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## TEXTUAL SIGNS

Small strokes above the line indicate line divisions. Every fifth line a small number is inserted in place of the stroke; the frequency of these numbers, however, may vary in tractates which are quite fragmentary. A new page is indicated with a number in bold type. When the beginning of a new line or page coincides with the opening of a paragraph, the line divider or number is placed at the end of the previous paragraph.

- [ ] Square brackets indicate a lacuna in the manuscript. When the text cannot be reconstructed, three dots are placed within the brackets, regardless of the size of the lacuna; a fourth dot, if appropriate, may function as a period. An exception to this rule is the occasional use of a different number of dots to estimate the extent of the missing portion of a proper noun. In a few instances the dots are used without brackets to indicate a series of Coptic letters which do not constitute a translatable sense unit. A bracket is not allowed to divide a word, except for a hyphenated word or a proper noun. Other words are placed entirely inside or outside the brackets, depending on the certainty of the Coptic word and the number of Coptic letters visible.
- < > Pointed brackets indicate a correction of a scribal omission or error. The translator has either inserted letters unintentionally omitted by the scribe, or replaced letters erroneously inserted with what the scribe presumably intended to write.
- { } Braces indicate superfluous letters or words added by the scribe.
- ( ) Parentheses indicate material supplied by the editor or translator. Although this material may not directly reflect the text being translated, it provides useful information for the reader.

## INTRODUCTION

by

JAMES M. ROBINSON

### 1. *The Stance of the Texts*

The Nag Hammadi library is a collection of religious texts that vary widely from each other as to when, where, and by whom they were written. Even the points of view diverge to such an extent that the texts are not to be thought of as coming from one group or movement. Yet these diversified materials must have had something in common which caused them to be chosen by those who collected them. The collectors no doubt contributed to this unity by finding in the texts hidden meanings not fully intended by the original authors. After all, one of them, the *Gospel of Thomas*, begins with a word to the wise: "Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death." Thus the texts can be read at two levels: what the original author may have intended to communicate and what the texts may subsequently have been taken to communicate.

The focus that brought the collection together is an estrangement from the mass of humanity, an affinity to an ideal order that completely transcends life as we know it, and a life-style radically other than common practice. This life-style involved giving up all the goods that people usually desire and longing for an ultimate liberation. It is not an aggressive revolution that is intended, but rather a withdrawal from involvement in the contamination that destroys clarity of vision.

As such, the focus of this library has much in common with primitive Christianity, with eastern religions, and with holy men of all times, as well as with the more secular equivalents of today, such as the counter-culture movements coming from the 1960's. Disinterest in the goods of a consumer society, withdrawal into communes of the like-minded away from the bustle and clutter of big-city distraction, non-involvement in the compromises of the political process, sharing an in-group's knowledge both of the disaster-course of the culture and of an ideal, radical alternative not commonly known—all this in modern garb is the real challenge rooted in such materials as the Nag Hammadi library.

[twelve] ' judge [...] them ' [...] the fountain of ' [immortality ...] <sup>13</sup> in order that [...] <sup>17</sup> good [...] ' the whole place. ' [...] there the enemies. <sup>20</sup> He was baptized, and the ' [...] he became divine; he flew ' [up], (and) they did not grasp him. ' [...] there the [enemies ' ...] since it was not possible <sup>25</sup> [for them to bring him] down again. ' Every [...] grasps him ' [with] ignorance, attending ' to those who teach in the corners ' by means of carved things and <sup>30</sup> artful tricks. They will not be able [...].

## MARSANES (X, 1)

Introduced and translated by

BIRGER A. PEARSON

Codex X, one of the most fragmentary of the Nag Hammadi codices, apparently consists of a single tractate whose title occurs at the end: "[M]arsanes". This tractate is an apocalypse attributed to a Gnostic prophet and visionary known from other Gnostic sources (under the name "Marsanes" and "Marsianos"). It may have been among the Gnostic apocalypses which, according to Porphyry, were discussed in Rome in the school of Plotinus.

*Marsanes* begins and ends with an encouraging statement on the rewards of knowledge. Though it is impossible to determine the full content of the tractate, some conclusions can be reached about the content of the best-preserved pages (1-10, 25-42). Pages 1-10 describe an intellectual and visionary ascent to the highest heaven; here the various levels of reality are revealed. The readers are given to understand that they, too, can achieve the ascent to God. The vocabulary of this section is closely related to that of *Allogenes* (XI, 3). Pages 25-42 contain revelations concerning the mystical meaning of the letters of the alphabet: their relation to the human soul on the one hand, and to the names of the angels on the other. The closest parallel to this material from previously known Gnostic sources is Irenaeus' description of the teachings of Marcus.

