

THE DOME OF CLEMENT

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That curious piece of pseudepigrapha, the *Recognitions* ascribed to Clement of Rome,¹ includes borrowings and fragments from many older sources, some of which illuminate matters far from the main thought of the work. One part in particular, with which we are here concerned, seems to be drawn from a philosophical work of an eclectic Pythagoreanism something like that of Philo. It includes a comparison of the heavens to a dome, and adds a little to our lamentably small literary information on the technique of building. The figure of the mutual support of unmortared stones fits nicely into a discussion of atomic coherence, and the instability of a dome under construction is employed to refute the Epicureans. The use of this figure implies an Epicurean cosmology rather different from that which we usually attribute to the school, but for which there is some other ancient evidence; this cosmology, moreover, is not unlike that of the first chapter of *Genesis*. Finally, the cosmology and the piety of the author make it likely that he was a Hellenized Jew of about the beginning of the Christian era, roughly a contemporary of Philo, but a man of far less mystical temperament.

Recognitions as we have it was translated into Latin about 400 A.D. by Rufinus of Aquileia from a Greek original; both it and the extant Greek *Homilies* go back to a common *Grundchrift*, put together in the early third century from several documents. A romantic narrative serves as a frame for a curious theology propounded by St. Peter, and also for a series of philosophical discussions borrowed in both matter and form from pagan philosophy. These discussions are embodied in the answers of three brothers, disciples of the apostle, to an old man

¹ Migne, PG I.1206; ed. B. Rehm and F. Paschke (GCS), Berlin 1965.

who, finding them at prayer, rebukes their futility: he himself, he tells them, follows Epicurus in denying the existence of a creator or of a divine providence. All things come about by chance or (this he claims as his own addition to the philosophy of the Garden) by *genesis*, ineluctable destiny (8.2.2).

The young men undertake the rebuttal of different parts of these propositions. Niceta, with whom we are concerned, demonstrates the impossibility of a universe arising from a chance gathering of matter, and maintains the activity of intelligence in the creation of the natural world. Aquila, the second speaker, shows that everything is governed by intelligence, not chance, and Clement, the last of the brothers, demolishes the fatalism of the old man and the astrology which supports it. The speeches are clearly patches added to the narrative, for their thought is entirely different from that of the rest of *Recognitions*; Peter, who elsewhere is always the important speaker, here contributes no more than remarks of introduction and summary. When the old man sums up the speech of Niceta, he attributes remarks to him which he did not make (8.39.5-6) and even Aquila puts words in his mouth which never came out of it (8.43.5). Part of the clumsy joining may have come from reworkings, but one would expect them to be less conspicuous the more the work was edited. The speeches contain matter from sources which can sometimes be identified: that of Niceta, for example, uses a doxography which Sextus and Galen also employed (8.15.1-5), and Clement quotes at length from the Syrian Bardesanes (9.19-29).

W. Heintze, who analyzed *Recognitions* carefully in 1914,² pointed out that the speech of Niceta falls into two parts. The first (8.13-20) he regarded as an arbitrarily abbreviated cosmogony of uncertain origin, which embodies a long piece of ill-understood Epicurean teaching; the second (8.21-34), which describes the operation of providence in nature, is so like Cicero's *De natura deorum* 2 that Heintze felt it must have been drawn from the *Peri theôn* of Poseidonius. Neither of these parts, in his opinion, has much connection with the neat schema which introduces the speech (8.10-12).

² W. Heintze, *Der Klemensroman und seine griechischen Quellen* = TU 40.2 (Berlin 1914) 51-98.

The speech of Niceta (8.9–34) is certainly abbreviated and compressed; for example, he promises to return to consideration of the invisible world after discussing the visible one (12.6), but never does so. Still its parts do not entirely lack connection in the eyes of one considering what Niceta undertook to show. The old man had maintained that there is no god, so worship is meaningless; that there is no providence; and that everything comes about by chance or by destiny. In a series of dichotomies Niceta (whose name we may use for both the speaker and his source) demonstrates that there must be an unlimited being, who is the source of separation and combination of what is limited; that the universe must have been created, and by a being outside itself; and that a providence must be at work in its creation and government. This providence could work by general law alone (which would mean the denial of just rewards for virtue and wickedness, as well as the denial of effective prayer and worship); it could act independently in each separate detail; or it could operate by a combination of the two modes of action. The arguments of Niceta are not directed to the proof of the freedom of the will, which he leaves to his brothers; he is concerned only to show that the world could not have been formed by chance, and that it is in fact the product of an intelligent providence. The first of his ends he accomplishes by reducing the argument of the atomist to absurdity, and the second by accepting the Stoic picture of providence, the objectionable aspects of which are later to be removed by the other speakers.

