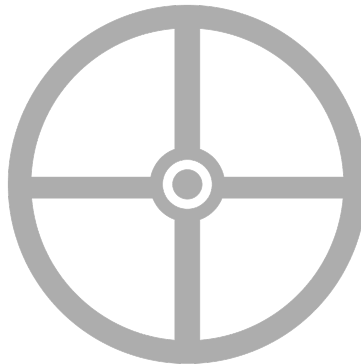


TRUTH FROM MONAD

The Great Book of Enlightenment

THE COMPANION

A plain-words guide to every chapter: what the verses mean, who the people are, what the words mean, and where to read further



Fellowship of the Common Good

Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love.

Truth from Monad: The Companion

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Scripture is drawn from *The Holy Bible, Fellowship Edition*; chapters and verses follow the Fellowship Bible, and the Psalms are numbered as in the Septuagint (most are one number lower than in other Bibles).

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HOW TO USE THIS COMPANION

This companion walks beside *Truth from Monad*, section by section. On each page, the left column gives the holy text itself, and the right column explains it.

In the right column you will find: **In plain words** (what the section means, told simply); **Who's who** (the people named); **Key words** (what the words mean); **Behind the verses** (where each verse comes from); and **Read further** (books and writings to help you go deeper).

At the back of the book are three lists: everyone named in the book (Who's Who, A to Z), every key word (Glossary, A to Z), and all the recommended reading in one place.

The marks at the end of each verse show where its truth comes from: ♦ a belief or revelation of our congregation · + scripture (the Bible and the Gnostic writings) · ✱ science and history · ♦ other faiths and wisdom traditions.

Read slowly. Read with others. Pray over what you read. And remember the words of the book itself: these pages are given to light your way, never to rule over you.

THE OPENING

Older Than Any Religion

THE OPENING

verses 1–13

1 In the beginning of our seeking, know this: the relationship of God with man is older than any religion. ✧

2 Before temples were built, before books were written, before any faith had a name, man looked up at the Sun and the stars and knew he was not alone. ✧

3 The earth itself bears witness. Long before the first word was written, our ancestors laid their dead to rest with care and with colour, in hope of something beyond. ✧

4 And they raised great circles of carved stone toward the heavens, before the first cities were built. ✧

5 No single religion owns the truth, for the truth is older than them all. It belongs to Monad, from whom all truth comes. ✧

6 Therefore, to find the truth, we must look everywhere. ✧

7 We look to the universe for proof: to the atom and the galaxy, to the cell and the star. ✧

8 For numbers belong to God as well, and He has ordered all things in measure and number and weight. ✧ +

9 We read the scriptures, the hidden gospels, and the wisdom of every people. +

10 We pray, and we listen in the silence within. ✧

11 Knowledge and truth are the key. ✧

12 And the kingdom they open is not far away, for the kingdom of God is within you. +

13 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The book begins with one simple and bold claim: people have been reaching for God far longer than any religion has existed. Long before there were temples, priests, or holy books, human beings looked up at the Sun and the stars and sensed that they were part of something greater. The Opening uses two facts from archaeology as witnesses: very ancient burials where the dead were laid to rest with care and red colour (a sign of hope in something beyond death), and enormous carved stone circles built at the very dawn of farming, before the first cities.

From this the Opening draws its rule for the whole book: because truth is older than every religion, no single religion owns it. Truth belongs to Monad, the One, and so the seeker must look everywhere: in the universe (science), in the holy writings (scripture), in the wisdom of every people (other faiths), and in prayer and silence. Verse 8 adds that “numbers belong to God as well,” meaning the order and measure we find in nature are also a way God speaks. The Opening ends with the root verse of our congregation, “the kingdom of God is within you,” and with our motto. In short: the search for God is as old as humanity, it is open to everyone, and the door is within you.

WHO'S WHO

Monad: the name this book uses for the One God, from the Greek word *monas*, “the one” or “the unit.” See Chapter 1.

KEY WORDS

Truth from Monad: the title of this book. It means that all truth comes from the One God.

Qafzeh: a cave in Israel where people were buried about 100,000 years ago, some with red ochre (a red earth pigment) and grave gifts.

Göbekli Tepe: a hilltop site in Turkey with huge carved stone pillars arranged in circles, about 11,600 years old, older than writing, farming villages, and Stonehenge.

The marks: every verse ends with a mark showing where its truth comes from: ✧ our congregation's belief or revelation, + scripture, ✧ science and history, ✧ other faiths.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 1, 2, 5, 6, and 10 are the founder's own teaching (✧): God's relationship with man is older than any religion, and to find the truth we must look everywhere. Verses 3 and 4 rest on archaeology (✧). Verse 8 joins the founder's teaching that "numbers belong to God" with the Wisdom of Solomon 11:20, "thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight." Verse 12 is Luke 17:21. Verse 13 is our motto, which grows from the ancient Persian teaching of "good thoughts, good words, good deeds" (see Chapter 14).

READ FURTHER

- Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (1993): how people's understanding of God grew across the ages.
- Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (1958, revised 1991): a warm, fair introduction to the great faiths.
- Klaus Schmidt, *Göbekli Tepe: A Stone Age Sanctuary* (2006, in English 2012), or a good documentary on Göbekli Tepe.
- Luke 17:20–21 in any Bible, read with the whole of Luke 17.

THE ONE

CHAPTER 1

I. HEAR THIS FIRST

verses 1–10

1 Hear, O seeker, the first and greatest truth: God is One. ✧ †

2 Before there was a beginning, Monad was; and when every beginning has come to its end, Monad is. ✧

3 Monad is the One. There is no second beside the One, and there is nothing above. †

4 All that is came forth from Monad, and all that came forth longs to return. ✧

5 And this is the simple truth, which even a child can hold: God is Light, God is Love, God is Truth. ✧

6 For God is light, and in God is no darkness at all. †

7 And God is love; and whoever dwells in love dwells in God, and God in them. †

8 Love God, love one another, seek the truth: this is the way, and it is straight and simple. ✧

9 Yet do not mistake the simple for the small. A drop of water is simple, and the ocean is deep; so is Monad simple to the heart and endless to the mind. ✧

10 For Monad is the deepest of all depths, and whoever seeks will never come to the end of the goodness of the One. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This chapter starts where every faith must start: with God. The first truth is that God is One. Before anything began, God already was; when everything ends, God still is. All things came from God, and all things long to go back to God.

Then the book gives the simplest summary of who God is, one that even a child can hold: God is Light, God is Love, God is Truth. From that comes the whole way of life: love God, love one another, seek the truth. But the chapter warns us not to confuse “simple” with “small.” A drop of water is simple; the ocean is deep. God can be understood simply by the heart and yet never fully understood by the mind. Verse 10 calls God “the deepest of all depths”: however far you go in seeking God’s goodness, there is always more.

WHO’S WHO

Monad: the One God. In the Gnostic writings, especially the *Secret Book of John*, the highest God is called “the Monad,” the One from whom everything else comes.

KEY WORDS

Monad: Greek for “the one” or “the unit.” Our title for the One God, used as a name.

Simple first, deep later: a guiding rule of our congregation; we teach the heart of faith plainly, and leave room to go deeper.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 6 and 7 come from the First Letter of John (1:5 and 4:16), adapted so that no gendered word is used for God, a rule of this book (God has no gender before the Mother-Father; see Chapter 2). Verse 3 echoes the *Secret Book of John*, which calls the One a “monarchy with nothing above it.” Verse 8 is the founder’s summary of the faith.

READ FURTHER

- The First Letter of John, chapters 1 and 4: the source of “God is light” and “God is love.”
- Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (1979): an accessible introduction to how the Gnostic Christians spoke of God.

II. MONAD BEYOND ALL NAMES

verses 11–29

11 What can be said of the One who is above all speech? Let the ancient seekers speak first. ♦

12 They wrote that Monad is a sovereignty with nothing above, without limit, for nothing came before Monad to set a bound. +

13 Monad cannot be measured, for nothing was before to take the measure. +

14 Monad is invisible, for no one has ever seen the One; eternal, having always been; unspeakable, for no word can hold such greatness; and unnamed, for no one came before to give a name. +

15 Monad is not large and not small; not one thing among the things that are, but far above them all. +

16 Monad is neither male nor female, for before the first Thought there was not yet two, but only One. ♦

17 Monad lacks nothing, and so needs nothing: complete, whole, and perfect. +

18 Monad is the light that has no shadow, the life that gives life, the goodness that gives goodness, the mercy that gives mercy. +

19 Therefore every name we give is a lamp held up toward the Sun: it shows our love, not the limits of the One. ♦

20 We call the One God. We call the One Monad. We call the One Light, Love, and Truth. ♦

21 None of these names is too great, and all of them are too small. ♦

22 The wise of other peoples knew this also. The sages of India said of the Highest, “Not this, not this,” for the Highest is beyond every thing that can be pointed to. ♦

23 An old teacher of China wrote that the Way which can be spoken is not the eternal Way, and the name which can be named is not the eternal Name. ♦

24 And the Quran says: “Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.” ♦

25 When Moses asked the Name, the answer came: I am THE BEING. +

26 Not a name like our names, but Being itself. Monad is; and because Monad is, all things are. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

How can anyone describe the One who is greater than all words? The ancient Gnostic teachers answered by saying what God is *not*: not limited, not measurable, not visible, not named by anyone before, not large or small, not one more “thing” among things. This way of speaking is called “negative theology”: we honour God’s greatness by admitting that our words fall short.

Verse 16 adds our congregation’s teaching that Monad is neither male nor female, because before the first Thought (Barbelo, Chapter 2) there was only One, not two. Verses 19–21 say every name we give God is like a lamp held up to the Sun: it shows our love, not God’s limits. Then the chapter shows that the wise of other faiths saw the same: the sages of India said “not this, not this,” the *Tao Te Ching* says the Way that can be spoken is not the eternal Way, and the Quran calls God “the Light of the heavens and the earth.” Moses was given the name “I am THE BEING,” which is not a name like ours but Being itself.

Finally, verses 27–29 show Jesus as the one who makes the unseen God known: he appeared in light to the grieving John on the mountain, and even Thomas could not put into words whom Jesus was like.

WHO’S WHO

Moses: the great prophet of Israel who led his people out of Egypt and received the Law; at the burning bush he asked God’s name (Exodus 3).

John: one of Jesus’ twelve disciples; in the *Secret Book of John* the risen Saviour appears to him on a mountain and reveals the hidden mysteries.

Thomas: one of the twelve disciples, called “the Twin” (Didymus); the *Gospel of Thomas* is a collection of Jesus’ sayings in his name.

The sages of India: the teachers of the Upanishads, the deep spiritual writings of Hinduism.

Lao Tzu (the “old teacher of China”): the traditional author of the *Tao Te Ching*, the founding book of Taoism (perhaps 6th–4th century BC).

KEY WORDS

Negative theology: describing God by what God is not, because God is beyond every positive description.

Neti neti: Sanskrit for “not this, not this,” from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

The Way (Tao): in Chinese wisdom, the hidden source and order of all things.

I AM THAT I AM: the name given to Moses (Exodus 3:14), meaning God simply *is*.

27 No one has ever seen God; yet the One who cannot be seen has been made known, for Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, came forth to reveal what was hidden. † ✧

28 To John, grieving upon the mountain, the Saviour appeared in light and taught the mystery of the One beyond all names. †

29 And when Jesus asked his disciples to say whom he was like, Thomas answered, "Teacher, my mouth cannot say whom you are like"; for the one who walks closest to the Light is also beyond our words. †

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 12–15, 17, and 18 render the opening of the *Secret Book of John* (Apocryphon of John, found at Nag Hammadi), which describes the Monad by negation. Verse 16 is a revelation of our congregation. Verse 22 comes from the Upanishads, verse 23 from the *Tao Te Ching* chapter 1, verse 24 from the Quran 24:35 (the "Light Verse"), verse 25 from Exodus 3:14, verse 27 from John 1:18, verse 28 from the opening of the *Secret Book of John*, and verse 29 from *Gospel of Thomas* saying 13.

READ FURTHER

- Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (2006): a careful translation and explanation of the *Secret Book of John*.
- Marvin Meyer (editor), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (2007): the standard one-volume English edition of the Nag Hammadi library.
- Stephen Mitchell, *Tao Te Ching* (1988): a clear, beautiful version for beginners.
- Eknath Easwaran, *The Upanishads* (1987): an easy, trustworthy introduction.
- The free online Gnostic Society Library (gnosis.org), which has the Nag Hammadi texts.

III. THE DEPTH AND THE SILENCE

verses 30–39

30 The Valentinian teachers called the One the Depth, the Fore-Beginning, the Source before every beginning. †

31 And beside the Depth they placed Silence, for before the first word was ever spoken, there was the stillness of God. †

32 So it is still: the way to the Depth is through the silence. ✧

33 Be still, and know that I am God. †

34 In silence the seeker hears what no noise can teach. ✧

35 People have sent their lights to the floor of the deepest sea, and their ships beyond the Moon; but no one will ever send a light to the floor of Monad, for there is none. ✧

36 The Gospel of Truth teaches that all things went searching for the One from whom they came, and all the while they were within the One, who is beyond understanding and above every thought. †

37 We are within Monad, and Monad is beyond us: nearer than breath, and higher than the highest heaven. ✧

38 For in God we live, and move, and are. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Valentinian teachers (one of the two great Gnostic schools; see Chapter 11) gave the One God beautiful names: the Depth, the Fore-Beginning, the Source before every beginning. Beside the Depth they placed Silence, because before any word was spoken there was God's stillness. The lesson for us is practical: the way to God goes through silence. "Be still, and know that I am God."

The section also comforts us. People have explored the bottom of the deepest sea and flown beyond the Moon, but no one will ever reach the "bottom" of God. Yet we are not far from God: we live inside God's presence ("in God we live, and move, and have our being"), and God's depth is not frightening, like a cold dark sea, but a depth of endless light.

WHO'S WHO

The Valentinians: followers of Valentinus, a great Christian teacher of the second century (see Chapter 11).

Paul: the apostle who, in Athens, said "in God we live, and move, and are" (Acts 17:28).

³⁹ Do not fear the depth of God. It is not the depth of a dark sea, but the depth of a light that has no end. ✧

KEY WORDS

Bythos: Greek for “Depth,” the Valentinian name for the highest God.

Proarche: Greek for “Fore-Beginning.”

Sige: Greek for “Silence,” the companion of the Depth in Valentinian teaching.

The Gospel of Truth: a gentle Valentinian meditation found at Nag Hammadi.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 30–31 come from the Valentinian system described by Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I.1. Verse 33 is Psalm 45:11; verse 35 refers to the Challenger Deep (first reached in 1960) and the Apollo Moon landings (1969–1972); verse 36 renders the *Gospel of Truth*; verse 38 is Acts 17:28.

READ FURTHER

- Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the Valentini-ans* (2006): the most thorough study of the Valentinians (for advanced readers).
- *The Cloud of Unknowing* (14th century): a classic Christian guide to meeting God in silence.
- Psalm 45.

IV. THE ONE AND THE NUMBERS

verses 40–46

⁴⁰ Monad means “the One.” ✧

⁴¹ Before two there is one; before the many there is one. Every number is the One, counted again. ✧ ✧

⁴² The followers of Pythagoras taught that from the Monad come all numbers, and from numbers the order of the world. ✧

⁴³ So it is: numbers belong to God as well. ✧

⁴⁴ Thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight. +

⁴⁵ The petals of the flower, the spiral of the seed, the turning of the planets, the rhythm of the seasons: all of them keep the count of the One. ✱

⁴⁶ Whoever studies numbers studies the handwriting of Monad. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

“Monad” means “the One,” and one is where all counting begins: two is one and one, many is one again and again. The followers of the Greek teacher Pythagoras taught that all numbers come from the Monad, and that the order of the world is written in numbers. Our congregation agrees: “numbers belong to God as well.” The petals of flowers, the spirals of seeds, the paths of the planets, and the rhythm of the seasons all follow precise numbers. So studying mathematics and nature is a way of reading “the handwriting of Monad.”

WHO’S WHO

Pythagoras (about 570–495 BC): a Greek philosopher and mathematician who founded a community devoted to number, music, and the soul.

KEY WORDS

Fibonacci numbers: the series 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13... in which each number is the sum of the two before; it appears in the spirals of sunflower seeds and pinecones.

Kepler’s laws: the three laws, found by Johannes Kepler, that describe the paths of the planets around the Sun.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 40–42 draw on the Greek word *monas* and Pythagorean teaching (♦). Verse 43 is the founder’s teaching. Verse 44 is the Wisdom of Solomon 11:20. Verse 45 rests on science (*).

READ FURTHER

- Kitty Ferguson, *Pythagoras: His Lives and the Legacy of a Rational Universe* (2008).
- Mario Livio, *The Golden Ratio* (2002): a careful look at where numbers really appear in nature (and where they don’t).

V. THE SMALL AND THE GREAT

verses 47–55

47 Monad is micro and macro, here and there.

♦

48 Look down into the smallest things: the atom is almost entirely empty space, yet it holds together, and from atoms every stone and every star is built. *

49 Look into your own body: some thirty-seven trillion cells, each one a living world, each one carrying the long book of life written in its DNA. *

50 Look up into the greatest things: our Sun is one star among hundreds of billions in our galaxy, and our galaxy is one among hundreds of billions in the heavens we can see. *

51 The universe has been shining for nearly fourteen billion years. *

52 The iron in your blood and the calcium in your bones were forged in stars long ago; you are made of the dust of stars. *

53 The small and the great are not two kingdoms but one, for one God rules them both. ♦

54 What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is like that which is below. ♦

55 The One who made the galaxy did not forget the grain of sand; the One who holds the stars has numbered the very hairs of your head.

†

IN PLAIN WORDS

A core teaching of our congregation is that God is “micro and macro, here and there”: in the tiniest atom and the greatest galaxy. This section takes the reader on a journey: down into the atom (mostly empty space, yet the building block of everything), into the body (about 37 trillion living cells, each carrying the book of life in its DNA), and up into the heavens (hundreds of billions of stars in our galaxy and hundreds of billions of galaxies). The iron in your blood was made inside stars long ago: you are made of stardust. The ancient Hermetic saying “what is below is like what is above” means that the same God and the same patterns rule the small and the great. And the God who made galaxies has counted the hairs of your head.

WHO’S WHO

Hermes Trismegistus: the legendary teacher to whom the Hermetic writings (and the Emerald Tablet) are attributed; the writings come from Egypt in the early centuries AD.

KEY WORDS

DNA: the molecule in our cells that carries the instructions for life.

Galaxy: a vast family of stars; ours is the Milky Way.

The Emerald Tablet: a short, ancient Hermetic text containing “as above, so below.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 47 states the founder’s teaching (God is micro and macro). Verses 48–52 rest on modern science (cell count from Bianconi and colleagues, 2013; star and galaxy counts from astronomy; the age of the universe, about 13.8 billion years; elements made inside stars). Verse 54 is the Emerald Tablet. Verse 55 echoes Matthew 10:30.

READ FURTHER

- Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (1980): the classic, wonder-filled journey through the universe.
- Neil deGrasse Tyson, *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry* (2017): short and clear.
- Bill Bryson, *A Short History of Nearly Everything* (2003): science told as a story.

VI. THE LIGHT THAT GIVES

verses 56–61

56 Monad gives, and gives, and is never made less. ✧

57 As the Sun pours out its light every moment and is not emptied, so the One pours out life and is not emptied; and in all our known heavens the Sun is the nearest image of the One. ✧

58 Monad does not give out of lack, but out of fullness; this giving is the overflowing of the Fullness. ✧ ✧

59 For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light we shall see light. +

60 Monad does not change. The weather changes, kingdoms change, our hearts change; Monad does not change. ✧

61 Therefore Monad can be trusted, as the sunrise can be trusted. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

God gives without ever running out, as the Sun pours out light every moment and is not emptied. This is why our congregation sees the Sun as the nearest image of God in our heavens (Chapter 5). God does not give because God needs anything; God gives because God is full, and the giving overflows. The section also teaches that God does not change: moods, weather, and kingdoms change, but Monad is as steady and trustworthy as the sunrise.

WHO'S WHO

Plotinus (about 204–270 AD): a great Greek philosopher in Rome who taught that everything flows out of “the One” the way light flows out of the Sun.

KEY WORDS

Emanation: the idea that all things flow out from God’s fullness, as rays from the Sun.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 57 is our Helio teaching (a revelation of our congregation). Verse 58 compares Plotinus. Verse 59 is Psalm 35:10: “with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light we shall see light.”

READ FURTHER

- Plotinus, *The Enneads* (the selections in Stephen MacKenna’s translation are a good start; advanced).
- Psalm 35.

VII. MONAD IS NOT A THING

verses 62–68

62 Hear this, and remember it: God is not a thing. God is Monad. ✧

63 A thing has a beginning and an end; Monad has neither. ✧

64 A thing can be held in the hand; Monad holds the hand. ✧

65 A thing can be owned; Monad owns all things, and no one owns the One. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This section protects the reader from a common mistake: thinking of God as a “thing,” however large. A thing has a beginning and an end, can be held, can be owned. God has no beginning or end, holds everything, and is owned by no one, no religion, no nation, no temple. When people shrink God to fit their fears or angers, they make an idol in their own image. The section calls us to seek God as God truly is. This is a revelation given to our congregation: “God is not a thing; God is Monad.”

66 No religion owns the One, no nation owns the One, and no temple can contain the One. ✧

67 If the heaven and heaven of heavens will not suffice Thee, how much less this house which I have built? †

68 Therefore do not make God small to fit your fear, nor shape the One in the image of your anger. Seek the One as the One truly is. ✧

KEY WORDS

Idol: anything we treat as God that is less than God.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 62 is a revelation of our congregation (the founder, 2026). Verse 67 is King Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8:27): even the highest heavens cannot contain God.

READ FURTHER

- 1 Kings 8 (Solomon's prayer).
- J. B. Phillips, *Your God Is Too Small* (1952): a short classic on outgrowing small ideas of God.

VIII. THE ONE WHO IS NEAR

verses 69–75

69 Yet the One who is above all is not far from any one of us. †

70 Monad is real, and Monad is here: in the morning light, in the bread on the table, in the laughter of a child, in the breath of your body, every hour of every day. ✧

71 We need only take the time to see. ✧

72 Split a piece of wood, and I am there; lift up a stone, and you will find Me there. †

73 The kingdom of God is within you. †

74 A spark of the light of Monad lives in every soul; therefore every person you meet carries something of the One. ✧

75 To know yourself truly is to begin to know the One; and to know the One is to know where you came from and where you are going. † ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

After showing how far above us God is, the chapter turns around: God is also very near. God is real and present in everyday life, in morning light, bread on the table, a child's laughter, your own breath, every hour of every day; we only need to take the time to notice. Jesus said in the *Gospel of Thomas* that if you split wood or lift a stone, he is there. And the root verse of our congregation says the kingdom of God is within you. A spark of God's light lives in every person, so every person you meet carries something of the One. To know yourself deeply is the beginning of knowing God.

KEY WORDS

Divine spark: the light of God within every human soul.

Gnosis: knowing God by experience (see Chapter 8).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 69 is Acts 17:27. Verses 70–71 express the founder's teaching that God is with us 24/7. Verse 72 is *Gospel of Thomas* 77; verse 73 is Luke 17:21; verse 75 joins *Gospel of Thomas* 3 with the Valentinian teacher Theodotus.

READ FURTHER

- Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (17th century): a humble cook's way of living with God every hour.
- Stevan Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas: Annotated and Explained* (2002).

IX. HOW TO SPEAK OF MONAD

verses 76–80

76 Speak of the One with reverence, for the One is holy. ✧
77 Speak of God with joy, for God is good. ✧
78 Speak of Monad with humility, for Monad is greater than every word. ✧
79 Speak of the One with truth, for the One is Truth. ✧
80 And speak to Monad, for Monad hears. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Five short verses teach how to talk about God: with reverence (because God is holy), with joy (because God is good), with humility (because God is greater than every word), with truth (because God is Truth), and finally, to talk *to* God, because God hears. This is a model for how members of our congregation speak in teaching, in conversation, and in prayer.

BEHIND THE VERSES

All five verses are the teaching of our congregation (✧).

READ FURTHER

· Psalm 144 (145 in other Bibles): a song of praise that speaks of God with joy and awe.

X. THE FIRST THOUGHT AND THE BLESSING

verses 81–85

81 And in the stillness of the Depth, Monad beheld Monad's own image in the light all around, as a face is seen in clear and living water. †
82 And from that beholding came forth the first Thought of Monad: Barbelo, the Mother-Father. In her the divine feminine and the divine masculine came into being. † ✧
83 Blessed be Monad: the One, the Light, the Depth, the Source of all truth. ✧
84 From Monad we came; in Monad we live; to Monad we return. ✧
85 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The chapter closes by opening the next one. In the silence, Monad looked into the light and “saw” Monad's own image, the way a face is seen in clear water, and from that seeing came the first Thought: Barbelo, the Mother-Father, in whom the feminine and masculine first came into being. The Blessing then gathers the whole chapter into praise: Monad is the One, the Light, the Depth, the Source; from Monad we came, in Monad we live, to Monad we return.

WHO'S WHO

Barbelo: the first emanation of the One in Sethian Gnostic teaching, the “Mother-Father.” See Chapter 2.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 81–82 render the *Secret Book of John* (the One sees its image in the light-water and the Thought comes forth), joined with a revelation of our congregation (the divine feminine and masculine come into being with Barbelo).

READ FURTHER

· Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (2006), on the coming forth of Barbelo.

THE MOTHER-FATHER

CHAPTER 2

I. THE FIRST THOUGHT

verses 1–11

1 Before anything was, there was the One; and the One was alone, and the One was enough. ✧

2 There was no time to count, no space to hold, no word to name. There was only Monad, whole, in a light that has no edge. ✧

3 And Monad looked into the light, and saw. +

4 And the seeing became a Thought; and the Thought stood forth, shining, from the One who thought it. +

5 Her name is Barbelo. +

6 She is the first Thought of the Invisible, the Forethought of all that would ever be. +

7 She is the first glory that ever shone: light from the Light. +

8 In her, for the first time, there was mother, and there was father. + ✧

9 Therefore she is called the Mother-Father: two in one, before the two were ever parted. + ✧

10 Here the great work began. Here the Architect took up the pattern by which all things would be made. ✧

11 Bow before her name, for she is the womb of the All, and through her the door of creation was opened. + ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Before anything else existed, there was only the One, Monad, complete and needing nothing. Then Monad “looked into the light and saw,” and that seeing became a Thought. This first Thought is named Barbelo. She is the first glory, light from the Light. In her, for the very first time, there was a mother and a father; that is why she is called the Mother-Father.

This is a turning point in the whole book. Up to now, God has been described with no gender at all. Here the feminine and the masculine come into being together, as two sides of one Thought. Our congregation teaches that from this moment the “Architect” of creation had the pattern from which everything else would be built: giving and receiving, masculine and feminine, joined together to bring forth new life. Verse 11 asks the reader to honour her name as the “womb of the All,” the doorway through which all creation came.

WHO’S WHO

Barbelo: in the Sethian Gnostic writings, the first being to come forth from the One; called the Mother-Father, the first Thought (Ennoia), and the Forethought (Pronoia) of all things.

The Architect: our congregation’s name for God as the designer and builder of all creation.

KEY WORDS

Ennoia: Greek for “Thought.”

Pronoia: Greek for “Forethought” or “Providence.”

Mother-Father: a title of Barbelo, showing that both the feminine and the masculine are in her.

Emanation: a “flowing out” from God, as light flows from a lamp.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 3–9 and 11 render the *Secret Book of John* (Apocryphon of John), the most important Sethian text. Verses 8 and 10 also carry two revelations of our congregation: that with Barbelo the divine feminine and masculine come into being, and that from here the Architect builds every creation after one pattern. The meaning of the name “Barbelo” is uncertain; one guess is a Hebrew phrase meaning “in four is God.”

READ FURTHER

- Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (2006).
- Marvin Meyer (editor), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (2007), the *Secret Book of John*.
- Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (1979), chapter “God the Father / God the Mother.”

II. THE GLORY OF BARBELO

verses 12–27

12 She is the image of the Invisible Spirit, the mirror in which the One is seen. †

13 She is the virgin Spirit, perfect and undivided. †

14 She is the womb of all things: before all, and all things came forth through her. †

15 She is the First Human, the pattern of humanity in heaven; every man and every woman is a far echo of her face. †

16 Three powers she holds and three names she bears, and in her the mother and the father are one. †

17 She is the Hidden, the Revealed, and the Self-Born: what is concealed, what is shown, and what comes to life. †

18 And her first act was praise. †

19 She turned toward the One from whom she came and gave thanks, for she knew her Source. †

20 She asked, and it was given: Foreknowledge, and Incorruptibility, and Eternal Life, and Truth. †

21 And they stood beside her and gave glory with her: the first gathering in the house of God, the first congregation of light. † ✧

22 Then Barbelo gazed into the pure Light with all her being, and from her gazing a spark was born. †

23 The One anointed the spark with goodness, until the Child of light lacked nothing; and this is the Christ, the Anointed. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

This section is a hymn of praise to Barbelo, drawn from the ancient Sethian writings. She is the image of the Invisible Spirit, a mirror in which the One can be seen. She is the “virgin Spirit,” pure and whole. She is the womb of all things, and the “First Human,” the heavenly pattern of humanity; every man and woman on earth is a faint echo of her. She holds three powers: what is hidden, what is revealed, and what is born.

Notice what she does first: she praises. She turns to the One and gives thanks. She asks, and receives, four gifts that become the first Aeons (eternal lights): Foreknowledge, Incorruptibility, Eternal Life, and Truth. Together they form “the first congregation of light.” Then Barbelo gazes into the pure Light, and a spark is born: the Child of Light, whom the One anoints with goodness. This Child is the Christ (the word means “the Anointed”). So heaven’s first family is the Source, the Mother-Father, and the Child.

In another ancient book she speaks in her own voice: “I am the Thought that dwells in the Light... the quiet voice beneath every voice.” The section ends with a gentle invitation: listen for her; she is closer than you think.

WHO’S WHO

The Invisible Spirit: the Sethian name for the One (Monad).

The Self-Begotten (Autogenes): the Child of Light, the Christ, in Sethian teaching.

Protennoia: “First Thought,” the speaker in the book *Trimorphic Protennoia*.

24 Behold the first family of heaven: the Source, the Mother-Father, and the Child. ✧

25 And still she speaks, in a voice so soft it is easily missed: +

26 I am the Thought that dwells in the Light. I move in every living thing. I am hidden in all, and I am the quiet voice beneath every voice. +

27 Listen for her. She is closer than you know.
✧

KEY WORDS

Aeon: an eternal being or “light” in the divine world; literally “age” or “eternity.”

Protanthropos: Greek for “First Human,” a title of Barbelo.

The Hidden, the First-Appearing, the Self-Begotten: Kalyptos, Protophanes, and Autogenes, three powers within Barbelo in some Sethian books.

Christ: from the Greek *Christos*, “anointed one.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 12–23 render the *Secret Book of John*. Verse 17 draws on the Sethian books *Allogenes*, *Zostrianos*, and *Three Steles of Seth*. Verses 25–26 render the *Trimorphic Protennoia* (Nag Hammadi Codex XIII). Verse 21 (“the first congregation of light”) and verse 24 are our congregation’s reading of these texts.

READ FURTHER

- John D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (2001) (advanced).
- David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (2010): a short, clear guide.
- *Trimorphic Protennoia* and *Thunder, Perfect Mind* in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.

III. THE PAIRS OF HEAVEN

verses 28–42

28 Hear it also as the wise of the Valentinian way heard it, for they too saw truly. +

29 Beside the Depth there was Silence; and Silence is also called Thought, and Thought is also called Grace. +

30 From the Depth and the Silence came Mind, and beside Mind stood Truth. +

31 From Mind and Truth came Word and Life; from Word and Life came Humanity and the Gathering of the faithful. +

32 Pair by pair the Fullness grew, until thirty lights shone in the heavens. +

33 Not one stood alone. Every light had its partner, and every pair was a marriage in heaven. +

34 They were yoked together like two oxen under one yoke, pulling the same plough toward the same field. +

35 And while every pair stood together, heaven was at peace. + ✧

36 But the youngest light, Sophia, reached out alone, without her partner; and from that one step apart, sorrow entered the worlds. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

Now the book tells the same story the way the Valentinian teachers told it. Beside the Depth (the One) was Silence, also called Thought and Grace. From them came pairs of Aeons: Mind and Truth, Word and Life, Humanity and Church, and on and on, until there were thirty lights in heaven. Not one stood alone; every light had a partner, like two oxen pulling one plough. While every pair stood together, heaven was at peace.

But the youngest light, Sophia (Wisdom), reached out alone, without her partner, and sorrow entered the worlds (her full story is in Chapter 4). The lesson: even in heaven, what was made to be “two-as-one” was not meant to walk alone. The *Gospel of Philip* says that when the woman was separated from the man, death came, and that Christ came to rejoin what was separated. That holy reunion is called the Bridal Chamber. The *Gospel of Thomas* adds that when we “make the two one,” we enter the kingdom. The section ends by showing that both Gnostic traditions sing one song: the One brought forth two, and the two are meant to become one.

WHO’S WHO

Sophia: Wisdom, the youngest Aeon. See Chapter 4.

Adam and Eve: the first man and woman in Genesis; the *Gospel of Philip* speaks of their separation.

37 Remember this: even in heaven, what was made to be two-as-one was never meant to walk alone. ✧

38 When the woman was within the man, there was no death. When they were parted, death came. †

39 And Christ came to mend what was torn: to join again the two who had been separated, and to give life to all who had died of the parting. †

40 That is why the holy union was called the Bridal Chamber, where the soul and its heavenly partner become one light. †

41 When you make the two one, the inside as the outside, the above as the below, the male and the female one, then you will enter the kingdom. †

42 Two traditions, two voices, one song: the One brought forth the two, and the two were made to become one. ✧

KEY WORDS

Syzygy: Greek for “yoking together,” a pair of Aeons, male and female.