The content and vocabulary of *Marsanes* show interesting points of contact with Neoplatonic philosophy, revealing a distinct trend away from the radical dualism of the earliest Gnostic systems in the direction of a monistic understanding of reality. *Marsanes* was composed originally in Greek, perhaps by a Syrian author, probably in the early third century.

## MARSANES

X 1, 1-68, 18

[...] <sup>11</sup> and a [reward]. They [came to know]; they ' found him with a pure heart, ' and they are not afflicted by him ' with evils. Those who have received <sup>15</sup> you (pl.) will be given their ' choice reward for ' endurance, and he will ' ward off [the] ' evils from them. [But] let none <sup>20</sup> of us be distressed [and] ' think [in] his ' heart that the great ' Father [...]. ' For he looks upon the All [and] <sup>25</sup> takes care of them all. ' And [he] has shown to them ' his [...]. ' Those that [...] <sup>2</sup> <sup>11</sup> at first. '

But as for the thirteenth ' seal, I have established it, ' together with [the] limit of <sup>15</sup> knowledge and the certainty ' of rest. The first ' [and the] second and the ' [third] are the cosmic ' and the material. I have <sup>20</sup> [in-

formed] you concerning these, that you should ' [...] your bodies. And ' [a] sense-perceptible [power] ' will [...] those who will rest, ' and they will be kept <sup>25</sup> [from] passion and division ' [of the] union.

The fourth ' [and the] fifth which are above, ' [these] you have come to know ' [...] divine]. 3 He exists after the [...] ' and the nature of the [...] ' that is, the one who [...] ' three. And [I have <sup>5</sup> informed] you of [...] ' in the three [...] ' by these [two. I have ' informed] you concerning [it, that it] ' is incorporeal [...] <sup>11</sup> and after [...] ' within [...] ' every [...] which [...] ' your [...]. The [fifth, <sup>15</sup> concerning the] repentance [of] ' those that are within me, and ' concerning those who dwell in that place. '

But the sixth, ' concerning the self-begotten ones, <sup>20</sup> concerning the incorporeal being ' which exists partially, ' together with those who exist in ' the truth of the All [...] ' for understanding and <sup>25</sup> assurance. And the [seventh], ' concerning the self-begotten power, ' which [is the] ' third [perfect ...] 4 fourth, concerning salvation ' [and] wisdom. And the eighth, ' concerning the mind which is ' [male, which] appeared <sup>5</sup> [in the beginning], and (concerning) the being ' [which is incorporeal] and the ' [intelligible] world. The ninth, ' [...] of the power ' [which] appeared [in the <sup>10</sup> beginning. The] tenth, [concerning ' Barbelo, the] virgin [...] ' of the Aeon. ' [The eleventh] and [the ' twelfth] speak of the <sup>15</sup> Invisible One who possesses ' three powers ' and the Spirit which does not ' have being, belonging to ' the first Unbegotten (fem.). The <sup>20</sup> thirteenth speaks concerning ' [the] Silent One who was not ' [known], and the primacy of ' [the one who] was not distinguished. '

For I am he who has <sup>25</sup> [understood] that which truly exists, ' [whether] partially or ' [wholly], according to difference ' [and sameness], that they exist from the ' [beginning in the] entire place which is 5 eternal, <i.e.> all those that have come into ' existence whether without being ' or with being, those who are ' unbegotten, and the divine aeons <sup>5</sup> together with the angels, and the ' souls which are without guile, ' and the soul-[garments], ' the likenesses of [the] ' simple ones. And [afterwards they] <sup>10</sup> have been mixed with [those that resemble] ' them. But still [...] the ' entire being [...] which ' imitates the [incorporeal being] ' and the unsubstantial (fem.). [Finally] <sup>15</sup> the entire defilement [was saved] ' together with the immortality of ' that one (fem.). I have deliberated ' and have attained to the boundary of the sense-perceptible ' world, <I have come to know> part by part <sup>20</sup> the entire place ' of the incorporeal being, and ' <I> have come to know the intelligible world. ' <I have come to know>, when <I> was deliberating, ' that in every respect the sense-perceptible <sup>25</sup> world is [worthy] ' of being saved entirely.