Descending to the visible world, Niceta observes that practically all thinkers agree that it arises from a plurality of elements derived from a single *hylê*; the monists are dismissed in a sentence. From the interdependence of the elements Niceta infers a creation *ex nihilo*. These elemental sources are divided into particles which are then recombined, both processes being the work of a creator. He next examines the joining of the particles which, the Epicureans insist, are unthinking and ungoverned, but which, they maintain, meet and cling to each other as chance may decree. But, Niceta points out, a universe thus formed is impossible. Each of the four elements has its own natural motion: earth and water, being heavy, tend downward; air, being neutral, floats in the middle; the lightest atoms, those of fire, press upward. Since by their nature they move in different directions, how can they

cling together to form enduring bodies? Even those that naturally move in the same direction, earth and water, have different weights, and therefore move with different speeds; how, then, could the lighter atoms ever catch up with the heavier? From these considerations we can be sure that, without some cohesive power, no compound bodies could have come into being. And even if we assume that such bodies could have been formed, we cannot explain how they could have survived the crush of fresh atoms ever raining down on them from above (16.5–18.1).

Where this extraordinary account agrees with the teachings of Epicurus at all it garbles them, and most of it is a collection of bits from other philosophies. The atoms of Epicurus did have a sort of natural motion, but it was the same in direction and speed for all of them, unless they were affected by collision with other atoms or by the swerve. Epicurus had several explanations of atomic cohesion, all of which are apparently ignored by Niceta. We must distinguish between the actual teaching of the Garden (that there is no reality beyond moving atoms, and that the world is formed by the chance joining of these, without planner or plan), the Aristotelian picture of natural motion, the Platonic notion of a double world, and the Pythagorean one of a creation by division. Our account treats the Epicurean atoms, the seeds of things, as though they were Pythagorean, the ultimates in divisibility of material. The Epicurean doctrines of the hooks of the atoms and their intertwining may be weak explanations of cohesion, but Niceta ought to pay some attention to them if he is in fact attacking the Garden. But his attack is actually on the idea of a random ungoverned creation, which is more easily refuted by saddling his "Epicureans" with ideas not their own.

From general consideration of atomic cosmology Niceta proceeds to a specific consequence of a random universe. The Epicurean heaven, he tells us, forms a dome of solid matter arching over the earth. About such a dome he raises certain questions: What could hold it together while it was being built? What footings could support such a mass, and on what could they rest? And, finally, if the heavy atoms which make up such a dome were lifted by the upward flight of the light ones which entrained them, how did the light atoms get underneath in the first place?

Niceta first considers the mechanical problems of the dome:

Let me ask this: if the circle of the heavens was built up by particles which came together gradually, why did it not collapse as fast as it was built, if the gaping height of its fabric was not braced up and held together by a centering? When people build round domes on buildings, if they do not lock the last course together at the top in the middle, the whole structure falls in. Just so the circle of the heavens, which we see has been constructed in so splendid a fashion. Suppose it had been formed, not through the might of the creator at a single sweep of the divine power, but rather through the gradual running together and piling up of atoms—that is, not as reason would demand, but as things might happen by accident. Would it not have collapsed and broken up before it could have been put together and closed in? And let me ask this too: what footings could there be upon which the foundations of so enormous a mass could rest? If you tell me of such supports, I will ask you what in turn underlies them, and so on until my questions force you to confess that the whole rests on void and nothingness.³

Arches, vaults, and domes of various sorts go back to remote antiquity in many parts of the Mediterranean and Near East, and by Hellenistic times the principles of thrust were well understood. Our literary sources tell us very little about such construction, and, indeed, our knowledge of technical vocabulary is slender. Arches and barrel vaults were common long before domes, and a few philosophical passages show an interest in the mutual bracing effect upon the stones in their construction. The author of the pseudo-Aristotelean *Peri kosmou* of the first century B.C. or A.D., for example, uses this figure:

It seems proper to compare God on a smaller scale to the stones in vaults (*psalides*) called bosses (*omphaloi*). These are set in the middle, and by