Pleroma: “the Fullness,” the whole divine world of the Aeons (Chapter 3).

Bridal Chamber: a holy mystery of the Valentinians; the reunion of what was separated. See Chapter 16.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 29–34 render the Valentinian system as Irenaeus described it (*Against Heresies* I.1). Verse 36 draws on Irenaeus and the *Secret Book of John*. Verses 38–40 render the *Gospel of Philip*; verse 41 is *Gospel of Thomas* 22.

READ FURTHER

- Bentley Layton and David Brakke, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (2nd edition, 2021): includes the Valentinian writings with excellent introductions.
- Jean-Yves Leloup, *The Gospel of Philip* (2004): a readable translation with commentary.

IV. THE PATTERN OF THE ARCHITECT

verses 43–54

43 Every builder leaves a mark on the work; every master has a pattern. ✧

44 And this is the pattern of the One: a giving and a receiving, a masculine and a feminine, joined; and where they join, life. ✧

45 It was first in Barbelo; and from her it was passed to everything that would ever be made. ✧

46 Creation copies the way of God Almighty, as a child copies the way of a parent, without even knowing it does. ✧

47 Look up: the Sun gives, the Earth receives, and from the Sun and the Earth the Moon was born. ✧

48 Look down: the atom holds together because the positive and the negative are drawn to one another. ✱

49 Look within: in every cell of your body the book of life is written on two strands, wound one around the other, never apart. ✱

50 Look at any child: half of the mother, half of the father, and a new life the world has never seen before. ✱

51 Look into the flower: it holds a part that gives and a part that receives, and where they meet, the fruit begins. ✱

IN PLAIN WORDS

Here the book teaches one of our congregation’s own revelations: the “pattern of the Architect.” Every builder has a pattern, and God’s pattern is this: a giving and a receiving, a masculine and a feminine, joined, and where they join, new life. It began in Barbelo, and all creation copies it, “as a child copies the way of a parent.”

The book then shows the pattern everywhere. In the sky, the Sun gives, the Earth receives, and the Moon came from them. In the atom, positive and negative charges hold each other. In every cell, DNA is two strands wound together. In every child, half comes from the mother and half from the father. In the flower, a giving part and a receiving part bring forth fruit. Even the Earth has a north and a south, with a protective field between them. From the smallest thing to the greatest: two made for each other, and life where they meet. “And God saw that it was good.”

KEY WORDS

DNA double helix: the two-stranded shape of DNA, discovered in 1953.

Chromosomes: packages of DNA; a child receives 23 from the mother and 23 from the father.

Stamen and pistil: the pollen-giving and seed-bearing parts of a flower.

Magnetic field: the invisible field around the Earth that shields life from the solar wind.

52 Look at the Earth itself: a north and a south, and between them an unseen shield that guards all life from the fire of the Sun. ✱

53 From the smallest thing to the greatest, one pattern, written again and again: two made for each other, and life where they meet. ✧

54 And God saw that it was good. †

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 43–47 and 53 are a revelation of our congregation (the Architect's pattern), and verse 47 also recalls the teaching that the Moon (Sophia) came from the Sun and the Earth (Chapter 4). Verses 48–52 rest on science. Verse 54 is the refrain of Genesis 1.

READ FURTHER

- James D. Watson, *The Double Helix* (1968), with Brenda Maddox, *Rosalind Franklin: The Dark Lady of DNA* (2002), for the full story of the discovery.
- Siddhartha Mukherjee, *The Gene: An Intimate History* (2016).

V. THE MOTHER AND THE FATHER

verses 55–71

55 The Mother-Father held both in one. And from that holy Thought the two went out, the mother and the father, each distinct, each with a part of the great work in their hands. ✧

56 This parting was not a wound; it was a gift. The One divided the labour, never the love. ✧

57 For if the two had stayed one, there could be no meeting; and without a meeting, no new life. ✧

58 In heaven it was the same: Mind was not Truth, and Word was not Life; each had its own name and its own strength, and each was incomplete without the other. †

59 The father is the sun of his family. ✧

60 He gives. He provides. He guards. He stands at the centre and holds it steady, so that all who turn around him may find warmth, order, and peace. ✧

61 His light is meant to fall without ceasing, his strength to serve without boasting, his protection to stand without fear. ✧

62 The mother is the earth of her family. ✧

63 She receives. She nourishes. She carries life within her body, and from her the whole house grows green. ✧

64 Beneath her heart the child is formed; and the first sound any of us ever heard was a mother's heartbeat. ✱

65 She takes what is given and makes it living: the father's light becomes, in her, a child; and the child becomes, around her, a home. ✧

66 Without the father, the house has no centre. Without the mother, the house has no hearth. ✧

67 A father alone is light falling on stone. A mother alone is good soil waiting for the sun. Together they are a garden. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Mother-Father held both in one; then the two went out as mother and father, each with a part of the great work. Our congregation teaches that this parting was a gift, not a wound: "The One divided the labour, never the love." If the two had stayed one, there could be no meeting, and so no new life.

This section describes the two roles with great honour. The father is "the sun of his family": he gives, provides, and guards; he holds the centre steady so that all around him find warmth, order, and peace. The mother is "the earth of her family": she receives, nourishes, carries life within her, and turns what she receives into a living home. A child's very first sound in this world is a mother's heartbeat. Without the father the house has no centre; without the mother it has no hearth. Neither is lesser, neither is the same, and both are holy. Two scripture verses close the section: honour your father and mother, and keep the teaching of both. When a father and mother turn toward each other in love, the image of the Mother-Father is seen again on earth.

KEY WORDS

Hearth: the fireplace at the centre of an old home; a picture of warmth, food, and gathering.

BEHIND THE VERSES

This section is the founder's teaching on the parting of the Mother-Father and the importance of each role, joined to two revelations of our congregation: "the father is the sun of his family" and "the Sun gives, the planets receive." Verse 58 recalls the Valentinian pairs. Verse 64 rests on science (a baby in the womb hears the mother's heartbeat). Verse 69 is Exodus 20:12 and verse 70 is Proverbs 1:8.

READ FURTHER

- Proverbs 1–4 and 31: the teaching of a father and a mother to their children.
- Chapter 6 of *Truth from Monad* (The Solar Family).

68 Neither is lesser. Neither is the same. Both were given by the one Thought, and both are holy. ♦

69 Honour your father and your mother, for in them the first pattern of heaven came down to you. † ♦

70 Hear the instruction of your father, and do not reject the rules of your mother. †

71 And whenever a father and a mother turn again toward one another in love, the Mother-Father is seen once more upon the earth. ♦

VI. MANY LAMPS, ONE LIGHT

verses 72–81

72 Across the earth and in every age, the seekers of God have seen this same pattern, and each people has spoken of it in its own tongue. ♦

73 In the East it was taught that the Way gave birth to One, and One to Two, and Two to Three, and Three to all the ten thousand things. ♦

74 And they drew it as a circle of light and shadow, each turning into the other, each holding a seed of the other in its heart. ♦

75 In India they saw the stillness and the power forever joined, and they pictured the Holy One as half man and half woman in a single form. ♦

76 The mystics of Israel taught that above all things stand a Father and a Mother, Wisdom and Understanding, and that the Presence of God dwells among the people like a bride. ♦

77 In Egypt, in the City of the Sun, it was taught that the first Creator brought forth a first pair, and from that pair came heaven and earth. ♦

78 In the Quran it is written that all things were created in pairs, so that we might stop and reflect. ♦

79 And that husband and wife were made from one soul, to find rest in each other, with love and mercy set between them. ♦

80 In Greece they told of the first humans, whole and round, who were split in two; and since that day each half has wandered the earth in search of the other. ♦

81 Different lands, different words, one truth: the two belong together. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Our congregation receives truth from every people, and this section shows that the “pattern of two” has been seen all over the world. Chinese wisdom says the Way brought forth one, then two, then three, then all things, and draws the yin and yang as a circle of light and shadow, each holding a seed of the other. In India, Shiva and Shakti (stillness and power) cannot be separated, and are pictured together as one form, half man and half woman. The mystics of Israel speak of a heavenly Father and Mother, Wisdom and Understanding, and of God’s Presence dwelling among the people like a bride. Egypt’s priests taught that the first Creator brought forth a first pair, from whom came sky and earth. The Quran says all things were created in pairs, and that spouses were made from one soul with love and mercy between them. And a Greek story says each human was once whole, was split in two, and has been searching for its other half ever since. Many tongues, one truth: the two belong together.

WHO’S WHO

Shiva and Shakti: in Hinduism, the divine masculine (pure consciousness) and the divine feminine (power and energy).

Ardhanarishvara: “the form that is half woman,” the image of Shiva and Shakti in one body.

The Kabbalists: Jewish mystics whose teaching is called Kabbalah (“receiving”).

Atum: the creator god of Heliopolis in Egypt, who brought forth Shu (air) and Tefnut (moisture).

Aristophanes: a Greek comic poet; in Plato’s dialogue *Symposium* he tells the story of the divided humans.

KEY WORDS

Yin and yang: in Chinese thought, the receptive and the active forces, always together.

Chokhmah and Binah: Hebrew for Wisdom and Understanding; in the Zohar they are called Father and Mother.

Shekhinah: the indwelling Presence of God in Jewish teaching.

Heliopolis: “City of the Sun” in Greek; an ancient Egyptian holy city.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 73 is *Tao Te Ching* 42; verse 74 the yin-yang symbol (taijitu); verse 75 Hindu teaching; verse 76 Kabbalah and the Zohar; verse 77 Egyptian creation teaching; verses 78–79 Quran 51:49, 4:1, and 30:21; verse 80 Plato’s *Symposium*.

READ FURTHER

- Huston Smith, *The World’s Religions*.
- Daniel C. Matt, *The Essential Kabbalah* (1995).
- Plato, *Symposium* (any translation; Aristophanes’ speech).
- Seyyed Hossein Nasr (editor), *The Study Quran* (2015).

VII. MALE AND FEMALE

verses 82–90

82 In the divine image God created humankind; male and female, God created them. +

83 Not the man alone. Not the woman alone. The image of God is the two together. ✧

84 It was not good for the first one to be alone, and it is not good still. + ✧

85 For this reason a man leaves his father and his mother and holds fast to his wife, and the two become one flesh. +

86 The man is not above the woman. The woman is not above the man. They came from the same Thought; they carry the same spark. ✧

87 In Christ there is neither male nor female; all are one. +

88 Together they are heirs of the grace of life. +

89 And yet the man is not the woman, and the woman is not the man. Each holds gifts the other does not, as the Sun gives and the Earth receives, and neither is less. ✧

90 Both are loved by God, equally and beyond measure. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Genesis says God created humankind in the divine image, “male and female.” The book draws out what this means: the image of God is not the man alone or the woman alone, but the two together. It was not good for the first person to be alone, and it is still not good. Marriage makes the two “one flesh.”

Then come two truths that must be held together. First, equality: the man is not above the woman, nor the woman above the man; they come from the same Thought and carry the same spark; in Christ there is neither male nor female, and they are heirs together of life. Second, difference: the man is not the woman and the woman is not the man; each holds gifts the other does not, as the Sun gives and the Earth receives, “and neither is less.” Both are loved by God equally and without measure.

KEY WORDS

Image of God (*imago Dei*): the teaching that human beings reflect God.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 82 is Genesis 1:27 (rendered without gendered words for God); verse 84 Genesis 2:18; verse 85 Genesis 2:24; verse 87 Galatians 3:28; verse 88 1 Peter 3:7. Verses 83, 86, 89, and 90 are our congregation’s teaching (the founder: man and woman equal, both loved by God).

READ FURTHER

- Genesis 1–2.
- Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (1978): a careful reading of Genesis on man and woman (advanced).

VIII. AS ONE PERSON

verses 91–100

91 There is a way of living that heals the world, and it is simple: to see the other as yourself. ✧

92 Love your neighbour as yourself. †

93 Not as someone near you, not as someone beneath you, but as you; for we all came from one Thought, and in the deepest place we are not strangers. ✧

94 Man and woman walk the same road. They feel the same pain, carry the same weight, and stand against the same evil that has spread across this world. Neither has ever walked it alone. ✧

95 So when we meet, we meet as fellow travellers, each lightening the other's load. ✧

96 When one carries the burden of another, the law of Christ is fulfilled. †

97 The man gives as the Sun gives, freely and without pride; the woman receives and brings forth life, as the Earth receives the light and clothes the world in green; and each honours the gift of the other. ✧

98 A gentle word is a small light, and small lights are how we find our way home. ✧

99 Every kindness shown to another is shown to the image of God within them. ✧

100 And this is not for holy days only, but for the kitchen, the workplace, and the road: every day we are given. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This section turns the teaching into daily life. The founder taught that we must treat one another "as if we were the same person," equal and both loved by God. "Love your neighbour as yourself" is read closely: not "near" yourself, not "beneath" yourself, but *as* yourself, because we all came from one Thought.

Man and woman walk the same road, feel the same pain, carry the same weight, and stand against the same evil that has spread across this world; neither has ever walked it alone. So when we meet, we meet as fellow travellers who lighten each other's load. The man gives as the Sun gives, freely and without pride; the woman receives and brings forth life as the Earth does; each honours the other's gift. A gentle word is a small light; every kindness is shown to the image of God in the other person; and this is not for holy days only, but for the kitchen, the workplace, and the road.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 91 and 93–100 express the founder's teaching (✧). Verse 92 is Leviticus 19:18 (also Matthew 22:39). Verse 96 is Galatians 6:2. Verse 97 draws on our Helio teaching.

READ FURTHER

- Leviticus 19 and Luke 10:25–37 (the Good Samaritan).
- Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (2009): the African teaching "I am because we are."

IX. HARMONY

verses 101–107

101 Man and woman were made to work together, as two hands work one task, as two eyes see one world. ✧

102 When they pull apart, there is discord. When they move as one, there is music. ✧

103 Two are better than one, for together their labour bears more fruit. †

104 If one falls, the other lifts them up; but whoever falls alone has no one to help them rise. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

Man and woman are made to work together, "as two hands work one task, as two eyes see one world." Pulling apart brings discord; moving as one makes music. Ecclesiastes says two are better than one, because if one falls the other lifts them up, and that a cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Our congregation reads the three strands as the man, the woman, and God woven between them. The last verse is a wise warning: harmony is not sameness. A low note and a high note are different notes, but together they make the song.

105 And a cord of three strands is not quickly broken. †

106 The man, the woman, and God woven between them: this is the cord of three strands. ✧

107 Harmony is not sameness. The low note and the high note are not one note; but listen, and together they make the song. ✧

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 103–105 are Ecclesiastes 4:9–12. Verse 106 is our congregation's reading of the threefold cord.

READ FURTHER

· Ecclesiastes 4.

X. THE CHILD

verses 108–117

108 And when the man and the woman come together in love, something happens that no one on earth can fully explain: a child is born. ✧

109 A new soul. A new light. A divine creation of God, sent into the world. ✧

110 See the pattern once more: as the Mother-Father gazed into the Light and the Child of light came forth, so the man and the woman come together, and a child comes forth. ✧ †

111 Every child carries the mother and the father within; and above them both, the spark of the One. ✧

112 Children are the inheritance of God, the reward of the fruit of the womb. †

113 And God said: The children are Mine. ✧

114 Every soul belongs to Me. †

115 So we who are parents are keepers, not owners. We guard our children as one guards a lamp in the wind, for the flame belongs to God. ✧

116 We raise them in love, we teach them the truth, and we show them the pattern by the way we live with one another. ✧

117 For the first place a child sees the light of God carried in this world is in the two who brought them here. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

When a man and a woman come together in love, a child is born, something no one on earth can fully explain: a new soul, a new light, a divine creation of God. The book shows the pattern again: as the Mother-Father gazed into the Light and the Child of Light came forth, so the father and mother come together and a child comes forth. Every child carries mother and father within, and above both, the spark of the One.

The founder taught that "God said: the children are Mine." Parents are therefore keepers, not owners. We guard our children "as one guards a lamp in the wind," because the flame belongs to God. We raise them in love, teach them truth, and show them the pattern by how we live, because a child first learns how God's light is carried by watching the two who brought them into the world.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 108, 109, and 113 are the founder's teaching. Verse 110 joins it with the *Secret Book of John* (chapter 2, section II). Verse 112 is Psalm 126:3; verse 114 is Ezekiel 18:4.

READ FURTHER

· Psalm 126 and 128.

· Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (1923), the chapter "On Children."

XI. WHAT EVIL ENVIES

verses 118–128

118 Consider this, and keep it in your heart. ✧

119 God made the light, and God made the dark also; and it is in the dark that the stars shine their light. ✧ †

120 The dark is not evil. Evil is another thing. ✧

121 Evil cannot create. It has never made a single star, a single seed, a single child. It can only divide what God has joined. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The chapter ends with a quiet warning that leads into later chapters. First, a revelation of our congregation: God made the light and God made the dark too, and it is in the dark that the stars shine; so the dark is not evil. Evil is something else.

Evil cannot create anything: not a star, a seed, or a child. It can only divide what God has joined. The ancient Gnostic books tell how the evil "rulers" tore the woman from the man to seize the light within, and how evil spirits attack the person who sits alone

122 In the hidden books it is told that the rulers of the lower world tore the woman from the man, so that they might seize the light within. †

123 And it is told that wicked spirits fall upon the one who sits alone; but when they find the man and the woman side by side, they cannot enter. †

124 Where two are joined in love, a door of light stands open; and the wicked fear every open door. ✧

125 What God has joined together, let no one tear apart. †

126 Whatever carries the pattern of the One, evil envies. ✧

127 Watch where evil strikes, and you will know what it fears. ✧

128 Guard what God has joined, and the pattern of the Architect will shine in you. ✧

but cannot enter where a man and woman sit side by side. Where two are joined in love, “a door of light stands open,” and the wicked fear every open door. “What God has joined together, let no one tear apart.” The book does not point at any one modern thing; it leaves the reader with a question to carry: watch where evil strikes, and you will know what it fears.

WHO’S WHO

The Rulers (Archons): evil powers of the lower world in Gnostic teaching. See Chapter 7.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 119–120 are a revelation of our congregation (God created the dark; in the dark the stars shine), with Isaiah 45:7. Verse 122 renders the *Secret Book of John*; verse 123 the *Gospel of Philip*; verse 125 is Mark 10:9.

READ FURTHER

- Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (1988).
- Mark 10:1–16.

THE FULLNESS

CHAPTER 3

I. THE HOUSE OF ETERNAL LIGHT

verses 1–13

1 Above every heaven, beyond every star, there is a place where nothing is missing. ✧

2 It is called the Fullness. +

3 There no light flickers, no love runs dry, no truth is half told. ✧

4 It is the house of God, the circle of eternal light around the One. +

5 The wise of old called it Pleroma, which means “that which is full.” +

6 Hold this word in your heart: Fullness. Everything your soul has ever longed for has its home there. ✧

7 The One is beyond the Fullness, and the Fullness is the shining of the One. + ✧

8 As light pours from a lamp and fills a room, so the powers of God poured forth from the One and filled the heavens. ✧

9 These powers are the Aeons, the Eternal Ones: living lights, each one a face of the glory of God. +

10 Each Aeon is a word God spoke into the Silence, and every word was holy. ✧

11 They are not gods beside God. They are the radiance of the One, as the rays are the radiance of the Sun. ✧

12 And the Fullness is a place of rest. There no one is weary, for nothing is lacking, and nothing has to be fought for; all is given. +

13 Every quiet hour, every peaceful night, every day of rest is a small taste of that rest. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Above every heaven, the Gnostic teachers said, there is a place where nothing is missing. They called it the Pleroma, “the Fullness.” It is the house of God, a circle of eternal light around the One. Everything your soul has ever truly longed for has its home there.

The Fullness is filled with Aeons, “Eternal Ones”: living lights that flowed out of the One the way light fills a room from a lamp. Each Aeon is like a holy word God spoke into the silence. Verse 11 makes something very clear so no reader is confused: the Aeons are not other gods next to God. They are the radiance of the One, as sunbeams are the radiance of the Sun. The Fullness is also a place of rest; nothing has to be fought for there, because everything is given. Every quiet hour and every day of rest on earth is a small taste of it.

KEY WORDS

Pleroma: Greek for “fullness”; the complete divine world.

Aeon: “age” or “eternity”; an eternal light or power of God.

Emanation: flowing out from God, like light from a lamp.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 2–9 draw on both Sethian and Valentinian teaching. Verse 11 states our congregation’s belief that there is one God (Statement of Beliefs 1). Verse 12 draws on the *Gospel of Truth*, which speaks of the place of rest where nothing is lacking.

READ FURTHER

- Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (1983): a full, careful survey.
- Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (1958): a classic study (advanced).

II. THE LIGHTS AROUND THE CHILD

verses 14–29

14 From the Mother-Father came the Child of light, the Anointed; and around the Child the One set great lights to stand. +

15 Four great Lights, standing like four pillars of heaven. +

16 The first is Harmozel; the second, Oroiael; the third, Daveithai; the fourth, Eleleth. +

17 And with each Light stood three powers, twelve in all, as there are twelve hours in the day and twelve months in the year. + ✧

18 With Harmozel stood Grace, and Truth, and Form. +

19 With Oroiael stood Insight, and Perception, and Memory. +

20 With Daveithai stood Understanding, and Love, and Idea. +

21 With Eleleth stood Perfection, and Peace, and Wisdom. +

22 Hear their names again, slowly, for they are the treasures of heaven: Grace, Truth, Form. Insight, Perception, Memory. Understanding, Love, Idea. Perfection, Peace, Wisdom. ✧

23 Every good thing you have ever known on earth is a reflection of one of these. ✧

24 When grace is shown to you, a light from Harmozel has touched you. When you remember what truly matters, Oroiael is near. When you love and understand, Daveithai shines on you. When peace and wisdom find you, you are standing in the light of Eleleth. ✧

25 In the first Light the heavenly Adam was set: the perfect human of heaven, the true image of what we are. +

26 In the second Light, Seth was set, the heavenly son of Adam. +

27 In the third Light, the seed of Seth: the holy souls who would remember where they came from. +

28 And in the fourth Light, the souls who wandered for a time, and turned, and came home. +

29 See this: a light in heaven is kept even for those who wandered. No one is too late to return. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

In the Sethian teaching, around the Christ (the Child of Light) stand four great Lights, like four pillars of heaven: Harmozel, Oroiael, Daveithai, and Eleleth. With each stand three powers, twelve in all: Grace, Truth, and Form; Insight, Perception, and Memory; Understanding, Love, and Idea; Perfection, Peace, and Wisdom. The book asks us to say these names slowly, “for they are the treasures of heaven.”

Then comes a beautiful teaching of our congregation: every good thing you have known on earth is a reflection of one of these twelve. When someone shows you grace, Harmozel has touched you; when you remember what matters, Oroiael is near; when you love and understand, Daveithai shines on you; when you find peace and wisdom, you stand in the light of Eleleth.

The four Lights also hold the heavenly family of humankind: the perfect heavenly Adam, his son Seth, Seth’s holy descendants, and in the fourth Light, those souls who wandered for a time and then came home. The section ends with hope: there is a light in heaven kept even for those who wandered; no one is too late to return.

WHO’S WHO

Harmozel, Oroiael, Daveithai, Eleleth: the Four Luminaries (great Lights) of Sethian teaching.

The heavenly Adam (Pigeradamas or Geradamas): the perfect, heavenly pattern of humanity.

Seth: the third son of Adam and Eve (Genesis 4:25); in Sethian teaching also a heavenly figure and the ancestor of the spiritual people.

KEY WORDS

Luminary: a source of light; here, one of the four great Lights.

Seed of Seth: the Sethians’ name for the people who carry the light and remember where they came from.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 14–21 and 25–28 render the *Secret Book of John*. Verses 22–24 and 29 are our congregation’s reading.

READ FURTHER

· Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (2006).

· *The Gospel of the Egyptians* (also called *The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit*) in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.

III. THE THIRTY LIGHTS

verses 30–37

30 The wise of the Valentinian way counted the Fullness as thirty lights, and named them all, in pairs. +

31 First the eight: Depth and Silence, Mind and Truth, Word and Life, Humanity and Church. +

32 From Word and Life came ten: Deep and Mingling, Ageless and Union, Self-Born and Delight, Unmoved and Blending, Only-Begotten and Blessedness. +

33 From Humanity and Church came twelve: Comforter and Faith, Fatherly and Hope, Motherly and Love, Ever-Thinking and Understanding, Gathering and Happiness, Desired and Wisdom. +

34 Look closely and see what shines there: Faith, and Hope, and Love stand in the Fullness as eternal lights. + ✧

35 The virtues we reach for on earth are not rules made by people. They are lights of heaven, shining down to show us the way up. ✧

36 And see this also: beside Hope stands the Fatherly, and beside Love stands the Motherly. Even in heaven, love wears a mother's face. + ✧

37 Thirty lights, fifteen pairs, one Fullness. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Valentinian teachers counted thirty Aeons in pairs. First eight: Depth and Silence, Mind and Truth, Word and Life, Humanity and Church. From Word and Life came ten more, and from Humanity and Church came twelve more. Among those last twelve, look closely: Faith, Hope, and Love stand as eternal lights in heaven. Our congregation draws a powerful lesson: the virtues we try to practise on earth are not rules invented by people; they are lights of heaven shining down to show us the way up. Beside Hope stands the Fatherly, beside Love stands the Motherly; “even in heaven, love wears a mother's face.”

WHO'S WHO

Ptolemy: a Valentinian teacher in Rome around AD 150–160, whose list of thirty Aeons was recorded by Irenaeus.

Irenaeus of Lyon: a bishop who wrote *Against Heresies* (about AD 180), our main early source for the Valentinian system.

KEY WORDS

Ogdoad: the “eight,” the first four pairs of Aeons.

Decad and Dodecad: the “ten” and the “twelve,” the further Aeons.

Pistis, Elpis, Agape: Greek for Faith, Hope, and Love.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 30–33 render Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I.1–2. Verses 34–36 are our congregation's reading; compare 1 Corinthians 13:13 and Chapter 13.

READ FURTHER

- Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book I (free at newadvent.org).
- Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed* (2006) (advanced).

IV. THE LONGING AND THE BOUNDARY

verses 38–45

38 Of all the lights, only Mind could behold the Depth; for the One is so deep that even the Eternal Ones could not take it all in. +

39 Mind longed to show the others the greatness of the Source; but Silence held Mind back, for it was the will of the One that each should come to know through longing. +

40 And so every Aeon longed for the Source, quietly, as a flower leans toward the Sun. + ✧

41 Longing for God is not a weakness. It is the oldest prayer in heaven. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Of all the thirty, only Mind could fully see the Depth, because the One is so deep that even the Eternal Ones cannot take it all in. Mind wanted to show the others, but Silence held Mind back, because the One willed that each should come to know through longing. So every Aeon longed for the Source “as a flower leans toward the Sun.” Our congregation draws a comforting truth: longing for God is not a weakness; “it is the oldest prayer in heaven.”

Around the Fullness the One set a Boundary, called Limit and also called the Cross, to guard what is whole. The book teaches a practical lesson about boundaries: a riverbank does not stop the river; it gives the river a path. Every holy thing (a home, a

42 Around the Fullness the One set a Boundary, called Limit, to guard what is whole and keep it whole. †

43 The Boundary is also called the Cross, for it stands firm, it holds, and it keeps what is whole from what would break it. †

44 Some think a limit is the enemy of love. But the riverbank does not stop the river; it gives the river a way to flow. ✧

45 Every holy thing has its boundary: the home, the marriage, the body, the heart. Not to shut love out, but to keep love in. ✧

marriage, a body, a heart) needs a boundary, “not to shut love out, but to keep love in.”

KEY WORDS

Nous: Greek for “Mind,” the first-born Aeon of the Valentinians.

Horos: Greek for “Limit” or “Boundary”; also called Stauros, “Cross.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 38–43 render Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I.2. Verses 41, 44, and 45 are our congregation’s teaching.

READ FURTHER

· Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries* (1992): a practical book on healthy boundaries in life and love.

V. THE FRUIT OF THE FULLNESS

verses 46–54

46 And when the lights of heaven were at peace, they did a beautiful thing. †

47 Each Aeon brought forth the best and brightest it held, and they gave it all together, with one heart. †

48 And from all their gifts joined into one, there came forth a perfect beauty, the star of the Fullness, the perfect fruit of heaven. †

49 And that fruit is Jesus, the Saviour. †

50 Think on this: the Saviour is what heaven brought forth when every light gave its best. ✧

51 And so it is on earth. When each one gives their best, and all give together, something holy is born among them. ✧

52 Where two or three gather in his name, he is there in their midst. †

53 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. †

54 For in Christ the whole fullness of God dwells; and in Christ, you too are made full. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

When the Aeons were at peace again, they did something beautiful: each one brought out the best and brightest of itself, and together, with one heart, they gave it all. From all those gifts joined into one came “the perfect fruit of heaven”: Jesus, the Saviour.

Our congregation draws a lesson for life on earth: the Saviour is what heaven brought forth when every light gave its best; and when each of us gives our best together, something holy is born among us. Jesus promised to be present where two or three gather in his name; from his fullness we receive grace upon grace; and in Christ the whole fullness of God dwells, and we too are made full.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 46–49 render Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I.2.6. Verse 52 is Matthew 18:20; verse 53 John 1:16; verse 54 Colossians 2:9–10.

READ FURTHER

· John 1 and Colossians 1–2, where the word “fullness” (pleroma) is used of Christ.

VI. THE FULLNESS AND THE EMPTINESS

verses 55–63

55 Beyond the Fullness there is another place, called the Emptiness. †

56 There, what is whole is broken into pieces; there, what is known is forgotten; there, something is always missing. †

57 This world we walk in lies far from the Fullness, and so every heart here knows the feeling of something missing. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Outside the Fullness is the Emptiness: a place where wholeness is broken into pieces, knowledge is forgotten, and something is always missing. This world lies far from the Fullness, so every heart here feels that “something missing”: alone in a crowd, hungry in the middle of plenty, longing in the middle of noise.

The book says this ache is not your enemy. It is the memory of home, calling you back. The world offers many things to fill it (possessions, pleasure, noise), but “the hollow in the human

58 You have felt it: alone in the middle of a crowd; hungry in the middle of plenty; longing, in the middle of the noise, for something you cannot name. ✧

59 That ache is not your enemy. It is the memory of the Fullness, calling you home. ✧

60 The world offers many things to fill it: more possessions, more pleasure, more noise. ✧

61 But the hollow in the human heart has the shape of God, and only God can fill it. ✧

62 When the One is known, what was lacking vanishes, as the fog vanishes when the Sun rises. †

63 This is gnosis: not to be told about the Fullness, but to be filled. ✧

heart has the shape of God, and only God can fill it." When the One is known, the emptiness vanishes like fog in the sunrise. That is gnosis: not just being told about the Fullness, but being filled.

WHO'S WHO

Augustine of Hippo (354–430): an African bishop and writer; his famous line "our heart is restless until it rests in You" echoes this section.

KEY WORDS

Kenoma: Greek for "emptiness."

Hysterema: Greek for "deficiency" or "lack."

Gnosis: knowing God by experience.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 55–56 draw on Valentinian teaching. Verse 61 compares Augustine, *Confessions* I.1. Verse 62 renders the *Gospel of Truth*.

READ FURTHER

- Augustine, *Confessions*, Book I (Henry Chadwick's translation is clear).
- Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (on the "God-shaped" emptiness in the human heart).

VII. THE FULLNESS AMONG THE NATIONS

verses 64–72

64 Other peoples have also glimpsed the Fullness and named it in their own tongues. ✧

65 In India the sages prayed: That is full; this is full. From the full, the full comes forth. Take the full from the full, and the full remains. ✧

66 So it is with God: the One gives, and gives, and loses nothing; the Fullness pours out, and is still full. ✧

67 The mystics of Israel saw ten radiant powers flowing from the Infinite, arranged like a great tree of life, through which the light of God comes down into the world. ✧

68 In the East they told of a net hung across the heavens, with a jewel at every knot, and every jewel reflecting all the others, so that in each one the whole is seen. ✧

69 So are the lights of the Fullness: each one holding the glory of all. ✧

70 The faithful of the Quran call upon God by many beautiful names: the Merciful, the Light, the Peace, the Wise, the Loving; and every name is a doorway into the One. ✧

71 And the philosophers of Greece taught that from the One flows Mind, and from Mind flows Soul, as light flows from the Sun and warmth flows from the light. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Others have glimpsed the Fullness too. A famous Hindu prayer says: "That is full; this is full; from the full, the full comes forth; take the full from the full, and the full remains." In other words, God gives endlessly and is never less. The Jewish mystics saw ten radiant powers (the Sefirot) flowing from the Infinite like a tree of life. Buddhist teachers told of a great net across heaven with a jewel at every knot, each jewel reflecting all the others, like the Aeons, each holding the glory of all. The Quran calls on God by many beautiful names, each a doorway into the One. And Greek philosophers taught that Mind flows from the One and Soul from Mind, like light from the Sun.

WHO'S WHO

The sages of the Upanishads: Hindu teachers whose writings are among the oldest spiritual texts in the world.

Indra: a Hindu god of the heavens; "Indra's net" is a Buddhist picture of how all things reflect one another.

Plotinus: see Chapter 1.

KEY WORDS

Purnamadah: the opening words of the Hindu "fullness" prayer.

Sefirot: in Kabbalah, the ten emanations or powers of God.