[For] ' I have not ceased speaking [of the] ' Self-begotten One, O [...] ' became [...] 6 part by part the entire place. ' He descended; again he descended ' <from> the Unbegotten One ' who does not have being, who <sup>5</sup> is the Spirit. That one who exists ' before all of them attains ' [to the divine] Self-engendered One. ' The one having ' [being] searches <sup>10</sup> [...] and he exists ' [...] and he is like ' [...] and from ' [...] dividing ' [...] I became <sup>15</sup> [...] for many, as it is manifest ' that he saved a multitude. '

But after all of these things ' I am seeking the kingdom ' of the Three-Powered One, <sup>20</sup> which has no beginning. Whence ' did he appear and ' act to fill the ' entire place with his power? And ' in what way did the unbegotten ones <sup>25</sup> come into existence, since they were not begotten? And ' what are [the] differences among the [aeons? ' And] as for those who are unbegotten, ' how many [are they]? And in what respect ' [do they differ] from each other? 7

When I had inquired about these things ' I perceived that he had worked ' from silence. He exists ' from the beginning among those that <sup>5</sup> truly exist, that belong to the One who ' exists. There is another, existing ' from the beginning, belonging to the One who ' works within the Silent One. ' And the silence [...] <sup>10</sup> him works, ' for this [...] is [a] brother. ' That one [works from] ' the [silence which belongs to the] ' Unbegotten One among [the aeons, and from] <sup>15</sup> the beginning he does not have [being]. ' But the energy of ' that One <is> the Three-Powered One, ' the One unbegotten [before] ' the Aeon, not having [being]. <sup>20</sup> And it is possible to behold the supremacy of the ' silence of the Silent One, ' <...> i.e. the supremacy ' of the energy of the ' Three-Powered. And the One who <sup>25</sup> exists, who is silent, [who is] ' above the [heaven ...], ' revealed [the ' Three-Powered, First]-Perfect ' One.

[When he ...] 8 the powers they rejoiced. ' Those that are within me were perfected ' together with all the ' rest. And they all blessed <sup>5</sup> the Three-Powered, ' one by one, who ' is [the] First-Perfect One, ' [blessing] him in purity, [everywhere] ' praising the Lord <sup>10</sup> [who exists] before the All, ' [...] the Three-Powered. ' [...] their worship ' [...] myself, ' [and I will still go on <sup>15</sup> inquiring] how they had ' [become silent]. I will understand a ' power which I hold ' in honor.

The third ' power of the Three-Powered, <sup>20</sup> when it had perceived him, ' said to me, "Be silent ' in order that you might {not} know; run, ' and come before me. But ' know that this One was <sup>25</sup> [silent], and obtain understanding." ' For [the power] is attending ' [to me, leading] me into ' [the Aeon which] is Barbelo, ' [the] male [Virgin]. 9

For this reason the ' Virgin became male, ' because she had been divided from the male. The ' Knowledge stood outside of him,<sup>5</sup> because it belongs to him. ' And she who exists, she who sought, ' possesses (it), just as ' the Three-Powered One possesses. ' She withdrew<sup>10</sup> from them, from [these] two [powers], ' since she exists [outside of] ' the Great One, as she [...] ' who is above [...] ' who is silent, [who has]<sup>15</sup> this [commandment] ' to be silent. His knowledge ' and his hypostasis ' and his energy ' are those things of which the power<sup>20</sup> of the Three-Powered spoke, <saying>, ' We all have ' withdrawn to ourselves. We have [become] ' silent, [and] ' when we came to know [him, that is],<sup>25</sup> the Three-Powered, [we] ' bowed down; we [...] ; we] ' blessed him [...] ' upon us. [...].

[...] the] invisible [Spirit] 10 ran up ' to his place. The whole place ' was revealed; the whole place unfolded ' <until> he reached the upper region.<sup>5</sup> Again he departed; he caused the ' whole place to be illuminated, and the whole ' place was illuminated. And [you] (pl.) have been given ' the third part of ' [the spirit] of the power of the One<sup>10</sup> [who possesses] the three ' [powers]. Blessed is ' [...]. He said, O [you ' who dwell in these] places, it is necessary ' [for you to know] those that are higher<sup>15</sup> than these, and tell them to the ' powers. For you (sing.) will become ' [elect] with the elect ones ' [in the last] times, ' [as] the invisible Spirit<sup>20</sup> [runs] up above. And you ' [yourselves], run with him ' [up above], since you have ' [the] great crown which ' [...].

