure, without binding duties, without responsibility for a house and domestic service and without having to show the world order any consideration. Knowledge demands a higher sovereignty, freedom and independence than anything else. You can never have me as your own, Orestes, and neither can anyone else, least of all the Christians, even if they should threaten me.

*Orestes* Would you then be a martyr?

*Hypatia* Honestly speaking, Orestes, the whole success of Christianity only depends on martyrdom. Without the crucifixion, Christ would be nothing, just another Jewish prophet or teacher or philosopher like so many others, and the constant Christian continued harvest of martyrdoms is what makes it victorious. Martyrdom is a privilege. If I was made a martyr for resisting Christianity in the defense of considerably older and nobler traditions from Homer, Pythagoras and Plato, I would regard it as my life's greatest possible honour. In brief, I would have nothing against it.

*Orestes* You are brave.

*Hypatia* No, Orestes, just objective.

*Dolon* A delegation from the Christians ask for an audience.

*Hypatia* Who are they?

*Dolon* Demetrios, Linus and some parabolans.

*Orestes* Drive them off at once. They have nothing to do here.

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

*Orestes* Beware of offering them any finger.

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

*Demetrios* (*enters with Linus and three parabolans*) Most honoured teacher, archbishop Cyril hereby invites you to some small talk in his church for the cure of all differences that could occur between his Christians and the authorities of the city.

*Hypatia* A conversation between four eyes?

*Demetrios* You are accustomed to speak in public, and more than he would be interested in hearing what you have to say.

*Hypatia* About what?

*Demetrios* About what we can all do in common to achieve peace in the city.

*Hypatia* I am just a teacher. I do nothing to create any disturbance in the city. I only teach such knowledge which is beneficial both practically and for the soul. My activity is focused on being exclusively constructive. All strife and disturbance in the city is caused by the Christians, which you very well know, Demetrios. Why do the Christians then turn to me to create peace, when they only can do it themselves, as they started the quarrels when they exiled all the Jews?

*Demetrios* (*to the others*) There you are. I knew it. She has nothing to offer.

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

*Hypatia* Only I, not the prefect?

2 The prefect won't be needed.

*Hypatia* What do you say to that, Orestes? The Christians suggest that the prefect won't be needed.

1 That is for the talks, for this time.

*Hypatia* But some other time?

1           Certainly.

*Hypatia*     And why then does archbishop Cyril believe that I could help him solve the conflict problems of the city better than the ruling prefect of the city?

2           Because you are to blame for them.

*Hypatia*     Did I exile the Jews? Did I plunder and destroy the Serapion with its invaluable collections of books? Am I the one who did all this in the name of Christianity?

1           We only ask you to talk with him. He is the one who least of all wants any more violence to happen in the city.

*Hypatia*     Still all the outbursts of atrocities in the city have consistently occurred by his authority.

2           Are you accusing him?

*Hypatia*     No, I only state the facts.

*Orestes*     Begone, you miserable parasites! You have nothing to do here! You have only come to stir trouble with Hypatia! Don't you realize, that it is impossible, that she is the least troublesome source in all Alexandria?

*Hypatia*     I am not afraid of them, Orestes. I will give the archbishop a chance to explain himself and what he actually wants with his realm of terror. He can't do me any harm. I am just a lonely woman. If I in any way could contribute to better harmony within the city between its different fractions, it will be my honour to be able to do so. I can't see that anyone could lose anything by it.

*Orestes*     Don't go, Hypatia. They will only force you to dance after their pipes.

*Hypatia*     Do you think that is possible? – Come, Demetrios and Linus. Escort me with your parabolan brothers to your archbishop, so that we together perhaps could reach one step closer to that reconciliation between all of us which we all actually are striving for.

*Demetrios*   I personally guarantee your absolute security, madam.

*Hypatia*     I always trusted my students. Come, let's go.

*Orestes*     I will keep my troops ready at the least sign of unrest.

*Hypatia*     I don't think I could have any better escort than the pious Christians. Dismiss your soldiers, Orestes. They are not needed any more. Perhaps it is as the Christians think: If only I and Cyril reach an agreement, we could reach peace in the city. – Come, my friends. I trust you. (*leaves with Demetrios, Linus and the other Christians.*)

*Orestes*     I don't like this. When the Christians notice that nothing could change her solid good sense and objectivity, they could imagine anything.