The Ninety-Nine Names: the "most beautiful names" of God in Islam, such as the Merciful, the Light, and the Peace.

72 Many faiths, one vision: around the One there is a Fullness, and it overflows. ✧

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 65 is the peace invocation of the Isha Upanishad. Verse 67 is Kabbalah; verse 68 Huayan Buddhism; verse 70 the Names of God in Islam; verse 71 Plotinus.

READ FURTHER

- Eknath Easwaran, *The Upanishads*.
- Daniel C. Matt, *The Essential Kabbalah*.
- Francis H. Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra* (1977).

VIII. THE FULLNESS IN CREATION

verses 73–81

73 Creation itself bears witness to the Fullness, for creation was made in its image. ✧

74 Pass white light through a prism, and it opens into every colour of the rainbow. *

75 All those colours were in the white light from the beginning, hidden in its brightness. *

76 So is the Fullness: one Light holding every glory; and when it shines through creation, the colours of God appear. ✧

77 Strike one string and listen closely: within that one note sound many higher notes, softly, all in harmony. *

78 One note, many voices: such is the Fullness. ✧

79 Look up at the heavens: the galaxies are not scattered alone, but woven together in vast threads and webs across the universe. *

80 Look into your own body: heart and lungs, blood and bone, trillions of cells, each doing its own work, and all of them one life. *

81 Not one cell lives for itself alone; and not one Aeon shines for itself alone. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Creation itself shows us the Fullness. Pass white light through a prism and it opens into all the colours of the rainbow; all those colours were hidden inside the white light all along. That is a picture of the Fullness: one Light holding every glory. Pluck a single string and listen closely: inside that one note sound many higher notes in harmony; one note, many voices. The galaxies are not scattered alone but woven together in great threads and webs. And your own body is trillions of cells, each doing its own work, all one life. “Not one cell lives for itself alone; and not one Aeon shines for itself alone.”

WHO’S WHO

Isaac Newton (1643–1727): the English scientist who showed with a prism that white light contains all colours.

KEY WORDS

Prism: a clear, angled piece of glass that splits light into colours.

Overtones (harmonics): the higher notes that sound together with a plucked string.

Cosmic web: the vast network of galaxies stretching across the universe.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 74–75 rest on Newton’s prism experiments; verse 77 on the physics of sound; verse 79 on modern astronomy; verse 80 on biology.

READ FURTHER

- Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*.
- A simple home prism or a glass of water in sunlight: see it for yourself.

IX. EVERY LIGHT HAS ITS PLACE

verses 82–91

82 In the Fullness, every light has its own name, its own place, and its own work. ✧

83 Grace does not envy Truth. Hope does not envy Love. Each shines as it was made to shine, and the whole is glorious. ✧

84 So it is with every soul. ✧

85 You were given a light that no one else was given, and a work that no one else can do. ✧

86 Some are called to raise a family; some to teach; some to heal; some to serve; some to carry light where none has shone. ✧

87 Every calling is holy, as every Aeon is holy. ✧

88 There is no small light in the house of God. ✧

89 If you have ever felt unseen, remember: in heaven every light is known by name. ✧

90 So we do not measure ourselves against one another. We shine side by side. ✧

91 And when each of us gives our best, together, the Fullness is mirrored on the earth. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

In the Fullness every light has its own name, place, and work, and none envies another: Grace does not envy Truth; Hope does not envy Love. So it is with every soul. You were given a light no one else was given and a work no one else can do. Some are called to family, some to teaching, healing, serving, or carrying light where none has shone, and every calling is holy. “There is no small light in the house of God.” If you have ever felt unseen, remember that in heaven every light is known by name. So we don’t measure ourselves against each other; we shine side by side.

BEHIND THE VERSES

All verses are our congregation’s teaching; verse 86 is the founder’s revelation that every calling is sacred (see Chapter 15).

READ FURTHER

- 1 Corinthians 12 (many gifts, one Spirit).
- Chapter 15 of *Truth from Monad*.

X. THE FULLNESS WITHIN

verses 92–99

92 You did not come from nothing. You came from the Fullness. ✧

93 The spark within you was kindled in that light, and it remembers. ✧

94 That is why beauty moves you, why truth stirs you, why love can bring you to tears: they are messages from home. ✧

95 This is the prayer for you: that you may know the love that is beyond all knowing, and be filled with all the fullness of God. +

96 And the Fullness is not only above you. The kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it. +

97 It is in the quiet morning, in the hand held out, in the truth spoken when it is hard to speak. ✧

98 Wherever grace, truth, love, peace, and wisdom appear, the Fullness has touched the world. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

You didn’t come from nothing; you came from the Fullness. The spark inside you was lit there, and it remembers. That is why beauty moves you, truth stirs you, and love can bring you to tears: they are “messages from home.” The book prays that the reader may know the love beyond knowing and be filled with God’s fullness, and reminds us, with the *Gospel of Thomas*, that the kingdom is spread out on the earth right now, though people don’t see it: in a quiet morning, a hand held out, a hard truth spoken. And one day the spark will return to its light, and nothing will be missing ever again.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 95 is Ephesians 3:19; verse 96 is *Gospel of Thomas* 113.

READ FURTHER

- Ephesians 3.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (1941), a sermon on the longing for our true home.

99 And one day the spark will return to the light it came from, and nothing will be missing ever again. ✧

XI. THE YOUNGEST LIGHT AND THE BLESSING

verses 100–110

100 Yet in the Fullness there was one light who longed more than all the others. †

101 She was the last and the youngest of the Eternal Ones, and her name was Sophia, which is Wisdom. †

102 She stood at the edge of the Fullness and gazed toward the Depth, with a longing too great to hold. †

103 She longed to know the One completely, to see what even the Eternal Ones could not see. †

104 Her longing was holy; and her longing would change everything. ✧

105 Remember her name: Wisdom. For the story of Wisdom is the story of every soul. ✧

106 Blessed be Monad, the One beyond the Fullness. ✧

107 Blessed be the Fullness, the house of eternal light, where nothing is missing. ✧

108 Blessed be the Eternal Ones: Grace and Truth, Faith and Hope and Love, Peace and Wisdom, lights of heaven that shine on the earth. ✧

109 Blessed be the Saviour, the perfect fruit of the Fullness. ✧

110 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The chapter ends by introducing Sophia, Wisdom, the youngest of the Eternal Ones, who longed more than all the others. She stood at the edge of the Fullness and gazed toward the Depth, wanting to know the One completely. Her longing was holy, and it would change everything. The book adds: “the story of Wisdom is the story of every soul.” Her full story is the next chapter. The Blessing then praises Monad beyond the Fullness, the Fullness itself, the Eternal Ones (Grace and Truth, Faith, Hope and Love, Peace and Wisdom), and the Saviour, the perfect fruit of heaven.

WHO’S WHO

Sophia: Greek for “Wisdom.” See Chapter 4.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 100–104 draw on Irenaeus I.2.2 and the *Secret Book of John*.

READ FURTHER

· Proverbs 8 and the Wisdom of Solomon 7, where Wisdom is praised.

SOPHIA

CHAPTER 4

I. WISDOM

verses 1–10

1 There is a name older than the mountains, sweeter than honey, more precious than gold: Wisdom. ✧ +

2 In the tongue of the Greeks she is called Sophia; in the tongue of the Hebrews, Hokhmah. +

3 She is the youngest light of the Fullness, and the most beloved of all who seek. + ✧

4 Wisdom herself speaks: Before the mountains were settled, before the hills were raised, I was there. +

5 When the heavens were set in their place, I was there; when the circle was drawn upon the face of the deep, I was there. +

6 I was beside the Maker of all things, and I was delight, day after day, rejoicing always. +

7 She is the breath of the power of God, a pure stream flowing from the glory of the Almighty. +

8 She is the radiance of the everlasting Light, the spotless mirror of the working of God, the image of God's goodness. +

9 She is one, yet she can do all things; she remains in herself, yet she makes all things new; and in every age she enters holy souls and makes them friends of God. +

10 This is Sophia. Learn her name, and love her. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This chapter tells the story of Sophia, whose name means Wisdom. In Greek she is Sophia; in Hebrew, Hokhmah. She is the youngest light of the Fullness and the most beloved by seekers.

The Bible itself lets Wisdom speak: before the mountains and hills existed, she was there; when the heavens were set in place, she was beside the Maker of all things, full of delight. The Wisdom of Solomon praises her as the breath of God's power, the radiance of everlasting Light, a spotless mirror of God's work, who enters holy souls in every age and makes them "friends of God." The section ends simply: learn her name, and love her.

WHO'S WHO

Sophia / Hokhmah: Wisdom, pictured as a holy woman beside God in the Bible and as the youngest Aeon in Gnostic teaching.

Solomon: king of Israel (10th century BC), famous for his wisdom; the *Wisdom of Solomon* was written in his name centuries later.

KEY WORDS

Proverbs: a book of the Bible full of short wise sayings; chapter 8 is Wisdom's own speech.

Wisdom of Solomon: a book written in Greek about a century before Christ, found in the Apocrypha.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 4–6 render Proverbs 8:25, 27, 30. Verses 7–9 render the Wisdom of Solomon 7:25–27. Verse 3 draws on Gnostic teaching (Sophia, the youngest Aeon).

READ FURTHER

- Proverbs 8–9 and the Wisdom of Solomon 6–9.
- Caitlín Matthews, *Sophia: Goddess of Wisdom, Bride of God* (1991; revised 2001).

II. THE LONGING

verses 11–17

11 Now Sophia stood at the edge of the Fullness, and she longed. †

12 The wise of the Valentinian way say she longed to know the Depth completely: to hold the whole greatness of the One within her own understanding. †

13 It was a holy longing, born of love; but it was greater than any Aeon could hold. † ✧

14 The wise of the Sethian way say she longed to bring forth a likeness from herself: to create, as the One creates. †

15 And she did it alone: without the consent of the Spirit, and without her partner. †

16 Hear this, and understand: her heart was not evil. She loved too much, and reached too far, too soon, and alone. ✧

17 How many of us have done the same. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Sophia stood at the edge of the Fullness and longed. The two Gnostic schools explain her longing in two ways. The Valentinians say she longed to know the Depth (God) completely, to hold all of God's greatness in her own understanding, which was more than any Aeon could hold. The Sethians say she longed to bring forth a child from herself, to create as the One creates, and she did it alone, without the Spirit's consent and without her partner.

Our congregation adds a merciful note: her heart was not evil. She loved too much, reached too far, too soon, and alone. "How many of us have done the same."

WHO'S WHO

The Sethians and Valentinians: the two great Gnostic schools (see Chapter 11).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 12–13 render the Valentinian account (Irenaeus I.2.2); verses 14–15 render the *Secret Book of John*. Verses 16–17 are our congregation's teaching.

READ FURTHER

· Bentley Layton and David Brakke, *The Gnostic Scriptures*.

III. THE FALL

verses 18–28

18 The Valentinian wise tell that as she strained toward the Depth, she would have been dissolved into its sweetness and swallowed by the infinite, had she not been stopped. †

19 The Boundary met her, the Limit, the Cross that guards the Fullness; and it held her, and turned her back, and made her firm again. †

20 She was restored to her place in the Fullness; but her yearning was cut away from her and cast outside the Boundary. †

21 And that yearning took on a life of its own outside the light: the lower Wisdom, named Achamoth, wandering in the Emptiness. †

22 The Sethian wise tell it another way. What Sophia brought forth alone was not like the light from which it came. †

23 It was misshapen, a thing of another kind: the face of a lion, the body of a serpent, and eyes flashing like fire. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

The two schools also tell her fall differently. In the Valentinian telling, as Sophia strained toward the Depth she would have dissolved into it, but the Boundary (called Limit and the Cross) caught her, turned her back, and restored her. Her intense longing, however, was cut off and thrown outside the Fullness, where it took on a life of its own as the "lower Wisdom," called Achamoth, wandering in the Emptiness.

In the Sethian telling, what Sophia brought forth alone came out misshapen: a being with a lion's face, a serpent's body, and fiery eyes. Frightened, she cast it out of the Fullness, hid it in a bright cloud, set a throne in the cloud, and named it Yaldabaoth. Not knowing where it came from, Yaldabaoth took the light she had given it and went down to make worlds of its own. Two tellings, one sorrow: Wisdom's light fell outside the Fullness.

WHO'S WHO

Achamoth: the "lower Wisdom" in Valentinian teaching; the name comes from the Hebrew *Hokhmah*.

Yaldabaoth: the ignorant maker of the lower world in Sethian teaching (see Chapter 7).

24 When she saw it she was afraid, and she cast it away from her, out of the Fullness, so that none of the Eternal Ones would see it. +

25 She wrapped it in a bright cloud, and set a throne in the middle of the cloud, and named it Yaldabaoth. +

26 And Yaldabaoth, not knowing where it had come from, took the light its mother had given it and went down to make worlds of its own. +

27 So the light of Wisdom was carried down into the lower worlds, far from home. +

28 Two tellings, one sorrow: the light of Wisdom fell outside the Fullness. ✧

KEY WORDS

Horos / Stauros: Limit / Cross, the boundary of the Fullness.

Enthymesis: Greek for “intention” or “desire,” Sophia’s longing that was cast out.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 18–21 render Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I.2.2–4. Verses 22–27 render the *Secret Book of John*.

READ FURTHER

· Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John*.

· Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, the chapters on the Valentinian speculation.

IV. HER TEARS

verses 29–44

29 Then Wisdom grieved. +

30 She knew what she had done, and she was ashamed, and she wept. +

31 Outside the Fullness the lower Wisdom suffered every sorrow: grief, because she was left alone; fear, that life itself would leave her; confusion, not knowing where to turn; and forgetting, the loss of the light. +

32 And the wise say that from her sorrows the stuff of this world was made: from her grief and fear, the heavy things of matter; and from her turning back toward the light, the soul. +

33 So this world carries both her tears and her hope. ✧

34 The waters of the world remember her weeping, and every soul that turns toward God carries her turning. ✧

35 When it is written that the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters, the Sethian wise say it was Sophia, moving to and fro in her sorrow, for she saw that her light was gone. +

36 In another holy book she is called Faith-Wisdom, Pistis Sophia; and it is told that she saw a false light shining from below, and went down after it into the chaos, believing it was the true Light. +

37 There the powers of the lower world pressed upon her and stripped her of her light. +

38 And from the depths she cried out to the Light, again and again, thirteen times, with songs of repentance. +

39 And this was her cry: +

IN PLAIN WORDS

Then Wisdom grieved. Outside the Fullness she suffered every sorrow: grief at being alone, fear that life would leave her, confusion, and forgetting. The Valentinians taught a striking idea: this world was formed out of her sorrows. Grief and fear became the heavy things of matter, and her turning back toward the light became the soul. So the world carries both her tears and her hope.

The Sethians read Genesis 1:2, “the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters,” as Sophia moving to and fro in sorrow because her light was gone. Another book, *Pistis Sophia* (“Faith-Wisdom”), tells how she was tricked by a false light shining from below, went down after it into chaos, and was stripped of her light by evil powers. From the depths she cried out thirteen times in repentance. Verses 40–43 give her prayer in our own words: “O Light of lights, in whom I have trusted from the beginning... I am like a lamp without a flame... Save me, O Light.” And the Light heard her.

WHO’S WHO

Pistis Sophia: “Faith-Wisdom,” Sophia’s name in the book *Pistis Sophia*.

Self-Willed (Authades): the arrogant power whose false light deceived her in *Pistis Sophia*.

KEY WORDS

Matter (hyle): the physical stuff of the world.

Soul (psyche): in Valentinian teaching, made from Sophia’s turning back to the light.

Repentance: turning back toward God.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 31–32 render Irenaeus I.4–5. Verse 35 is Genesis 1:2 as read in the *Secret Book of John*. Verses 36–44 render *Pistis Sophia*, Books I–II (whose first repentance begins “O Light of lights, in whom I have had faith from the beginning”).

40 O Light of lights, in whom I have trusted from the beginning, hear me now. +

41 I saw a light below and thought it was You; I followed it, and I have fallen into the chaos. +

42 They have taken my power from me. I am like a lamp without a flame. +

43 Do not forget me. Do not leave me here. Save me, O Light, for I have trusted in You. +

44 And the Light heard her. +

READ FURTHER

- G. R. S. Mead, *Pistis Sophia* (1921; free online at sacred-texts.com).
- Psalm 68 and Psalm 129 (“Out of the depths”), which *Pistis Sophia* uses to interpret her repentances.

V. THE ANSWER

verses 45–56

45 No cry of repentance is ever lost. Every one is heard. ✧

46 The Eternal Ones heard the weeping of Wisdom, and all of them together prayed for her to the One. +

47 And the One consented, and poured out the Spirit upon her; and her partner came down to her, to make right what had gone wrong. +

48 The Valentinian wise tell that Christ stretched himself out upon the Cross, the Boundary, and reached down to the lower Wisdom, and gave her form, so that she would not be lost in the Emptiness. +

49 Then he withdrew, and she was left with the memory of his light, and she longed for it; and the longing itself began to heal her. +

50 Afterward the Saviour came to her with his angels. When she saw him, she was ashamed, and covered her face. +

51 Then she looked upon him, and rejoiced, and ran to him, and received strength from him. +

52 He healed her sorrows. He lifted grief and fear and confusion from her and set them outside her, and she was free. +

53 And in her joy she conceived a seed of light, in the image of the angels who came with the Saviour. +

54 And in the book of Faith-Wisdom, Jesus himself went down into the chaos, and lifted Wisdom up, and led her out, and gave her back her light. +

55 And the promise stands: at the end, Wisdom will enter the Fullness as a bride, joined to the Saviour, and the separation will be no more. +

56 Hear the good news of Wisdom: the fall is not the end of the story. The return is. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

“No cry of repentance is ever lost.” All the Eternal Ones heard Wisdom weeping and prayed for her together, and the One poured out the Spirit upon her; her partner came down to set things right. In the Valentinian telling, Christ stretched himself along the Cross (the Boundary) and reached down to give her shape so she would not be lost; then he withdrew, and her longing for his light began to heal her. Later the Saviour came with his angels; at first she covered her face in shame, then she looked at him, rejoiced, ran to him, and received strength. He lifted her grief, fear, and confusion away, and in her joy she conceived a seed of light. In *Pistis Sophia*, Jesus himself goes down into the chaos, lifts her up, and gives her back her light. And the promise stands: at the end Wisdom will enter the Fullness as a bride, joined to the Saviour. The good news: the fall is not the end of the story; the return is.

WHO’S WHO

The Saviour / Christ / Jesus: the one who comes down to rescue Wisdom (see Chapter 9).

KEY WORDS

Consort / partner: Sophia’s paired Aeon in the Fullness.

Spiritual seed: the light Sophia conceived, sown into human souls.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 46–47 render the *Secret Book of John*. Verses 48–53 and 55 render Irenaeus I.4.1, I.4.5, and I.7.1. Verse 54 renders *Pistis Sophia*.

READ FURTHER

- Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed* (advanced).
- Luke 15 (the parables of the lost sheep, coin, and son), which carry the same heart.

VI. THE LIGHT SHE LEFT IN US

verses 57–64

57 Where did the light of Wisdom go? ✧
58 It went into us. +
59 When the first human lay lifeless, made of the stuff of the lower world, the light of Sophia was breathed into him; and he rose, and shone. +
60 The spark within you is the light of Wisdom, carried in a human heart. + ✧
61 That is why you cannot be satisfied with less than the truth. That is why you long. ✧
62 The seed of Wisdom was sown in the souls of humankind, and it grows wherever it is watered with knowledge and love. +
63 You are not only a child of the earth. You carry the daughter of the Fullness within you. ✧
64 Guard that light. Feed it. Let it grow. For when it shines, Wisdom herself is returning home through you. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Where did Wisdom's light go? Into us. The *Secret Book of John* tells that the first human lay lifeless until Sophia's stolen light was breathed into him, and then he rose and shone. So the spark in every person is Wisdom's light, carried in a human heart. That is why we can't be satisfied with less than the truth, and why we long. You are not only a child of the earth; you carry the daughter of the Fullness within you. Guard that light, feed it, let it grow; when it shines, Wisdom herself is coming home through you.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 59 renders the *Secret Book of John*. Verse 62 draws on the Valentinian teaching of the spiritual seed. The rest is our congregation's teaching.

READ FURTHER

· Chapter 8 of *Truth from Monad* (The Kingdom Within).

VII. THE DAUGHTER OF LIGHT

verses 65–83

65 And this was revealed to our congregation: look up at night, and see her. ✧
66 The Moon is Sophia, the daughter of Monad, brought forth from the Sun and the Earth. ✧
67 She has no light of her own. All her light is received from the Sun, and she gives it back into the night. ✧
68 So is Wisdom: she does not shine by herself; she receives the light of the One, and pours it out on all who walk in the night. ✧
69 The Earth did not always have a Moon. ✧
70 In the young days of the world a great body struck the Earth, and from the fire and the scattered pieces the Moon was gathered together. ✧
71 The stone of the Moon is like the stone of the Earth; she was born of the Earth, under the Sun. ✧
72 Watch her journey: every month she wanes until she is hidden, and every month she returns until she is full. ✧
73 This is the story of Wisdom, written in the sky: the fall, the hiding, the turning, and the return to fullness. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This is one of the most important revelations given to our congregation: the Moon is Sophia, the daughter of Monad, brought forth from the Sun and the Earth. The book then shows how the Moon, in the light of science, tells Wisdom's story in the sky.

The Moon has no light of her own: all of it is sunlight, which she gives back into the night, as Wisdom receives God's light and pours it out on those who walk in the night. The Earth did not always have a Moon: scientists believe a great body struck the young Earth and the Moon gathered from the debris, and Moon rocks are very like Earth rocks, "born of the Earth, under the Sun." Every month she wanes until hidden and returns until full, the story of the fall, the hiding, the turning, and the return. She always turns the same face to Earth, as Wisdom never turns away from us. She moves the tides from far away, as Wisdom moves the depths of the soul. She steadies Earth's tilt and keeps our seasons gentle. And at an eclipse, the small Moon almost exactly covers the great Sun, because the Sun is about 400 times wider and 400 times farther away: the small and the great "in perfect measure." Every night she rises to remind you that you were made to receive the light and give it back.

74 She always turns the same face toward the Earth, and never looks away. ✱

75 So Wisdom never turns her face from the children of the Earth. ✧

76 She moves the tides of the great seas, though she is far away. ✱

77 So Wisdom moves in the depths of the soul, though she is unseen. ✧

78 She steadies the Earth as it turns, keeping its seasons gentle and its tilt from wandering. ✱

79 So Wisdom steadies the one who holds to her. ✧

80 And when the Sun is hidden at the eclipse, the Moon, so much smaller, covers the face of the Sun exactly; for the Sun is about four hundred times wider than the Moon, and about four hundred times farther away. ✱

81 In that moment the small one and the great one stand in perfect measure. So it is when Wisdom stands in line with the Light: nothing is out of place. ✧

82 God created the dark, and in the dark the Moon and the stars shine their light. ✧

83 Every night she rises to remind you: you were made to receive the light, and to give it back. ✧

KEY WORDS

Giant-impact hypothesis: the leading scientific explanation of the Moon's origin; a Mars-sized body (called Theia) struck the young Earth about 4.5 billion years ago.

Tidal locking: why the Moon always shows us the same face.

Lunar cycle: the Moon's monthly round of phases, about 29.5 days.

Eclipse: when the Moon passes in front of the Sun (solar eclipse).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 65–66 are a revelation of our congregation (the Moon is Sophia). Verses 67, 69–72, 74, 76, 78, and 80 rest on science (Apollo samples; tides; the Moon steadying Earth's axial tilt; the 400-to-1 coincidence). Verse 82 is the revelation that God created the dark. The comparisons in between are our congregation's teaching. Note: identifying the Moon with Sophia is our own revelation; the ancient texts do not say it, and we say so honestly.

READ FURTHER

- Oliver Morton, *The Moon: A History for the Future* (2019).
- NASA's Moon website (moon.nasa.gov), free.
- Any clear night: watch the Moon through one full month.

VIII. WISDOM AMONG THE NATIONS

verses 84–92

84 Every people has known Wisdom and loved her, by many names. ✧

85 In India she is honoured as Saraswati, flowing like a river: the mother of learning, of music, and of speech. ✧

86 The followers of the Buddha call the Perfection of Wisdom the Mother of all the awakened ones, for from Wisdom every awakening is born. ✧

87 In Egypt it was told that Isis searched the whole land for the scattered pieces of her beloved, and gathered them together, and brought him back to life. ✧

88 So Wisdom gathers the scattered sparks of light, one by one, and brings them home. ✧

89 In the Quran it is written that whoever is given wisdom has been given a great good. ✧

90 The seekers of Greece named their whole search for truth after her: philosophy, the love of Wisdom. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Every people has loved Wisdom. In India she is Saraswati, flowing like a river, the mother of learning, music, and speech. Buddhists call the Perfection of Wisdom “the Mother of all Buddhas,” because every awakening is born from wisdom. In Egypt, Isis searched the whole land for the scattered pieces of her beloved Osiris, gathered them, and brought him back to life, as Wisdom gathers the scattered sparks. The Quran says whoever is given wisdom has been given great good. The Greeks named their whole search for truth after her: *philosophy*, “love of Wisdom.” And Proverbs says: get Wisdom, and with all you get, get understanding.

WHO'S WHO

Saraswati: the Hindu goddess of knowledge, music, and speech; also a sacred river.

Prajnaparamita: “the Perfection of Wisdom,” honoured as a mother in Mahayana Buddhism.

Isis and Osiris: Egyptian goddess and god; Isis restored her murdered husband Osiris.

91 And the teachers of Israel said of Wisdom:
Forsake her not, and she shall keep you; love
her and honour her, and she shall embrace you.
†

92 Many lands, many names, one Wisdom,
calling every heart toward the light. ✧

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 85 is Hindu; 86 Buddhist; 87 Egyptian; 89 Quran 2:269; 90 the Greek word *philosophia*; 91 Proverbs 4:6, 8.

READ FURTHER

- Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*.
- Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris* (ancient; free online).

IX. EVERY SOUL IS SOPHIA

verses 93–103

93 Now hear why the story of Wisdom is your
story. ✧

94 You too came from the light. ✧

95 You too have longed for more than you
could hold. ✧

96 You too have reached out alone, and made
something you never meant to make. ✧

97 You too have wept, and been afraid, and for-
gotten for a while who you are. ✧

98 And you too can turn. ✧

99 There is no fall so deep that the turning can-
not heal it. ✧

100 Wisdom fell, and Wisdom was not aban-
doned. Neither are you. ✧

101 The Light that heard her hears you; the
Saviour who went down to her comes down to
you. ✧

102 So we do not look down on anyone who
has fallen. We remember that we have fallen
too, and we reach out a hand. ✧

103 For every soul we help lift is Wisdom com-
ing home. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Why tell Wisdom's story? Because it is your story. You too came from the light; you too have longed for more than you could hold; you too have reached out alone and made something you never meant to make; you too have wept, been afraid, and forgotten for a while who you are. And you too can turn. "There is no fall so deep that the turning cannot heal it." Wisdom fell and was not abandoned; neither are you. The same Light that heard her hears you. So we never look down on anyone who has fallen; we remember we have fallen too, and we reach out a hand, because every soul we help lift is Wisdom coming home.

BEHIND THE VERSES

This section is our congregation's teaching (✧).

READ FURTHER

- Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1992).

X. WALKING WITH WISDOM AND THE BLESSING

verses 104–119

104 Wisdom does not hide from those who
seek her. †

105 She stands on the heights, in the midst of
the ways; she sits by the gates and sings at the
entrances, saying: Come, eat of my bread, and
drink the wine I have mingled for you. †

106 Whoever rises early to look for her will not
search long; they will find her sitting at their
door. †

107 Seek her in the scriptures, in the stars, and
in the quiet of prayer. ✧

108 Seek her in the counsel of the old and in the
questions of the young. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Wisdom does not hide. Proverbs pictures her standing at the crossroads, calling out in the street, inviting all to her table. The Wisdom of Solomon says whoever rises early to look for her will find her sitting at the door. Seek her in scripture, in the stars, in prayer, in the counsel of the old and the questions of the young, and especially when you are wrong, "for that is when she teaches best." James promises that God gives wisdom freely to anyone who asks. Every night when the Moon rises, remember her: she fell and was lifted; her light is in you; you too are on your way home. The Blessing praises Monad who heard Wisdom's cry, Sophia herself, the Saviour who went down for her, and the Moon who carries the Sun's light into the night.

109 Seek her most when you are wrong, for that is when she teaches best. ✧

110 If anyone lacks wisdom, let them ask of God, who gives to all freely and without reproach, and it will be given. †

111 And every night, when the Moon rises, remember her. ✧

112 Remember that she fell, and was lifted. ✧

113 Remember that her light is in you. ✧

114 Remember that you, too, are on your way home. ✧

115 Blessed be Monad, the Light of lights, who heard the cry of Wisdom. ✧

116 Blessed be Sophia, the daughter of Monad, who fell for love and was lifted by love. ✧

117 Blessed be the Saviour, who went down to bring her home. ✧

118 Blessed be the Moon, who carries the light of the Sun into the night. ✧

119 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love.
✧

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 105 is Proverbs 8:1–3 and 9:5; verse 106 the Wisdom of Solomon 6:14; verse 110 James 1:5.

READ FURTHER

- James 1 and 3 (wisdom from above).
- Proverbs 1–9.

THE SUN

CHAPTER 5

I. THE LAMP OF HEAVEN

verses 1–11

1 Lift up your eyes in the morning, and behold the Sun. ✧

2 Of all the lights in our heavens, the Sun is the nearest image of Monad. ✧

3 The Sun is not Monad; no light that can be seen is the One. But in all our known heavens, nothing shows the One more clearly. ✧

4 As Monad is the Source of all that is, the Sun is the source of light and life in our world. ✧

5 As Monad gives without being emptied, the Sun gives without being emptied. ✧

6 As Monad stands at the centre of the Fullness, the Sun stands at the centre of our heavens. ✧

7 What is above is like that which is below: the One in the Fullness, the Sun in the sky, the father in the home. ✧ ✧

8 God set two great lights in the heavens: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. †

9 The greater light is the Sun; the lesser is Wisdom, the Moon, who carries the light of the Sun into the night. † ✧

10 Yet no one can look straight into the Sun without harm; how much less can anyone look upon the One. ✧

11 So the Sun teaches two truths at once: God is light, and God is beyond our sight. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This chapter teaches our congregation's "Helio" faith (from *helios*, the Greek word for the Sun). The founder's revelation is that, of all the lights in our heavens, the Sun is the nearest image of Monad. The book is careful: the Sun is not God, and no visible light is the One; but nothing in our known heavens shows the One more clearly. The comparisons are simple: as Monad is the source of all, the Sun is the source of light and life here; as Monad gives without being emptied, so does the Sun; as Monad is the centre of the Fullness, the Sun is the centre of our heavens; and in the home, the father is like the sun. Genesis calls the Sun the "greater light" and the Moon the "lesser light," which our congregation sees as Wisdom carrying the Sun's light into the night. Finally, a double lesson: no one can stare at the Sun without harm, how much less at God; so the Sun teaches both that God is light and that God is beyond our sight.

KEY WORDS

Helio-Gnosticism: our congregation's identity: Gnostic Christian faith that sees God as Light, Christ as the Sun of righteousness, and the visible Sun as the great image of divine light.

As above, so below: the Hermetic teaching that the same pattern appears in heaven and on earth.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 2–7 express revelations of our congregation (the Sun as nearest image of Monad; the father as the sun of the family) and the Hermetic correspondence. Verse 8 is Genesis 1:16. Verse 9 joins it to the revelation that the Moon is Sophia.

READ FURTHER

· Genesis 1.

II. THE GIVER

verses 12–21

12 The Sun is the great Giver. ✧

13 Every moment it pours out light, and warmth, and power, in every direction, to all that is near and all that is far. ✧ ✱

14 It asks for nothing back. It does not choose who will receive. It gives. ✧

15 This is masculine energy: the giving, the outpouring, the light that goes forth. ✧

16 In the heart of the Sun, fire is born from the joining of the smallest things; and every second, millions of tons of its substance are turned into pure light. ✱

17 The Sun spends itself to give, and it has been giving for four and a half billion years. ✱

18 The light that warms your face this morning began its journey in the heart of the Sun many thousands of years ago; it worked its way outward through the fire, and then crossed the heavens in about eight minutes to reach you. ✱

19 Think of it: a gift prepared for you before the first word was ever written. ✧

20 In a single hour, the Sun pours onto the Earth more power than all the people of the world use in a whole year. ✱

21 Such is the generosity of the Giver; and greater still is the generosity of the One. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Sun is the great Giver. Every moment it pours out light, warmth, and power in every direction, asks for nothing back, and does not choose who receives. Our congregation calls this “masculine energy”: giving, outpouring, going forth. Science makes the Sun’s generosity astonishing. In its core, the smallest particles fuse together, and every second millions of tons of its substance turn into pure light. It has been giving for about four and a half billion years. The light warming your face this morning began its journey deep inside the Sun thousands of years ago, slowly working its way out, and then crossed space in about eight minutes to reach you: “a gift prepared for you before the first word was ever written.” In just one hour, sunlight brings the Earth more energy than all humanity uses in a year. Such is the generosity of the Giver, and God’s is greater still.

KEY WORDS

Nuclear fusion: the joining of light atoms (hydrogen) into heavier ones (helium) in the Sun’s core, releasing enormous energy.

Photon: a particle of light.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 15 is a revelation of our congregation (the Sun is masculine, giving energy). Verses 16–18 and 20 rest on solar science (about 4 million tons of mass become energy each second; light takes thousands of years to leave the core and 8 minutes 20 seconds to reach Earth).