But on the day<sup>25</sup> [...] will beckon ' [...] run up above ' [...] and the sense-perceptible ' [...] visible ' [...] and they [...] (pp. 11-12 missing) 13<sup>15</sup> the perception. He is for ' ever, not having being, ' in the One who is, who is silent, ' the One who is from the beginning, ' [who] does [not] have being<sup>20</sup> [...] part of [...] ' indivisible. The [...] ' consider a [...] <sup>24</sup>ninth [...] 14<sup>15</sup> I [was dwelling] ' among the aeons which have ' been begotten. As I was permitted, [I] have ' come to be among those that were not [begotten]. ' But I was dwelling in the [great]<sup>20</sup> Aeon, as I [...]. ' And [...] the three powers [...] ' the One who [possesses] ' the [three] powers. The [three<sup>25</sup> powers ... 15 the] Silent One and the ' Three-Powered One [...] the] one that does not have breath. ' We took our stand [...] <sup>5</sup> in the [...] <sup>13</sup> we entered [...] ' breath [...] 16 who] does not have breath, ' [and he] exists in a [...] ' completely. And I saw ' [...] him to the great <sup>5</sup> [...] they knew him [...] <sup>12</sup> limit [...] ' and [I ...] ' alone [...] 17 is active ' [...] why, [again], (does) knowledge ' [...] ignorant, and [...] ' he runs the risk <sup>5</sup> [...] that he become [...].<sup>15</sup> Those ' [...]. But it is necessary that a ' [...] does not have form ' [...]

to this one ' [...] exists before<sup>20</sup> [...] remember ' [...] from] the beginning ' [...] the one that [...] 18 these [...] ' look(ed) at [...] in the nine [...] the] ' world of the Seven [...] ' in a day of [...] <sup>5</sup> for ever [...] <sup>14</sup> and [...] after] ' many [years ...] ' when I saw the [Father I came to] ' know him, and [...] ' many [...] ' partial [...] <sup>20</sup> for ever [...] ' the material ones [...] ' cosmic [...] ' above [...] ' in addition [...] 19<sup>13</sup> he [...] <sup>15</sup> out of [...] ' into those that [...] ' them into [...] ' name ' [them. And] (as for) their nomenclature,<sup>20</sup> [bear] witness yourselves ' [that you are] lower than [...] ' and their [hypostasis].

But [in addition, when ...] 20<sup>14</sup> hidden [...] the] third ' [power]. The blessed Authority (fem.) ' said [...] ' among these and [...] ' i.e. she who [does not have ...].<sup>20</sup> For there is not glory [...] ' nor even the one who [...]. ' For indeed the one who [...].<sup>24</sup> For [...] 21<sup>14</sup> and the [signs of the Zodiac ...] ' and the [...] ' and [...] ' which do not have [...] ' acquire for [...] ' revolution ...].<sup>20</sup> But [the] soul(s) [...] ' there [...] ' body(s) of this ' [...] soul(s) of heaven [...] ' around [...] <sup>25</sup> shape [...] ' which is [...] 22<sup>15</sup> those that [...] ' there [...] <sup>19</sup> all the likenesses [...] ' them [...] ' all the forms [...] ' shape(s), so that [they ...] ' and] become [...] ' themselves [...] <sup>25</sup> and the [...] ' the animals [...] ' and the [...] (pp. 23-24 missing) 25 there.

But their ' powers, which are the angels, ' are in the form of ' beasts and animals.<sup>5</sup> Some among them are ' [polymorphous], and contrary to ' [nature] they have [...] ' for their names which [...]. ' They are [divided] and [...] <sup>10</sup> according to the [...] ' and [...] in [form ...]. ' But these that are ' [patterns] of sound according to the third ' originate from being.<sup>15</sup> And concerning these, all of ' these (remarks) are sufficient, ' since we have (already) spoken about them.

For [this] ' division takes place ' again in these regions in [the manner] <sup>20</sup> we have mentioned from the [beginning]. ' However the soul, on the ' other hand, [has] ' different shape(s). ' The shape of the soul exists [in <sup>25</sup> this] form, ' i.e. (the soul) that came into ' existence of its own accord. The shape ' is [the second] 26 spherical portion ' while the first follows [it], ' eēiou, the self-begotten soul, ' aeēiouō.<sup>5</sup> [The] second schema, ' eēiou, (consists) of those [having] ' two sounds (diphthongs), the first being ' placed after them [...] <sup>12</sup> the light.