### Scene 3. At Church.

*Cyril*       They will never get her here. She isn't that stupid. She is the most obstinate soul in all Alexandria.

*parabolan 3* Don't we believe in miracles then? Couldn't anything happen? What does really stand between her and Christianity? Doesn't she with her philosophy embrace all religions by her tolerance? She really has no religion at all except that philosophical tolerance. So she should be wide open to the only universal religion.

*Cyril*       The age of idealism is over, Isidor. We are no idealists any more. We are realists and have to think of safeguarding what we have succeeded in bringing home after a struggle of nearly four centuries. But here is someone coming. Demetrios! Isn't she coming?

*Demetrios (enters, rather detached)* She is coming. Keep calm. Remember your promise now: She must not be harassed.

*Cyril* We would never have invited her here had there been any risk for any harm to her. The point is that she is coming. How did you manage?

*Demetrios* She agreed to come on the condition that it would only be a friendly talk in an effort to resolve the present tensions – nothing else.

*Cyril* And she has no Orestes to follow?

*Demetrios* Orestes was there. He dissuaded her from coming. He guards her carefully. If something happens to her with you he will hold you responsible to all Christianity.

*Cyril* What are you worried about? Nothing could happen. What could possibly happen? She is almost as holy as we are. The only thing missing for her is her few brief steps to baptismal.

*Demetrios* You can't force her.

*Cyril* But we may persuade her. She must be made to realize that her best chances to make it and be able to carry on her educational mission is to become one of us.

*Isidor* Here they come.

*(Enter Hypatia under group escort of parabolans. She is modestly dressed in white with her hair covered, as would befit a Christian virgin.)*

*Cyrrillos* Welcome, my lady. At last we may meet to be able to speak with each other.

*Hypatia* Father metropolite, I have only come in an effort to make you put an end to your assaults and persecution of all those who haven't joined your community.

*Cyril* You were the ones who first persecuted us. Don't you forget it. That was only twenty years ago. In the view of our hard persecutions then and for two hundred years before that, it is hardly strange if some Christians are affected by desires of revenge?

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

*Cyril* Have you come to preach to us?

*Hypatia* I have come by your invitation for talks to set all conflicts aside. I thought it was to the interest of both of us that they could be set aside. You don't seem quite willing to put an end to the continued aggressions of your Christians.

*Cyril* To say the truth, my lady, I am not entirely in control of them. I am just a priest. The parabolans do as they wish. They neither obey me, your friend the prefect Orestes or any other authority.

*Hypatia* Then they are lawless.

*Cyril* They are Christians and obey the Christian law or no law at all.

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

*Demetrios* I beg of you, Hypatia, don't provoke the archbishop.

*Hypatia* I only try to stick to the point. But it seems to me that he tries to wriggle out of it.

*Cyril* I am trying to show you the reality, Hypatia. We are nowadays first of all realists with an immense responsibility for an infinite number of Christian souls. It is our foremost duty to keep up this responsibility. This work is made difficult by the resistance made by the non-Christians, although we are the most powerful group of people of the city, excited by you.

*Hypatia* I excite no one.

*Cyril* In your lessons you provide your students with anti-Christian propaganda to thereby manipulate them to never become Christians.

*Hypatia* Will you prohibit me from lecturing?

*Cyril* I ask you to consider more carefully what you are lecturing.

*Hypatia* I lecture in astronomy, astrology, mathematics, geometry and other sciences except classical philosophy and languages and literature. Is that wrong? Are these subjects offensive to you?

*Cyrillos* Not the subjects as such, but in your lecturing you include unsuitable antichristian propaganda.

*Hypatia* Like what?

*Cyril* Demetrios, what has she said against Christianity?

*Demetrios* She has only been teaching the right of all religions and philosophies to exist and to make themselves valid across all limits.

*Hypatia* That is correct. I have no religion, only religious tolerance.

*Cyril* Hasn't she said, that Jesus would not be the Son of God?

