

# THE INTERPRETATION OF KNOWLEDGE

— Nag Hammadi XI, 1 —

*(13 lines missing)*

... they came to believe by means of signs and wonders and fabrications. The likeness that came to be through them followed him, but through reproaches and humiliations before they received the apprehension of a vision they fled without having heard that the Christ had been crucified. But our generation is fleeing since it does not yet even believe that the Christ is alive. In order that our faith may be holy (and) pure, not relying upon itself actively, but maintaining itself planted in him, do not say: "Whence is the patience to measure faith?", for each one is persuaded by the things he believes. If he disbelieves them, then he would be unable to be persuaded. But it is a great thing for a man who has faith, since he is not in unbelief, which is the world.

Now the world is the place of unfaith and the place of death. And death exists as ... *(14 lines missing)*

... likeness and they will not believe. A holy thing is the faith to see the likeness. The opposite is unfaith in the likeness. The things that he will grant them will support them. It was impossible for them to attain to the imperishability [...] will become [...] loosen [...] those who were sent [...]. For he who is distressed will not believe. He is unable to bring a great church, since it is gathered out of a small gathering.

He became an emanation of the trace. For also they say about the likeness that it is apprehended by means of his trace. The structure apprehends by means of the likeness, but God apprehends by means of his members. He knew them before they were begotten, and they will know him. And the one who begot each one from the first will indwell them. He will rule over them. For it is necessary for each one ... *(25 lines missing)*

... the Savior removed himself, since it is fitting. Indeed, not ignorant but carnal is the word who took him as a husband. And it is he who exists as an image, since that one (masc.) also exists, as well as that one (fem.) who brought us forth. And she caused him to know that she is the Womb. This is a marvel of hers that she causes us to transcend patience. But this is the marvel: he loves the one who was first to permit a virgin [...]. It is fitting to [...] her [...] unto death [...] desire to practice ... *(23 lines missing)*

Therefore she yielded to him in her path. He was first to fix our eye upon this virgin who is fixed to the cross that is in those places. And we see that it is her water which the supreme authority granted to the one in whom there is a sign. This is the water of immortality which the great powers will grant to him while he is below in the likeness of her young son. She did not stop on his account. She [...] the [...] he became [...] in the [...] word that appears to the [...]. He did not ... *(13 lines missing)*

... in [...] through [...] come from those places. Some fell in the path. Others fell in the rocks. Yet still others he sowed in the thorns. And still others he gave to drink [...] and the shadow. Behold [...] he [...] And this is the eternal reality before the souls come forth from those who are being killed.

But he was being pursued in that place by the trace produced by the Savior. And he was crucified and he died — not his own death, for he did not at all deserve to die because of the church of mortals. And he was nailed so that they might keep him in the Church. He answered her with humiliations, since in this way he had borne the suffering which he had suffered. For Jesus is for us a likeness on account of ... *(14 lines missing)*

... this [...] the entire structure and [...] the great bitterness of the world [...] us with the [...] by thieves [...] the slaves [...] down to Jericho [...] they received [...]. For [...] down to those who will wait while the entire defect restrains them until the final reality that is their portion, since he brought us down, having bound us in nets of flesh. Since the body is a temporary dwelling which the rulers and authorities have as an abode, the man within, after being imprisoned in the fabrication, fell into suffering. And having compelled him to serve them, they constrained him to serve the energies. They split the Church so as to inherit ... *(9 lines missing)*

... power to [...] and [...] and [...] having touched [...] before [...] it is the beauty that will [...] wanted to [...] and to be with [...] fighting with one another [...] like others [...] virgin [...] to destroy [...] wound [...] but she [...] she likens herself to the [...] her since they had struck [...] imperishable. This [...] that he remain [...] virgin. The [...] her beauty [...] faithfulness [...] and therefore [...] her. He hastened [...] he did not put up with [...] they despise [...]. For when the Mother had ... *(5 lines missing)* ... the Mother [...] her enemy [...] the teaching [...] of the force [...] nature [...] behold a maiden [...] he is unable [...] first [...] the opposite [...]. But how has he [...] maiden [...] he was not able [...] he became [...] killed him [...] alive [...] he reckoned her [...] better than life [...] since he knows that if [...] world created him [...] him to raise him [...] up from [...] upon the regions [...] those whom they rule [...]. But [...] emitted him [...] he dwells in him [...] the Father of the All [...] be more to her [...] him. He ... *(8 lines missing)*

... like [...] into [...] he has them [...] them [...] each one will be worthy [...] take him and [...] the teacher should hide himself as if he were a god who would embrace his works and destroy them. For he also spoke with the Church and he made himself her teacher of immortality, and destroyed the arrogant teacher by teaching her to die.