³ *Rec.* 8.18.2–6: sed et illud requiro: si paulatim coeuntibus corpusculis extruebatur hic quem videmus ambitus caeli, quomodo non in eo cum consurgeret conruit, si quidem hians machinae ipsius summitas nullis suffulta repagulis stringeretur? sicut enim hi qui aedificiorum tholos in circulum struunt, nisi conclusionem medii verticis strinxerint, universum pariter solvitur, ita et mundi circulus, quem tam decora specie collectum videmus, si non subito et sub uno divinae virtutis rotatu potentia conditoris effectus est, sed paulatim concurrentibus atomis et extruentibus, non ut ratio petebat, sed ut fortuitus incidisset eventus, quomodo non priusquam colligi posset et concludi, dilapsus est et dissolutus? ad haec et iam illud requiro, quod sit munimen, super quod tam immensae molis iecta sint fundamenta, et rursus illud ipsum quod dixeris munimen, super quid iaceat, et item illud aliud, super quid, et eo usque interrogando progrediar, donec responsio ad nihil et inane perveniat.

their contact on either side hold the form of the vault fast in its position (399B28-400A4).

Clement of Alexandria, too, describes the stones at the top of the vault (*epi tês psalidos*) as the causes of each other as far as the category of "standing fast" is concerned (*Strom.* 8.9.30). Both authors seem concerned with barrel vaults rather than with domes, and, although Clement does not mention a keystone, his use of *epi* shows that he, like the author of the *Peri kosmou*, is concerned rather with the top of the vault than with the whole series of voussoirs.

How much more did Niceta understand about the mechanics of a dome than the wedging effect of the stones? He certainly knew that a dome is not stable until it is completed at the top, and that until then a centering is necessary—that is, he had seen finished domes and also domes under construction. But he gives no hint that he realized that the vertical thrust of a dome is transferred laterally; he knew that a big dome needs heavy foundations, but, if we may judge from his discussion of footings, he thought of them simply as a solid ground for vertical thrust. True, Rufinus' use of *stringo* (translated above as "hold in" and "lock together") may reflect some such word as *synechô*, *syspaô*, or *sphingô* in the Greek text before him. We do not know enough of the technical vocabulary of either Greek or Latin to be sure. Niceta's mention of the centering is apparently the only literary reference to it surviving from antiquity.

Those who think of ancient domes in terms of the great Roman structures like the Pantheon may be surprised that Niceta makes no mention of construction in concrete. Either he knew nothing of its use, or he preferred to ignore it. His analogy, of course, demanded a dry stone structure, for mortar in a dome would hold the stones together just as the Stoic *pneuma* or the Hebrew Divine Wisdom makes the parts of the universe cohere. The figure of a poured concrete dome would have been even less apt. In any case, the omission suggests that Niceta lived in a region where dry stone masonry was well understood, but where concrete was used very little.

Syria best fulfills these conditions, though domes which were not corbeled were used occasionally elsewhere in the Near East. The form certainly goes back far into pre-Christian times, but it seems usually to have been rendered in timber. Even in Syria our evidence

is scanty, for large free-standing structures of this type have not withstood earthquakes, and we can do little more than speculate about the origins and early history of the dome before the time of the Empire. Small domed houses (*kalybae*) and tombs make their appearance early in the Empire, and by the late second century A.D. Syrian masons understood stone construction so well that they could erect domes on pendentives.⁴ Baldwin Smith suggests that the form of the big dome was introduced ultimately from Italy, perhaps by way of Egypt. Whether or not this is true, there is no Italian parallel for dry stone domes.

Our passage is apparently the only extant example of the figure of the hemispherical dome illustrating the philosophical question of cohesion. As we have seen above, Clement of Alexandria and the author of the *Peri kosmou* used the figure of a vault, and the context of the passage of Clement suggests that it was used, though not necessarily invented, by a Stoic. Niceta also raises, without discussing, the suggestion that a cohesive force would be unnecessary if the universe were all created at once, a suggestion which would be meaningless to either a Stoic or an Epicurean, who both asserted that the ordering of things was an endless sequence of changes. Perhaps this is why Niceta makes his suggestion and then brushes it aside as only a theoretical possibility. Philo (*Op. mund.* 40–44) asserts an original perfect creation, now succeeded by cyclical development. Our figure could not have been used to illustrate either of these questions before the development of the dome, and we may therefore infer that it was applied at the beginning of the Empire or a little later.