*Hypatia* Is that why I am here? Is that what you accuse me of? Do you want to put me to 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 will you Christians not accept and tolerate our considerably older philosophical and religious traditions, as they have been inherited through different schools of philosophy for a thousand years?

*Cyril* Don't you understand then, my lady, that your gods are dead? Homer only imagined and romanced. Your pagan gods never had any power and could never accomplish anything. They were just fosters of imagination. Paganism is dead. It's the one and only God who counts, who rules all the universe. That's what the difference between us is all about. We demand that there is only one God, but you demand unsound alternatives.

*Hypatia* So you demand that I with my school subordinate your one God and his absolute power and supreme control over the lives of all people. Is there then no other living being than this jealous autocratic god? Is there no free nature with all kinds of living beings, like dolphins and lions and eagles, perhaps also Pegasus and centaurs and unicorns, that are just as much alive as your god of power? Isn't in fact all things alive part of the universal divinity, which I with Plato am the first one to accept?

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

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

*Cyril* But yourself exclude Christ.

*Hypatia* We can't exclude him. He already exists in our world as the main figure of the established national church. We will never be rid of him as what you made of him. But I think he really was something completely different than a man of power.

*Cyril* What then do you think he was?

*Hypatia* One of us, an ordinary human being, a fellow wanderer, a teacher and perhaps the highest representative for 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 blasphemed!

*A number of parabolans* She blasphemed! She blasphemed!

*Demetrios (interferes)* Stop it! One more step closer to her, and Orestes will send his troops! You will not touch her!

*Cyril* We never intended to touch her.

*Demetrios* But here and now, father metropolitan, you just made an incipience to urge all your parabolans against her!

*Cyril* Not at all. She was the one who made herself guilty of blaspheme. Didn't you ask her yourself not to provoke us?

*Demetrios* You tricked her to make a compromising statement!

*Cyril* She did it herself.

*Demetrios* Can't you see then, that you are about to stage exactly as mad a fake trial as the one Annas and Caiphas staged against Jesus? They also tricked him into a blasphemous statement from their point of view!

*Cyril* Are you comparing Jesus and his process with this woman's case?

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

*Cyril* You are quite confused, my son. There are no parallels at all. She is a woman, he was a man, she is of common blood, he was the king of Jews, she is a pagan, he was the first Christian, and so on. On the contrary, they are each other's contraries. He only said the truth, but this woman has actually blasphemed against God and that quite consciously and deliberately by her own logic and intelligence. Therefore it is unpardonable.

*Demetrios* And how will you then sentence her?

*Cyril* We will not sentence her at all. We leave that to others.

*Demetrios* Like the high priests left the sentence to Pontius Pilate.

*Cyril* You are quite confused, my son. You who adopted the Greek learning with its tall tales and unrealistic fantasies live in a world of dreams, which has nothing to do with reality. Your world is populated by heroes and idols, false ideals and mirages of beguiling dreams, with the philosophies of Plato and Pythagoras you want to abandon yourselves to spiritual indulgences and consider yourselves having every right to dedicate yourselves to full time parasitism, while others must work for you, which is why you have slaves. We Christians exist to liberate all slaves and the world from all false dreams. There are no noble and beautiful overmen, Demetrios. There are only egoistic survivors, who are ready to drive over and sacrifice anything belonging to others for the sake of their own interests. It has always been like that, but this lack of balance has constantly been sharpened by history. Today it is the Christian church which is lord of the hill, and we aim to keep that position. In that position we have to reject everyone who provides a challenge to that position. In this city, the leader of the world, it is only Hypatia. We simply ask her to cooperate, become Christian and accept our spiritual authority, so that she may go on as usual. But she is stubborn and refuses to cooperate. She does not accept Jesus as the Son of God and king of the world.

*Hypatia* He was just an ordinary man, but you made him into an idol which you worship and debase into a more superstitious cult than any Greek temple god ever was.

*Isidor* Now she is blaspheming again!

