Clement is a link in the tradition of Alexandrian exegesis that stretches from Philo to Origen and beyond—a link whose importance has yet to be fully recognized. Although he did not write the kind of scriptural commentaries we have from his predecessor Philo and his successor Origen, Clement’s surviving works are full of scriptural citations and allusions. Most of his exegetical comments are brief, but he does provide a few samples of verse-by-verse exegesis of specific biblical texts. For example, in each of the last four books of his *Stromateis*, he dedicates a chapter to detailed exegesis of a biblical text, two from the Old Testament and two from the New. In *Strom.* V 32–40 (chapter 6), as an example of how “the Law and the Prophets” speak in “enigmas,” he sets forth a symbolic interpretation of the tabernacle described in Exodus 25–38, and in *Strom.* VI 133–148 (chapter 16).

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he considers the Decalogue (Exodus 20:1–17) in an example of “gnostic interpretation” (VI 133, 1). The other two chapters are early examples of the spiritual exegesis of New Testament texts, one each from the Gospels and the letters of Paul. In Strom. IV, chapter 6, Clement explicates the beatitudes of Matthew 5, finding in them a description of how the soul becomes perfect and ascends to God. The final sample exegesis, in Strom. VII 84–88 (chapter 14) explores the deeper meaning of Paul’s discussion of lawsuits and fornication in 1 Corinthians 6.

This last chapter is the focus of the present essay. I will trace the main lines of Clement’s interpretation, with particular attention to three questions:

1. Why does Clement choose this text, and how does his exegesis of it function in the context of the whole of Stromateis VII?
2. What help does Clement find in Platonic and Stoic philosophy as he seeks to spell out the deeper meaning of Paul’s words?
3. How does this chapter exemplify Clement’s inner biblical exegesis?

1. First Corinthians 6 in the Context of Stromateis VII

First the context: At the beginning of Stromateis VII Clement states that the purpose of this book is to demonstrate to “the Greeks,” in particular to “the philosophers” among them, that they are totally mistaken when they accuse Christians of atheism (VII 1, 1). In fact, Clement asserts, it is the perfect Christian, whom he calls ‘the gnostic,’ who is the only truly pious person (VII 1, 1). He argues this point through a lengthy description of such features of the gnostic’s life as his prayer (VII 35, 1–49, 8), which is superior to any sacrifice, and his perfection in virtue, which makes him a divine ‘image,’ superior to any cult statue (VII 52, 2). Clement says that because his primary intended audience here is Greek philosophers he will rely mainly on rational arguments, instead of quoting Scripture (VII 1, 2–3). The extended exegesis of 1 Corinthians 6 in chapter 14 (VII 84, 1–88, 7) is the major exception to

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