[Restrain] ' yourselves, receive [the] ' imperishable seed,<sup>15</sup> bear fruit, and ' do not become ' attached to your possessions.

But know that the oxytones ' exist among the vowels<sup>20</sup> and the ' diphthongs which are ' next to them. But the [short] ' are inferior, and the [...] ' are [...] <sup>25</sup> by them. Those that [...] ' since they are inter-

mediate ' [...]. The sounds of ' [the semivowels] are 27 superior to those that do not have voice. ' And those that are double are superior ' to the semivowels which ' do not change. But the aspirates <sup>5</sup> are better than the inaspirates (of) ' these that do not have voice. ' And those that are intermediate will [accept] ' their combination in which they are. ' They are ignorant [of] <sup>10</sup> the things that are good. They ' are combined with the [intermediates] ' which are less, according to <the> [form] ' of the nomenclature of the [gods] ' and the angels, [not] because <sup>15</sup> they are mixed with each other ' form by form, but ' only (because) they have their ' good works. ' It did not happen <sup>20</sup> that their will was revealed. '

Do not keep on [sinning], ' and do not dare to ' make use of sin.

But [I] ' am speaking to you [concerning the ' three ... shapes] ' of the soul. [The] ' third [shape of the soul] ' is [...] 28 is a spherical one, put ' after it, from those that have a ' single vowel: ' eee, iii, ooo, uuu, òòò.<sup>5</sup> The diphthongs were ' as follows: ai, au, ' ei, eu, ēu, ou, ōu, oi, ēi, ' ui, ōi, auei, euēu, oiou, ' ggg, ggg, ggg, aiau,<sup>10</sup> [eieu], ēu, oiou, ōu, ggg, ' [ggg], aueieu, oiou, ēu, ' three times for a male soul. ' The third ' shape is spherical.<sup>15</sup> The second shape, being ' put after it, has ' two sounds. The male soul's ' third shape ' (consists) of the <sup>20</sup> simple vowels: ' aaa, eee, ēēē, iii, ooo, ' uuu, òòò, òòò, òòò. ' [And] this shape is different ' [from] the first, but <sup>25</sup> [they resemble] each other ' [and they] make some ' [ordinary sounds] of ' [this sort: aeē]oò. And 29 from these (are made) the diphthongs. '

So also the ' fourth and the fifth. ' With regard to them, they were not allowed to <sup>5</sup> reveal the whole topic, ' but only those things that are apparent. ' You (pl.) were taught ' about them, that you should perceive them ' in order that they, too, might <sup>10</sup> all seek and find [who] ' they are, either ' by themselves alone [...] ' or by each other, ' or to reveal [destinies] <sup>15</sup> that have been determined from the beginning, ' either with reference to themselves alone [or] ' with reference to one another, just as [they] ' exist with each other [in] ' sound, whether partially <sup>20</sup> or formally.

[They are] ' commanded [to] ' submit or their ' [part] is generated and ' formal. Either (they are commanded) by [the <sup>25</sup> long] (vowels) or [by] ' those of [dual time value, or] ' by [...] ' which are short [...] 30 or the oxytones or the ' intermediates or the barytones. '

And <the> consonants ' exist with the vowels,<sup>5</sup> and individually ' they are commanded, ' and they submit. ' They constitute the naming ' [of] the angels. And <sup>10</sup> [the] consonants are ' self-existent, ' [and] as they are changed ' <they> submit ' to the hidden <sup>15</sup> gods by means of ' beat

and ' pitch and ' silence and impulse. ' [They] summon the semivowels,<sup>20</sup> all of which ' submit to them with ' one [accord]; since it is only ' the [unchanging] double (consonants) ' that coexist with the semivowels.<sup>25</sup>

But the aspirates ' [and the inaspirates] and the ' [intermediates] coexist ' [with those that have] voice. [Again ' ... they] are combined ' [with each other, and] they are separate 31 from one another. They are ' commanded, and they submit, ' and they constitute an ' ignorant nomenclature.<sup>5</sup> And they become one [or] ' two or three or [four] ' or five or six up to ' seven having a ' [single] vowel. These that [have] <sup>10</sup> two [vowels ...] seven consonants. Among ' the first names [some] are ' less. And ' since [these] do not have being,<sup>15</sup> either [you (sing.)] are an aspect [of] ' being [or] you do [not] separate ' the nature [of] our mind, ' which [is masculine] (and) which is [intermediate]. '

And you [put] in <sup>20</sup> those that resemble each other [with] ' the vowels [and] ' the consonants. Some ' are: bagadazatha, ' begedezethe, [bēgēdē]<sup>25</sup>zēthē, [bigidizithi, bogo]dozotho, [buguduzuthu], ' bōgōdō-zōthō. [And] ' the rest [...] ' ba[...]. 32 But the rest are ' different: abebēbi'bob, in order that you (sing.) might [collect] ' them, and be separated from the <sup>5</sup> angels.