*Hypatia* No, I only tell the truth. The gospels were written long after his death, and their discrepancies indicate that they in extensive parts were fabricated. Thereby the myth of him as a divine man could be pure conjecture. What we know for certain is that he was born and died as a man. Period. All the rest is constructions. You have turned him into a cult to build up a position of power. The emperor Constantine raised Christianity to a national religion only to in that way reunite the whole 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 of all its religions, but you will never succeed in exterminating any other religion or sect in this world, no matter how you try to persecute free thinkers and exterminate them by the unblessed means of your blessedness.

*Isidor* Hear how she blasphemes!

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

*Hypatia* Since I told the truth?

Demetrios Hypatia, I beg of you, apologize to the archbishop!

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

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

Isidor You have heard her blasphemies? Can we tolerate that here in church?

parabolans No!

Demetrios Don't touch her!

Alexios (*has entered*) My lady, Orestes is on his way with his guards. Come out of here before it is too late!

Isidor Another heathen! Drive him out! (*the parabolans drive him out by force*)

Demetrios This is getting out of hand. They don't know what they are doing.

Hypatia (*finds her way to the altar, turns around to the crowd*) My friends, listen! I am just a human being! I am just a woman! And a virgin at that!

voices Virgin! That one!

others Didn't she go with the prefect?

others Down with the prefect! Down with Hypatia!

Demetrios (*tries to go between to protect her*) No! (*He is immediately beaten down and disappear under their feet, is then thrown out after Alexios*)

Hypatia My friends and brothers! I came here only to have a friendly talk with your archbishop! But your archbishop has run away! Is that my fault?

a parabolans Yes, it is your fault!

Another Everything is your fault!

A third one You are the one who has seduced this entire city, so that it never can become Christian!

others Witch! Sorceress! Harlot! Bitch!

others Get her!

(*Suddenly they attack her, she disappears in the crowd, but she clings to the altar as it now shows with her clothes torn off. She rises by the altar completely naked.*)

Hypatia I appeal to your God! By what right have you assaulted me? What have I done to you? What evidence do you have for your accusations that I would not be a virgin? Don't you realize yourselves that you contradict your own Christianity? Was not Christianity the religion of love? Why then do you hate me?

A voice The witch tries to enchant us!

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

(*They attack again, and now it becomes bloody. Finally they retire when it has gone too far. Hypatia lies massacred and bloody still in contact with the altar. Then Orestes and his troops break in. They stop appalled by the entrance. The parabolans retire.*)

Orestes We arrived too late. The archbishop shall be brought to trial for this. Where is he?

Linus He ran away when it got out of hand. He is innocent.

Orestes No one here is innocent. Here everyone is exactly equally guilty who allowed this to happen. This can never be washed clean from the history of our city. Do you realize what you have done? You have ravished the purest innocence in this world! Get out of here, all of you! (*Everyone disperses, parabolans, soldiers, everyone. Orestes is left alone with the dead Hypatia.*)

Orestes (*kneels by her without touching her*) My beloved, I am most guilty of all, for I saw it most clearly of all how this could happen, and I failed to stop it. I refused to believe it could happen, but it happened. I can do nothing about the tremendous damage done here, but I can promise you, that the Christian church shall never cease to be held accountable for it and brought to trial for it forever. This is a death blow to the inmost sanctity and beauty of life itself, and the Christian church alone is guilty. I will accuse it forever. (*removes his red mantle to cover her with it. Finally he can't control himself, falls*



*down over her, embraces her and cries bitterly with no end to it, until the stage grows dark and the curtain falls.)*

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

*Augustine* A beggar monk, you say?

*His servant* Rough usage, it seems.

*Augustine* Where does he come from?

*servant* From the east.

*Augustine* Does he know me?

*servant* Everyone knows who you are, father.

*Augustine* Well, he would hardly do me any harm. This world has been done so much harm during the last century that it could hardly fare any worse. Show him in.

*(The servant leaves and shows in a hermit.)*

*Augustine* Do I know you?

*hermit* No one knows me, but everyone knows you.

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

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

*Augustine* Am I? Most reluctantly in that case.

*hermit* The ancient world with its enlightened order has fallen, downtrodden by barbarians, wild Goths and Vandals. The church is almost the only thing left, and you are its highest authority.

*Augustine* The bishop of Rome is above me.

*hermit* Because you gave him that authority.

*Augustine* Why have you come?