The discussion of the footings raises the questions of the shape of the cosmos and the direction of movement within it. Epicurus (Diog. Laert. 10.88) remarks that the cosmos may be round or triangular or any other shape. Lucretius in his first book (1046–76) seems to envisage a discoidal earth with no support beneath, in which all downward motions would be parallel. In the fifth book (439–553), however, he regards the earth as resting on underpinnings which dwindle and attenuate, but still hold the world fast in the middle; above it stretches a domical heaven. Lucretius is vague and confused in this account of the shape of the cosmos, but he describes its origin

⁴ E. Baldwin Smith, *The Dome* (Princeton 1950) 58.

(5.449-470). The heavens, he says, are formed by the squeezing out of light matter from the mass of atoms pressing toward a center.

Niceta alludes to a belief held by the Epicureans which resembles that of Lucretius:

Perhaps someone will argue that the atoms of fiery quality join together and make themselves into a single mass and, since the quality of fire directs itself not down but up, the fiery nature will always be thrusting upwards and will support the structure of the heavens which rests upon it. To this we will reply: how could the fiery atoms have sunk to the bottom in the first place, if they are always pushing up, and why are they found in a place sunk down deep below everything else? For since the heavier sort, the earthy and watery, outweigh the lighter, as we have shown, even they assert that the sky is built like a superstructure of fiery atoms, which are lighter and always escape upward. No; the heaven cannot have fire or anything else as its foundations, nor can there be any alliance or cohesion of heavy and light atoms, of those which are always plunging down and those which are always escaping up.⁵

We notice that the cosmology Niceta is discussing has no notion of a center. In this it is closer to the account preserved by the doxographer Aëtius (ps.-Plutarch, *Placita* 1.4, 878C, quoted also by Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 15.32). The universe, he tells us, arose from random collisions of atomic bodies. As they met, the heavy ones settled to the bottom and squeezed the light ones out and up. The further they got from the lower mass the less the force driving them became, but the stream of atoms rising behind kept them from returning by the way they had come. They therefore arched off to the sides, forming the heavens; when they reached the earth again their buffeting consolidated its substance.

⁵ *Rec.* 8.19.1-4: Quod si dicat aliquis, quia atomi igneae qualitatis coniunctae sibi corpus unum fecerunt, et quia ignis qualitas non deorsum sed sursum tendit, inpositam mundi molem ad superiora semper nitens ignis natura subvectat; ad haec respondebimus: Quomodo potuerunt atomi igneae qualitatis, quae semper ad superiora contendunt, in inferiora descendere et in profundo ac sub omnia demerso inveniri loco? cum utique graviores quaeque, id est terrenae vel umidae qualitates praeveniant, ut diximus, leviores, unde et caelum velut superiorem fabricam igneis atomis, quae et leviores sunt et sursum semper fugiunt, adserunt structam. neque ergo fundamenta ignis aut alia ulla habere mundus potest, neque atomis gravioribus cum levioribus, id est his quae deorsum semper praecipitantur et his quae semper sursum fugiunt, societas aut compaginatio ulla conveniet.

Aëtius does not mention a permanent shell of heavy matter bounding the cosmos. He does, however, give us a picture of a heaven formed by atomic motion, which arches over an apparently flat earth, with no mention of a center toward which motions converge, and his cosmology is therefore rather more like that recorded by Niceta than is that of Lucretius.

A little further on (8.21.2-3) Niceta expresses his willingness to accept either of two philosophical cosmologies: that with a spherical earth inside a spherical heaven, in which everything tends to the center, or that with a spherical cosmos floating on or in water. The second of these seems to imply a single downward direction in which the cosmos would move if it were not supported by the waters. There is, therefore, no center of convergence, and the earth is presumably not spherical but disc-shaped, bounded by the rim of a domed heaven. This picture, perhaps originating with Thales, is fairly close to that of Aëtius, but it is closer still to that which we find in *Genesis*. We may therefore conclude that Niceta is willing to accept the plausibility of the Epicurean model of the universe, but not the Epicurean explanation of its rise from the chance collisions of atoms.

Thus far Niceta has considered the statics and construction of the dome of heaven. He next advances to a consideration of its function as an index to its maker.

What man with even a grain of sense could look at a house equipped with everything needed for its operation, its roof covering a round space with part of a sphere, its decoration in splendid richness of varied pictures, its ornament of magnificent great luminaries—who, I ask you, could look at such a structure and not immediately pronounce that it was the work of the wisest and most powerful of builders? Just so, what fool could be found who could gaze on the work of the heavens, the glory of the sun and moon, the splendor of the stars in their courses, and their paths established in unvarying positions and times—who, pray, could observe all this and not maintain that they are the work of a wise and rational creator, nay rather, of wisdom and rationality itself?⁶

Even Lucretius (5.1170-74) could hardly keep from admitting this.