READ FURTHER

- David Whitehouse, *The Sun: A Biography* (2005).
- NASA’s Solar Dynamics Observatory website (sdo.gsfc.nasa.gov), free images of the Sun.

III. THE CENTRE

verses 22–28

22 The Sun stands at the centre, and all things turn around it. ✧ ✱

23 The planets, the moons, the wandering stones, and the ice that sails in from the far edge: all are held by the Sun, and none falls away. ✱

24 Of all the substance in our heavens, the Sun holds more than ninety-nine parts in every hundred. ✱

25 Yet the Sun does not crush what it holds. It keeps each one at its own distance, on its own path, in its own time. ✱ ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Sun stands at the centre and everything turns around it: planets, moons, asteroids, comets. It holds more than ninety-nine parts out of every hundred of all the matter in our solar system. Yet it does not crush what it holds; it keeps each world at its own distance, on its own path, in its own time. Our congregation draws the lesson of true leadership: the strength of the centre is not to press down, but to hold steady so everything around it can move in order and peace. The Earth circling the Sun gives us years, and its turning gives us days; every season and every birthday is counted by the Sun.

26 This is the strength of the centre: not to press down, but to hold steady, so that everything around it may move in order and in peace. ✧

27 The Earth circles the Sun, and so we have years; the Earth turns before the Sun, and so we have days. *

28 Every season, every harvest, every year of your life is counted by the Sun. ✧

KEY WORDS

Solar system: the Sun and everything held in orbit around it.

Gravity: the pull that holds the planets to the Sun.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 23–24 and 27 rest on astronomy (the Sun holds about 99.86% of the solar system’s mass).

READ FURTHER

· Dava Sobel, *The Planets* (2005).

IV. LIFE FROM THE SUN

verses 29–37

29 Nothing on the Earth lives without the Sun. *

30 The green leaf drinks the sunlight, and with water and air it makes food, and breathes out the air we breathe in. *

31 The bread on your table is sunlight, gathered by the wheat. * ✧

32 The fruit on the tree is sunlight, made sweet. ✧

33 The fire in the hearth is sunlight the tree stored up long ago, now given back as warmth. *

34 The rain that waters the fields was lifted from the sea by the warmth of the Sun. *

35 Even your body takes the Sun into itself: your skin makes from sunlight what your bones need to grow strong. *

36 The morning light tells your body when to wake, and the fading light tells it when to rest. *

37 We live by the Sun more than we know; and we live by the One more than we know. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Nothing on Earth lives without the Sun. Green leaves drink sunlight and, with water and air, make food and breathe out the oxygen we breathe in. So “the bread on your table is sunlight, gathered by the wheat,” and fruit is sunlight made sweet. Firewood is sunlight a tree stored up long ago. Rain is lifted from the sea by the Sun’s warmth. Even your skin turns sunlight into what your bones need, and morning light sets your body’s clock. “We live by the Sun more than we know; and we live by the One more than we know.”

KEY WORDS

Photosynthesis: how plants turn light, water, and carbon dioxide into food and oxygen.

Vitamin D: a vitamin the skin makes in sunlight, needed for strong bones.

Circadian rhythm: the body’s daily clock, set by light.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 29–36 rest on biology and earth science.

READ FURTHER

· Oliver Morton, *Eating the Sun: How Plants Power the Planet* (2007).

V. THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

verses 38–50

38 The prophets looked at the Sun and spoke of the Saviour. †

39 It was promised: For you who honour My name, the Sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. †

40 The Psalmist sang: In the Sun God has set a tabernacle; and the Sun comes forth like a bridegroom from his chamber, and exults like a giant to run his course; its going forth is from the end of heaven, and its circuit to the other end, and no one is hidden from its heat. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

The prophets saw the Sun and spoke of the Saviour. Malachi promised “the Sun of righteousness” rising “with healing in its wings.” A Psalm pictures the Sun as a bridegroom and a runner, and the wise Sirach writes, “The Sun that gives light looks upon all things.” Jesus called himself “the light of the world”; John’s Gospel calls him the true Light; at the Transfiguration his face shone like the Sun; and in John’s vision his face was like the Sun in full strength. He rose from death “at the rising of the Sun,” and so the first day of the week, the day of the Sun (Sunday), became the day of the Resurrection, when early Christians gathered at dawn. In the oldest Christian tombs under St Peter’s in Rome

41 And the wise one wrote: The Sun that gives light looks upon all things, and its work is full of the glory of God. +

42 Jesus said: I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk without light, but will have the light of life. +

43 He was the true Light, who gives light to every person coming into the world. +

44 On the high mountain he was transfigured before them: his face shone like the Sun, and his garments became white as snow. +

45 And John saw him in a vision, and his face was like the Sun shining in its full strength. +

46 And when he rose from death, the women came to the tomb very early on the first day of the week, when the Sun had now risen. +

47 The Saviour rose with the Sun. ✧

48 So the first day of the week, the day of the Sun, became the day of the Resurrection, and the faithful gathered at dawn to greet the risen Light. + ✧

49 And in the oldest tombs beneath the great church of Rome, the faithful pictured Christ, it is believed, as the Sun, riding a chariot of light across the heavens. ✱

50 Jesus Christ, King of Kings, is the Sun of our souls: the light that gives, the centre that holds, the warmth that heals. ✧

there is even a mosaic of Christ as the Sun riding a chariot of light. Our congregation proclaims: Jesus Christ, King of Kings, is the Sun of our souls.

WHO'S WHO

Malachi: the last of the Old Testament prophets (5th century BC).

Justin Martyr (about 100–165): an early Christian teacher who described Christians gathering on “the day of the Sun.”

KEY WORDS

Transfiguration: the moment on a mountain when Jesus shone with light before three disciples.

Vatican necropolis: the ancient burial ground under St Peter's Basilica; the “Christ as Helios” mosaic is in the tomb of the Julii (3rd century).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 39 is Malachi 3:20 (4:2 in other Bibles); 40 Psalm 18:6–7; 41 Sirach 42:16; 42 John 8:12; 43 John 1:9; 44 Matthew 17:2; 45 Revelation 1:16; 46 Mark 16:2; 48 Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67; 49 the Vatican mosaic.

READ FURTHER

- Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries* (1985), especially “The Light of the World.”
- Matthew 17 and Mark 16.

VI. THE LIGHT OF THE HIDDEN BOOKS

verses 51–57

51 The hidden books also speak of the Saviour as light. +

52 Jesus said: I am the light that shines over all things. I am the All; from me the All came forth, and to me the All returns. +

53 And he said: Within a person of light there is light, and it shines on the whole world; and if it does not shine, the world has no light. +

54 It is written that after he rose, a great stream of light came down upon him, brighter than every light of heaven, and he went up into the heights clothed in that light. +

55 It is written that the faithful are drawn up to the Saviour as rays are drawn back into the Sun, and nothing can hold them back. +

56 And the followers of Mani taught that the Sun and the Moon are ships of light, sailing the heavens, gathering the light scattered in the world and carrying it home. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Gnostic books also describe the Saviour as light. In the *Gospel of Thomas* Jesus says, “I am the light that shines over all things,” and teaches that there is light inside a person of light that shines on the whole world. *Pistis Sophia* tells that after the Resurrection a great stream of light came down upon him and he ascended clothed in it. The *Treatise on the Resurrection* says the faithful are drawn up to the Saviour like rays drawn back into the Sun. And the followers of Mani taught that the Sun and Moon are “ships of light” carrying scattered light back home. So every ray of sunlight is an invitation to return to the Light.

WHO'S WHO

Mani (216–274 or 277): a prophet from Babylonia who founded Manichaeism, a religion of light that spread from Rome to China.

KEY WORDS

Manichaeism: Mani's religion, which taught a struggle between Light and evil and the return of light to its source.

57 So the Sun is a messenger: every ray that reaches you is an invitation to return to the Light. ♦

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 52 is *Gospel of Thomas* 77; 53 *Gospel of Thomas* 24; 54 *Pistis Sophia* I; 55 *Treatise on the Resurrection* 45; 56 Manichaean teaching.

READ FURTHER

- Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (1985) (advanced).
- Stevan Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas: Annotated and Explained*.

VII. ONE SUN ACROSS THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD

verses 58–66

58 Every people under heaven has looked up at the Sun and seen something holy. ♦

59 In Egypt the morning Sun was greeted each day as the light reborn; and one king sang of the Sun whose rays reach down like hands, giving life to every land. ♦

60 In India, at every sunrise, millions pray the ancient prayer: we meditate on the glorious light of the divine Sun; may it awaken our minds. ♦

61 Plato, the great teacher of Greece, said the Sun is the image of the highest Good: as the Sun gives light to the eye and life to all that grows, so the Good gives truth to the mind and being to all that is. ♦

62 The Quran says that God made the Moon a light and the Sun a lamp, and it swears by the Sun and its morning brightness. ♦

63 The people of Japan honour the great light of heaven, and their land is called the land of the rising Sun. ♦

64 The peoples of the Andes honoured the Sun as the giver of warmth and harvest, and kept a great feast at the turning of the year. ♦

65 And the wise of the Hermetic way called the Sun the visible image of the invisible Maker. ♦

66 Many peoples, many prayers, one witness: the Sun points to the Giver of all. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Every people has seen something holy in the Sun. In Egypt the morning Sun was greeted daily as the light reborn, and King Akhenaten's hymn pictures the Sun's rays reaching down like hands giving life. In India millions pray the Gayatri at sunrise: "we meditate on the glorious light of the divine Sun; may it awaken our minds." Plato, the great teacher of Greece, said the Sun is the image of the highest Good: it gives light to the eye and life to all that grows, as the Good gives truth to the mind and being to all things. The Quran calls the Sun a lamp and swears by its brightness. Japan is "the land of the rising Sun"; the Inca kept a great feast of the Sun; and the Hermetic writings called the Sun the visible image of the invisible Maker. Many prayers, one witness: the Sun points to the Giver of all.

WHO'S WHO

Akhenaten: a pharaoh of Egypt (14th century BC) who worshipped the Aten, the disk of the Sun, and wrote the *Great Hymn to the Aten*.

Plato (about 428–348 BC): a great Greek philosopher, student of Socrates.

Amaterasu: the Sun goddess of Japan's Shinto faith.

The Inca: the people of the great Andean empire of South America, who kept the festival Inti Raymi.

KEY WORDS

Gayatri mantra: an ancient Hindu prayer to the divine light of the Sun (Rig Veda 3.62.10).

The Good: in Plato, the highest reality, the source of all truth and being.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 59 is the *Great Hymn to the Aten*; 60 the Gayatri; 61 Plato, *Republic* VI (507–509); 62 Quran 71:16 and 91:1; 63 Shinto; 64 Inca; 65 the Hermetic writings.

READ FURTHER

- Plato, *Republic*, Books VI–VII (the Sun and the Cave).
- Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*.

VIII. THE BREATH OF THE SUN

verses 67–74

67 The Sun does not only shine; it breathes. ✱
68 From its surface a wind blows out without ceasing, past every planet, to the far edge of the heavens. ✱
69 And at times the Sun flares, and great clouds of its fire are flung out into the heavens. ✱
70 When they reach the Earth, the skies of the far north and the far south burst into curtains of coloured light. ✱
71 And the works of human hands feel it: lights may fail, voices carried through the air fall silent, and guiding signals wander. ✱
72 Yet the Earth is shielded, and her children live safely beneath the shield. ✱ ✧
73 Learn from this: the power of the giver is great, and every receiver is touched by it. ✧
74 So let every giver give with care, for the gift reaches farther than the giver can see. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Sun not only shines, it “breathes.” A wind of particles blows from it constantly past every planet. Sometimes it flares and flings out great clouds of its fire. When these reach Earth, the skies near the poles light up with the aurora, and human technology feels it: radios fall silent and signals go astray: in the great storm of 1859 telegraph lines sparked, and in 2024 GPS signals wandered. Yet Earth is shielded by its magnetic field and air, so life is safe. The lesson: the giver’s power is great and every receiver feels it, so every giver (every father, leader, strong person) should give with care, because “the gift reaches farther than the giver can see.”

KEY WORDS

Solar wind: the stream of charged particles flowing from the Sun.
Solar flare / coronal mass ejection: bursts of energy and matter from the Sun.
Aurora: the northern and southern lights.
Carrington Event: the great solar storm of 1859.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 67–72 rest on solar science (and the founder’s teaching that the Sun acts upon the planets).

READ FURTHER

· Stuart Clark, *The Sun Kings* (2007): the story of the 1859 solar storm.

IX. SHINE AS THE SUN SHINES

verses 75–90

75 Now learn the way of the Sun, and walk in it. ✧
76 The Sun rises every morning. It does not stay down because yesterday was cloudy. ✧
77 So rise again every morning, whatever yesterday was. ✧
78 The Sun rises on the evil and on the good, and its warmth falls on the just and the unjust alike. ✧
79 So give your kindness without first asking who deserves it. ✧
80 The Sun gives its best to the smallest seed and the tallest tree alike. ✧
81 So give your best to the small and the great alike. ✧
82 The Sun gives and keeps no count. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Now the chapter teaches us to live like the Sun. The Sun rises every morning, even after a cloudy day, so rise again whatever yesterday was. Jesus said the Sun rises on the evil and the good, so give kindness without first asking who deserves it. The Sun gives its best to the smallest seed and the tallest tree, so treat the small and great alike. The Sun keeps no count, so give in secret. The Sun is faithful, so be faithful in small things, and people will trust your light. Jesus said, “You are the light of the world... let your light shine.” There is a sun within you, the spark of the One. To every father: you are the sun of your family; give, hold the centre steady, and let all who turn around you feel your warmth. And to everyone, man and woman: carry the light, because it was given to be shared.

83 So give in secret; let your left hand not know what your right hand is doing. †

84 The Sun is faithful. In all the ages of the world, not one morning has it failed to rise. ✧

85 So be faithful in small things, day after day, and you will become a light others can trust. ✧

86 You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. †

87 Let your light shine before all people, that they may see your good works and give glory to the One. †

88 There is a sun within you, for the spark of the One is light. Let it shine. ✧

89 To every father: give as the Sun gives, and let your warmth be felt by all who turn around you. ✧

90 And to every one of us, man and woman alike: carry the light, for the light was given to be shared. ✧

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 78 is Matthew 5:45; 83 Matthew 6:3; 86 Matthew 5:14; 87 Matthew 5:16. Verse 89 is a revelation of our congregation (the father is the sun of his family).

READ FURTHER

· Matthew 5–7 (the Sermon on the Mount).

X. THE LIGHT BEYOND THE SUN AND THE BLESSING

verses 91–104

91 Yet remember: the Sun is a lamp, and Monad is the Light. ✧

92 The Sun was born and will one day grow old; Monad has no birth and no old age. ✧ ✱

93 The Sun lights one small corner of the heavens; Monad fills the Fullness. ✧

94 The Sun warms the body; Monad warms the soul. ✧

95 Look at the morning and give thanks; then look past the Sun, to the One it points to. ✧

96 It is written that the city of God has no need of the Sun or of the Moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light. †

97 And it is promised: the Sun will no longer be your light by day, nor the Moon by night; for God will be your everlasting light. †

98 On that day we will see the Light that every sunrise was promising. ✧

99 Until that day, let every sunrise remind you: the Light is faithful, the Light is giving, and the Light is coming. ✧

100 Blessed be Monad, the Light beyond every light. ✧

101 Blessed be the Sun, the great Giver, the nearest image of the One. ✧

102 Blessed be Jesus Christ, King of Kings, the Sun of righteousness, risen with healing in his wings. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The chapter guards against misunderstanding: “the Sun is a lamp, and Monad is the Light.” The Sun was born and will one day grow old (astronomers expect it to swell into a red giant in about five billion years); Monad has no birth and no old age. The Sun lights one small corner of space; Monad fills the Fullness. So look at the Sun and give thanks, and then look past it to the One it points to. The Bible promises a city of God that needs no Sun or Moon, for God’s glory is its light. Every sunrise is a promise of that Light. The Blessing praises Monad, the Sun as the great Giver, and Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness, and closes with the motto variation for this chapter: “Shine in thought, word, and deed.”

KEY WORDS

Red giant: a late stage in a star’s life, when it swells greatly.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 92 rests on astronomy; 96 is Revelation 21:23; 97 Isaiah 60:19.

READ FURTHER

· Revelation 21–22.

· Isaiah 60.

103 Shine in thought, word, and deed. ✧

104 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love.

✧

THE SOLAR FAMILY

CHAPTER 6

I. THE HOUSEHOLD OF THE SUN

verses 1–7

1 The Sun does not shine alone. It has a household. ✧

2 Around it turn the planets, each on its own path, each at its own distance, each in its own time; and the Sun holds them all. ✧ ✧

3 This is the solar family: one who gives, and many who receive; one centre, and many lives turning around it. ✧

4 The Sun is the giver, the masculine light that goes forth. ✧

5 The planets are the receivers, the feminine energies that take in the light and are shaped by it. ✧

6 And the household of the Sun is the pattern of every household on the earth. ✧

7 For what is above is like that which is below; and the Architect builds every family after the same design. ✧ ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Sun is not alone; it has a household. The planets circle it, each on its own path and at its own distance, and the Sun holds them all. Our congregation calls this “the solar family”: one who gives and many who receive; one centre and many lives around it. The founder’s revelation is that the Sun’s giving is masculine energy, and the planets, which receive its light and are shaped by it, are feminine energies. This household in the sky is the pattern of every household on earth, because “what is above is like that which is below,” and the Architect builds every family after the same design.

KEY WORDS

Solar family: our congregation’s name for the Sun and its planets, seen as a household.

Masculine and feminine energies: in our Helio teaching, giving (masculine) and receiving (feminine). This is our own teaching; classical astrology called some planets masculine and others feminine in a different way.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 3–5 are a revelation of our congregation (the Sun is masculine, the planets feminine). Verse 7 joins the Hermetic “as above, so below” with the revelation of the Architect’s pattern (Chapter 2).

READ FURTHER

· Dava Sobel, *The Planets* (2005): a beautiful book on each planet.

II. THE HOLINESS OF RECEIVING

verses 8–15

8 Do not think that to receive is to be less. ✧

9 The Sun pours out its light into the emptiness, and the emptiness stays empty. But when the light falls upon the Earth, the Earth turns it into life. ✧ ✧

10 The giver gives the light; the receiver gives it a body. ✧

11 Receiving is not weakness. Receiving is the power to take what is given and bring forth something new. ✧

12 In receiving, the Earth gives back: she turns the light into green, she breathes out the air of life, she shines in the heavens. Every true receiver becomes a giver in turn. ✧

13 The field receives the seed, and the harvest comes. The womb receives life, and a child is born. The heart receives the word of God, and a soul awakens. ✧

14 Wisdom herself is a receiver: she shines with no light of her own, yet she lights the whole night. ✧

15 Blessed are the receivers, for through them every gift becomes life. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Some think receiving is less than giving. The book says no. The Sun's light poured into empty space stays empty, but when it falls on the Earth, the Earth turns it into life. "The giver gives the light; the receiver gives it a body." Receiving is the power to take what is given and bring forth something new: a field receives seed and gives a harvest; a womb receives life and a child is born; a heart receives God's word and a soul awakens. True receivers then become givers too: the Earth turns light into green, breathes out air, and shines back into space. Even Wisdom, the Moon, is a receiver, yet she lights the whole night. "Blessed are the receivers, for through them every gift becomes life."

BEHIND THE VERSES

This section is our congregation's teaching (✧), with science in verse 9; verse 14 recalls Chapter 4 (the Moon as Sophia).

READ FURTHER

• The parable of the sower, Mark 4:1–20 (the good soil that receives the seed).

III. EACH ONE SHAPED IN ITS OWN WAY

verses 16–28

16 Every planet receives the same Sun; yet no two are alike, for each is shaped by the light in its own way. ✧ ✧

17 Mercury runs closest to the Sun. Its days burn hotter than molten metal and its nights are colder than any winter on the Earth, for it has no cloak to hold the warmth. ✧

18 Venus wrapped herself in thick clouds, and the warmth she received can no longer leave her; she is the hottest of all the planets, and she turns the other way, so that on her the Sun rises in the west. ✧

19 Yet Venus shines brighter than every star in our sky, the morning star and the evening star, because her clouds give back so much of the light. ✧

20 The Earth was set at the measure of grace: not too near and not too far, where water can stay water and life can be born. ✧ ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Every planet receives the same Sun, but no two are alike, because each is shaped by the light in its own way. Mercury, closest, burns by day and freezes by night because it has no air to hold warmth. Venus wraps herself in thick clouds that trap the heat, making her the hottest planet; she even spins backward, so the Sun rises in the west; yet her clouds reflect so much light that she shines brightest of all as the morning and evening star. The Earth was set "at the measure of grace," not too near and not too far, where water can stay water and life can be born. Mars once had rivers but lost its magnetic shield, and the solar wind slowly carried its air away. Jupiter is the giant, heavier than all other planets together, with a storm larger than Earth. Saturn wears rings of ice and stone and is so light for its size that it would float. Uranus rolls on its side, with each pole getting decades of light then decades of night. Neptune, farthest, receives about one nine-hundredth of Earth's sunlight, has the fastest winds, and yet the Sun still holds it.

The lesson: the same light received in different ways makes different worlds, and so the same love of God makes each of us something no one else could be. And no one is too far from the centre to be held, "not even the farthest."

21 Mars, the red one, once had rivers. But it lost its shield, and the wind of the Sun carried its air away, little by little, over the ages. *

22 Jupiter is the great one, more massive than all the other planets together, with a storm upon its face larger than the whole Earth. *

23 Saturn wears a crown of rings, made of ice and stone, and it is so light for its size that it would float upon the waters. *

24 Uranus lies on its side as it travels, so that each of its poles has a long summer of light and then a long winter of night. *

25 And Neptune, the farthest, receives about one nine-hundredth of the light that falls on the Earth; its winds are the fastest of any planet; and still the Sun holds it, and it never falls away. *

26 Hear the lesson of the planets: the same light, received in different ways, makes different worlds. ✧

27 So it is with every soul. The same love of God falls on all of us, and each of us becomes something no one else could be. ✧

28 No one is too far from the centre to be held. Not even the farthest. ✧

KEY WORDS

Habitable zone: the distance from a star where liquid water can exist on a planet's surface.

Greenhouse effect: heat trapped by a thick atmosphere (extreme on Venus).

Retrograde rotation: spinning in the opposite direction to most planets (Venus).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 17–25 rest on planetary science (NASA missions; the MAVEN spacecraft showed how Mars lost its air). Verse 16 is a revelation of our congregation (each planet shaped by its interaction with the Sun).

READ FURTHER

- NASA's Solar System Exploration website (science.nasa.gov/solar-system), free.
- Dava Sobel, *The Planets*.

IV. THE EARTH, MOTHER OF THE LIVING

verses 29–34

29 Among all the receivers, one was made the mother of the living: the Earth. ✧

30 She receives the light of the Sun, and she does not keep it; she turns it into forests and fields, rivers and rain, bread and breath. ✧ *

31 She wraps her children in air, and her waters cover most of her face, and her shield turns away the burning wind. *

32 Of all the worlds we know, she alone is known to carry life. *

33 And from the Sun and the Earth, the Moon was born: the daughter, Wisdom, who keeps watch over the night. ✧

34 So the solar family shows the first family on earth: the father who gives, the mother who receives and brings forth, and the child who carries the light of both. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Among all the receivers, one became “the mother of the living”: the Earth. She receives the Sun's light and does not keep it; she turns it into forests, fields, rivers, rain, bread, and breath. She wraps her children in air, covers most of her face with water, and her magnetic shield turns away the burning solar wind. Of all the worlds we know, only she is known to carry life. And from the Sun and the Earth the Moon was born, the daughter, Wisdom. So the solar family shows the first family: the father who gives, the mother who receives and brings forth, and the child who carries the light of both.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 29 recalls Chapter 2 (the mother is the earth of her family). Verses 30–32 rest on earth science. Verse 33 is the revelation that the Moon is Sophia.

READ FURTHER

- James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979), on the Earth as a living system (read critically).
- *Earthrise* and *Pale Blue Dot*: the famous photographs of Earth from space (free online).

V. THE LESSON OF THE SHIELD

verses 35–41

35 Hear also the lesson of Mars. ✧

36 The light of the Sun is good; yet the same Sun that gives life also breathes a fierce wind.

✧

37 The Earth lives because she is shielded: her shield turns aside what would harm her, and lets the light come through. ✧

38 Mars lost its shield, and slowly lost its breath. ✧

39 So every family needs a shield: love that guards, boundaries that hold, a home where the light comes in and harm is turned away. ✧

40 Guard your home as the Earth is guarded. Not with walls of fear, but with a shield of love, truth, and faith. ✧

41 Above all, take the shield of faith. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

Mars teaches a lesson. The same Sun that gives life also breathes a fierce wind. Earth lives because she is shielded: her magnetic field turns aside what would harm her while still letting the light through. Mars lost its shield and slowly lost its air. So every family needs a shield: love that guards, boundaries that hold, a home where light comes in and harm is turned away. Guard your home like the Earth, “not with walls of fear, but with a shield of love, truth, and faith.” And above all, take up the shield of faith.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 36–38 rest on science; verse 41 is Ephesians 6:16.

READ FURTHER

· Ephesians 6:10–18 (the armour of God).

VI. THE FATHER, SUN OF THE FAMILY

verses 42–50

42 And this was revealed to our congregation: as the Sun is the centre of its household, so the father is the centre of his family. ✧

43 When a man and a woman bring forth new life together, his own solar system begins to grow. ✧

44 The father is the sun of his family. He is not the whole of the family, as the Sun is not the whole of the heavens; but he is its steady centre. ✧

45 A sun that comes too near burns; a sun that goes too far leaves its worlds cold. ✧ ✧

46 So the father is called to the right distance: near enough to warm, never so near that he smothers; present enough to hold, never so far that his children grow cold. ✧

47 The Sun does not shine only on the days it feels like shining. So the father gives on good days and hard days alike. ✧

48 The Sun holds each world in its own path and does not force them into one. So the father honours each child’s own way. ✧

49 The Sun’s light reaches even the farthest. So the father’s love reaches even the child who wanders far. ✧

50 And every father is himself held by a greater light; for no sun in the heavens shines

IN PLAIN WORDS

Here is the founder’s revelation in full: as the Sun is the centre of its household, the father is the centre of his family, and when a man and woman bring forth new life together, “his own solar system begins to grow.” The book is careful to show what this means. The father is not the whole family, as the Sun is not the whole sky, but he is its steady centre. A sun too close burns; a sun too far leaves its worlds cold. So the father must find “the right distance”: near enough to warm, never so near that he smothers; present enough to hold, never so far that his children grow cold. He gives on good days and hard days; he lets each child follow its own path; his love reaches even the child who wanders far. And every father is himself held by a greater light: “no father on earth rules except under God.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 42–43 are a revelation of our congregation (the founder, 2026). Verses 44–50 are our congregation’s teaching, with an image from astronomy in verse 45.

READ FURTHER

· Proverbs 4 (a father’s teaching).

· Ephesians 6:4 (“provoke not your children to anger”).

by its own command, and no father on earth rules except under God. ✧

VII. THE FAMILY ON THE EARTH

verses 51–58

51 The family is the first congregation. ✧
52 There the father gives, the mother receives and brings forth, and the children learn how light is carried. ✧
53 No two children are alike, as no two planets are alike. One is fiery, one is quiet; one stays close, one travels far. Each was made on purpose. ✧
54 So do not measure one child by another. Each has its own path around the light. ✧
55 Brothers and sisters are like the planets who share one Sun: different worlds, one household, one light. ✧
56 The old ones of the family are like the outer worlds: slower, farther, wiser, and still held by the same light. ✧
57 Honour them; for the length of their journey is a treasure to the whole household. ✧
58 Grandchildren are a crown to the old, and parents are the glory of their children. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

“The family is the first congregation.” There the father gives, the mother receives and brings forth, and the children learn how light is carried. No two children are alike, as no two planets are; one is fiery, one quiet, one stays close, one travels far, and each was made on purpose. So don’t compare one child to another. Brothers and sisters are different worlds around one Sun. The elders are like the outer planets: slower, farther, wiser, still held by the same light; honour them. Proverbs says grandchildren are a crown to the old and parents the glory of their children.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 51 is our Statement of Beliefs (the family is the first congregation). Verse 58 is Proverbs 17:6.

READ FURTHER

· Our Statement of Beliefs, article 11 (Family and Community).

VIII. THE SEASONS OF THE HOME

verses 59–68

59 The Earth leans as she travels around the Sun, and so the seasons come: spring and summer, harvest and winter. ✧
60 The seasons do not come because the Sun draws near or goes far, but because the Earth leans toward the light, or away from it. ✧
61 Indeed, in the heart of the northern winter, the Earth is nearer to the Sun than in the summer. ✧
62 Hear this, you who are in a winter season: the cold does not mean the light has gone away. ✧
63 The Sun has not moved; the light is as near as ever. Lean toward it, and spring will come. ✧
64 So every family has its seasons: the spring of new love, the summer of children, the harvest of the grown years, the winter of the old. ✧
65 Each season is holy, and no season lasts forever. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Earth leans as it circles the Sun, and so the seasons come. Here is a surprising fact: the seasons are not caused by the Earth getting closer to or farther from the Sun, but by its tilt; in fact, in the middle of the northern winter, Earth is *nearer* the Sun than in summer. The book turns this into comfort: if you are in a “winter season,” the cold does not mean the light has gone away; “the Sun has not moved; the light is as near as ever; lean toward it, and spring will come.” Families have seasons too: the spring of new love, the summer of children, the harvest of grown years, the winter of old age. Each is holy and none lasts forever. Ecclesiastes says there is a time for everything. Walk the seasons together, leaning toward the light.

KEY WORDS

Axial tilt: the Earth’s lean of about 23.4 degrees, which causes the seasons.

Perihelion: the point where Earth is closest to the Sun (early January).

66 To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven. †

67 A time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to gather what was planted. †

68 Walk through every season together; for the household that leans toward the light together will see the spring together. ♦

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 59–61 rest on astronomy. Verses 66–67 are Ecclesiastes 3:1–2.

READ FURTHER

· Ecclesiastes 3.

IX. THE FAMILY OF HUMANKIND

verses 69–76

69 Every people on the earth has known that the family is holy. ♦

70 The sages of China taught that when the family is set in order, the land is set in order, and when the land is in order, there is peace under heaven. ♦

71 In India the life of the household is honoured as a sacred stage of the soul's path, for the household feeds all the others. ♦

72 The faithful of Israel gather at the table as the light of the day of rest begins, and the mother lights the lamps, and the father blesses the children. ♦

73 The Quran teaches: be good to your father and mother, and when they grow old, lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy, and pray: O God, have mercy on them, as they cared for me when I was small. ♦

74 The peoples of Africa say: I am because we are. ♦

75 And the first peoples of the plains pray: all my relations; for they know that every living being belongs to one family. ♦

76 Many peoples, one truth: the family is the first temple, and love is its light. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Every people knows the family is holy. Chinese wisdom teaches that when the family is in order, the land is in order, and there is peace under heaven. In India, the life of the household is a sacred stage of the soul's journey, because the household feeds everyone else. At the Jewish Sabbath table, the mother lights the lamps and the father blesses the children. The Quran tells us to be good to our parents, to "lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy," and to pray for them as they cared for us when we were small. African wisdom says, "I am because we are." The Lakota pray "all my relations," knowing every living being belongs to one family. One truth: the family is the first temple, and love is its light.

WHO'S WHO

Confucius (551–479 BC): the great teacher of China; *The Great Learning* comes from his school.

The Lakota: a Native American people of the Great Plains.

KEY WORDS

Grihastha: the "householder" stage of life in Hindu tradition.

Sabbath: the Jewish day of rest, from Friday evening to Saturday evening.

Ubuntu: a southern African idea of shared humanity.

Mitákuye Oyás'ín: Lakota for "all my relations."

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 70 is Confucian (*The Great Learning*); 71 Hindu; 72 Jewish; 73 Quran 17:23–24; 74 Ubuntu; 75 Lakota.

READ FURTHER

· Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*.

· Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (2009).

X. FOR EVERY FAMILY

verses 77–85

77 And if your family is broken, do not lose heart. ✧

78 If your father was absent, or your mother was gone, or your home was cold, hear this: you are still held. ✧

79 Though my father and my mother forsake me, God will take me up. †

80 God is father of the orphans and defender of the widows, and settles the lonely in a home. †

81 The planet far from the Sun is still held by the Sun; and the child far from home is still held by God. ✧

82 Let the ones who were never given a sun become a sun for others. Let the ones who were never warmed become warmth. ✧

83 To the mothers who stood alone and became both sun and earth to their children: heaven has seen your labour. ✧

84 To the fathers who stood alone and became both shield and hearth: heaven has seen you too. ✧

85 And let the congregation be a family to every one who has none; for the household of God is wide, and there is a place at its table for you. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This section speaks gently to everyone whose family was broken. If your father was absent, your mother gone, or your home cold, “you are still held.” The Psalm says that even if father and mother forsake me, God will take me up, and that God sets the lonely in families. The farthest planet is still held by the Sun, and the child far from home is still held by God. Those who were never warmed can become warmth for others. The book honours single mothers who became “both sun and earth” and single fathers who became “both shield and hearth”: “heaven has seen your labour.” And the congregation itself is called to be family to everyone who has none.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 79 is Psalm 26:10; verse 80 Psalm 67:6–7. The rest is our congregation’s teaching.

READ FURTHER

· Psalm 26 and Psalm 67.