*hermit* To inform you, that by undermining and causing the downfall of the pagan world, you only undermined and doomed your own Christianity. Your Christianity could have become an enlightened and world uniting religion, but it chose the opposite by the enforcement of intolerance by dogmas and persecutions of sects. You succeeded in overthrowing the Roman world order, which you now have taken over, but your world order is a worse lie than the Roman one.

*Augustine* Who are you? What right do you have to speak thus to me? With what authority do you threaten me and the Catholic church?

*hermit* I was there when your church destroyed the most sacred manifestation that then existed 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 recovered after that!

*hermit* While before that it was the centre of the world and hub of its foremost enlightenment and wealth of preserved knowledge. You burned its library and murdered its administrator.

*Augustine* I was not there.

*hermit* I don't accuse you. I am accusing the world Christianity, and I will do so forever.

*Augustine* You still haven't told me who you are.

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

*Augustine* That name means nothing to me.

*hermit* That's what I mean. I knew it would tell you nothing. No Jewish names mean anything to you Christians, for you have repressed us and treat us as if we never existed, while we are carrying the funding of Christianity, while you only care for its power and tyranny with the implacability of intolerance 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?

*hermit* Like me he turned out a beggar, a mad beggar who never could wear any clean clothes again nor shoes on his feet. He followed my example, for he found out there was nothing more sensible he could do.

*Augustine* Is he still alive?

*hermit* That's more than I know. Unfortunately I am still alive, and that is more than I can bear. So. My mission is accomplished. I have conveyed the curse of the eternally wandering Jew over the Christian church, you will never get rid of it, for it will become harder than ours.

*Augustine* Why would it be harder than yours?

*hermit* Because we only became your victims. We never had anything on our conscience. But you will be carrying the heaviest conscience in the world forever. You wouldn't have, if only you hadn't massacred Hypatia, the last librarian of the library of Alexandria.

*(rises and leaves, limping on his staff.)*

*Augustine stupidly watches him leave, struck by terror.)*

*Augustine* So Christianity went wrong from the beginning, and Hypatia confirmed the mistake. Still the church lives on and the Jews in its deepest shadow, and we will never be rid of each other forever. Was that what the hermit meant? In that case it seems that Hypatia got away more happy as a martyr for a higher ideal and freedom than what Christianity ever will be able to manifest. *(sinks deeper into his writings and broodings.)*

*The End.*

*(Gothenburg 3.3.2010,  
translated in March 2024)*



### *Comment*

Like Alejandro Amenábar's commendable film, the drama is based on Charles Kingsley's novel of 500 pages "Hypatia" from 1851, but like the film we have chosen to leave out the more fictional ingredients of the novel, like some very improbable characters as the old Miriam and the occurring Goths. The film has chosen to fill these gaps in the story with most credible speculations in what Hypatia professed in her education and research, while we have chosen to concentrate the drama wholly on the human factors. To some degree Orestes' partiality for Hypatia has been romanticised but nothing else. All the characters of the drama except Hypatia herself, Orestes, her father Theon and the bishops Theophilos and Cyril are fictional, while they represent types that must have occurred in her vicinity. Of the parabolans, officially nurses and wardens but in reality the arbitrary militia of the church, no individual has ever been identified except one or other so called "saint" who probably were the contrary, like archbishop Cyril himself.

No one was prosecuted for the murder of Hypatia, since so many holy Christians took part in it. In reality she was lynched to death and on principle flayed alive and then immediately cremated, whereupon the ashes were thrown into the sea - nothing was left of the body. This could neither be represented on stage or on film, why we, like Amenábar, have chosen a humanisation of her end.

The novel inspired a painting of Hypatia executed by the painter Charles William Mitchell, which directly depicts her such as the novel describes her the minute before her death. This picture could very well be a successful reconstruction of the real Hypatia. No one knows what she looked like, it is not even known how old she was when she was lynched to death by the Christians, but she was probably in her 40s but could have been older. We have chosen this picture for an illustration of the drama since we find that it completely fits the impression Hypatia gives historically as perhaps an equally remarkable victim to intolerance and fanaticism as Jesus himself.

It is quite intentional that Hypatia is the only female role of the drama.