And there ' will be some effects. ' The first, ' which is good, is from ' [the] three. It (fem.) [...] <sup>10</sup> has need of [...] <sup>12</sup> their shapes. <The> dyad ' and the monad ' do not resemble anything, but <sup>15</sup> they are first to exist. ' The dyad, being divided, ' is divided [from the] monad, and ' [it] belongs to the hypostasis. ' But the tetrad received (the) [elements],<sup>20</sup> and the fifth ' received concord, and the ' [sixth] was perfected by ' itself. The ' [seventh] received beauty,<sup>25</sup> [and the] eighth ' [received ...] ' ready [...] <sup>29</sup> greatly. 33 And the [tenth revealed] ' the whole place. ' But the eleventh and the ' [twelfth] have traversed <sup>5</sup> [...] not having [...] ' it [is higher ...] ' seven [...] <sup>15</sup> name(s) [...] <sup>17</sup> promise that [...] ' begin [to separate] ' them by means of <sup>20</sup> a mark [and] ' a point, the [one which ' quarrels] from the one which is [an enemy]. '

Thus [...] ' of being [...] <sup>26</sup> the [letters ...] ' in [a ... 34 holy] or according to a [bond] ' existing separately. ' [And] <they> exist with each ' [other] in generation or [in <sup>5</sup> birth. And] according to [...] ' generation [...] they do not have ' [...] these [...] <sup>18</sup> one [...] speaking ' [the] riddle.

Because within <sup>20</sup> [the] sense-perceptible world ' there exists the temple ' [that measures] seven hundred ' [cubits], and a river which ' [...] within <sup>25</sup> [...] for] ever, they ' [...] three ' [...] to the four ' [...] seals ' [...]

[...] clouds <sup>35</sup> [and the] waters, and the ' wax-line [images, ' and] some emerald-like things. '

For the rest, I will <sup>5</sup> [teach you] about them. This is ' [the] generation of the names. She who [was not] ' begotten [...] from the ' beginning [...] <sup>15</sup> with regard to [...] <sup>18</sup> time(s), when [confined], when ' spread out, when [diminished].<sup>20</sup> But there exists the gentle [word], ' and there exists another ' word which [approaches] ' being [...] ' in this [manner ...].<sup>26</sup> And he [...] ' the difference [...] ' and the [...] <sup>36</sup> the all and a [...] ' the [undivided] beings ' and the power [...] ' having [...] <sup>5</sup> intercourse with [the bridegroom] ' separately and [...] ' whether [...] <sup>15</sup> power ' [...] he] exists ' [in] every place [...] ' them always. ' [He] dwells with the corporeal <sup>20</sup> and the incorporeal ones. '

This is the word of the hypostases ' that one should ' [...] in this way. If ' [...] with their <sup>25</sup> [...] helping ' [those who stir up] the ' [...] manifest ' [...] if one <sup>37</sup> knows him, he will ' [call] upon him. '

But there are words, some ' of which are [two <sup>5</sup> but others] existing ' [separately ... <sup>13</sup> and] they [...] <sup>15</sup> or those that [...] <sup>17</sup> or according to [those that] have ' duration. And [these] ' either are separate from [them] <sup>20</sup> or they are joined to one another, ' or with themselves, either [the] ' diphthongs, or the ' single [vowels], or every [...] ' or [...] <sup>25</sup> or [...] ' exist] just as [...] ' exist [...] ' the [consonants ...] <sup>38</sup> they exist individually ' until they are divided ' and doubled. Some ' have the power <sup>5</sup> [...] according to the [letters ' that are consonants ...] <sup>12</sup> become [...] <sup>15</sup> by themselves ' [...] and three (times) ' [for the] vowels, ' and twice ' [for] the consonants,<sup>20</sup> [and] once for ' the entire place, and with ' ignorance for ' [those that] are subject to change ' [...] that] became <sup>25</sup> [...] together with the [entire ' place ...] finally.