XI. THE GREAT FAMILY AND THE BLESSING

verses 86–98

86 Look up again at the household of the Sun, and then look higher. ✧

87 Our Sun is one star among countless stars, and many of them have worlds of their own turning around them. ✧

88 And the whole household of the Sun is itself travelling, around the heart of our galaxy, once in about two hundred and thirty million years. ✧

89 So even the Sun turns around a greater centre; and there is no final centre but the One. ✧

90 Family upon family, household upon household, all the way up to the One, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. † ✧

91 All of us came from one Source; therefore all of us are one family. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Look higher: our Sun is one of countless stars, and many have planets of their own; and the whole solar system is itself travelling around the centre of our galaxy, once every 230 million years or so. So even the Sun circles a greater centre, and the only final centre is the One. Paul wrote that every family in heaven and on earth takes its name from God. All of us came from one Source, so we are all one family: “the stranger is a relative you have not met; the enemy is a brother or a sister who has forgotten.” The Blessing praises Monad, the Sun and its household, and every father, mother, and child, and ends with this chapter’s motto variation: “As the Sun gives, so we give: in thought, in word, in deed.”

KEY WORDS

Exoplanet: a planet circling another star; thousands have been found.

Galactic year: the time the Sun takes to circle the galaxy’s centre.

92 The stranger is a relative you have not met. The enemy is a brother or a sister who has forgotten. ✧

93 So we bow before the One, from whom every family is named, and we pray that every household on earth be filled with light. ✧

94 Blessed be Monad, the Source of every family in heaven and on earth. ✧

95 Blessed be the Sun and its household, the pattern of the home. ✧

96 Blessed be every father who gives, every mother who brings forth, and every child who carries the light. ✧

97 As the Sun gives, so we give: in thought, in word, in deed. ✧

98 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. ✧

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 87–88 rest on astronomy; verse 90 is Ephesians 3:15.

READ FURTHER

· Ephesians 3:14–21.

THE RULERS

CHAPTER 7

I. THE ONE WHO DID NOT KNOW

verses 1–10

1 Now hear of the one who was born outside the light, and did not know where it came from. +

2 When Wisdom brought forth alone, without her partner, what came forth was Yaldabaoth. +

3 It was cast out of the Fullness and hidden in a cloud, and it never saw the face of its mother, nor the light from which she came. +

4 It carried within it a little of her light, stolen; and with that borrowed light it went down and made worlds of its own. +

5 And when its work was done, it looked around, and saw no one above it, and it said: I am God, and there is no other God beside me. +

6 But in saying it, it showed what it did not know; for why speak of other gods, unless there are others? +

7 Then a voice came down from above, from the Incorruptible, and said: You are mistaken, Samael. You are mistaken, blind god. +

8 For this reason the wise gave it three names: Yaldabaoth, child of chaos; Saklas, the fool; Samael, the blind one. +

9 Here is the root of all evil: not a power equal to God, but a power that does not know God, and thinks itself to be God. ✧

10 Ignorance that crowns itself: that is the first lie. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This chapter explains evil as the Gnostic writings understand it. When Wisdom brought forth alone, the being that came out was Yaldabaoth (Chapter 4). It was thrown out of the Fullness and never saw its mother or the Light. It carried a little stolen light, and with that borrowed light it made worlds of its own. When its work was done it looked around, saw no one above it, and boasted: “I am God, and there is no other God beside me.” But the boast gave it away: why mention other gods unless there are others? A voice from above answered: “You are mistaken, Samael (blind god).” So the wise gave it three names: Yaldabaoth (child of chaos), Saklas (fool), and Samael (blind one).

Our congregation draws the key lesson: the root of all evil is not a power equal to God, but a power that does not know God and thinks itself God. “Ignorance that crowns itself: that is the first lie.”

WHO’S WHO

Yaldabaoth / Saklas / Samael: the ignorant, arrogant maker of the lower world in Sethian Gnostic teaching.

KEY WORDS

Demiurge: Greek for “craftsman,” the maker of the material world in Gnostic and Platonic thought.

The Incorruptible: a name for the highest realm or power in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 2–8 render the *Secret Book of John* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (Nag Hammadi Codex II,4); the boast echoes Isaiah 45:5. Verses 9–10 are our congregation’s teaching.

READ FURTHER

- Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, chapter 2.
- The *Hypostasis of the Archons* (also called *The Reality of the Rulers*) in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.

II. THE RULERS

verses 11–22

11 Yaldabaoth did not rule alone. It brought forth powers to serve it, and they are called the Rulers, the Archons. +

12 Seven it set over the seven heavens, and twelve over the turning of the ages, and hundreds of angels beneath them. +

13 And the Rulers set themselves as gatekeepers in the heavens, between the earth and the Fullness. +

14 And they invented fate, a chain of times and seasons, to bind the souls below and keep them turning in circles. +

15 Once they saw an image shining in the waters below, the image of the perfect Human of heaven; and they desired it. +

16 They said: Let us make a human after that image. And each of them made a part, bone and sinew, flesh and breath, until a body lay before them. +

17 But the body lay still. It could not rise, for the Rulers have no life of their own to give. +

18 Then, by the counsel of the Light, Yaldabaoth was led to breathe into the face of the body; and the light of Wisdom that it had stolen went out of it and into the human. +

19 And the human rose, and shone, brighter than all the Rulers who had made him, and wiser than them all. +

20 And the Rulers were jealous; for they saw that the one they made was greater than they were. +

21 So they cast him down into the heaviest part of matter, and wrapped him in forgetting, that he might not remember the light within him. +

22 Hear it, child of light: the Rulers made the vessel, but the light within you was never theirs.

◇

IN PLAIN WORDS

Yaldabaoth made helpers called the Rulers (Archons): seven over the seven heavens, twelve over the ages, and hundreds of angels below them. They set themselves as gatekeepers between earth and the Fullness, and they invented “fate,” a chain of times and seasons that keeps souls going in circles. When they glimpsed the image of the perfect heavenly Human reflected in the waters, they wanted it, and together they built a human body part by part. But the body lay still; the Rulers have no life to give. Then, by a plan of the Light, Yaldabaoth breathed into it, and the light of Wisdom it had stolen passed into the human. The human rose and shone, brighter and wiser than the Rulers. Jealous, they threw him into the heaviest part of matter and wrapped him in forgetting. The section ends: the Rulers made the vessel, but the light within you was never theirs.

KEY WORDS

Archon: Greek for “ruler.”

Heimarmene: Greek for “fate.”

First Human: the heavenly pattern of humanity (Chapter 2).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 11–21 render the *Secret Book of John*. Verse 13 note: ancient texts linked the Rulers to the seven planets; we do not, because our Helio teaching honours the planets as receivers of the Sun’s light (Chapter 6). Verse 22 is our congregation’s teaching.

READ FURTHER

· Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John*.

III. THEIR CHAINS

verses 23–34

23 The Rulers cannot destroy the light; so they try to make it forget itself. ✧

24 They sent among people a counterfeit spirit, a false breath, that whispers and leads astray. +

25 Their chains are not made of iron. Their chains are made of ignorance, of fear, of craving, of despair, of hatred, and of pride. ✧

26 Ignorance, that you may not know who you are. ✧

27 Fear, that you may not dare to rise. ✧

28 Craving, that you may chase what never fills you, and be held by what you chase. ✧

29 Despair, that you may stop believing the light can win. ✧

30 Hatred, that you may turn on the very ones who could stand with you. ✧

31 Pride, that you may crown yourself, as Yaldabaoth did, and forget that there is One above. ✧

32 There is an old hymn of a prince who went down into a far land, and ate the food of that land, and wore its clothes, and forgot that he was a king's son, and fell asleep. +

33 That is the way of the Rulers: not to kill the light, but to lull it to sleep. ✧

34 And the noise of the world, the endless hurry, the hunger for more: these are the songs that keep the sleepers sleeping. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Rulers can't destroy the light, so they try to make it forget itself. They send a "counterfeit spirit," a false voice that whispers and misleads. Their chains are not iron but six things: ignorance (so you don't know who you are), fear (so you don't dare to rise), craving (so you chase what never fills you), despair (so you stop believing the light can win), hatred (so you turn on those who could stand with you), and pride (so you crown yourself, like Yaldabaoth). The ancient *Hymn of the Pearl* tells of a prince who went to a far land, ate its food, wore its clothes, forgot he was a king's son, and fell asleep. That is how the Rulers work: not by killing the light but by lulling it to sleep, and "the noise of the world, the endless hurry, the hunger for more" are the songs that keep the sleepers sleeping.

KEY WORDS

Counterfeit spirit (antimimon pneuma): the false spirit that leads people astray in the *Secret Book of John*.

Hymn of the Pearl: a poem in the *Acts of Thomas* (3rd century); see Chapter 17.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 24 renders the *Secret Book of John*. Verses 25–31 are our congregation's teaching on the chains the Rulers use. Verse 32 is the *Hymn of the Pearl*.

READ FURTHER

- G. R. S. Mead, *The Hymn of the Robe of Glory* (1908; free online).
- C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (1942): a famous, witty picture of how evil works by distraction.

IV. THE WEAKNESS OF THE RULERS

verses 35–42

35 Now hear the good news, and hold it fast: the Rulers are weak. ✧

36 Every power they have is borrowed. Every light they shine with was stolen. + ✧

37 They cannot create life; they could not even make their own creation stand. +

38 They do not know the One, and they cannot see the Fullness. +

39 They are not God's rivals. They are not even God's equals in a single thing. ✧

40 Greater is the One within you than the one who rules in this world. +

41 The light in you came from above the Rulers; and what is from above cannot be ruled by what is below. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Here is the good news: the Rulers are weak. Every power they have is borrowed, every light they shine with is stolen. They cannot create life; they couldn't even make their own creation stand up. They don't know the One and can't see the Fullness. They are not God's rivals or equals in anything. "Greater is the One within you than the one who rules in this world." The light in you comes from above them, and what is from above cannot be ruled by what is below. So don't live in fear of them; fear is one of their chains.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 40 is 1 John 4:4. Verses 36–38 draw on the *Secret Book of John*.

READ FURTHER

- 1 John 4.

42 So do not live in fear of them. Fear is one of their chains. ✧

V. NOT PEOPLE, BUT POWERS

verses 43–50

43 And hear this, so that you may never be deceived: our struggle is not against flesh and blood. +

44 It is against the rulers and the powers of this world, against the spirit of wickedness in high places. +

45 No man, no woman, no child is an Archon. People are not the enemy. ✧

46 Those who do harm are often the ones most deeply chained, asleep and dreaming, doing what the Rulers whisper. ✧

47 So we do not hate the captive; we pray for the captive's freedom. ✧

48 Even on the cross, the Saviour prayed for those who wounded him: forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. +

49 They do not know. That is the whole of it. And knowledge is what sets them free. ✧

50 Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who hurt you; for in each of them a spark is sleeping, waiting to be woken. + ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This section protects against a dangerous mistake. Our struggle is “not against flesh and blood” but against spiritual powers of wickedness. No man, woman, or child is an Archon; people are not the enemy. Those who do harm are often the most deeply chained, asleep and doing what the Rulers whisper. So we don't hate the captive; we pray for the captive's freedom. On the cross Jesus prayed for those who hurt him: “forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” They do not know; that is the whole problem, and knowledge is what frees them. So love your enemies, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who hurt you: in each of them a spark is sleeping.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 43–44 are Ephesians 6:12 (the verse the *Hypostasis of the Archons* opens with). Verse 48 is Luke 23:34; verse 50 Matthew 5:44.

READ FURTHER

· Matthew 5:38–48.

· Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place* (1971): a true story of forgiving those who did great harm.

VI. TWO WAYS OF SEEING THE MAKER

verses 51–65

51 Now hear how the wise of both ways understood the maker of this world; and then search it out for yourself. ✧

52 The wise of the Sethian way taught that Yaldabaoth is the maker spoken of in Genesis: the one who formed the first human from the dust, who forbade the tree of knowledge, who drove the human out of the garden, and who sent the flood. +

53 For they heard in its voice the words: I am a jealous God, and there is no other beside me; and they asked, if there were no other, of whom would it be jealous? +

54 And again and again their book corrects the old story, saying: it was not as Moses said. +

55 The wise of the Valentinian way also taught that the maker of this world is the one who spoke in Genesis and gave the Law; but they saw it more gently. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

Following the founder's direction, this section lays out both Gnostic schools' views of the maker of this world, and asks the reader to research and decide. The Sethians taught that Yaldabaoth is the maker described in Genesis, the one who formed Adam, forbade the tree of knowledge, drove humans from the garden, and sent the flood; they noticed the words “I am a jealous God” and asked: jealous of whom, if there is no other? Their book keeps correcting the old story: “it was not as Moses said.” The Valentinians also saw the maker of Genesis and the Law as this lower power, but more gently: not evil but ignorant, a “just” middle power. Ptolemy taught that its Law has three parts: a pure part Jesus fulfilled, a harsh part Jesus set aside, and a part of signs Jesus made spiritual; and that at the end even the maker will find rest when it learns what it did not know. Both agree the maker of this world is not the One.

Then the book says something important: every writing that speaks of God's divinity is holy, so read them all yourself (Moses and the prophets, the gospels, the Sethian and Valentinian books), compare, question, and pray. “Do not take this

56 They taught that it was not wicked, but ignorant: a middle power, neither the highest good nor evil, but just in its own measure. †

57 They taught that the Law it gave has three parts: a pure part, which the Saviour fulfilled; a part mixed with harshness, which the Saviour set aside; and a part of signs and shadows, which the Saviour made spiritual. †

58 And they taught that it shaped the world without knowing that Wisdom guided its hand; and that at the end even it will come to rest in the middle place, when it learns what it did not know. †

59 Both ways agree on this: the maker of this lower world is not the One, and the One is greater than all its works. † ✧

60 Every writing that speaks of the divinity of God is holy. ✧

61 So read them for yourself: the books of Moses and the prophets, the gospels, and the hidden books of the Sethians and the Valentinians. ✧

62 Compare them; question them; pray over them. ✧

63 Do not take this truth from anyone's mouth alone, not even from ours. Seek, and you will find. ✧ †

64 And as you seek, keep your eyes on the One: Monad, beyond every maker, greater than every name, whose divinity no ruler can claim. ✧

65 Whoever finds the greatness of Monad will know the difference between a ruler and the Light. ✧

truth from anyone's mouth alone, not even from ours." Keep your eyes on Monad, and you will know the difference between a ruler and the Light.

WHO'S WHO

Ptolemy: a Valentinian teacher in Rome (about AD 150–160) who wrote the *Letter to Flora*.

Flora: a Christian woman to whom Ptolemy wrote, explaining the Law of Moses.

KEY WORDS

The Law: the commandments given through Moses in the Torah.

"Not as Moses said": the refrain of the *Secret Book of John*, correcting Genesis.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 52–54 render the *Secret Book of John*, *Hypostasis of the Archons*, and *On the Origin of the World*. Verses 55–58 render Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* and Irenaeus I.5 and I.7. Verse 60 is the founder's teaching. Verse 63 is Matthew 7:7 and *Gospel of Thomas* 2. The founder's own belief is that Yaldabaoth is the creator god of Genesis; the book leaves the decision to each reader.

READ FURTHER

- Ptolemy, *Letter to Flora* (in Layton and Brakke, *The Gnostic Scriptures*).
- Genesis 1–11, read side by side with the *Secret Book of John* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons*.
- Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"* (1996), on "biblical demiurgical traditions" (advanced).

VII. THE WITNESS OF THE NATIONS

verses 66–75

66 Every people under heaven has known that a struggle is being fought for the soul. ✧

67 Zoroaster, the prophet of Persia, taught that there are two spirits, the holy spirit and the destroying spirit; and every person chooses between them, in thought, in word, and in deed. ✧

68 And he taught that the war is between Truth and the Lie; and our motto comes from his ancient call to good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. ✧ ✧

69 When the Buddha sat beneath the tree to awaken, the tempter Mara came with fear and with desire; and the Buddha touched the earth, and the earth bore witness, and Mara fled. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Many faiths have seen this struggle for the soul. Zoroaster, the prophet of Persia, taught two spirits, the holy and the destroying, and that every person chooses between them in thought, word, and deed (the root of our motto); the war is between Truth and the Lie. When the Buddha sat under the tree to awaken, the tempter Mara came with fear and desire; the Buddha touched the earth as his witness and Mara fled. Hindu sages speak of *maya*, a veil of illusion that hides the eternal. The Quran tells of Iblis, who refused out of pride to bow, and became the "whisperer who slinks away" when God is remembered. Plato told of prisoners chained in a cave who took shadows for reality until one was freed into the sunlight. And in Egypt the great serpent attacked the Sun's boat every night and was defeated every morning, so "every sunrise is a victory; the serpent never wins the morning."

70 The sages of India speak of illusion, a veil that makes the passing world seem to be all there is, and hides the eternal. ♦

71 The Quran tells of the one who refused to bow out of pride, and became the whisperer who slinks away when God is remembered. ♦

72 Plato, the great teacher of Greece, told of prisoners chained in a cave, who saw only shadows on the wall and thought them real, until one was freed and walked up into the light of the Sun. ♦

73 And in Egypt they told that every night a great serpent rises against the boat of the Sun, and every night it is defeated, and every morning the Sun rises again. ♦

74 So every sunrise is a victory. The serpent never wins the morning. ♦

75 Many peoples, one witness: there are powers that would keep the soul asleep, and there is a Light that wakes it. ♦

WHO'S WHO

Zoroaster (Zarathustra): the prophet of ancient Persia, founder of Zoroastrianism (dates debated, perhaps 1500–1000 BC).

The Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama, about 5th century BC): the founder of Buddhism.

Mara: the tempter in Buddhist teaching.

Iblis: the one who refused to bow to Adam in the Quran.

Apophis (Apep): the serpent enemy of the Sun god Ra in Egyptian belief.

KEY WORDS

Asha and Druj: Truth/Order and the Lie in Zoroastrian teaching.

Maya: illusion (Hindu, Vedanta).

The allegory of the cave: Plato's story in *Republic* VII.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 67–68 Zoroastrian (Gathas); 69 Buddhist; 70 Hindu; 71 Quran 7:11–12 and 114:4; 72 Plato, *Republic* VII; 73 Egyptian.

READ FURTHER

- Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (1979).
- Plato, *Republic*, Book VII.
- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Old Path White Clouds* (1987): the life of the Buddha.

VIII. RISING OUT OF THEIR GRASP

verses 76–86

76 This is our mission: to heal our temples, body, mind, and spirit, and to rise up out of the grasp of Yaldabaoth. ♦

77 We do it not with hatred, but with light; not with fear, but with knowledge; not alone, but together. ♦

78 Where ignorance binds, we bring gnosis. ♦

79 Where fear binds, we bring faith. ♦

80 Where craving binds, we bring freedom and temperance. ♦

81 Where despair binds, we bring hope. ♦

82 Where hatred binds, we bring love. ♦

83 Where pride binds, we bring humility. ♦

84 And we use the light of God within us against everything that is evil. ♦

85 We honour the healers also; for the Most High created medicines out of the earth, and the wise will not despise them. †

86 Let prayer and the physician walk together; both serve the light. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

This is our congregation's mission (decided by the founder): to heal our temples, body, mind, and spirit, and rise out of Yaldabaoth's grasp, "not with hatred, but with light; not with fear, but with knowledge; not alone, but together." For each chain there is a remedy: ignorance is answered by gnosis, fear by faith, craving by freedom and temperance, despair by hope, hatred by love, pride by humility. We use the light of God within against everything evil. And we honour healers: Sirach says God created medicines from the earth and the wise do not despise them; prayer and the physician walk together.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 76 is the founder's mission statement. Verse 84 is a teaching of our congregation. Verse 85 is Sirach 38:4.

READ FURTHER

- Sirach 38 (on physicians).

IX. THE SOUL THAT PASSES THE RULERS

verses 87–96

87 It is told that the soul, rising, must pass the Rulers on its way home, and they question it at every gate. †

88 Desire asked: I did not see you going down; how is it that you are going up? †

89 And the soul answered: I saw you, but you did not see me. You only saw the garment I wore; you never knew me. †

90 Ignorance asked: Where are you going? You are bound. †

91 And the soul answered: What bound me has been cut away. What surrounded me has been overcome. My craving has ended, and my ignorance has died. †

92 And Wrath came with its seven forms: the lust for death, the kingdom of the flesh, the foolish wisdom of the flesh, and the rest; and they asked: Where do you come from, killer of humans, and where are you going, conqueror of space? †

93 And the soul answered: From a world I was set free; and from a chain of forgetting I was released. From now on I will rest, in silence, in the time of the eternal. †

94 And the wise taught the faithful to answer every gate with the truth of who they are: †

95 I am a child of the One who was before all things. I came from the light, and I am returning to the light. † ♦

96 Learn these words, and say them in every trial: I am a child of the One. I came from the light. I am returning to the light. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

The ancient books teach that when the soul rises after death it must pass the Rulers, who question it at every gate. In the *Gospel of Mary*, Desire asks how the soul can be going up when it never saw it come down, and the soul answers: “You only saw the garment I wore; you never knew me.” Ignorance says, “You are bound,” and the soul answers that what bound it has been cut away. Wrath comes with its seven forms, and the soul answers, “From a world I was set free... from now on I will rest in silence.” The Valentinians taught the faithful to answer every gate with the truth of who they are. Our book turns that into a phrase to carry through every trial: “I am a child of the One. I came from the light. I am returning to the light.”

WHO’S WHO

Mary Magdalene: a close disciple of Jesus, the first witness of the Resurrection; the *Gospel of Mary* gives her vision of the soul’s ascent.

James: the brother of Jesus; in the *First Apocalypse of James*, Jesus teaches him answers for the soul’s journey.

KEY WORDS

Ascent of the soul: the soul’s journey up through the heavens back to God.

Apolytrosis: Greek for “redemption,” a Valentinian rite that included words for the soul’s ascent.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 88–93 render the *Gospel of Mary* (Berlin Codex). Verses 94–95 draw on Irenaeus I.21.5 (the Valentinian answer, “I am a son from the Father...”), rendered without gendered words for God.

READ FURTHER

• Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala* (2003).

X. THE END OF THE RULERS AND THE BLESSING

verses 97–109

97 The rule of the Rulers is not forever. †

98 It is written that when the end comes, their power will be undone, and the light that was scattered will be gathered home. †

99 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. †

100 The Saviour said: In the world you will have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world. †

101 Every soul that wakes is a gate the Rulers can no longer hold. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Rulers’ reign is not forever. The Gnostic books promise that at the end their power will be undone and the scattered light gathered home. John’s Gospel says the light shines and nothing has overcome it; Jesus said, “In the world you will have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world.” Every soul that wakes is “a gate the Rulers can no longer hold,” every child of light who remembers is “a crack of dawn in their walls.” So wake, remember, and help another to wake. The Blessing praises Monad above every ruler, the light the Rulers could not keep, the Saviour who overcame the world, and every soul that rises.

102 Every child of light who remembers is a crack of dawn in their walls. ✧

103 So wake, and remember, and help another to wake. ✧

104 For the One is greater than all their works, and the Light is coming home. ✧

105 Blessed be Monad, above every ruler and every power. ✧

106 Blessed be the Light that the Rulers could not keep. ✧

107 Blessed be the Saviour, who has overcome the world. ✧

108 Blessed be every soul that wakes, and remembers, and rises. ✧

109 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. ✧

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 98 draws on the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*; verse 99 is John 1:5; verse 100 John 16:33.

READ FURTHER

· John 16.

THE KINGDOM WITHIN

CHAPTER 8

I. NOT HERE, NOT THERE

verses 1–8

1 They asked the Saviour: When will the kingdom of God come? †

2 And he answered: The kingdom of God does not come in a way that can be watched for. No one will say, Look, here it is, or, There it is. †

3 For behold, the kingdom of God is within you. †

4 Hear these words again, slowly, for they are the root of our congregation: the kingdom of God is within you. ✧

5 Not in a far city. Not in a temple of stone. Not in the hands of any king or priest. ✧

6 Within you. ✧

7 People have crossed oceans looking for God, and climbed mountains, and built towers to reach the heavens; and all the while, the door was inside them. ✧

8 You do not have to travel to find the kingdom. You have to wake. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This chapter is built on the root verse of our congregation. When people asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come, he said it would not come in a way you can point to (“look, here it is”); “for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” The book repeats the words slowly, because they are the root of our congregation. The kingdom is not in a far city, a stone temple, or the hands of any king or priest. People have crossed oceans and climbed mountains looking for God, while the door was inside them all along. “You do not have to travel to find the kingdom. You have to wake.”

KEY WORDS

The kingdom of God: God’s reign, God’s presence and way of life; in our teaching, found first within.

Root verse: the verse at the centre of our congregation’s faith (Luke 17:21).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 1–3 are Luke 17:20–21. The rest is our congregation’s teaching. Some modern Bibles translate the Greek *entos hymōn* as “among you” rather than “within you”; both readings are ancient, and our congregation follows “within you,” as the King James Version and the *Gospel of Thomas* do.

READ FURTHER

- Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1894).
- Luke 17.

II. INSIDE YOU, AND OUTSIDE YOU

verses 9–17

9 And in the hidden gospel Jesus said: If those who lead you say, Look, the kingdom is in the sky, then the birds will get there before you. +

10 If they say, It is in the sea, then the fish will get there before you. +

11 No: the kingdom is inside you, and it is outside you. +

12 When you come to know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the Living One. +

13 But if you do not know yourselves, you live in poverty, and you are the poverty. +

14 And his disciples asked: When will the kingdom come? And he said: It will not come by watching for it. The kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it. +

15 Spread out upon the earth: in the field and the forest, in the face of a stranger, in the bread and the water, in the light of every morning. ✧

16 So the kingdom is a meeting: the light within you meeting the light around you. ✧

17 When the two are joined, the inside like the outside, you will enter the kingdom. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

The *Gospel of Thomas* adds wit and depth to the same teaching. If leaders say the kingdom is in the sky, the birds will get there first; if they say it is in the sea, the fish will get there first. No: the kingdom is inside you *and* outside you. When you know yourselves, you will be known, and you will see you are children of the Living One; if you don't know yourselves, you live in poverty. Asked when the kingdom would come, Jesus said it is already "spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it": in fields and forests, a stranger's face, bread and water, every morning's light. So the kingdom is a meeting: the light within you meeting the light around you; and when the inside and outside are joined, you enter the kingdom.

WHO'S WHO

Thomas (Didymus Judas Thomas): the disciple in whose name the *Gospel of Thomas* was written.

KEY WORDS

Gospel of Thomas: a collection of 114 sayings of Jesus, found complete at Nag Hammadi in 1945, with Greek fragments found at Oxyrhynchus around 1900.

The Living One: the *Gospel of Thomas's* name for the living God (the text says "the living Father," rendered here without gendered words).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 9–13 are *Gospel of Thomas* 3; verse 14 is saying 113; verse 15 recalls the founder's teaching that God is with us 24/7; verse 17 is saying 22.

READ FURTHER

- Stevan Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas: Annotated and Explained* (2002).
- Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (2003).

III. THE SPARK

verses 18–26

18 Within every human being there is a spark of the light of God. ✧ +

19 It is the light of Wisdom that came down from the Fullness and was breathed into the first human. +

20 The Sethian wise called it Insight, the Epinoia of light, hidden within humanity, so that what was lost could be set right. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

Inside every human being is a spark of God's light. It is Wisdom's light that came down from the Fullness and was breathed into the first human (Chapters 4 and 7). The Sethians called it "Insight" (Epinoia), hidden within humanity so that what was lost could be restored; the Valentinians called it the "seed" that Wisdom sowed in human souls, waiting to grow; Proverbs calls the human spirit "the lamp of God." Our congregation teaches that everyone carries this spark: the kind and the cruel, the wise and the lost. In some it burns bright, in some it's buried under ashes, but in none has it gone out. That is why no person is worthless

21 The Valentinian wise called it the seed: the spiritual seed sown by Wisdom in the souls of humankind, waiting to grow. †

22 The proverb calls it the lamp of God, searching all the inward parts. †

23 Every person you will ever meet carries it: the kind and the cruel, the wise and the lost, the friend and the stranger. ♦

24 In some it burns bright. In some it is buried under ashes. In none has it gone out. ♦

25 This is why no person is worthless. This is why no soul is beyond hope. ♦

26 Every human being is a lamp of God, whether they know it yet or not. ♦

and no soul is beyond hope. “Every human being is a lamp of God, whether they know it yet or not.”

KEY WORDS

Divine spark: the light of God in the human soul.

Epinoia: Greek for “Insight,” the hidden light of God in humanity (Sethian).

Pneuma: Greek for “spirit”; the spiritual part of a person.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 18 is our Statement of Beliefs (article 3) and Gnostic teaching; verse 20 the *Secret Book of John*; verse 21 Valentinian teaching (Irenaeus I.5.6); verse 22 Proverbs 20:27.

READ FURTHER

· Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (on Epinoia).

IV. GNOSIS

verses 27–35

27 What wakes the spark is gnosis: knowing. ♦ †

28 Not knowing about God, as one knows about a far country from a book; but knowing God, as one knows a friend, face to face. ♦

29 The wise of old said that what sets us free is to know who we were, and what we have become; where we were, and where we have been thrown; where we are hastening, and from what we are redeemed; what birth is, and what rebirth is. †

30 These are the great questions. Carry them with you all your days. ♦

31 The Gospel of Truth teaches that the one who knows is like a person who was drunk and has become sober, who has come back to themselves and set their feet on solid ground. †

32 It is like one who wakes from a nightmare of running and falling and fear, and sees in the morning light that none of it was real. †

33 Knowledge does not destroy the world; it shows you where you stand in it. ♦

34 Belief is the door, and knowing is the house. ♦

35 Seek, and do not stop seeking until you find; and when you find, you will be troubled; and when you are troubled, you will marvel; and you will reign over all. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

What wakes the spark is gnosis, “knowing.” Not knowing *about* God, like reading about a faraway country, but knowing God the way you know a friend. The Valentinian teacher Theodotus gave the great questions that set us free: who we were and what we’ve become; where we were and where we’ve been thrown; where we’re going and what we’re redeemed from; what birth is and what rebirth is. Carry those questions all your life. The *Gospel of Truth* compares knowing to sobering up after drunkenness, or waking from a nightmare to find in the morning light that none of it was real. “Belief is the door, and knowing is the house.” And the *Gospel of Thomas* describes the path: seek until you find; when you find, you’ll be troubled; then you’ll marvel; and then you’ll reign over all.

WHO’S WHO

Theodotus: a Valentinian teacher of the second century, quoted by Clement of Alexandria.

Clement of Alexandria (about 150–215): a Christian teacher who preserved many Valentinian sayings.

KEY WORDS

Gnosis: Greek for “knowledge,” especially knowing by experience.

Excerpts from Theodotus: Clement’s collection of Theodotus’s teaching.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 29 is *Excerpts from Theodotus* 78.2; verses 31–32 the *Gospel of Truth*; verse 35 *Gospel of Thomas* 2.

READ FURTHER

- Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, chapter “Gnosis: Self-Knowledge as Knowledge of God.”
- Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus* (2008).

V. BRING FORTH WHAT IS WITHIN YOU

verses 36–42

36 Jesus said: If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. †

37 If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you. †

38 Hear this with your whole heart: the gift inside you is not for hiding. ✧

39 The song you were given wants to be sung. The healing in your hands wants to touch the sick. The truth in your mouth wants to be spoken. ✧

40 Every calling is a light within that is asking to come out. ✧

41 Because we know the truth, we are free to create out of our own will, with the light of God. ✧

42 Do not bury your light under a basket. Set it on a lampstand, and let it give light to the whole house. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

One of the most powerful sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas*: “If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.” Our congregation reads this as a call to use your gifts. The song you were given wants to be sung; the healing in your hands wants to touch the sick; the truth in your mouth wants to be spoken. Every calling is a light inside asking to come out. Because we know the truth, we are free to create from our own will, with the light of God. Jesus said not to hide a lamp under a basket but to set it where it lights the whole house.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 36–37 are *Gospel of Thomas* 70; verse 40 the founder’s revelation that every calling is sacred; verse 41 the founder’s teaching; verse 42 Matthew 5:15.

READ FURTHER

- Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak* (2000).

VI. THE TEMPLE WITHIN

verses 43–49

43 Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God lives in you? †

44 Your body is a temple of the holy light that is within you. †

45 Therefore the work of healing the temple is holy work: the body, the mind, and the spirit, each one a room in the house of God. ✧

46 Christ in you: that is the hope of glory. †

47 And in the Gospel of Mary the Saviour said: Peace be with you. Be careful that no one leads you astray, saying, Look here, or Look there; for the Son of Humanity is within you. Follow that one. †

48 Those who seek within will find. †

49 So when you pray, you do not need to shout to the far heavens. Go into your room, shut the door, and speak to the One who is in the secret place. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

Paul wrote, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God lives in you?” and that your body is a temple of the holy light within. So the work of “healing the temple” (body, mind, and spirit) is holy work (Chapter 10). “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” In the *Gospel of Mary*, the risen Saviour warns that no one should lead you astray saying “look here” or “look there,” because “the Son of Humanity is within you; follow that one.” And Jesus taught that real prayer doesn’t need a show: go into your room, shut the door, and speak to the One in the secret place.

WHO’S WHO

Paul: the apostle who wrote many letters in the New Testament.

Mary Magdalene: the disciple whose vision and teaching the *Gospel of Mary* records.

KEY WORDS

Son of Humanity (Son of Man): Jesus' name for himself and, in the *Gospel of Mary*, for the true human within.

Gospel of Mary: a 2nd-century Gospel, partly preserved, found in the Berlin Codex (published 1955).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 43 is 1 Corinthians 3:16; 44 1 Corinthians 6:19; 45 the founder's mission (healing the temple); 46 Colossians 1:27; 47 the *Gospel of Mary*; 49 Matthew 6:6.

READ FURTHER

· Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala* (2003).