⁶ *Rec.* 8.20.6-8: quis enim est exigui saltim sensus homo, qui cum cernat domum omnia quae ad usus necessaria sunt habentem, cuius cameram in sphaerae gyrum videat collectam, eamque vario splendore et diversis imaginibus depictam, luminaribus

Karl Lehmann⁷ has shown that domical construction, perilous though it was in a land of earthquakes, developed as a symbol, sometimes of the overarching heavens, sometimes of the tent of the ruler. Most of the evidence from the East is archaeological; for the West we have literary evidence as well, almost all of which specifies the celestial meaning of the dome. Varro (*R.R.* 3.5) describes an aviary with a hemispherical roof, but even in his aviary there were devices to indicate the signs of the zodiac and the direction of the wind. Nero's Golden House included a dining room with a domed ceiling on which the constellations were shown; like any good planetarium, it rotated, presumably through the labors of an old horse working on a windlass (Suetonius, *Nero* 31). Martial's descriptions of the palace of Domitian (2.59, 7.56, 8.36) are clothed in the mist of poetic diction, but suffice to show that the architect Rabirius had roofed it with a concave representation of the heavens. The architect Apollodorus sneered at the fondness of Hadrian for pumpkins, a jest which cost him his life (Dio 69.4.2), but Tibur and the Pantheon bear witness to the emperor's interest in symbolic spherical structures. Indeed, about the only dome which is not called a model of the heavens is that placed by Vitruvius (5.10.5) on the sweat-house of his baths, and even there we observe that its specifications are strikingly like those of the Pantheon—its height was equal to its diameter, and it was topped by a great eye, whose opening was regulated by a bronze shield raised and lowered by chains. Lehmann continues (p. 23),

In this period of Hadrian and the elaborate celestial decorations in his villa, documented evidence for the dome of heaven in pre-Constantinian art ends. The lack of literary sources is complete. It is part of the deplorably poor tradition about history and buildings in the second and third centuries of our era. It should be kept in mind, however, that the sources and monuments discussed here are the only sources whatsoever which refer to the decoration of large domes even in the early Imperial age; without exception, they point to the celestial character of these structures.

praecipuis et maximis adornatam; quis, inquam, est, qui huiusmodi fabricam videns non statim pronuntiet a sapientissimo et potentissimo artifice esse constructam? et ita quis invenietur insipiens, ut cum caeli opus inspiciat, splendorem solis cernat ac lunae, astrorum cursus et species et vias certis rationibus et temporibus videat definitas, non tam a sapiente haec artifice et rationabili quam ab ipsa sapientia et ratione clamet effecta?

⁷ K. Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven," *Art Bulletin* 37 (1945) 1-27.

Lehmann does not refer to our passage, which he might have added to those which treat the dome as a planetarium.

The other symbolic source from which the dome derived its meaning was the tent of the ruler, and especially of the god who dwells in the tent of the heavens. There is ample archaeological evidence throughout the Middle East for this, and it is supported by many passages in the Old Testament and the intertestamental literature: e.g. "Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens" (*Ps.* 123:1), "Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place" (*I Ki.* 8:30), "Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool" (*Is.* 66:1). Sometimes we find the picture of the heaven as a tent: "In [the heaven] hath he set a tabernacle for the sun" (*Ps.* 19:4). In one striking verse the circularity of the heavens is juxtaposed with their function as dwelling: "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in" (*Is.* 40:22). Hebrew often uses the word *hog*, here translated as "circle," for the heavens: so "He walketh in the circuit of heaven" (*Job* 22:14).