And this teacher made a living school, for that teacher has another school: while it teaches us about the dead writings, he, on the other hand, was causing us to remove ourselves from the surfeit of the world; we were being taught about our death through them.

Now this is his teaching: Do not call to a father upon the earth. Your Father, who is in heaven, is one. You are the light of the world. They are my brothers and my fellow companions who do the will of the Father. For what use is it if you gain the world and you forfeit your soul? For when we were in the dark, we used to call many "father," since we were ignorant of the true Father. And this is the great conception of all the sins ... *(8 lines missing)* ... pleasure. We are like [...] him to [...] soul [...] men who [...] the dwelling place.

What now is the faith laid down by the master who released him from the great ignorance and the darkness of the ignorant eye? He reminded him of the good things of his Father and the race. For he said to him, "Now the world is not yours, may you not esteem the form that is in it as advantageous; rather (as) disadvantageous and (as) a punishment." Receive now the teaching of the one who was reproached — an advantage and a profit for the soul — and receive his shape. It is the shape that exists in the presence of the Father, the word and the height, that let you know him before you have been led astray while in (the) flesh of condemnation.

Likewise I became very small, so that through my humility I might take you up to the great height, whence you had fallen. You were taken to this pit. If now you believe in me, it is I who shall take you above, through this shape that you see. It is I who shall bear you upon my shoulders. Enter through the rib whence you came and hide yourself from the beasts. The burden that you bear now is not yours. Whenever you (fem.) go ... *(14 lines missing)*

... from his glory [...] from the first. From being counted with the female, sleep brought labor and the Sabbath, which is the world. For from being counted with the Father, sleep brought the Sabbath and the exodus from the world of the beasts. For the world is from beasts and it is a beast. Therefore he that is lost has been reckoned to the crafty one, and that one is from the beasts that came forth. They put upon him a garment of condemnation, for the female had no other garment for clothing her seed except the one she brought on the Sabbath. For no beast exists in the Aeon. For the Father does not keep the Sabbath, but

(rather) actuates the Son, and through the Son he continued to provide himself with the Aeons. The Father has living rational elements from which he puts on my members as garments. The man ... *(11 lines missing)*

... this is the name. The [...] he emitted himself and he emitted the reproached one. The one who was reproached changed (his) name and, along with that which would be like the reproach, he appeared as flesh. And the humiliated one has no equipment. He has no need of the glory that is not his; he has his own glory with the name, which is the Son. Now he came that we might become glorious through the humiliated one that dwells in the places of humiliation. And through him who was reproached we receive the forgiveness of sins. And through the one who was reproached and the one who was redeemed we receive grace.

But who is it that redeemed the one who was reproached? It is the emanation of the name. For just as the flesh has need of a name, so also is the flesh an Aeon that Wisdom has emitted. It received the majesty that is descending, so that the Aeon might enter the one who was reproached, that we might escape the disgrace of the carcass and be regenerated in the flesh and blood of ... *(8 lines missing)* ... destiny. He [...] and the Aeons [...] they accepted the Son although he was a complete mystery [...] each one of his members [...] grace. When he cried out, he was separated from the Church like portions of the darkness from the Mother, while his feet provided him traces, and these scorched the path of the ascent to the Father.

But what is the way and manner (in) which it (fem.) became their head? Well, it (fem.) made the dwelling place to bring forth the light to those who dwell within him, so that they might see the ascending Church. For the Head drew itself up from the pit; it was bent over the cross and it looked down to Tartaros so that those below might look above. Hence, for example, when someone looks at someone, then the face of the one who looked down looks up; so also once the Head looked from the height to its members, our members went above, where the Head was. And it, the cross, was undergoing nailing for the members, and solely that they might be able ... *(7 lines missing)* ... have [...] because they were like [...] slave. The consummation is thus: He whom she indicated will be completed by the one who indicated. And the seeds that remain will endure until the All is separated and takes shape.

And thus the decree will be fulfilled, for just as the woman who is honored until death has the advantage of time, so too will it give birth. And this offspring will receive the body appointed for it, and it will become perfect. He has a generous nature, since the Son of God dwells in him. And whenever he acquires the All, whatever he possesses will <be dissolved> in the fire because it greatly despised and outraged the Father.

Moreover, when the great Son was sent after his small brothers, he spread abroad the edict of the Father and proclaimed it, opposing the All. And he removed the old bond of debt, the one of condemnation. And this is the edict that was: Those who made themselves enslaved have become condemned in Adam. They have been brought from death, received forgiveness for their sins, and been redeemed by ... *(9 lines missing)*

... since we are worthy [...] and [...] but I say [...] and these [...]. For [...] is worthy to [...] God. And the Father [...] the Christ removed himself from all these, since he loves his members with all his heart. One who is jealous sets his members against one another. If he is not jealous, he will not be removed from (the) other members and the good which he sees.