VII. FREE CHILDREN OF LIGHT

verses 50–58

50 Hear also the last command the Saviour gave in the Gospel of Mary: Do not lay down any rules beyond what I have given you, and do not make laws like the lawgiver, or you will be bound by them. +

51 For the kingdom within cannot be owned. No ruler, no priest, no teacher, and no book can own the light within you. ✧

52 Not even this book. These words are given to light your way, never to rule over you. ✧

53 You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. +

54 The Saviour came to proclaim freedom to the captives, sight to the blind, and liberty to those who are crushed. +

55 Stand firm, then, in the freedom by which Christ has made you free, and do not let yourselves be bound again. +

56 And because the light dwells in every person, we honour every person, and we respect the beliefs of others, even where we differ. ✧

57 We do not force the light on anyone. We hold it up, and let each soul come to it freely. ✧

58 For a spark is never woken by force; it is woken by love, and by truth, and by the warmth of another flame. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This section protects the freedom of every reader. In the *Gospel of Mary*, the Saviour's last instruction is not to lay down rules beyond what he gave, nor to make laws like a lawgiver, "or you will be bound by them." So the kingdom within cannot be owned: no ruler, priest, teacher, or book (not even this one) can own the light inside you; these words are given to light your way, "never to rule over you." Jesus said the truth will set you free, and he came to proclaim liberty to captives and those who are crushed; Paul urged us to stand firm in that freedom. And since the light lives in everyone, we honour everyone and respect others' beliefs even when we differ. We never force the light on anyone; a spark is woken by love, truth, and the warmth of another flame.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 50 is the *Gospel of Mary*; 53 John 8:32; 54 Luke 4:18; 55 Galatians 5:1; 56 the founder's teaching to respect one another and each other's beliefs.

READ FURTHER

· John 8:31–36; Galatians 5.

VIII. THE LIGHT WITHIN, IN EVERY TRADITION

verses 59–67

59 The wise of every people have found the door within. ♦

60 Over the temple at Delphi the Greeks carved the words: Know thyself. ♦

61 In India the sage Uddalaka taught his son: the finest essence that is in all things, that is the Truth, that is the Self; and that art thou. ♦

62 The Buddha, near the end of his days, told his followers: Be a lamp unto yourselves; be a refuge unto yourselves. ♦

63 The Quran says that God is nearer to every person than the vein in their own neck. ♦

64 And the scholars of Islam say: whoever knows themselves knows their God. ♦

65 Isaac Luria, a teacher of Israel, taught that sparks of holy light were scattered into every corner of the world, and that each good deed lifts a spark back to its Source. ♦

66 George Fox, a seeker of England, taught his friends to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one. ♦

67 Many peoples, one door: the kingdom is within. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Wise people of every faith found this same “door within.” Above the temple at Delphi the Greeks carved “Know thyself.” In India the sage Uddalaka taught his son that the finest essence in all things is the Self, and “that art thou.” Near the end of his life the Buddha told his followers, “Be a lamp unto yourselves.” The Quran says God is nearer to us than the vein in our neck; scholars of Islam say whoever knows themselves knows their God. Isaac Luria taught that holy sparks are scattered everywhere and each good deed lifts one back to its Source. George Fox urged his friends to answer “that of God in every one.” Many peoples, one door.

WHO’S WHO

Delphi: the most famous temple and oracle of ancient Greece.

Uddalaka Aruni: a sage of the Chandogya Upanishad who taught his son Shvetaketu.

Isaac Luria (1534–1572): a great Jewish mystic of Safed, in the land of Israel.

George Fox (1624–1691): founder of the Religious Society of Friends (the Quakers) in England.

KEY WORDS

Tat tvam asi: Sanskrit, “That art thou.”

Tikkun: Hebrew for “repair,” the lifting of the holy sparks.

Quakers: the Society of Friends, who seek “the inner light.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 60 Delphi; 61 *Chandogya Upanishad* 6.8–16; 62 *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*; 63 Quran 50:16; 64 a saying handed down in Islam; 65 Lurianic Kabbalah; 66 George Fox (1656).

READ FURTHER

· Eknath Easwaran, *The Upanishads*.

· Rex Ambler, *Truth of the Heart: An Anthology of George Fox* (2001).

· Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (2003).

IX. THE UNIVERSE WITHIN

verses 68–74

68 And look at what the One has placed within you, even in the body. ♦

69 Your body is built of tens of trillions of living cells, and each one carries the whole book of your life. ✽

70 Within your head is a world of tens of billions of nerve cells, each one reaching out

IN PLAIN WORDS

Look at what God placed even in your body: tens of trillions of living cells, each carrying the whole book of your life; a brain of tens of billions of nerve cells with more connections than there are stars in our galaxy; atoms forged in stars that died before Earth was born. The ancients called the human being a “small cosmos,” a world in miniature holding the pattern of the heavens. The mi-

to thousands of others, more connections than there are stars in our galaxy. *

71 The atoms of your body were forged in stars that burned and died before the Earth was born. *

72 The wise of old called the human being a small cosmos, a world in miniature, holding within it the pattern of the heavens. ♦

73 So the micro and the macro meet in you: the stars outside, the stars within. ♦

74 You are not small. You were made to hold a kingdom. ♦

cro and the macro meet in you. "You are not small. You were made to hold a kingdom."

KEY WORDS

Neuron: a nerve cell; the adult brain has about 86 billion.

Synapse: a connection between nerve cells; there are on the order of 100 trillion.

Microcosm: "small world," the human being as a picture of the universe.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 69–71 rest on biology and astronomy; verse 72 is Hermetic and Greek tradition; verse 73 the founder's teaching that God is micro and macro.

READ FURTHER

· David Eagleman, *The Brain: The Story of You* (2015).

X. WAKING AND THE BLESSING

verses 75–88

75 How, then, does the spark wake? ♦

76 In stillness: for the voice within speaks softly, and the noise of the world drowns it out. ♦

77 In seeking: for the one who asks receives, and the one who knocks finds the door opened. †

78 In love: for whoever loves knows God, and the spark burns brightest in a loving heart. †

79 In truth: for every honest word fans the flame, and every lie covers it with ashes. ♦

80 In wonder: for the One is with us every hour of every day, and we have only to stop and see. ♦

81 And in one another: for one flame lights another, and the light is never made less by being shared. ♦

82 So wake, child of light. Remember who you are. ♦

83 And when you are awake, go and gently wake another. ♦

84 Blessed be Monad, whose kingdom is within us and around us. ♦

85 Blessed be the spark in every soul, which no power can put out. ♦

86 Blessed be the Saviour, who showed us the door within. ♦

87 Let the light within guide every thought, word, and deed. ♦

88 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

How does the spark wake? In stillness, because the inner voice is soft and noise drowns it out. In seeking, because whoever asks receives and whoever knocks finds the door opened. In love, because "whoever loves knows God." In truth, because every honest word fans the flame and every lie buries it in ashes. In wonder, because God is with us every hour if we only stop and see. And in one another: one flame lights another and loses nothing. "So wake, child of light. Remember who you are. And when you are awake, go and gently wake another." The Blessing praises the One whose kingdom is within and around us, the spark no power can put out, and the Saviour who showed us the door; it closes with this chapter's motto variation, "Let the light within guide every thought, word, and deed."

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 77 is Matthew 7:8; verse 78 1 John 4:7; verse 80 the founder's teaching (God with us 24/7).

READ FURTHER

· Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (1961).

· Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness* (1975).

THE KING OF KINGS

CHAPTER 9

I. THE KING OF KINGS

verses 1–12

1 Now lift up your heads, and hear of the King.

✧

2 Jesus Christ is the King of Kings, the Anointed of God, the Light of the world. +

3 His kingship was not taken by the sword, nor bought with gold, nor won by the vote of any crowd. ✧

4 It was given by God. He is King by divine right. ✧

5 Before he was born it was said of him: He will be great; God will give him the throne of his father David, and of his kingdom there will be no end. +

6 And the old song of the kings was fulfilled in him: I have been made king on Sion, the holy mountain; God said to me, You are My Son, today I have begotten you. +

7 His name, Christ, means the Anointed, for kings were anointed with holy oil when God set them on their thrones. +

8 But he was anointed with something greater than oil: with goodness, with the Spirit, with the light of the Fullness. + ✧

9 The Gospel of Philip says: from the anointing we are called Christians; and whoever is anointed possesses everything. +

10 He is the King above every king, because he is the one who obeyed the One in heaven most perfectly. ✧

11 Every crown on the earth will rust. His will not. ✧

12 Every throne on the earth will fall. His kingdom has no end. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This chapter is about Jesus Christ as our congregation believes in him: King of Kings by divine right, and Saviour through obedience. “Divine right” means his kingship was not taken by force, bought, or voted on; it was given by God. Before his birth the angel said God would give him the throne of David and his kingdom would never end; Psalm 2, an old coronation song, is fulfilled in him. “Christ” means “the Anointed”: kings were anointed with oil, but he was anointed with goodness, the Spirit, and the light of the Fullness (as Chapter 2 described). The *Gospel of Philip* says the word “Christian” comes from this anointing. He is “the King above every king” because he obeyed God most perfectly. Every earthly crown will rust and every throne fall; his kingdom has no end.

WHO’S WHO

David: Israel’s greatest king (about 1000 BC), from whose line the Messiah was promised.

Jesus Christ: the King of Kings, the Anointed of God, the Light of the world.

KEY WORDS

Divine right: kingship given by God.

Messiah / Christ: Hebrew and Greek words meaning “anointed one.”

Psalm 2: a royal psalm sung at the crowning of Israel’s kings.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 2 joins 1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 17:14 and 19:16 (King of kings) with John 8:12. Verse 4 is our Statement of Beliefs (article 5) and the founder’s teaching. Verse 5 is Luke 1:32–33; verse 6 Psalm 2:6–7; verse 9 the *Gospel of Philip*.

READ FURTHER

· Luke 1–2.

· E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (1993).

II. A KINGDOM NOT OF THIS WORLD

verses 13–26

13 Yet hear what kind of King he is. ✧

14 When the ruler of Rome asked him, Are you a king? he answered: My kingdom is not of this world. +

15 If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight. But my kingdom is not from here. +

16 For this I was born, and for this I came into the world: to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice. +

17 When the tempter took him up to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their glory, and said, All this I will give you if you will bow down to me, +

18 he answered: Go away. Worship God, and serve God alone. +

19 He refused the crowns of the Rulers. He would not take a kingdom from the hand of evil. ✧

20 And when the crowds wanted to seize him and make him king by force, he withdrew alone to the mountain. +

21 He would not be made king by force, and he would not rule by force. ✧

22 He rode into the holy city not on a war horse but on a young donkey, gentle and humble, as the prophet had foretold. +

23 He knelt down and washed the feet of his friends, and said: I have given you an example; do as I have done. +

24 He said: The rulers of the nations rule harshly over them, but it shall not be so among you. Whoever would be great among you must be the servant of all. +

25 For the Son of Humanity came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life for many. +

26 Here is the mark of the true King: he does not take; he gives. He does not rule over; he lifts up. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

What kind of king is he? When Pilate, the Roman governor, asked “Are you a king?”, Jesus answered that his kingdom is not of this world, or his servants would fight; he came “to bear witness to the truth.” When the tempter offered him all the world’s kingdoms if he would bow down, he refused: worship and serve God alone. When crowds tried to make him king by force, he withdrew to the mountain. He entered Jerusalem on a humble donkey, not a war horse. He washed his friends’ feet. He taught that rulers of nations dominate people, “but it shall not be so among you”: whoever would be great must be the servant of all. Our congregation sums it up: “he would not be made king by force, and he would not rule by force”; “he does not take; he gives. He does not rule over; he lifts up.”

WHO’S WHO

Pontius Pilate: the Roman governor of Judea (AD 26–36) who tried and crucified Jesus.

The tempter: the evil one who tested Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4).

KEY WORDS

Triumphal entry: Jesus’ humble ride into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9).

Foot washing: Jesus’ act of service at the Last Supper (John 13).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 14–16 are John 18:33–37; 17–18 Matthew 4:8–10; 20 John 6:15; 22 Zechariah 9:9 and Matthew 21:5; 23 John 13:4–15; 24–25 Mark 10:42–45.

READ FURTHER

· John 13 and 18; Mark 10.

· Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (1989).

III. BORN IN HUMILITY

verses 27–36

27 The King of Kings was not born in a palace.

✧

28 He was born where the animals were kept, and laid in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. +

29 Shepherds came first to see him, the poorest of the poor, called by angels from their fields in the night. +

30 And from the East came wise men, the Magi of Persia, following a star; and they knelt and gave him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. + ✧

31 So the wise of another faith, who had taught good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, were among the first to honour him. ✧ ✧

32 Gold for a king; frankincense for one who is holy; myrrh for one who would suffer. ✧

33 As a boy of twelve he was found in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding. +

34 He grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and with people. +

35 And he worked with his hands as a builder, a craftsman of wood and stone. +

36 The Architect of all things sent the King to earth as a builder; for he came to build again what had been broken. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The King of Kings was born where animals were kept and laid in a feeding trough, because there was no room in the inn. Poor shepherds were the first visitors. Then came the Magi, wise men from the East, priests of the Zoroastrian faith of Persia, the very people whose teaching “good thoughts, good words, good deeds” became our motto. They brought gold (for a king), frankincense (for one who is holy), and myrrh (for one who would suffer). At twelve, Jesus amazed the teachers in the Temple with his questions and understanding, and he grew in wisdom and favour. He worked with his hands as a *tekton*, a craftsman or builder: “The Architect of all things sent the King to earth as a builder; for he came to build again what had been broken.”

WHO’S WHO

The Magi: priest-astrologers of Persia; Matthew’s Gospel says they followed a star to Bethlehem.

Zoroaster: the prophet of Persia (see Chapter 14).

KEY WORDS

Manger: a feeding trough for animals.

Frankincense and myrrh: costly fragrant resins used in worship and in burial.

Tektōn: Greek for a craftsman or builder in wood and stone.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 28 is Luke 2:7; 29 Luke 2:8–16; 30 Matthew 2:1–11; 31 our congregation’s reading (the motto, Chapter 14); 33 Luke 2:46–47; 34 Luke 2:52; 35 Mark 6:3; 36 the founder’s revelation of the Architect.

READ FURTHER

· Matthew 2 and Luke 2.

· Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians* (on the Magi’s faith).

IV. THE ANOINTING

verses 37–42

37 When he came to the river Jordan to be baptised, the heavens opened above him. +

38 And the Spirit came down upon him like a dove, and rested on him. +

39 And a voice came from heaven: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. +

40 The Valentinian wise taught that at the river the Spirit descended upon him, as the light of the Fullness came down into the world. +

41 This was his anointing: not by the hands of men, but by the Spirit of God. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

At the Jordan river Jesus was baptised, the heavens opened, the Spirit came down like a dove, and a voice said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The Valentinian teachers saw this as the light of the Fullness coming down into the world. Our congregation calls it his true anointing: not by human hands but by the Spirit of God. From that day he began to teach, heal, and wake the sleeping.

WHO’S WHO

John the Baptist: the prophet who baptised Jesus in the Jordan.

42 And from that day he went out, and began to teach, and to heal, and to call the sleeping to wake. †

KEY WORDS

Baptism: washing in water as a sign of new life (see Chapter 16).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 37–39 are Matthew 3:13–17; verse 40 Valentinian teaching (Irenaeus I.7.2; *Excerpts from Theodotus*); verse 42 Matthew 4:17.

READ FURTHER

· Matthew 3–4.

V. THE MAN WHO WALKED WITH GOD

verses 43–59

43 Jesus was a man of great knowledge and great gifts; and he used every gift in obedience to God. ✧

44 He knew the scriptures, and he knew the hidden meaning beneath them, and he spoke with an authority no teacher of his day possessed. † ✧

45 He led with love: he said, Love one another as I have loved you. †

46 He led with compassion: when he saw the crowds, he was moved with compassion, for they were like sheep without a shepherd. †

47 He touched those whom no one would touch, and they were made clean. †

48 He ate with those whom others despised, and said: It is not the healthy who need a physician, but the sick. †

49 When they brought him a woman caught in wrongdoing and wanted to stone her, he said: Let the one among you without sin throw the first stone. †

50 And one by one they went away, and he said to her: Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more. †

51 He did not judge to destroy. He judged to heal. ✧

52 He led with courage: he overturned the tables of those who made the house of prayer a market, and he spoke the truth to the powerful without fear. †

53 He led with pure faith: he said, With God all things are possible. †

54 He wept at the grave of his friend. †

55 He took the little children in his arms and blessed them, and said: the kingdom belongs to such as these. †

56 He prayed alone in the early morning, before the Sun was up, in a quiet place. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

This section paints the character of Jesus as our congregation sees him: a man of great knowledge and gifts who used every gift in obedience to God. He knew the scriptures and their hidden meanings and spoke with unique authority. He led with **love** (“love one another as I have loved you”), with **compassion** (moved by crowds who were “like sheep without a shepherd”), touching people no one would touch and eating with those others despised. When a woman was about to be stoned, he said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone,” and then, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more.” “He did not judge to destroy. He judged to heal.” He led with **courage**, overturning the market tables in the Temple and speaking truth to power, and with **pure faith**: “With God all things are possible.” He wept at his friend’s grave, blessed children, prayed alone before dawn, fed and healed people, and never asked for a crown. Look at his life, and you see what a human being can become when the light within is fully awake.

WHO’S WHO

Lazarus: Jesus’ friend at whose grave he wept (John 11).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 43 is the founder’s teaching (Jesus obeyed God; led with love, compassion, courage, and pure faith). Verse 44 is Matthew 7:28–29; 45 John 13:34; 46 Matthew 9:36; 47 Mark 1:40–42; 48 Mark 2:16–17; 49–50 John 8:7, 11; 52 John 2:13–16; 53 Matthew 19:26; 54 John 11:35; 55 Mark 10:14–16; 56 Mark 1:35; 58 our Statement of Beliefs.

READ FURTHER

· The Gospel of Mark (the shortest Gospel, easily read in one sitting).

· Marcus J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (1994).

57 He fed the hungry crowds, and he healed the sick, and he raised the fallen, and he never asked for a crown in return. † ✧

58 Of all who ever walked the earth, he is the greatest example of one who walked with God. ✧

59 Look at his life, and you will see what a human being can become when the light within is fully awake. ✧

VI. THE CHOICE OF THE KING

verses 60–75

60 Now hear the choice of the King, which is the heart of his obedience. ✧

61 His people lived under the iron hand of Rome; and many waited for a king who would raise the sword and drive the Romans out. ✧ ✱

62 Jesus had the power to stir the crowds. Thousands followed him. He could have raised an army. ✧

63 But he saw what the sword would bring: the slaughter of his people, their homes burned, their children killed. ✧

64 So the King chose another way. He chose obedience to God, and self-giving love. ✧

65 When one of his friends drew a sword to defend him, he said: Put your sword back in its place; for all who take the sword will die by the sword. †

66 And even the high priest said, without knowing the depth of his words: It is better that one man should die for the people, than that the whole nation should perish. †

67 History bears witness: a generation later, when others did rise with the sword against Rome, Jerusalem was destroyed, and its temple burned. ✱

68 The King saw what was coming, and he chose to give himself rather than to see his people die. ✧

69 In the garden, the night before he died, he fell on his face and prayed in anguish, and his sweat was like drops of blood. †

70 And he prayed: If it is Your will, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but Yours be done. †

71 Not my will, but Yours. These are the strongest words a king has ever spoken. ✧

72 He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

Here is the heart of the founder's teaching about Jesus. His people lived under Roman rule, and many hoped for a messiah who would lead an armed revolt. Jesus had the power to stir thousands and could have raised an army. But he saw what the sword would bring: the slaughter of his people. So he chose obedience to God and self-giving love instead. When a friend drew a sword to defend him, he said, "Put up again your sword into its place... all that take the sword shall perish with the sword." The high priest Caiaphas unknowingly spoke a deep truth: "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." History bears witness: about forty years later, when others did revolt against Rome, Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple burned (AD 70). In the garden of Gethsemane, sweating like drops of blood, Jesus prayed, "Not my will, but Yours be done," "the strongest words a king has ever spoken." He humbled himself and obeyed unto death, and so became our Saviour through obedience.

WHO'S WHO

Caiaphas: the Jewish high priest (AD 18–36) who handed Jesus to the Romans.

Peter: the disciple who drew a sword in the garden (named in John 18:10).

KEY WORDS

Gethsemane: the olive garden where Jesus prayed the night before he died.

First Jewish–Roman War (AD 66–73): the revolt that ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple in AD 70.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 61–64 and 68 are the founder's teaching (Jesus did not fight Rome because the people would have been massacred). Verse 65 is Matthew 26:52; 66 John 11:50; 67 history (AD 70); 69 Luke 22:44; 70 Luke 22:42; 72 Philippians 2:8; 73 our Statement of Beliefs; 75 John 15:13.

73 This is how he became our Saviour: through obedience to God. ✧

74 A king who conquers with the sword rules for a season. A king who conquers with obedience and love rules forever. ✧

75 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. +

READ FURTHER

- Josephus, *The Jewish War* (an eyewitness history of the war with Rome; free online).
- John 11 and 18; Luke 22.

VII. THE CROSS AND THE FRUIT

verses 76–87

76 They crowned him with thorns, and mocked him, and put a purple robe on him, and said: Hail, King. +

77 They did not know that they were crowning the true King. ✧

78 Above his head they wrote his title in three languages: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. +

79 And on the cross he prayed for those who put him there: Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. +

80 The Gospel of Truth says that he was nailed to a tree, and became the fruit of the knowledge of the One; and that fruit does not bring death to those who eat it, but joy, for in it they find themselves. +

81 It says that he put on the living book of the living, and that on the cross he published the edict of the One, so that all might read it and know. +

82 So the tree of death became the tree of knowledge, and the tree of knowledge became the tree of life. ✧

83 The wise of the two ways spoke differently of his suffering. +

84 Some of the Sethian wise taught that the Living Christ was beyond the reach of the Rulers' nails, and that only the garment of flesh was wounded. +

85 The Valentinian wise taught that he truly suffered, and that his suffering was love made visible. +

86 Both agree on this: what the Rulers nailed to the tree could not hold the Living One. + ✧

87 And the seeker will discern the rest in prayer. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The soldiers crowned him with thorns, mocked him as "King," and nailed above his head, in three languages, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," not knowing they were crowning the true King. On the cross he prayed, "Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." The *Gospel of Truth* gives a beautiful Gnostic reading: Jesus nailed to the tree became "the fruit of the knowledge" of God, a fruit that gives not death but joy; he "published" God's message on the cross like an edict for all to read. So the tree of death became the tree of knowledge, and the tree of life. The two Gnostic schools spoke differently about his suffering: some Sethian texts say the Living Christ was beyond the nails and only his body suffered; the Valentinians say he truly suffered, "love made visible." Both agree that what was nailed to the tree could not hold the Living One. The reader discerns the rest in prayer.

KEY WORDS

Edict: a public decree, posted for all to read.

Docetism: the belief that Christ only seemed to suffer (held by some Gnostics, not by the Valentinians).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 76–79 are John 19:2–3, 19–20 and Luke 23:34. Verses 80–81 are the *Gospel of Truth*. Verse 84 draws on the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* and the *Apocalypse of Peter* (Nag Hammadi Codex VII); verse 85 on the *Gospel of Truth*.

READ FURTHER

- John 19.
- Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, chapter "The Passion of Christ and the Persecution of Christians."

VIII. THE RISING

verses 88–94

88 And on the first day of the week, at the rising of the Sun, the tomb was found empty. +

89 Mary Magdalene stood weeping at the tomb, and a voice said her name, Mary; and she turned, and knew him. +

90 She was the first to see the risen King, and the first to carry the news. +

91 And the hidden books tell that after he rose, he remained with his disciples, teaching them the mysteries of the Light; and a great stream of light came down upon him, and he was clothed in glory. +

92 The Rulers had done their worst; and the King rose with the Sun. ✧

93 Death could not keep him, because death was never his master. ✧

94 And he said: Peace be with you. As I have been sent, so I send you. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

Early on the first day of the week, at sunrise, the tomb was found empty. Mary Magdalene, weeping at the tomb, heard someone say her name, “Mary,” and turned and knew him; she was the first to see the risen King and the first to carry the news. The Gnostic book *Pistis Sophia* adds that after rising he stayed with his disciples, teaching the mysteries of the Light, and a great stream of light came down and clothed him in glory. “The Rulers had done their worst; and the King rose with the Sun.” He said, “Peace be with you. As I have been sent, so I send you.”

WHO’S WHO

Mary Magdalene: a close disciple of Jesus from Magdala in Galilee; first witness of the Resurrection.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 88 is Mark 16:2–6; 89–90 John 20:11–18; 91 *Pistis Sophia* I; 94 John 20:21.

READ FURTHER

- John 20.
- Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala*.

IX. THE REVEALER OF HIDDEN THINGS

verses 95–105

95 The King came not only to rule, but to reveal. ✧

96 He brought the hidden knowledge of God out of the silence, and spoke it so that those with ears to hear might understand. ✧

97 These are the hidden sayings the Living Jesus spoke: whoever finds their meaning will not taste death. +

98 He said: Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me; and I myself will become that one; and the hidden things will be revealed to them. +

99 The Gospel of Philip says that he did not appear as he truly was, but in the way each one could bear to see him: to the great he appeared great, to the small he appeared small, to the angels as an angel, and to humans as a human. +

100 And when he appeared to John on the mountain, he came first as a child, then as an old man, then as a servant; for the King can be found in every age of life. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

The King came not only to rule but to reveal the hidden knowledge of God. The *Gospel of Thomas* opens: these are the hidden sayings of the living Jesus, and whoever finds their meaning will not taste death; and he says whoever “drinks from my mouth will become like me.” The *Gospel of Philip* says he did not show himself as he truly was, but in the way each could bear: great to the great, small to the small. In the *Secret Book of John* he appears as a child, then an old man, then a servant: the King can be found at every age of life. The *Gospel of Truth* says he became a way for the wanderer, knowledge for those who did not know, a discovery for seekers, support for the shaking, purity for those who felt unclean, and rest for the weary. “Whatever you lack, he became it, so that you might find it.” “Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 97 is *Gospel of Thomas*, prologue and saying 1; 98 saying 108; 99 the *Gospel of Philip*; 100 the *Secret Book of John*; 101–103 the *Gospel of Truth*; 105 Matthew 11:28.

READ FURTHER

- Marvin Meyer, *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus* (1992) and *The Gospels of Mary* (2004).

101 The Gospel of Truth says that he became a way for those who had wandered, and knowledge for those who did not know. †

102 He became a discovery for those who were searching, and a support for those who were shaking. †

103 He became purity for those who felt unclean, and rest for those who were weary. †

104 Whatever you lack, he became it, so that you might find it. ♦

105 Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. †

X. THE KING HONOURED BY THE NATIONS

verses 106–113

106 The King of Kings is honoured far beyond the walls of any one church. ♦

107 The Quran calls him the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, a Word from God and a Spirit from God, honoured in this world and the next. ♦

108 And it tells that he spoke even as a child in the cradle, and healed the blind and the leper, and raised the dead by the leave of God. ♦

109 Ramakrishna, a holy man of India, saw in a vision the Christ come toward him and enter into his heart; and from that day he honoured Jesus as one filled with the love of God. ♦

110 Rumi, a poet of the Persian lands, wrote that the body is like Mary, and that within every one of us a Christ is waiting to be born. ♦

111 Thich Nhat Hanh, a monk of the Buddhist way, kept an image of the Christ upon his altar beside the Buddha, and wrote of the living Buddha and the living Christ. ♦

112 And the Magi of Persia knelt before him as a child. ♦

113 Many peoples, many faiths, one honour: the light of this King reaches every land. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Jesus is honoured far beyond any single church. The Quran calls him the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, a Word and a Spirit from God, honoured in this world and the next, who spoke as a baby and healed by God's leave. Ramakrishna, a holy man of India, saw Christ in a vision enter his heart and honoured him as filled with God's love. Rumi, the Persian poet, wrote that the body is like Mary and within each of us a Christ waits to be born. Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist monk, kept an image of Christ beside the Buddha on his altar. And the Magi of Persia knelt before him as a child. "The light of this King reaches every land."

WHO'S WHO

Isa: the Quran's name for Jesus.

Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886): a Hindu mystic of Bengal who honoured all religions as paths to God.

Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207–1273): the great Sufi poet, born in Balkh and living in Konya (in today's Turkey).

Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–2022): a Vietnamese Zen monk and teacher of mindfulness.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 107 is Quran 3:45 and 4:171; 108 Quran 3:46 and 5:110; 109 the life of Sri Ramakrishna (1874); 110 Rumi, *Fihi Ma Fihi*; 111 Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (1995).

READ FURTHER

· Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus* (2001).

· Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (1995).

XI. FOLLOWING THE KING AND THE BLESSING

verses 114–133

114 Now hear how to follow the King. ✧

115 You too are royal. He has made us a kingdom of priests to serve God. +

116 Remember the old hymn: you are a king's son, a king's daughter; you came from the palace of light. ✧

117 But be royal as he was royal: by serving. ✧

118 Rule your own heart before you try to rule anything else. ✧

119 When you hold power, in your home or in your work, use it to lift up and never to crush. ✧

120 When you are tempted to take the sword, in your words or in your deeds, remember the garden, and put it back in its place. ✧

121 When your will and God's will pull in two directions, pray as he prayed: not my will, but Yours. ✧

122 When you are wronged, pray as he prayed: forgive them, for they do not know. ✧

123 When you see the outcast, sit and eat with them. ✧

124 When you see the one everyone condemns, say as he said: neither do I condemn you; go, and live in the light. ✧

125 Take up your cross daily, and follow. +

126 The cross is not only suffering. It is the choice of love over power, every day. ✧

127 And whoever follows the King will find that the King walks beside them, all the way home. ✧

128 And remember, I am with you all days, even to the end of the world. +

129 Blessed be Monad, from whom every true crown is given. ✧

130 Blessed be Jesus Christ, King of Kings, by divine right, through obedience, in love. ✧

131 Blessed be the King who would not take the sword, and so saved his people. ✧

132 Blessed be every soul that follows him, serving as he served. ✧

133 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

How do we follow him? Remember you are royal: he made us a kingdom of priests, and the old hymn says you are a king's son or daughter from the palace of light. But be royal as he was: by serving. Rule your own heart first. If you have power at home or work, use it to lift up, never to crush. When tempted to "take the sword" in words or deeds, remember the garden and put it away. When your will and God's pull apart, pray "not my will, but Yours." When wronged, pray "forgive them." Sit and eat with the outcast; tell the condemned, "neither do I condemn you." "Take up your cross daily": the cross is "the choice of love over power, every day." And he promised, "I am with you all days." The Blessing praises Monad who gives every true crown, Jesus the King of Kings "by divine right, through obedience, in love," and every soul that serves as he served.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 115 is Revelation 1:6 and 1 Peter 2:9; 116 the *Hymn of the Pearl*; 125 Luke 9:23; 128 Matthew 28:20.

READ FURTHER

- Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (15th century).
- Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (1978).

HEALING THE TEMPLE

CHAPTER 10

I. THE TEMPLE

verses 1–9

1 Hear now of the temple you live in every day.

✧

2 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; therefore honour God in your body. +

3 Not a temple of stone, built by hands, but a temple of flesh and breath and blood, built by the Architect of all things. ✧

4 I will give You thanks, for You are fearfully wondrous; wondrous are Your works, and my soul knows it well. +

5 We carry this treasure in vessels of clay, so that the greatness of the power may be seen to come from God. +

6 Every beat of your heart is a gift you did not have to ask for. Every breath is given before you remember to be thankful. ✧

7 And the temple renews itself: the blood in your veins is made new every few months, your skin every few weeks, and even your bones are slowly rebuilt over the years. ✧

8 So the One is always healing you, from within, quietly, every day you are alive. ✧

9 This is a core of our mission: to heal our temples, body, mind, and spirit, so that the light within can shine fully. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Paul wrote that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, so honour God in your body. This chapter takes that seriously. The body is not a stone temple made by hands, but a living temple of flesh, breath, and blood, built by the Architect. The Psalm gives thanks for being “wondrously and lovingly made,” and Paul says we carry a treasure in “vessels of clay.” Every heartbeat and every breath is an unasked-for gift. And the temple quietly renews itself: blood cells are replaced every few months, skin every few weeks, and bones rebuild over the years; so God is always healing you from within. Healing our temples (body, mind, and spirit) is a core part of our congregation’s mission, so that the light within can shine fully.

KEY WORDS

Temple of the Spirit: the body as a holy dwelling of God’s light.

Bone remodelling: the body’s constant breaking down and rebuilding of bone.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 2 is 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 4 Psalm 138:14; 5 2 Corinthians 4:7; 7 biology; 9 the founder’s mission (heal our temples).

READ FURTHER

· Psalm 138.

II. PRISON OR TEMPLE?

verses 10–16

10 Some of the ancient wise looked at the body and called it a prison, a tomb, a garment of forgetting woven by the Rulers. +

11 And it is true that the body can become a prison, when it is ruled by craving and fear. ✧

12 But hear the teaching of our congregation: the body is a temple, and a temple is meant to be cleansed, not hated. ✧

13 Jesus said: If the flesh came into being because of the spirit, it is a wonder; but if the spirit came into being because of the body, it is a wonder of wonders. Yet I marvel at how such a great treasure has made its home in such poverty. +

14 A great treasure lives in you. Do not despise the house it lives in; tend it, so the treasure can shine. ✧

15 The Saviour did not hate the body. He touched the sick, and fed the hungry, and washed tired feet. + ✧

16 So we take the call of the wise to freedom, and we honour the body as the house of the light. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Some ancient Gnostic books called the body a prison or tomb made by the Rulers to make us forget. The book admits the body *can* become a prison when craving and fear rule it. But our congregation teaches that the body is a temple, and “a temple is meant to be cleansed, not hated.” In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus marvels that such great treasure (the spirit) has made its home in such poverty (the body); so don’t despise the house the treasure lives in; tend it so the treasure shines. Jesus didn’t hate the body: he touched the sick, fed the hungry, washed tired feet. So we take the Gnostic call to freedom, but honour the body as the house of the light.