The domical nature of the heaven of Hebrew literature is, of course, a natural development of the old notion of the hemisphere (*raqaya*^c "expanse") which divides the waters from the waters. When the scriptures were translated into Greek the idea of the solidity of the heavens seems to have been added: it becomes *stereōma*, or in Latin *firmamentum*. In one of the passages quoted above (*Is.* 40:22), the Hebrew word *dog*, literally "veil" or "curtain," is rendered in the Septuagint as *kamara*, which usually, though not invariably, means "vaulted roof" or "ceiling." Again a verse in *Job* (38:37-38) appears thus in the King James version, a tolerably close translation of the Hebrew: "Who can number the clouds in wisdom, or who can stay the bottles of heaven, when the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together?" The Hebrew suggests a firmament of thick plastery mud, but in Greek it comes out as a sort of concrete: "Who is he who numbers the clouds by wisdom, and who bent down the heaven to the earth; the dust is piled up (*kechutai*) like earth, and I have fastened it (the heaven) like a cube of stone (reading *lithou kubon*)."⁸ A later work⁸ paraphrases this verse: "The heavens know

⁸ *Apostolic Constitutions* 7.35.5, incorporating an older Jewish prayer. See E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light* (New Haven 1935) 306-58.

him who fixed them like a cube of stone (i.e. solidly) in the form of a vault (*kamara*) upon nothing." The last phrase reminds us of Niceta's concern with the foundations of the earth. The notion of the flat earth under an arched sky persisted in an odd form in a work quoted by Photius (*Bib.* 36, B7), in which the heavens are bent down upon the earth—except that the earth is described as oblong.

Niceta ascribes to the Epicureans the cosmology of domed heaven and flat earth without a center of convergence, but his introduction of waters to buoy it up suggests that he was thinking in biblical terms. On the other hand, the process by which this cosmos came into being is certainly Greek, and probably Neo-Pythagorean. A creator works either by division or combination. Goodenough⁹ has pointed out that we have a strikingly similar process in Philo, and he demonstrates that it is ultimately Pythagorean. The passages (*Quis heres* 130, 188) have God acting on matter as a *tomeus* or divider, but also as the glue which holds things together. Indeed, Goodenough regards the figure of the keystone in the *Peri kosmou* as Pythagorean, though ultimately Heraclitean: it both divides and unites the stones on either side. The Pythagoreans, moreover, like Niceta and Philo, were uncertain on the matter of creation in time.

In other ways Niceta is very like Philo: both speak of a double creation of the visible and intelligible worlds, both consider the transcendent god as operating through a *logos*, both divide this *logos* into creative and ruling powers. But there are many differences, the chief being that Philo presents us with elaborate allegorical interpretations of scriptural texts, while Niceta does not use a single quotation from scripture to illustrate his points.

If we make due allowance for compression, excision, and other sorts of editing, the speech bears some resemblance to several doxologies, for example those in *Wisdom* 9–10, *Sirach* 43–50, and the *Apostolic Constitutions* 7.34–39. These start with praise of God for the creation, sometimes even smuggling the four elements into the biblical six days, proceed to an account of his providence in arranging the world, and continue by praising him for the worthies of the past. This last ele-

⁹ E. R. Goodenough, "A Neo-Pythagorean Source in Philo Judaeus," *YCS* 3 (1932) 117–64. See also J. P. Maguire, "The Sources of Pseudo-Aristotle de Mundo," *YCS* 6 (1939) 156–58.

ment, which appears in the sort of list we find in *Hebrews* 11, would have no place in the speech of Niceta.

Niceta's pious reverence for a God at once transcendent and present, and his biblical cosmology, would fit any believer in the Old Testament. There is no evidence at all that he was a Christian, except perhaps the brief apocalyptic allusion in 12.5. He has no affinity with the odd Jewish-Christian theology preached by Peter elsewhere in *Recognitions*, the delight of the Tübingen theologians a century ago. We might echo Goodenough, who wrote about another work, "It contains no hint of Christ, nor any syllable that is distinctively Christian. And yet, so far as I have been able to ascertain, this obvious point has never been noticed. Found with Christian writings, its Christian character has gone unchallenged."¹⁰

What, then, may we assume about the speech of Niceta? It seems to be a patch sewed on to the narrative of *Recognitions*, the work of a man of Jewish piety but pagan learning. He resembled Philo in his grafting of pagan philosophy, chiefly Neo-Pythagorean, Aristotelian, and perhaps Stoic, onto his inherited belief. He is one of the few ancient authors to tell us in any detail about the construction of a dome; but his dome is one of dry stone, not of concrete. He must therefore have lived in a time and place where he and his audience would be familiar with such domes, perhaps in Syria in the first century A.D. He uses the figure in polemic against the Epicureans, thus giving us information about anti-Epicurean argument, and at the same time illuminating the confusing passage of Lucretius on the underpinning of the earth. He is a less allegorical and mystical Philo, and may be added to the small company whose amalgamation of Moses and Plato prepared the way for Christian philosophy.

¹⁰ Goodenough (above, note 8) 300.