And ' [...] they all ' [...] they] exist <sup>39</sup> as hidden, but they were pronounced ' openly. They did not ' stop without being revealed, ' nor did they stop without <sup>5</sup> naming the angels. ' The vowels ' [join] the ' [consonants, whether] without ' [or] within,<sup>10</sup> [...] they ' said [...] ' teach you [...] ' again [for ever. They were counted] ' four times, (and) they were [engendered] <sup>15</sup> three ' times, and they became [...].<sup>18</sup>

For these reasons we have acquired ' sufficiency; for it is fitting that <sup>20</sup> each one acquire ' power for himself to bear fruit, ' and that we ' never cast ' aspersions [on] the mysteries <sup>25</sup> [...] the [...]. '

For [...] which [is ... ' the] souls [...] ' the] signs of the Zodiac [...] <sup>40</sup> a new hypostasis. '

And the reward which will ' be provided for this one ' in this manner is salvation.<sup>5</sup> Or the opposite will ' happen there to the one ' who com-

mits sin. [The one who commits] sin ' by himself [...] will be ' [in a ... in a ...] <sup>12</sup> in order that ' before you (sing.) examine ' the one who <...>, one <sup>15</sup> might [tell] another ' [about an] exalted power ' and a divine knowledge ' and a might that ' cannot be resisted,<sup>20</sup> but that you might examine ' who is worthy that he should ' reveal them, knowing ' that [...] down ' to [...] who commit <sup>25</sup> sin. They [...] ' the Father [...] <sup>41</sup> that which is fitting. Do not desire ' to give power to the sense-perceptible world. ' Are you (pl.) not attending to me, ' who have received salvation <sup>5</sup> from the intelligible world? ' But (as for) these <words>—watch yourselves— ' do not [...] them [...] <sup>12</sup> he understands [...] and he takes [...] ' the rest], ' I [will speak of] them. The [perfection <sup>15</sup> ...] in order that ' it might [not] increase. [But those] who commit sin [...] <sup>18</sup> the embodied souls did not understand ' them. Those that are upon <sup>20</sup> the earth as well as those outside of ' the body, those in heaven, are ' more than the angels. The place ' which we [talked] about with ' words [...] But] these [...] <sup>25</sup> stars [...] <sup>27</sup> book(s) [...] ' whether already [...] ' into the [...] <sup>30</sup> blessed is [...] <sup>42</sup> whether he is gazing at the ' two or he is gazing at ' the seven planets ' or at the twelve <sup>5</sup> signs of the Zodiac or at ' the thirty-[six] decans [...] <sup>12</sup> are invisible, ' [these reach up] ' to [...] <sup>16</sup> and ' [these] numbers, whether [those in heaven] ' or those upon the earth, ' together with those that are under the [earth],<sup>20</sup> according to the relationships and ' the divisions among ' these, and in the rest ' [...] parts ' [according to kind and] according to [...] <sup>27</sup> they] will [submit ' since] she has power ' [...] above <sup>30</sup> [...] they exist] apart [...] <sup>43</sup> every [...] <sup>20</sup> body(s) [...] ' a] place [...] divine B]arb[elo ...] <sup>44</sup> reveal them [...] ' in this [manner ...] ' this [...] <sup>20</sup> intelligible angels], as she [...] ' intelligible [...] ' above [...] ' save(d) from [...] <sup>27</sup> them [...] <sup>45</sup> world [...] ' and [...] <sup>6</sup> world [...] <sup>21</sup> they came [...] <sup>24</sup> those who [...] <sup>46</sup> is [...] ' like [...] <sup>20</sup> the voice of ' [...] name(s) [and ... <sup>23</sup> for] ever [...] ' name(s) ...]. (pp. 47-54 missing)

[...] <sup>55</sup> I became silent. [...] ' tell [me, ...] ' what is the [power ...] <sup>20</sup> will wash [...] ' entire generation [...] <sup>56</sup> greatly, the ' [...] much ' [...] he is [...], and <sup>20</sup> [...] all [...] ' in the [...] <sup>57</sup> knowledge [...] <sup>20</sup> persevere [...] ' the great [...] ' for I [became ...] <sup>58</sup> bone(s) of the ' [...] in the [cosmic ... (pp. 59-60 missing) <sup>61</sup> which is] under [...] your daughters [...] <sup>3</sup> for just as ' [...] the] kingdom of [...].<sup>5</sup> But this one [they] have [...] <sup>12</sup> every [...] <sup>62</sup> in the one who [...] ' not. [And ...]. '

For it is [...] who [...] ' you (pl.) did not] know the [...] <sup>5</sup> for the [...] <sup>10</sup> partially [...] <sup>63</sup> in ' [...] remainder ' down [...] the] earth. And they ' [spoke] like the angels <sup>5</sup> [...] he is like the ' wild [beasts].