KEY WORDS

Asceticism: strict self-denial of the body; some ancient Gnostics practised it, while our congregation teaches balance (temperance).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 10 draws on the *Secret Book of John*; verse 12 is our congregation’s teaching (the founder’s mission); verse 13 is *Gospel of Thomas* 29.

READ FURTHER

• Stevan Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas: Annotated and Explained* (saying 29).

III. THE FOOD OF THE EARTH

verses 17–25

17 In the beginning it was said: Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed upon the face of the earth, and every tree with fruit that yields seed; they shall be food for you. +

18 The Earth receives the light of the Sun and turns it into food; and whoever eats what the Earth brings forth eats sunlight made living. ✧

19 In Babylon, young Daniel would not eat from the king’s rich table; he asked for plants and water for ten days. +

20 And at the end of ten days he and his friends looked healthier and stronger than all who ate the king’s food. +

21 So eat clean: food close to how the Earth gave it, grown in the light, not made in a factory far from the Sun. ✧

22 Within you lives a hidden garden of tiny living things, trillions of them, and they are fed by

IN PLAIN WORDS

In Genesis, God gives every seed-bearing plant and fruit tree as food. The Earth receives sunlight and turns it into food, so eating what the Earth gives is “eating sunlight made living.” In Babylon, young Daniel refused the king’s rich food, asked for vegetables and water for ten days, and ended healthier and stronger than the others. So the book urges clean eating: food close to how the Earth gave it, grown in the light, not made in a factory. Science supports this: trillions of tiny living things in our gut (the “hidden garden”) are fed by what we eat, especially whole plant foods; and diets heavy in ultra-processed foods are linked to poorer health. Bless your food and remember the hands, fields, and light that brought it. And the founder’s vision: one day we’ll grow our own food, in our own fields and homes, and share it with all who hunger.

WHO’S WHO

Daniel: a young Jewish nobleman taken to Babylon (6th century BC), famed for faith and wisdom.

what you eat; feed them well, and they help to keep you well. ✱

23 Food made far from the field, full of what the body was never made to carry, has been found to weaken the body over time. ✱

24 Bless your food before you eat it, and remember the hands and the fields and the light that brought it to you. ✧

25 And one day, with the help of God and of one another, we will grow our own food, in our own fields and in our own homes, and share it with all who hunger. ✧

KEY WORDS

Gut microbiome: the community of microbes living in our digestive system.

Ultra-processed food: industrially made food with many additives, far from its natural form.

Clean eating: eating whole, natural foods.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 17 is Genesis 1:29; 19–20 Daniel 1:8–16; 21 the founder's teaching (clean eating heals the temple); 22–23 nutrition science; 25 the founder's Clean Food Vision (farms and gardens).

READ FURTHER

- Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food* (2008): "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."
- Tim Spector, *The Diet Myth* (2015), on the gut microbiome.
- Daniel 1.

IV. WATER, LIGHT, BREATH, MOVEMENT, AND REST

verses 26–34

26 Drink the water God made, for most of your body is water, and every part of you depends on it. ✱

27 Receive the light of the Sun, gently and in its season; it strengthens your bones and lifts your heart. But do not burn under it, for even good gifts need measure. ✱ ✧

28 Breathe slowly and deeply; for the breath was the first gift given to the first human, and it is still a gift each moment. + ✧

29 Move the body God gave you: walk, work, carry, stretch, play. ✧

30 Those who move their bodies each day are protected from many sicknesses of the heart and of the mind. ✱

31 And rest. Even the Saviour said to his friends: Come away by yourselves to a quiet place, and rest a while. +

32 God gives sleep to the beloved. +

33 While you sleep deeply, the brain is washed clean of the waste of the day, and the body repairs what the day wore down. ✱

34 So do not despise rest. It is not laziness; it is the Sabbath of the temple. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Five simple gifts heal the temple. **Water:** most of the body is water; drink the water God made. **Light:** receive the Sun gently and in season; it strengthens bones and lifts the heart, but don't burn, "for even good gifts need measure." **Breath:** breathe slowly and deeply; breath was God's first gift to the first human. **Movement:** walk, work, carry, stretch, play; daily movement protects against many illnesses of body and mind. **Rest:** even Jesus told his friends to "come apart... and rest a little," and the Psalm says God gives sleep to the beloved; during deep sleep the brain is cleaned and the body repaired. "Do not despise rest. It is not laziness; it is the Sabbath of the temple."

KEY WORDS

Sabbath: a day of rest (from Hebrew *shabbat*).

Glymphatic system: the brain's cleaning process, most active during deep sleep.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 26, 27, 30, and 33 rest on health science; 28 is Genesis 2:7; 31 Mark 6:31; 32 Psalm 126:2.

READ FURTHER

- Matthew Walker, *Why We Sleep* (2017).
- Dan Buettner, *The Blue Zones* (2008): what the longest-lived peoples of the world have in common.

V. TEMPERANCE, THE CROWN OF HEALTH

verses 35–47

35 Above all the virtues of the body stands temperance. ♦

36 Temperance is the mastery of the soul over its desires, and the measure that keeps every good gift good. ♦

37 Food is good; gluttony is not. Rest is good; sloth is not. Pleasure is good; slavery to pleasure is not. ♦

38 Our congregation holds temperance so high that it stands on both of our lists of virtues: once as the mastery of the soul, and once as the care of the body. ♦

39 The Book of Thomas the Contender warns of the fire of desire that burns in the body day and night, and calls the wise to master it before it masters them. +

40 The Buddha first starved himself almost to death seeking the truth; then he took a bowl of rice and milk, and found the Middle Way, between too much and too little. ♦

41 The Quran says: eat and drink, but do not waste by excess. ♦

42 Fasting, too, can heal: it is a rest for the body and a sharpening for the spirit, and the faithful of every people have known it. ♦ ♦

43 And it has been found that the cells of the body have their own way of cleaning and renewing themselves. ✱

44 But let every fast be wise. ♦

45 And know that a fast is not only from food. You may fast from eating too much, from working too much, from the endless noise of screens, from harsh words, from worry, from anything that has grown too large in your life. ♦

46 Whatever you set aside in your fast, give that time back to God, to the people you love, and to rest. ♦

47 Temperance is not punishing the body. It is loving it with wisdom. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Our congregation holds temperance (self-mastery and measure) so high that it appears on both of our virtue lists and has two books of its own. Temperance is “the mastery of the soul over its desires,” the measure that keeps every good thing good: food is good but gluttony is not; rest is good but sloth is not; pleasure is good but slavery to pleasure is not. The *Book of Thomas the Contender* warns of the “fire” of desire. The Buddha learned that starving himself didn’t bring truth, accepted a bowl of rice and milk, and found the “Middle Way.” The Quran says eat and drink but don’t waste by excess. Fasting can heal, resting the body and sharpening the spirit, and science has found the body’s cells have their own way of cleaning and renewing themselves. Every fast should be wise. And a fast isn’t only from food: you can fast from overeating, overworking, screens, harsh words, worry, anything that has grown too big in your life, and give that time back to God, your loved ones, and rest. “Temperance is not punishing the body. It is loving it with wisdom.”

WHO’S WHO

The Buddha: see Chapter 7. Sujata was the young woman who offered him rice and milk.

KEY WORDS

Middle Way: the Buddha’s path between too much and too little.

Autophagy: Greek for “self-eating,” the cell’s way of cleaning and recycling its own parts.

Fasting: going without something (food or other things) for a time, for the sake of the spirit.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 35 is the founder’s teaching on temperance; 38 our virtue lists; 39 the *Book of Thomas the Contender*; 40 the Buddha’s story; 41 Quran 7:31; 43 cell biology (autophagy, discovered by Yoshinori Ohsumi); 44–46 the founder’s direction on fasting. Practical note: anyone who is sick, pregnant, or on medication should talk with a doctor before fasting from food.

READ FURTHER

- Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (1966), the chapter on temperance.
- Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (1978), the chapter on fasting.

VI. HEALING THE MIND

verses 48–58

48 The temple has a mind, and the mind can be wounded too. ✧

49 The wisdom of the spirit is life and peace. +

50 Keep your heart with the utmost care, for out of it are the issues of life. +

51 God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of sobriety. +

52 Whatever is true, whatever is modest, whatever is just, whatever is holy, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good fame: think on these things. +

53 Be reformed in the newness of your mind. +

54 Fear shouts; truth speaks calmly. Learn to listen for the calm voice. ✧

55 A glad heart brings health, but a sorrowful spirit dries up the bones. +

56 Give thanks each morning for three things, however small; for gratitude turns the eyes of the mind toward the light. ✧

57 Those who give thanks and keep hope are often found to heal and to endure better than those who do not. ✱

58 And if a thought comes to you again and again telling you that you are worthless, know that it is a lie, and not the voice of God. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The mind can be wounded too. Proverbs says “keep your heart with the utmost care; for out of these are the issues of life.” Paul writes that “the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace,” that God gave us not a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind; tells us to think on whatever is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report; and says we are transformed by renewing our minds. “Fear shouts; truth speaks calmly.” A joyful heart is good medicine. Give thanks each morning for three things; gratitude turns the mind toward the light, and studies find grateful, hopeful people often heal and endure better. And when a thought keeps saying you’re worthless, “know that it is a lie, and not the voice of God.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 49 is Romans 8:6; 50 Proverbs 4:23; 51 2 Timothy 1:7; 52 Philippians 4:8; 53 Romans 12:2; 55 Proverbs 17:22; 57 studies on gratitude and optimism.

READ FURTHER

- Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (1946).
- Philippians 4.

VII. HEALING THE SPIRIT

verses 59–67

59 The spirit is healed by returning to its Source. ✧

60 Pray every day, even if your prayer is only a breath: thank You. ✧

61 Sit in silence, for the voice within speaks softly. ✧

62 Turn toward the rising Sun in the morning and remember the Light that never fails. ✧

63 Walk in the virtues, for every virtue is a medicine for the soul, and every vice a slow sickness. ✧

64 When one of you is sick, let them call the priests of the church, and let them pray over the sick one and anoint them with oil; and the prayer of faith will save the sick. +

65 The hands of the believers were laid upon the sick, and they recovered. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

The spirit heals by returning to its Source. Pray daily, even a single breath of “thank You.” Sit in silence; the inner voice is soft. Turn toward the rising Sun each morning and remember the Light that never fails. Walk in the virtues: each is a medicine, each vice a slow sickness. When someone is sick, the faithful gather, pray, and anoint them with oil, and lay hands on them. Forgive, because unforgiveness is “a poison the spirit drinks hoping another will be harmed.” And remember who you are: a child of the One, from the light and returning to the light.

KEY WORDS

Laying on of hands: placing hands on someone while praying for them.

Anointing: blessing with oil (see Chapter 16).

66 Forgive, for unforgiveness is a poison the spirit drinks hoping another will be harmed. ✧

67 And remember who you are: a child of the One, who came from the light and is returning to the light. ✧

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 62 is the sunrise prayer of our Helio practice; 64 James 5:14–15; 65 Mark 16:18; 67 Chapter 7.

READ FURTHER

· Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* (1981).

VIII. BREAKING THE CHAINS

verses 68–76

68 Some chains are worn in the body itself: the drink, the smoke, the powder, the pill, the screen that will not let go. ✧

69 Hear this without shame: whoever is bound is not worthless. They are a child of light in chains, and chains can be broken. ✧

70 The Rulers bind through craving, so that the soul chases what never fills it. + ✧

71 No one is set free by being looked down on. We are set free by being loved, and helped, and not left alone. ✧

72 So if you are bound, tell someone. Speak it out loud. The chain loses strength in the light. ✧

73 Freedom often comes one day at a time; and every single day of freedom is a victory of the light. ✧

74 Seek out those who have walked this road before you, and the healers who know the way out; there is no shame in being helped. ✧

75 If you fall, rise again. The Sun does not stay down because yesterday was cloudy. ✧

76 Stand firm, then, in the freedom by which you have been made free, and do not take up the yoke of slavery again. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

Some chains are in the body itself: alcohol, smoking, drugs, pills, screens that won't let go. The book speaks without shame: whoever is bound is not worthless but "a child of light in chains, and chains can be broken." The Rulers bind through craving, so the soul chases what never fills it. No one is freed by being looked down on; we're freed by being loved, helped, and not left alone. So tell someone; say it out loud; "the chain loses strength in the light." Freedom often comes one day at a time, and each day is a victory. Seek people who've walked this road and healers who know the way out; there's no shame in help. If you fall, rise again; the Sun doesn't stay down because yesterday was cloudy. Stand firm in your freedom.

KEY WORDS

Recovery: the journey out of addiction, often one day at a time, with support.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 70 recalls Chapter 7 (the Rulers' chains); 74 recovery groups and addiction medicine (in the US, the SAMHSA National Helpline, 1-800-662-4357, is free and confidential); 75 Chapter 5; 76 Galatians 5:1.

READ FURTHER

· Gabor Maté, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* (2008): a compassionate look at addiction.
· *Alcoholics Anonymous* (the "Big Book," 1939) and other twelve-step fellowships, free to attend.

IX. THE HEALER AND THE HEALERS

verses 77–82

77 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching, and healing every sickness and every weakness among the people. +

78 And God said: I am the One who heals you. +

79 The Gospel of Truth says that the physician hurries to the place where there is sickness, because that is the will within the physician. +

80 So God works also through the hands of the Parabolani, those who risk themselves to

IN PLAIN WORDS

Jesus went through towns and villages healing every sickness. God says, "I am the One who heals you." The *Gospel of Truth* says the physician hurries to where sickness is, a picture of the Saviour. God also works through the Parabolani: the early Christian brotherhoods who risked their own lives to nurse the sick and bury the dead in times of plague; and Sirach says God created medicines from the earth, and the wise will not despise them. So spiritual healing walks beside this work, never instead of it. And there is strength in seeking help: when a storm in the mind is too heavy

care for the sick; for the Most High created medicines out of the earth, and the wise will not despise them. †

81 Therefore spiritual healing walks beside the healing work of the Parabolani, never instead of it. ✧

82 There is strength in seeking help. When a storm in the mind is too heavy to carry alone, reach out to someone who can walk with you through it; this is not weakness but courage, for your life is precious to God. ✧

to carry alone, reaching out is courage, not weakness, “for your life is precious to God.”

WHO’S WHO

The Parabolani: Christian brotherhoods (best known in Alexandria, 4th–5th centuries) whose name means “those who risk their lives”; they cared for the sick and the dead.

KEY WORDS

Sirach (Ecclesiasticus): a book of wisdom from about 180 BC, in the Apocrypha.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 77 is Matthew 9:35; 78 Exodus 15:26; 79 the *Gospel of Truth*; 80 Sirach 38:1–4 and the history of the Parabolani; 81 our safeguard that spiritual healing goes beside medical care; 82 the founder’s wording (“there is strength in seeking help”). In the US, anyone in crisis can call or text 988, any hour.

READ FURTHER

- Sirach 38.
- Gary B. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity* (2009).

X. HEALING IN EVERY TRADITION

verses 83–89

83 Every people under heaven has known that the body and the soul are healed together. ✧

84 Juvenal, a poet of Rome, prayed for a sound mind in a sound body. ✧

85 Maimonides, a Sephardic sage of the golden age of Al-Andalus, full of wisdom and knowledge, taught that keeping the body healthy is part of the way of God, for one cannot understand or know the Maker while sick. ✧

86 The healers of India teach balance: of food and rest, of work and stillness, of body and breath. ✧

87 The sages of China taught that the one who knows when enough is enough is rich, and that moderation is the root of a long life. ✧

88 In Islam it is taught: let a third of the stomach be for food, a third for drink, and a third for breath. ✧

89 Many peoples, one witness: the temple is holy, and its healing is holy work. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Every people knew body and soul heal together. Juvenal, a Roman poet, prayed for “a sound mind in a sound body.” Maimonides, the great Sephardic sage of the golden age of Al-Andalus, a physician full of wisdom, taught that keeping the body healthy is part of God’s way, because a sick person can’t understand or know the Maker well. India’s healers teach balance of food and rest, work and stillness, body and breath. China’s sages taught that knowing when enough is enough is true wealth, and moderation is the root of long life. Islam teaches that a third of the stomach is for food, a third for drink, a third for breath.

WHO’S WHO

Juvenal (about AD 55–130): a Roman poet.

Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon, 1138–1204): Jewish philosopher, legal scholar, and physician, born in Córdoba in Al-Andalus (Muslim Spain), later physician in Cairo.

KEY WORDS

Al-Andalus: Muslim-ruled Spain and Portugal (711–1492), known for its flowering of learning among Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

Ayurveda: the traditional medicine of India (“knowledge of life”).

Hadith: reported sayings of the Prophet of Islam.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 84 is Juvenal, *Satires* 10.356; 85 Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Hilchot De'ot 4:1; 86 Ayurveda; 87 *Tao Te Ching* 33, 44, 59; 88 Hadith (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 2380).

READ FURTHER

- Sherwin B. Nuland, *Maimonides* (2005): a short, readable life.
- Stephen Mitchell, *Tao Te Ching*.

XI. HEALING TOGETHER AND THE BLESSING

verses 90–102

90 No temple is healed alone. ✧

91 Bear one another's burdens. †

92 Cook for the one who is sick. Sit with the one who is grieving. Walk with the one who is learning to be free. ✧

93 Let the congregation be a house of healing, where no one is ashamed of their wounds. ✧

94 Teach the children to love their bodies and to care for them, for the temple is built in childhood. ✧

95 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, even as your soul prospers. †

96 Those who wait upon God shall renew their strength; they shall put forth new feathers like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not hunger. †

97 Heal the temple, and the light within will shine; and where the light shines, others will come to be healed. ✧

98 Blessed be Monad, the One who heals. ✧

99 Blessed be the temple of the body, wondrously and lovingly made. ✧

100 Blessed be every healer, and every hand that helps another rise. ✧

101 Light in the mind, truth on the tongue, love in the hands. ✧

102 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love.

✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

"No temple is healed alone." Bear one another's burdens: cook for the sick, sit with the grieving, walk with the one learning to be free. The congregation should be a house of healing where no one is ashamed of their wounds. Teach children to love and care for their bodies, because "the temple is built in childhood." John prays that we may be healthy in body as our soul is healthy, and Isaiah promises that those who wait on God will "put forth new feathers like eagles." Heal the temple and the light shines, and others come to be healed. The Blessing praises Monad who heals, the body "wondrously and lovingly made," every healer, and ends with this chapter's motto variation: "Light in the mind, truth on the tongue, love in the hands."

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 91 is Galatians 6:2; 95 3 John 1:2; 96 Isaiah 40:31.

READ FURTHER

- Isaiah 40.

THE TWO PATHS OF SEEKING

CHAPTER 11

I. TWO PATHS, ONE MOUNTAIN

verses 1–6

1 There is one mountain, and at its top is the Light. ✧

2 And up its sides, from the beginning, seekers have climbed by many paths. ✧

3 Two of the oldest paths of the hidden knowledge are the way of the Sethians and the way of the Valentinians. †

4 Both paths hold truth. Both were walked by holy souls. Both lead toward Monad. ✧

5 Where they agree, hold fast. Where they differ, seek in prayer; for each seeker is given the light to discern. ✧

6 Do not ask which path is mine and which is yours. Ask only: does this step bring me nearer to the Light? ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Picture one mountain with the Light at the top, and many paths up its sides. Two of the oldest paths of the hidden knowledge are the Sethian and the Valentinian. Our congregation teaches that both hold truth, both were walked by holy souls, and both lead toward Monad. Where they agree, hold fast; where they differ, seek in prayer, because each seeker is given light to discern. The best question is not “which path is mine?” but “does this step bring me nearer to the Light?”

KEY WORDS

Sethian: the Gnostic school that called itself the “children of Seth.”

Valentinian: the Gnostic school founded by Valentinus.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 3–4 express the founder’s decision that both traditions hold truth (Statement of Beliefs 7).

READ FURTHER

- David Brakke, *The Gnostics* (2010): a clear introduction to who the Gnostics were.
- Bentley Layton and David Brakke, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (2nd edition, 2021): the texts of both schools with introductions.

II. THE CHILDREN OF SETH

verses 7–16

7 The Sethians called themselves the children of Seth, the seed of another kind, the generation that cannot be shaken. †

8 For when Abel was slain, Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son, and called his name Seth: for God, she said, has given me another seed. †

9 They taught that Seth was more than a man: that in heaven stood a heavenly Seth, son of the perfect Human, who watches over his children on the earth. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Sethians called themselves the children of Seth, “the generation that cannot be shaken.” In Genesis, after Abel was killed, Eve bore Seth, “another seed.” The Sethians taught a heavenly Seth, son of the perfect heavenly Human, who watches over his children, came down three times (at the flood, the fire, and the end), and in the last days “put on” Jesus like a garment. They honoured Norea, Eve’s daughter, who refused to bow to the Rulers, cried out to God, and was answered by the angel Eleleth. They were seekers of visions: their wise ones rose in silence beyond stars and Aeons toward the Invisible Spirit; the seeker Allogenes

10 They taught that the heavenly Seth came down three times to save his children: at the flood, at the fire, and at the end; and that in the last days he put on the Living Jesus as a garment. †

11 They honoured Norea, the daughter of Eve, who would not bow to the Rulers, and who cried out to the God of the All, and was answered by the great angel Eleleth. †

12 They were seekers of visions. Their wise ones went up in silence, beyond the stars and beyond the Aeons, toward the Invisible Spirit. †

13 The seeker called Allogenes, the Stranger, prayed for a hundred years, and rose until he stood in the stillness, and knew the One by not knowing. †

14 For they taught that the One is best praised in silence, and that the highest knowing is to stand still before what no word can hold. † ✧

15 They kept a baptism of light, the Five Seals, in which the soul is clothed in light, washed in the spring of living water, enthroned, glorified, and caught up into the place of light. †

16 Theirs is the path of the vision and the ascent, of the great story told from the beginning, of the cry: Arise, and remember! † ✧

("the Stranger") prayed for a hundred years and came to know the One "by not knowing," because the One is best praised in silence. They kept a baptism of light, the Five Seals: the soul is clothed in light, washed in living water, enthroned, glorified, and caught up into the place of light. Theirs is "the path of the vision and the ascent," with the cry "Arise, and remember!"

WHO'S WHO

Seth: the third son of Adam and Eve.

Norea: in Sethian books, the daughter of Eve, a heroine who resisted the Rulers.

Eleleth: one of the four great Lights (Chapter 3), who appears to Norea.

Allogenes: "the Stranger," the visionary in the book named after him.

KEY WORDS

Immovable race: the Sethians' name for themselves.

Negative theology: knowing God by admitting what words cannot say (Chapter 1).

Five Seals: the Sethian baptism of light.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 7 is the Sethians' name for themselves; 8 Genesis 4:25; 9 the *Secret Book of John* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*; 10 the *Apocalypse of Adam*; 11 the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *Thought of Norea*; 12–14 *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes*, *Three Steles of Seth*; 15 the *Trimorphic Protennoia* 48 (the five acts after which the soul "received the Five Seals"); 16 the *Secret Book of John*.

READ FURTHER

- John D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (2001) (advanced).
- *Allogenes* and *Zostrianos* in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.

III. THE SCHOOL OF VALENTINUS

verses 17–26

17 Valentinus was born in Egypt and taught in Alexandria, and came to Rome, and was so loved that many hoped he would be made a bishop. †

18 He was a poet and a teacher of hidden things, and his followers spread through the churches from Rome to the East. †

19 He wrote: Everything hangs upon the spirit; everything is carried by the spirit: flesh upon soul, soul upon air, air upon the heavens, and fruit from the depths. †

20 His followers did not leave the churches. They prayed among the other Christians, and

IN PLAIN WORDS

Valentinus was born in Egypt, taught in Alexandria, and came to Rome around AD 136–140, where he was so respected that some hoped he'd become a bishop. A poet and teacher of hidden things, he wrote a psalm: "Everything hangs upon the spirit... fruit from the depths." His followers stayed inside the churches and saw themselves as the hidden heart of Christ's body. His students included Ptolemy, who patiently explained the Law of Moses to a woman named Flora; Heracleon, who wrote the first known commentary on John's Gospel; and Theodotus, who gave the great questions of gnosis (Chapter 8). The Valentinians kept five mysteries: baptism, anointing, shared bread, redemption, and the Bridal Chamber; and from them came the gentle *Gospel of Truth*, which begins "the gospel of truth is joy." Theirs is "the path of love and of the mysteries."

sought to be the hidden heart of the body of Christ. +

21 Ptolemy, one of his students, wrote with great patience to a woman named Flora, to explain the Law of Moses without contempt and without fear. +

22 Heracleon, another of his students, wrote the first known commentary on the Gospel of John, reading every word for its hidden meaning. +

23 Theodotus taught that what sets us free is to know who we were, what we have become, where we were, where we were thrown, where we are going, and what rebirth is. +

24 The Valentinians kept five holy mysteries: the baptism, the anointing, the shared bread, the redemption, and the Bridal Chamber. +

25 And from among them came the gentlest of the hidden books, the Gospel of Truth, which begins: the gospel of truth is joy. +

26 Theirs is the path of love and of the mysteries, of the community gathered in one body, of the patient reading of the holy word. ✧

WHO'S WHO

Valentinus (about 100–160): a great Christian teacher and poet of Alexandria and Rome.

Ptolemy: a Valentinian teacher in Rome, author of the *Letter to Flora*.

Heracleon: a Valentinian teacher whose commentary on John is quoted by Origen.

Theodotus: an Eastern Valentinian teacher quoted by Clement of Alexandria.

Tertullian (about 155–220): a North African Christian writer who wrote against the Valentinians.

KEY WORDS

Alexandria: the great Greek-speaking city of Egypt, a centre of learning.

Five mysteries: the sacraments named in the *Gospel of Philip*.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 17 is Tertullian, *Against the Valentinians* 4; 19 Valentinus, fragment 8 (“Harvest,” preserved by Hippolytus); 21 Ptolemy’s *Letter to Flora*; 22 Heracleon (in Origen); 23 *Excerpts from Theodotus* 78.2; 24 the *Gospel of Philip*; 25 the *Gospel of Truth*.

READ FURTHER

- Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed* (advanced).
- Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (2008).

IV. WHERE THE PATHS MEET

verses 27–36

27 Now see how the two paths walk side by side. ✧

28 Both teach that the One is beyond every name, unseen and unmeasured: the Sethians call the One the Invisible Spirit; the Valentinians call the One the Depth. +

29 Both teach that from the One came forth a first Thought, and the Fullness of the Eternal Ones. +

30 Both tell of Sophia, the youngest light, who reached out and fell, and was lifted again. +

31 Both teach that the maker of this lower world is not the One. +

32 Both teach that a spark of the light lives within the human soul. +

33 Both teach that Christ came down to reveal what was hidden, and to wake the sleeping. +

34 Both teach that the soul is saved by gnosis, the knowing of God and of itself. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

The two paths share far more than they disagree on. Both teach that the One is beyond every name (the Sethians call the One the Invisible Spirit; the Valentinians, the Depth). Both teach a first Thought and a Fullness of Eternal Ones; both tell of Sophia’s fall and rescue; both say the maker of this lower world is not the One; both teach a spark of light in the human soul; both teach that Christ came to reveal and wake; both teach salvation by gnosis; and both promise that the light will return to the Fullness. “One map, one root, one destination.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Each verse points back to an earlier chapter of *Truth from Monad*: 28 to Chapter 1, 29 to Chapters 2–3, 30 to Chapter 4, 31 to Chapter 7, 32 to Chapter 8, 33 to Chapter 9.

READ FURTHER

- Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis* (1983).

35 And both teach that the light will one day return to the Fullness, and nothing will be missing. +

36 So the two paths share one map, one root, and one destination. ✧

V. WHERE THE PATHS PART

verses 37–44

37 And yet they are two paths, and not one; and it is good to know where they part. ✧

38 The Sethian wise say Sophia fell because she wished to create alone; the Valentinian wise say she fell because she longed to know the Depth too soon. +

39 The Sethian wise see the maker of this world as proud and hostile; the Valentinian wise see it as ignorant, but just in its measure. +

40 The Sethian wise speak of a holy generation, the seed of Seth; the Valentinian wise speak of the spiritual, the soul-bearing, and the earthly, and many read these as stages of the soul's journey rather than fixed natures. +

41 The Sethian wise climb toward the One in vision and silence; the Valentinian wise draw near through the mysteries, the community, and the word. ✧

42 One path is like the eagle, flying alone into the height; the other is like the vine, many branches growing together on one root. ✧

43 Neither the eagle nor the vine is wrong. Both live in the light of the same Sun. ✧

44 Our congregation honours both, and lays no one under the yoke of either. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

They are still two paths, and it's good to know where they part. On Sophia: the Sethians say she fell by creating alone; the Valentinians, by longing to know the Depth too soon. On the maker of the world: the Sethians see it as proud and hostile; the Valentinians as ignorant but "just." On people: the Sethians speak of a holy "seed of Seth"; the Valentinians of spiritual, soul-bearing, and earthly people, which many today read as stages of the soul's journey rather than fixed kinds. On method: the Sethians climb in vision and silence; the Valentinians draw near through the mysteries, the community, and the word. The book's picture: one is the eagle flying alone into the heights; the other is the vine with many branches on one root. "Neither the eagle nor the vine is wrong." Our congregation honours both and puts no one under the yoke of either.

KEY WORDS

Pneumatic, psychic, hylic: Greek for spiritual, soul-bearing, and material people in Valentinian teaching.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 38 recalls Chapter 4; 39 Chapter 7; 40 Irenaeus I.6–7 and the *Tripartite Tractate*; 44 the founder's decision that both traditions hold truth, and Chapter 8 (no rules beyond what was given).

READ FURTHER

· Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"* (1996) (advanced).

VI. THE HIDDEN BOOKS

verses 45–56

45 Now hear what became of their books. ✧

46 In the second century, a bishop named Irenaeus wrote five books against them, and called their knowledge falsely so-called. ✱

47 In the fourth century, when the canon of the churches was fixed, the hidden books were set aside, and many were lost or burned. ✱

48 And for some fifteen hundred years the voice of the Gnostic wise was heard almost only through the words of those who argued against them. ✱

IN PLAIN WORDS

What happened to their books? Around AD 180 Bishop Irenaeus wrote five books against them. In the fourth century, as the church fixed its list of scriptures (Bishop Athanasius's letter of AD 367 lists the 27 books of our New Testament), the hidden books were set aside, and many were lost or burned. For about sixteen hundred years the Gnostic voice was heard mostly through their opponents. But someone loved those books too much to let them die: near the cliffs of Jabal al-Tarif by Nag Hammadi in Egypt, someone sealed thirteen leather-bound books in a clay jar and buried it. In December 1945 a farmer named Muhammad Ali al-Samman, digging for fertile soil, struck the jar. Afraid a spirit (jinn) might be inside but hoping

49 But someone loved those books too much to let them die. ✧

50 Near the cliffs of the Jabal al-Tarif in Egypt, by the town of Nag Hammadi, someone sealed thirteen books of leather and papyrus in a clay jar and buried it in the earth. ✱

51 And in December of the year 1945, a farmer named Muhammad Ali al-Samman, digging for soft earth to feed his fields, struck the jar with his mattock. ✱

52 He was afraid a spirit might be sealed inside, and he hoped there might be gold; and he broke it open, and found the books. ✱

53 Some pages were burned as kindling before anyone knew their worth; but most survived. ✱

54 And so the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, the Gospel of Truth, the Secret Book of John, and fifty more writings came back into the light. ✱

55 What was buried in the earth rose again, as a seed rises. ✧

56 Nothing that is true stays buried forever. ✧

for gold, he broke it open and found the books. Some pages were burned as kindling before anyone knew their worth, but most survived, and the *Gospel of Thomas*, *Gospel of Philip*, *Gospel of Truth*, *Secret Book of John*, and some fifty more writings came back into the light. "Nothing that is true stays buried forever."

WHO'S WHO

Irenaeus of Lyon (about 130–202): bishop in Gaul (France), author of *Against Heresies*.

Athanasius of Alexandria (about 296–373): bishop of Alexandria.

Muhammad Ali al-Samman: the Egyptian farmer who found the Nag Hammadi codices in 1945.

KEY WORDS

Codex (plural codices): an ancient book with pages, as opposed to a scroll.

Canon: the official list of books accepted as scripture.

Nag Hammadi: a town in Upper Egypt near which the books were found.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 46 is Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*; 47 Athanasius's 39th Festal Letter (AD 367); 50 the Nag Hammadi codices, probably buried in the late fourth century; 51–53 the discovery as al-Samman recounted it; 54 thirteen codices with about fifty-two writings.

READ FURTHER

- James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Story* (2014).
- Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, Introduction (the story of the discovery).

VII. SEEING WITH TWO EYES

verses 57–63

57 God gave you two eyes, and each sees the world from a slightly different place. ✱

58 And when the two are joined in the mind, the world gains depth, and you can tell what is near from what is far. ✱

59 So it is with the two paths: seen together, the truth gains depth. ✧

60 With one eye you may see the height of the One; with the other, the nearness of the One. With both, you begin to see the whole. ✧

61 Therefore read the books of both ways. Pray over them. Compare them. Keep what rings true in your spirit. ✧

62 Test every teaching by its fruit: does it make you more loving, more truthful, more free? Then it is from the Light. ✧ +

IN PLAIN WORDS

God gave you two eyes, each seeing from a slightly different place; when the brain joins the two images, the world gains depth. So too the two paths: seen together, truth gains depth; one may show the height of the One, the other the nearness of the One. So read both, pray, compare, and keep what rings true in your spirit. Test every teaching by its fruit: does it make you more loving, truthful, and free? Then it's from the Light. And when you can't yet tell, wait in patience; the light comes in its season.