By having a brother who regards us as he also is, one glorifies the one who gives us grace. Moreover, it is fitting for each of us to enjoy the gift that he has received from God, and that we not be jealous, since we know that he who is jealous is an obstacle in his (own) path, since he destroys only himself with the gift and he is ignorant of God. He ought to rejoice and be glad and partake of grace and bounty. Does someone have a prophetic gift? Share it without hesitation. Neither approach your brother jealously nor ... *(8 lines missing)*

... chosen as they [...] empty as they escape [...] fallen from their [...] are ignorant that [...] in this way they have [...] them in [...] in order that they may reflect perforce upon the things that you want them to think about when they think about you. Now your brother also has his grace: Do not belittle yourself, but rejoice and give thanks spiritually, and pray for that one, in order that you might share the grace that dwells within him. So do not consider him foreign to you, rather, (as) one who is yours, whom each of your <fellow> members received. By loving the Head who possesses them, you also possess the one from whom it is that these outpourings of gifts exist among your brethren.

But is someone making progress in the Word? Do not be hindered by this; do not say: "Why does he speak while I do not?", for what he says is (also) yours, and that which discerns the Word and that which speaks is the same power. The Word ... *(13 lines missing)*

... eye or a hand only, although they are a single body. Those who belong to us all serve the Head together. And each one of the members reckons it as a member. They cannot all become entirely a foot or entirely an eye or entirely a hand, since these members will not live alone; rather they are dead. We know that they are being put to death. So why do you love the members that are still dead, instead of those that live? How do you know that someone is ignorant of the brethren? For you are ignorant when you hate them and are jealous of them, since you will not receive

the grace that dwells within them, being unwilling to reconcile them to the bounty of the Head. You ought to give thanks for our members and ask that you too might be granted the grace that has been given to them. For the Word is rich, generous and kind. Here he gives away gifts to his men without jealousy, according to ... *(11 lines missing)*

... appeared in each of the members [...] himself [...] since they do not fight at all with one another on account of their difference(s). Rather, by laboring with one another, they will work with one another, and if one of them suffers, they will suffer with him, and when each one is saved, they are saved together.

Moreover, if they would wait for the exodus from the (earthly) harmony, they will come to the Aeon. If they are fit to share in the (true) harmony, how much the more those who derive from the single unity? They ought to be reconciled with one another. Do not accuse your Head because it has not appointed you as an eye but rather as a finger. And do not be jealous of that which has been put in the class of an eye or a hand or a foot, but be thankful that you do not exist outside the Body. On the contrary, you have the same Head on whose account the eye exists, as well as the hand and the foot and the rest of the parts. Why do you despise the one that is appointed as [...] it desired to [...] you slandered [...] does not embrace [...] unmixed body [...] chosen [...] dissolve [...] of the Aeon [...] descent [...] however plucked us from <the>Aeons that exist in that place. Some exist in the visible Church — those who exist in the Church of men — and unanimously they proclaim to one another the Pleroma of their aeon. And some exist for death in the Church on whose behalf they go — she for whom they are death — while others are for life. Therefore they are lovers of abundant life. And each of the rest endures by his own root. He puts forth fruit that is like him, since the roots have a connection with one another and their fruits are undivided, the best of each. They possess them, existing for them and for one another. So let us become like the roots, since we are equal [...] that Aeon [...] those who are not ours [...] above the [...] grasp him [...] since [...] your soul. He will [...] we gave you to him. If you purify it, it abides in me. If you enclose it, it belongs to the Devil. Even if you kill his forces that are active, it will be with you. For if the soul is dead, still it was enacted upon (by) the rulers and authorities.

What, now, do you think of as spirit? Or why do they persecute men of this sort to death? Are they not satisfied to be with the soul and seek it? For every place is excluded from them by the men of God so long as they exist in flesh. And when they cannot see them, since they (the men of God) live by the spirit, they tear apart what appears, as if thus they can find them. But what is the profit for them? They are senselessly mad! They rend their surroundings! They dig the earth! [...] him [...] hid [...] exists [...] purify [...] however [...] after God [...] seize us [...] but we walk

[...]. For if the sins are many, how much the more now is the jealousy of the Church of the Savior. For each one was capable of both (types) of transgression, namely that of an adept, and (that of) an ordinary person. It is still a single ability that they possess. And as for us, we are adepts at the Word. If we sin against it, we sin more than Gentiles. But if we surmount every sin, we shall receive the crown of victory, even as our Head was glorified by the Father.