And he said, [...] <sup>8</sup> for] ever [...] <sup>17</sup> from [...] ' the number [...] ' I saw [...] <sup>21</sup> and his [...] a [voice ...] ' and [...] his [...] **64** I [...] ' because I [saw] all of [the lights] ' around [me, blazing ' with] fire. [And ...] <sup>5</sup> me in their midst [...] <sup>16</sup> angel(s) [who ...] ' beside me. [And ...] ' the [one ...] ' Gamaliel, <sup>20</sup> [the one] who is in command of [the spirits] which [...] **65** the angels ' [...] which receive ' [all of them ...] ' with those whom they [...] <sup>5</sup> and] he [took] me ' [...] he finished ... <sup>12</sup> her] members [...] <sup>14</sup> the [invisible ... <sup>17</sup> judgment ...] ' thrown ' [...] every [...] which is placed ... <sup>21</sup> source ' [...] living ' [...] the two ' [...] silent <sup>25</sup> ... god(s)] **66** wash her from [...] ' of God [...] ' the one whom they [sealed] ' has been adorned [with the <sup>5</sup> seal of] heaven. [...] <sup>11</sup> to his [...] ' great [...].<sup>17</sup>

And I [saw ... <sup>19</sup> unmixed ...] ' those who [...] **67** they will become ' [...] of God ' [...] a woman ' [...] while she is in [travail <sup>5</sup> and] when she gives birth, [...] <sup>10</sup> with [...] <sup>12</sup> all of [...] ' thing ' [...] men [...] and <sup>15</sup> [...] women [and men ' in this manner ... ' no one] <of> those [that are upon the] earth ' [knew] that [...] ' every [...] them, <sup>20</sup> [and they will] take pity on these, [together with the] ' home-[born], for these will [pay ' ...] God [...] <sup>24</sup> aeon(s) [...] **68** with those who will [...] ' who have [...] ' God [...] ' from the [beginning ...] <sup>5</sup> in [the ...] ' fear [...] <sup>8</sup> name(s) ... <sup>12</sup> mysteries ...] ' in [...] ' God [...] <sup>16</sup> manifest [...] ' those who will know [him]. '

[M]arsanes

## THE INTERPRETATION OF KNOWLEDGE (XI, 1)

Introduced by

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The *Interpretation of Knowledge* offers a unique opportunity to see how a Gnostic teacher uses New Testament writings and applies them to the church. Features of style and structure suggest that the text may present a homily intended for delivery in a service of worship. The structure of the discussion follows a common pattern of worship, in which readings from "the gospel" are followed by readings from "the apostle." Correspondingly, one section of the *Interpretation of Knowledge* (9, 21-14, 15) uses passages known from Matthew to interpret the Savior's teaching and his passion; the next section (14, 15-21, 34) uses texts from 1 Corinthians and probably Romans, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians to interpret the church as the "body of Christ."

The author is concerned to address a community that is torn by jealousy and hatred over the issue of spiritual gifts. Some members refuse to share their spiritual gifts with one another; others envy those who have received such gifts as prophecy and public speaking, and so stand out in the congregation. Some despise others whom they consider "ignorant" (that is, lacking gnosis); the rest feel slighted and resentful.

To rectify this situation, the author first recalls the example of the "great son," Christ, who voluntarily humbled himself to demonstrate the Father's love to his "small brothers." Next the author takes up Paul's metaphor of the body and its members, and combines it with the image of Christ as the Head of his body, the church, to remind the members that they share the "same body" and the "same Head." Despite the diversity of spiritual gifts that the members receive, each one shares in the "same grace."

Strikingly, this teacher develops an interpretation of knowledge rather similar to that of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 or even of 1 John. Unlike Paul or the author of 1 John, however, this teacher offers a specifically Gnostic interpretation, implying that those who show jealousy and hatred betray their resemblance to the jealous and ignorant demiurge, while those who show love demonstrate the love of God the Father and of his Word.

## THE INTERPRETATION OF KNOWLEDGE

XI 1, 1-21, 35

[... <sup>14</sup> they came to] believe by means of [signs ' and] wonders [and fabrications. And ' the likeness] that came to be through [them ' fol-