

The Gospel of Mary

From the Nag Hammadi Library, James M. Robinson.

In this gospel Christ teaches that sin is not a problem of moral ignorance so much as a manifestation of imbalance of the soul. Christ then encourages the disciples to spread his teachings and warns them against those who teach of spirituality as an external concept rather than as an internal, gnostic experience. Mary, to whom this text is credited, then lifts the hearts of the disciples who have become despondent over Christ's departure. Peter and the other disciples acknowledge Mary's spiritual calibre and superiority and yet they challenge her when she describes her own gnostic experiences. This confrontation between Mary and Peter is well documented in many gnostic Scriptures. Mary exposes the small mindedness and superficiality of Peter and Andrew who find it difficult to comprehend, let alone accept, the deeper spiritual understanding that Mary has acquired through her personal experience and closer relationship with Christ. Indeed Peter and Andrew seem to prefer the very thing against which Christ warned them - a religion based on arbitrary ideas (in this case represented by Peter's male chauvinism and Andrew's ignorance). And yet many of their ideas have shaped modern Christianity while, paradoxically, Mary Magdelene's spirituality, which here seems more consistent with the teachings of Christ, is unheard of today.

"Will matter then be [destroyed] or not?". The Saviour said, "All natures, all formations, all creatures exist in and with one another, and they will be resolved into their own roots. For the nature of the matter is resolved into the (roots) of its nature alone. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Peter said to Him, "Since you have explained everything to us, tell us this also: What is the sin of the world?" The Saviour said, "There is no sin, but it is you who make sin when you do the things that are like the nature of adultery, which is called 'sin'. That is why the Good came into your midst, to the essence of every nature, in order to restore it to its root." Then He continued and said, "That is why you [become sick] and die, for [Š] of the one who [Š He who] understands, let him understand. Matter gave birth to a passion that has no equal, which proceeded from (something) contrary to nature. Then there arise a disturbance in the whole body. That is why I said to you, 'Be of good courage', and if you are discouraged (be) encouraged in the presence of the different forms of nature. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

When the blessed one had said this, He greeted them all, saying, "Peace be with you. Receive my peace to yourselves. Beware that no one lead you astray, saying, 'Lo here!' or 'Lo there!' for the Son of Man is within you. Follow after Him! Those who seek Him will find Him. Go then and preach the gospel of the kingdom. Do not lay down any rules beyond what I appointed for you, and do not give a law like the lawgiver lest you be constrained by it." When He said this, He departed.

But they were grieved. They wept greatly, saying, "How shall we go to the gentiles and preach the gospel of the kingdom of the Son of Man? If they did not spare him, how will they spare us?" Then Mary stood up, greeted them all, and said to her brethren, "Do not weep and do not grieve nor be irresolute, for His grace will be entirely with you and will protect you. But rather let us praise His greatness, for He has prepared us and made us into men." When Mary said this, she turned their hearts to the Good, and they began to discuss the words of the [Saviour].

Peter said to Mary, "Sister, we know that the Saviour loved you more than the rest of women. Tell us the

words of the Saviour which you remember - which you know (but) we do not, nor have we heard them." Mary answered and said, "What is hidden from you I will proclaim to you." And she began to speak to them these words: "I," she said, "I saw the Lord in a vision and I said to him, 'Lord, I saw you today in a vision.' He answered and said to me, 'Blessed are you that you did not waver at the sight of me. For where the mind is, there is the treasure.' I said to him, 'Lord, how does he who sees the vision see it through the soul or through the spirit?' The Saviour answered and said, 'He does not see through the soul nor through the spirit, but the mind which [is] between the two - that is [what] sees the vision and it is [Š].' (the mid-section of the original text is missing)

"[Š] it. And desire that, 'I did not see you descending, but now I see you ascending. Why do you lie, since you belong to me?' The soul answered and said, 'I saw you. You did not see me nor recognise me. I served you as a garment, and you did not know me.' When it had said this, it went away rejoicing greatly.

"Again it came to the third power, which is called ignorance. It (the power) questioned the soul saying, 'Where are you going? In wickedness are you bound. But you are bound; do not judge!' And the soul said, 'Why do you judge me although I have not judged? I was bound though I have not bound. I was not recognised. But I have recognised that the All is being dissolved, both the earthly (things) and the heavenly'.

When the soul had overcome the third power, it went upwards and saw the fourth power, (which) took seven forms. The first form is darkness, the second desire, the third ignorance, the fourth is the excitement of death, the fifth is the kingdom of the flesh, the sixth is the foolish wisdom of flesh, the seventh is the wrathful wisdom. These are the seven [powers] of wrath. They ask the soul, "Whence do you come, slayer of men, or where are you going, conqueror of space?" The soul answered and said, "What binds me has been slain, and what surrounds me has been overcome, and my desire has been ended and ignorance has died. In a [world] I was released from a world, [and] in a type from a heavenly type, and (from) the fetter of oblivion which is transient. From this time on will I attain to the rest of the time, of the season, of the aeon, in silence."

When Mary had said this, she fell silent, since it was to this point that the Saviour had spoken with her. But Andrew answered and said to the brethren, "Say what you (wish to) say about what she has said. I at least do not believe that the Saviour said this. For certainly these teachings are strange ideas." Peter answered and spoke concerning these same things. He questioned them about the Saviour: "Did He really speak with a woman without our knowledge (and) not openly? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did He prefer her to us?"

Then Mary wept and said to Peter, "My brother Peter, what do you think? Do you think that I thought this up myself in my heart, or that I am lying about the Saviour? Levi answered and said to Peter, "Peter, you have always been hot - tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like the adversaries. But if the Saviour made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Saviour knows her very well. That is why He loved her more than us. Rather let us be ashamed and put on the perfect man and acquire him for ourselves as He commanded us, and preach the gospel, not laying down any other rule or other law beyond what the Saviour said." When [Š] and they began to go forth [to] proclaim and to preach.

The Nag Hammadi Library, J M Robinson, Harper Collins

[Back to Issue 7](#)

©Copyright Knowledge of Reality Magazine 1996-2005. All rights reserved.
Any comments, queries please [email us](#). For Subscriptions [click here](#).



[Back to the KoR Homepage](#)