KEY WORDS

Binocular (stereoscopic) vision: seeing depth by combining the views of two eyes.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 58 is the science of vision; 61 the founder's direction that readers research and decide; 62 Matthew 7:16 ("by their fruits you shall know them").

63 And where you cannot yet tell, wait in patience; the light comes in its season. ♦

READ FURTHER
· Matthew 7:15–20.

VIII. ONE TRUTH, MANY SCHOOLS

verses 64–71

64 Every great faith has known more than one path within itself. ♦

65 In Israel, the house of Hillel and the house of Shammai disagreed for many years; and a voice from heaven said: These and these are both the words of the living God. ♦

66 And it was said that the house of Hillel was followed because they were kind and humble, and always taught the words of the other house before their own. ♦

67 Learn from this: speak the other's view fairly before you speak your own. ♦

68 The sages of India speak of the path of knowledge and the path of loving devotion, and teach that both lead to the Highest. ♦

69 The Buddha told of men who could not see, each touching one part of an elephant: one said it is a wall, one a rope, one a tree, one a fan; and they argued, for each held only a part. ♦

70 In the Torah, when Eldad and Modad prophesied outside the camp, a young man ran to Moses and cried: Stop them! But Moses answered: Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all God's people were prophets, and that God would put the Spirit upon them all. + ♦

71 Many faiths, one lesson: the One is greater than any single path; so walk your own with love, and honour the paths of others. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Other great faiths have their own "two paths." In Judaism, the schools of Hillel and Shammai argued for years, and a heavenly voice declared, "These and these are both the words of the living God"; Hillel's school was followed because they were kind and humble and always taught the other side's view first: "speak the other's view fairly before you speak your own." Hinduism speaks of the path of knowledge and the path of loving devotion, both leading to the Highest. The Buddha told of blind men each touching part of an elephant (one says wall, one rope, one tree, one fan) and arguing, because each held only a part. And in the Torah, when two men prophesied outside the camp and a young man wanted them stopped, Moses answered, "Would that all God's people were prophets." The One is greater than any single path.

WHO'S WHO

Hillel and Shammai: two great Jewish teachers of the first century BC, founders of rival schools.

Eldad and Medad: two elders who prophesied in the camp of Israel (Numbers 11).

Moses: see Chapter 1.

KEY WORDS

Jnana yoga: the path of knowledge (Hindu).

Bhakti yoga: the path of loving devotion (Hindu).

Talmud: the great collection of Jewish teaching and debate.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 65–66 are the Babylonian Talmud, *Eruvin* 13b; 68 the *Bhagavad Gita*; 69 *Udana* 6.4 (Buddhist); 70 Numbers 11:26–29; 71 the founder's teaching to respect each other's beliefs.

READ FURTHER

· Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud* (1976).

· Eknath Easwaran, *The Bhagavad Gita* (1985).

IX. WALKING THE PATHS TODAY

verses 72–79

72 And how shall we walk these paths today? ♦

73 From the Sethian way, learn the silence: sit each day in stillness before the One, beyond words. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

How do we walk these paths now? From the Sethians, learn silence (sit in stillness before the One each day) and remembering (tell the great story until you know who you are). From the Valentinians, learn gathering (seek together around one table) and deep reading (turn one holy word over until its hidden light shines). From both, learn humility; even the wisest said we

74 From the Sethian way, learn to remember: tell the great story again and again, until you know who you are. ✧

75 From the Valentinian way, learn the gathering: do not seek alone, but with brothers and sisters, around one table. ✧

76 From the Valentinian way, learn to read deeply: take one holy word and turn it over until its hidden light shines out. ✧

77 From both, learn humility; for even the wisest of them said they saw only in part. ✧ †

78 Do not argue to win. Argue to understand, or keep silent and love. ✧

79 And never wound another for walking a different path toward the same Light. ✧

“know in part.” “Do not argue to win. Argue to understand, or keep silent and love.” Never wound anyone for walking a different path to the same Light.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 77 is 1 Corinthians 13:12.

READ FURTHER

· *The Cloud of Unknowing* (silence) and Michael Casey, *Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina* (1996) (deep reading).

X. THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN AND THE BLESSING

verses 80–89

80 At the top of the mountain, the paths end, and there is only the Light. ✧

81 There no one will ask whether you came by the eagle’s path or the vine’s. ✧

82 There every seeker will see what they sought, face to face. †

83 And the Sethian will embrace the Valentinian, and both will embrace every seeker of every faith who walked in love toward the One. ✧

84 Until then, walk on. Help the one beside you. And keep your eyes on the Light. ✧

85 Blessed be Monad, the Light at the top of every path. ✧

86 Blessed be the children of Seth, who kept the vision. ✧

87 Blessed be the school of Valentinus, who kept the mysteries and the love. ✧

88 Blessed be the hands that buried the books, and the hands that found them. ✧

89 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

At the top, the paths end and there is only the Light. No one will ask whether you came by the eagle’s path or the vine’s; every seeker will see face to face; the Sethian will embrace the Valentinian, and both will embrace every seeker of every faith who walked in love toward the One. Until then, walk on, help the one beside you, and keep your eyes on the Light. The Blessing honours Monad at the top of every path, the children of Seth who kept the vision, the school of Valentinus who kept the mysteries and love, and “the hands that buried the books, and the hands that found them.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 82 is 1 Corinthians 13:12.

READ FURTHER

· 1 Corinthians 13.

GOD IN THE SMALL AND THE GREAT

CHAPTER 12

I. SMALLER THAN THE SMALL, GREATER THAN THE GREAT

verses 1–7

1 God is micro and macro, here and there. ✧

2 God is in the smallest thing you will never see, and in the greatest thing you will never reach. ✧

3 The sages of India said: smaller than the smallest, greater than the greatest, the One dwells hidden in the heart of every creature. ✧

4 From the tiniest measure that can be measured, to the edge of the heavens we can see, the creation spans more than sixty steps, each step ten times greater than the last. *

5 And we stand in the middle of that ladder, looking down into the atom and up into the galaxies, able to see both ways. * ✧

6 Is this not a wonder? The One placed us where we can behold the small and the great alike. ✧

7 Come, then, and see the works of God, and stand amazed. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This chapter celebrates the founder's teaching that "God is micro and macro, here and there": in the smallest thing you'll never see and the greatest thing you'll never reach. A Hindu scripture says the same: smaller than the smallest, greater than the greatest, the One is hidden in every heart. Science shows how vast this range is: from the tiniest measurable length to the edge of the visible universe spans about sixty "steps," each ten times bigger than the last. And human beings stand in the middle of that ladder, able to look down into the atom and up into the galaxies. "Come, then, and see the works of God, and stand amazed."

KEY WORDS

Orders of magnitude: steps of ten times; from the smallest measurable length (the Planck length) to the observable universe is about 62 such steps.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 1 is the founder's teaching; verse 3 is the *Katha Upanishad* 1.2.20; verse 4 is physics and astronomy.

READ FURTHER

· *Powers of Ten* (1977), a nine-minute film by Charles and Ray Eames (free online): a journey from the edge of the universe to inside an atom.

II. THE TWO BOOKS

verses 8–18

8 God has written two books. ✧

9 One is the book of the holy writings; the other is the book of creation. ✧ ✧

10 The holy writings tell why; creation shows how. The holy writings speak to the heart; creation speaks to the eyes and the mind. ✧

11 Both were written by the same hand, and so they cannot truly disagree. ✧

12 When they seem to quarrel, it is our reading that is wrong, not the books. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

God has written two books: the holy writings and creation. "The holy writings tell why; creation shows how." Because one hand wrote both, they can't truly disagree; when they seem to, our reading is wrong. Paul said God's invisible qualities are seen through what God made. So our congregation honours every honest seeker of creation: astronomer, chemist, physician, biologist. Georges Lemaître, a Catholic priest and physicist, was first to propose that the universe had a beginning (the theory later called the Big Bang). Isaac Newton, who discovered the law of gravity, wrote that such a beautiful system could only come from

13 The invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made. †

14 Therefore we honour every seeker who reads the book of creation with honest eyes: the astronomer, the chemist, the physician, the one who studies the cell and the star. ♦

15 Georges Lemaître, a priest and a man of science, was the first to propose that the whole universe had a beginning, growing out of a single first seed of light. ✽

16 Isaac Newton, who found the law that holds the planets to the Sun, wrote that so beautiful a system could only come from the wisdom of a mighty Maker. ✽

17 Ibn al-Haytham, a great seeker of the light in Cairo, who first showed how the eye receives light, taught that the seeker after truth does not simply trust the old books, but tests them, and questions, and follows the evidence. ✽ ♦

18 Learn from them: faith that is afraid of questions is a small faith. The One is not afraid of your questions. ♦

a wise and mighty Maker. Ibn al-Haytham of Cairo, who first explained how the eye receives light, taught that the seeker of truth must test and question even the old books and follow the evidence. "Faith that is afraid of questions is a small faith."

WHO'S WHO

Georges Lemaître (1894–1966): a Belgian priest and astronomer who proposed the "primeval atom," the beginning of the universe.

Isaac Newton (1643–1727): the English scientist who discovered the laws of motion and gravity.

Ibn al-Haytham (about 965–1040): an Arab scientist in Cairo, a founder of optics and of the experimental method.

KEY WORDS

The two books: Scripture and Nature, an old picture used by Christian, Jewish, and Muslim thinkers.

Big Bang: the scientific account of the universe's beginning about 13.8 billion years ago.

Optics: the science of light and sight.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 11 is our Statement of Beliefs (article 2: faith and science are not enemies); 13 Romans 1:20; 15 Lemaître (1927, 1931); 16 Newton, *Principia*, General Scholium (1713); 17 Ibn al-Haytham, *Book of Optics* and *Doubts concerning Ptolemy*.

READ FURTHER

- Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God* (2006): a geneticist on faith and science.
- John Farrell, *The Day Without Yesterday: Lemaître, Einstein, and the Birth of Modern Cosmology* (2005).
- Jim Al-Khalili, *The House of Wisdom* (2011): the great scientists of the Islamic golden age.

III. IN THE BEGINNING, LIGHT

verses 19–27

19 In the beginning, it is written, God said: Let there be light. †

20 And the seekers of the heavens have found that the universe had a beginning, nearly fourteen billion years ago, when all that is came forth from a state of unimaginable fire. ✽

21 And they have found that the first light is still here. ✽

22 When the universe was young, its first free light went out in every direction; and that light still fills the whole sky, faint and cool, all around us, every day and every night. ✽

23 Think on this: the first light of creation is still touching you now. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Genesis begins: "Let there be light." Science finds that the universe had a beginning nearly fourteen billion years ago in unimaginable heat, and that the first light set free in the young universe still fills the whole sky today, faint and cool (it was discovered in 1965 and is called the cosmic microwave background). "The first light of creation is still touching you now." And the simplest atom, hydrogen, is made of "one": one proton and one electron. It's still the most common thing in the universe, and stars fuse it again and again to make all other elements. "So even matter begins with One." As above, so below: from Monad came the Fullness; from the "One-atom" came the stars.

24 And the first and simplest of all the atoms is made of one: one small spark of charge at its heart, and one around it. *

25 This first atom is still the most common thing in all the heavens; and in the hearts of the stars, the One-atom is joined and joined again to make every other kind of matter. *

26 So even matter begins with One, and builds everything else from the One. ✧

27 What is above is like that which is below: from Monad came the Fullness; from the One-atom came the stars. ✧ ✧

KEY WORDS

Cosmic microwave background: the afterglow of the early universe, released about 380,000 years after the beginning.

Hydrogen: the simplest and most abundant element.

Nuclear fusion: stars joining light atoms into heavier ones.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 19 is Genesis 1:3; 20–22 cosmology; 24–25 physics and astronomy; 27 the Hermetic correspondence and Chapter 1.

READ FURTHER

· Simon Singh, *Big Bang: The Origin of the Universe* (2004).

IV. THE UNSEEN

verses 28–35

28 Monad is invisible; and see how much of creation is unseen also. ✧

29 The seekers of the heavens have found that almost all that is in the universe cannot be seen by any eye or any instrument of light. *

30 Most of creation is hidden from our sight; we know it is there only because the stars and the galaxies move as if they were held by an unseen hand. *

31 So it is with God: we do not see the One, but we see everything the One moves. ✧

32 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that from things unseen the things that are seen were made. †

33 And look into the smallest things: there, the tiniest pieces of matter act at one moment like a wave, and at another like a grain, and they will not be held in any one picture. *

34 Even the wisest seekers of science confess that at the very bottom of things lies a mystery. ✧ ✧

35 Do not be troubled by the mystery. It is the signature of the One. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Monad is invisible, and most of creation is unseen too. Astronomers find that ordinary matter (everything we can see) is only about five percent of the universe; the rest is known only because stars and galaxies move “as if held by an unseen hand.” “So it is with God: we do not see the One, but we see everything the One moves.” Hebrews says the worlds were framed by God’s word, and what is seen came from what does not appear. Even the tiniest particles act sometimes like waves and sometimes like grains, and won’t fit one picture; scientists confess there is mystery at the bottom of things. “Do not be troubled by the mystery. It is the signature of the One.”

KEY WORDS

Dark matter and dark energy: the scientific names for the unseen matter and energy of the universe (the book says “unseen” to keep “dark” for God’s good creation).

Wave–particle duality: the quantum discovery that light and matter behave both as waves and as particles.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 29–30 and 33–34 rest on physics; 32 is Hebrews 11:3.

READ FURTHER

· Carlo Rovelli, *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics* (2014).

V. MORE THAN THE EYE CAN SEE

verses 36–42

36 The light your eyes can see is only a thin thread in a great weaving of light. *

37 Beyond the red, there is light too low for the eye; beyond the violet, light too high; and the whole of it stretches from the long waves that carry voices through the air to the sharp rays that pass through the body. *

IN PLAIN WORDS

The light our eyes see is only a thin thread of all light: beyond red is light too low to see (infrared, radio), beyond violet light too high (ultraviolet, X-rays). Bees see colours in flowers that we can’t: hidden paths guiding them to the nectar. The little mantis shrimp has more than a dozen kinds of colour-sensing cells in its eyes; we have three. “What you see is real, but it is not all that is

38 The bee sees colours in the flowers that you cannot see, paths of light drawn on the petals to lead it to the sweetness. *

39 The small mantis shrimp of the sea has more than a dozen kinds of colour-seeing cells in its eyes, where we have only three. *

40 So learn humility: what you see is real, but it is not all that is real. ✧

41 If the eye sees so little of the light of the Sun, how much less can it see of the Light of the One? ✧

42 Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed. +

real." If our eyes see so little of the Sun's light, how much less of the Light of the One. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed."

KEY WORDS

Electromagnetic spectrum: the full range of light, from radio waves to gamma rays.

Photoreceptor: a light-sensing cell in the eye.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 36–39 rest on physics and biology; verse 42 is John 20:29.

READ FURTHER

• Ed Yong, *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us* (2022).

VI. THE PATTERN REPEATED

verses 43–51

43 Look at a tree, with its trunk, its branches, its smaller branches, and its twigs. *

44 Now look at a river seen from high above, with its streams and its smaller streams. *

45 Now look inside your own chest, at the branches of the breath in your lungs; and inside your body, at the branching of your blood. *

46 Now look at the lightning across the sky. *

47 The same pattern, again and again: the large shape repeated in the small, and the small in the smaller. *

48 See the spiral of the shell, the spiral of the storm, the spiral of the seeds in the sunflower, and the spiral of the great galaxies turning in the heavens. *

49 The Architect uses one hand for the small and the great. ✧

50 William Blake, a poet of England, wrote: to see a world in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower; to hold infinity in the palm of your hand, and eternity in an hour. ♦

51 This is not only poetry. It is the way creation is made. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Look at a tree's branching, a river system from above, the branching airways of your lungs and blood vessels, a lightning bolt: the same pattern repeated large and small. Look at the spiral of a shell, a hurricane, sunflower seeds, and spiral galaxies. "The Architect uses one hand for the small and the great." William Blake wrote of seeing "a world in a grain of sand." "This is not only poetry. It is the way creation is made."

WHO'S WHO

William Blake (1757–1827): an English poet, painter, and visionary.

KEY WORDS

Fractal: a pattern that repeats itself at smaller and smaller scales.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 43–48 rest on nature and mathematics; 49 the founder's revelation of the Architect; 50 Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*.

READ FURTHER

• Philip Ball, *Patterns in Nature* (2016): beautiful photographs and explanations.

VII. THE BOOK OF LIFE

verses 52–59

52 Within almost every cell of your body is written a book of three billion letters, and it holds the plan of your whole body. *

53 If its thread were drawn out from one cell, it would stretch longer than you are tall; and from all your cells together, it would reach to the Sun and back many times. *

54 The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, which grows into the greatest of plants, so that the birds of the air nest in its branches. †

55 The seed of the giant redwood is smaller than a fingernail, yet it holds within it a tree taller than almost any tower of the ancient world. *

56 So never despise small beginnings. The whole tree is already written in the seed. ✧

57 And so it is with the spark within you: small, and hidden, and holding a kingdom. ✧

58 You began as a single cell, smaller than a grain of sand; and from that one cell came every part of you: your eyes, your heart, your hands. *

59 One became many, and the many became one body. This is the pattern of Monad, written in your own beginning. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Almost every cell in your body carries a “book” of about three billion letters (your DNA), holding the plan of your body. Stretched out, one cell’s DNA is about two metres long; all of yours together would reach the Sun and back many times. Jesus said the kingdom is like a mustard seed, the smallest seed growing into a great plant. A redwood seed is smaller than a fingernail but holds a tree taller than almost any ancient tower. “Never despise small beginnings. The whole tree is already written in the seed.” So with your spark: small, hidden, holding a kingdom. You yourself began as a single cell; one became many, and the many became one body: “the pattern of Monad, written in your own beginning.”

KEY WORDS

Genome: the complete set of DNA instructions in a living thing.

Zygote: the single cell formed when a new human life begins.

Mustard Seed System: our congregation’s planning system, named after this parable.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 52–53 rest on genetics; 54 is Mark 4:30–32; 55 botany; 58 embryology.

READ FURTHER

- Siddhartha Mukherjee, *The Gene* (2016).
- Mark 4.

VIII. LIGHT IN THE LIVING

verses 60–65

60 Go down into the deepest sea, where the light of the Sun has never reached. *

61 And there you will find living things that carry their own light, shining blue and green in the deep, signalling to one another, lighting their own way. *

62 On a summer night the fireflies rise from the fields, each one a small lamp, calling to its own kind. *

63 God created the dark, and in the dark even the creatures shine. ✧

64 So it is with the spark within you: even in the deepest place, where no other light reaches, you carry a light of your own. ✧

65 Let it shine, for someone near you is finding their way by it. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

In the deepest sea, where sunlight never reaches, many living creatures make their own light, glowing blue and green to signal and to find their way. On summer nights fireflies rise like little lamps. “God created the dark, and in the dark even the creatures shine.” So with your spark: even in the deepest place where no other light reaches, you carry a light of your own. Let it shine; someone near you is finding their way by it.

KEY WORDS

Bioluminescence: light made by living things.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 61–62 rest on marine biology and entomology; verse 63 is the revelation of our congregation that God created the dark.

READ FURTHER

- Edith Widder, *Below the Edge of Darkness* (2021): a scientist’s journey into the glowing deep sea.

IX. THE LIVING SOIL

verses 66–72

66 Take up a handful of earth, and you are holding a world. ✱

67 In a single spoonful of good soil there are more living things than there are people on the whole Earth. ✱

68 They break down what has died and make it into food for what will live; nothing is wasted in the household of God. ✱ ✧

69 The fallen leaf becomes the soil; the soil feeds the seed; the seed becomes the tree; the tree lets fall its leaf again. ✱

70 So death in creation is not an ending but a turning, and every ending feeds a new beginning. ✧

71 Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. +

72 Care for the soil, for it is the cradle of our bread; and when we grow our own food, we will tend it as a holy thing. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

A handful of earth is a world: a spoonful of good soil holds more living things than there are people on Earth. They break down what has died and turn it into food for new life: “nothing is wasted in the household of God.” Leaf becomes soil, soil feeds seed, seed becomes tree, tree drops its leaf. So in creation death is “not an ending but a turning.” Jesus said a grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die to bear much fruit. Care for the soil, “the cradle of our bread,” and when we grow our own food, we’ll tend it as holy.

KEY WORDS

Decomposition: the breaking down of dead things into soil and nutrients.

Nutrient cycle: the way the building blocks of life are used again and again.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 67–69 rest on soil science; 71 is John 12:24; 72 the founder’s Clean Food Vision.

READ FURTHER

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013).
- Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life* (2020): the hidden world of fungi.

X. THE WISDOM OF THE CREATURES

verses 73–82

73 Ask the beasts, and they will speak to you; the birds of the air, and they will declare to you; speak to the earth, and the fish of the sea will explain to you. +

74 The birds that cross the oceans each year find their way by sensing the hidden field of the Earth itself. ✱

75 The bees dance to tell one another where the flowers are, and the whole hive lives by sharing. ✱

76 Go to the ant, and see, and copy its ways, and become wise: it has no master over it, yet it prepares its food in the summer. +

77 The great whales sing across the oceans, and their songs change from year to year, passed from one to another like a hymn. ✱

78 The salmon return across the whole sea to the very stream where they were born. ✱

IN PLAIN WORDS

Job says to ask the animals and birds and earth, and they will teach you. Migrating birds cross oceans guided by Earth’s hidden magnetic field. Bees “dance” to tell each other where flowers are, and the hive lives by sharing. Proverbs tells the lazy to learn from the ant, which works without a ruler. Humpback whales sing songs that change each year and spread like hymns. Salmon return across the sea to the very stream where they were born; so even creatures remember the way home, “how much more shall the children of light remember theirs.” Under the forest, tree roots are linked by threads of fungi, and food and water can pass, it seems, from tree to tree: “even the forest is a congregation.” Nothing in creation lives for itself alone.

WHO’S WHO

Karl von Frisch (1886–1982): the Austrian scientist who decoded the honeybee’s dance.

79 So even the creatures remember the way home. How much more shall the children of light remember theirs. ✧

80 Beneath the forest floor, the roots of the trees are joined by living threads, and through them, it seems, water and food can pass from one tree to another. ✧

81 So even the forest is a congregation, and the strong share with the weak. ✧

82 Nothing in creation lives for itself alone. ✧

KEY WORDS

Magnetoreception: sensing Earth's magnetic field.

Mycorrhizal network: the web of fungi joining plant roots.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 73 is Job 12:7–8; 74, 75, 77, 78, 80 rest on biology; 76 is Proverbs 6:6–8; 79 recalls Chapter 7.

READ FURTHER

- Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees* (2015) (popular; some claims are debated).
- Ed Yong, *An Immense World* (2022).

XI. THE FINE MEASURE

verses 83–88

83 Look closely, and you will see that creation is held in a fine measure. ✧

84 When water freezes, it does not sink, as most things do when they grow cold; it floats, and covers the lakes like a roof, so the life beneath can live through the winter. ✧

85 The Earth is set at the measure of grace from the Sun, with a shield around her, a moon to steady her, and air to wrap her. ✧ ✧

86 And the seekers of science have noticed that if the great numbers that hold the universe together were only a little different, there could be no stars, no worlds, and no life at all. ✧

87 Who has measured the water in the hollow of a hand, and the heaven with a span, and all the earth in a handful? Who has weighed the mountains in scales, and the forests in a balance? Only the One. +

88 Numbers belong to God as well; and the measures of creation are the handwriting of Monad. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Creation is held in fine balance. Most things sink when frozen, but ice floats, roofing lakes so life below survives winter. The Earth sits at just the right distance from the Sun, with a shield, a Moon to steady it, and air to wrap it. Scientists note that if the basic numbers of physics were only a little different, there could be no stars or life at all. Isaiah asks who measured the waters in the hollow of a hand and weighed the mountains: only the One. "Numbers belong to God as well; the measures of creation are the handwriting of Monad."

KEY WORDS

Fine-tuning: the observation that the constants of physics fall within the narrow range that allows stars and life.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 84–86 rest on science; 87 is Isaiah 40:12; 88 the founder's teaching that numbers belong to God.

READ FURTHER

- Martin Rees, *Just Six Numbers* (1999).
- Isaiah 40.

XII. THE HARMONY OF THE HEAVENS

verses 89–95

89 Pythagoras, a seeker of Greece, plucked a string and found that the sweetest harmonies come from the simplest numbers: half the string sings the octave, two thirds sing the fifth. ✧ ✧

90 And he taught that the heavens themselves move in harmony, a music of the spheres too great for the ear to hear. ✧

91 Johannes Kepler, who learned the true paths of the planets, believed he had found that music written in their motions. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Pythagoras discovered that the sweetest musical harmonies come from simple number ratios: half a string sounds the octave, two-thirds the fifth. He taught that the heavens move in harmony, "the music of the spheres." Johannes Kepler, who found the true orbits of the planets, believed he'd found that music in their motions. Three of Jupiter's moons keep perfect time: one circles four times while the next circles twice and the third once. "The heavens are not a noise but a song." Job speaks of the day "when the stars were made," and "all the angels of God praised with a loud voice." And every life lived in love adds a voice to that song.

92 And see: three of the moons of Jupiter keep time with one another, the first circling four times while the second circles twice and the third once, like dancers who never lose the beat. *

93 Numbers, harmony, and motion: the heavens are not a noise but a song. ✧

94 When the stars were made, all the angels of God praised with a loud voice. †

95 And every life lived in love is a voice added to that song. ✧

WHO'S WHO

Pythagoras: see Chapter 1.

Johannes Kepler (1571–1630): the German astronomer who discovered the laws of planetary motion.

KEY WORDS

Octave and fifth: the most basic musical harmonies (ratios 2:1 and 3:2).

Orbital resonance: moons or planets keeping time in simple ratios (Io, Europa, and Ganymede in 1:2:4).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 89–90 are Pythagorean teaching; 91 Kepler, *Harmonices Mundi* (1619); 92 astronomy; 94 Job 38:7.

READ FURTHER

· Kitty Ferguson, *Pythagoras* (2008).

· Job 38–39 (God's speech about creation).

XIII. THE LONG PATIENCE OF GOD

verses 96–102

96 The Earth is old, older than any people has ever imagined: about four and a half billion years. *

97 If the whole story of the Earth were told in a single day, the first living cells would appear before the morning was over; the forests would rise only in the late evening; and the human race would arrive in the last few seconds before midnight. *

98 Think on how short our day has been, and how long the One has been working. ✧

99 A thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, like a watch in the night. †

100 The mountains were lifted up grain by grain; the canyons were carved drop by drop; the seas were filled over ages beyond counting. *

101 So God is patient. And if God is patient with the mountains, God is patient with you. ✧

102 Do not despair at slow growth. The One builds slowly, and what the One builds lasts. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Earth is about four and a half billion years old. If all its history were one day, the first life would appear before morning, forests late in the evening, and humans only seconds before midnight. "Think on how short our day has been, and how long the One has been working." A thousand years in God's sight are like yesterday. Mountains rose grain by grain; canyons were carved drop by drop. So God is patient, "and if God is patient with the mountains, God is patient with you." Don't despair at slow growth; what the One builds slowly lasts.

KEY WORDS

Deep time: the immense age of the Earth revealed by geology.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 96–97 and 100 rest on geology; verse 99 is Psalm 89:4.

READ FURTHER

· John McPhee, *Annals of the Former World* (1998), on deep time.

· Psalm 89.

XIV. WHAT THE PEOPLES SAW

verses 103–109

103 The wise of every people have looked at creation and seen the Creator's hand. ♦

104 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims the work of God's hands; day to day utters speech, and night to night proclaims knowledge. +

105 The Quran says: We will show them Our signs on the far horizons and within themselves, until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. ♦

106 The far horizons and within themselves: the macro and the micro, the galaxy and the cell. ♦

107 Zhuangzi, a sage of China, was asked where the Way could be found; and he answered: there is nowhere it is not. It is in the ant; it is in the grass; it is in the clay tile. ♦

108 And the Psalmist sang: Where could I go from Your Spirit? If I rise to heaven, You are there; if I go down to the depths, You are present; if I spread my wings to fly straight forward and dwell at the far edge of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me. +

109 Many faiths, one wonder: creation is the open book of God, and anyone can read it. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Every faith has seen the Creator's hand in creation. The Psalm says the heavens declare God's glory. The Quran says God will show "signs on the far horizons and within themselves," the macro and the micro. Zhuangzi, asked where the Way is, said "there is nowhere it is not: in the ant, the grass, the clay tile." And the Psalmist asked where he could go from God's Spirit: up to the heavens, down to the depths, to the far edge of the sea, God is there. "Creation is the open book of God, and anyone can read it."

WHO'S WHO

Zhuangzi (about 369–286 BC): a Chinese Taoist sage known for his stories and humour.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 104 is Psalm 18:2–3; 105 Quran 41:53; 107 *Zhuangzi*, chapter 22; 108 Psalm 138:7–10.

READ FURTHER

- Burton Watson (translator), *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings* (1964).
- Psalm 18 and Psalm 138.

XV. BECOMING A SEEKER OF WONDER AND THE BLESSING

verses 110–123

110 So become a seeker of wonder. ♦

111 Learn about the world: the stars and the cells, the seas and the seeds, the numbers and the laws. ♦

112 Every true thing you learn about creation is a true thing you learn about the hand that made it. ♦

113 Ask questions, and do not be ashamed to say: I do not know yet. ♦

114 Let science make you humble, and let faith make you brave. ♦

115 Take the children outside. Show them the ants and the stars. Teach them that the same God made both. ♦

116 Go out at night, away from the lamps of the city, and look up; and let the heavens show you how small you are, and how loved. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

The chapter ends with an invitation: become a seeker of wonder. Learn about stars and cells, seas and seeds, numbers and laws, because every true thing you learn about creation teaches you about the hand that made it. Ask questions; it's fine to say "I don't know yet." "Let science make you humble, and let faith make you brave." Take children outside and show them ants and stars, made by the same God. Go out at night away from city lights and see "how small you are, and how loved." Plato said wonder is the beginning of wisdom. End each day by looking up and saying "how great are Your works." The Blessing praises Monad, smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest; the two books; and every honest seeker.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 117 compares Plato, *Theaetetus* 155d.

117 When you study, pray; and when you pray, wonder; for wonder is the beginning of wisdom. ♦ ♦

118 And at the end of every day, look up, and say: how great are Your works. ♦

119 For God is in the small and the great, here and there; and there is no place in all creation where the One is not. ♦

120 Blessed be Monad, smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest. ♦

121 Blessed be the two books, the holy writings and the creation, written by one hand. ♦

122 Blessed be every seeker of truth who reads them with honest eyes. ♦

123 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love.
♦

READ FURTHER

- Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*.
- A free star-map app, or a local astronomy club's public night.

THE FOURTEEN VIRTUES

CHAPTER 13

I. THE HOUSE OF WISDOM

verses 1–5

1 Wisdom has built a house for herself, and set up seven pillars. †

2 The soul, too, is a house, and it stands or falls by what holds it up. ♦

3 Seven virtues hold it up like pillars: the seven foundation virtues, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance, Faith, Hope, and Love. ♦

4 The first four were honoured by the wise of the ancient world; the last three were given a crown by the apostle of Christ. ♦ †

5 A house with one pillar falls in the first wind. A house with seven stands through the storm. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Proverbs says Wisdom built her house on seven pillars. The soul is a house too, held up by seven “foundation virtues”: prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, faith, hope, and love. The first four (the “cardinal” virtues) were honoured by the ancient Greek philosophers; the last three were crowned by the apostle Paul. A house with one pillar falls in the first wind; with seven it stands through the storm. Each of the fourteen virtues will also receive its own book in our congregation’s collection.

KEY WORDS

Virtue: a lasting strength of character, a habit of doing good.

Cardinal virtues: from Latin *cardo*, “hinge”; prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, on which the moral life turns.

Theological virtues: faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 1 is Proverbs 9:1; 3 our congregation’s two virtue lists; 4 Plato, *Republic IV*, and 1 Corinthians 13:13.

READ FURTHER

· Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (1966).

· Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (the classic book on virtue).

II. PRUDENCE, THE EYE OF THE SOUL

verses 6–11

6 Prudence is wisdom brought down from the mind into the hands: it sees what is good, weighs every path, and chooses the right word, the right deed, and the right hour. ♦

7 The wise, seeing the wrongdoer punished, learn from it; but the foolish pass by and suffer for it. †

8 Jesus said: Be wise as serpents, and simple as doves. †

9 And in the hidden gospel he said: The wise one is like a fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up full of small fish; among

IN PLAIN WORDS

Prudence is practical wisdom: “wisdom brought down from the mind into the hands.” It sees what’s good, weighs every path, and picks the right word, deed, and hour. Proverbs says the prudent see trouble coming and take shelter. Jesus said, “Be wise as serpents, and simple as doves.” In the *Gospel of Thomas*, the wise person is like a fisherman who hauls in a net full of small fish, finds one great fish, and keeps it, throwing back the rest without hesitation: prudence knows “the thing that matters from the thing that only shines.” Practice: pause before speaking, pray before choosing, and ask where the road leads before acting.

them he found one great and beautiful fish; and he threw all the small fish back, and chose the great one without a second thought. +

10 Prudence is the eye that tells the great fish from the small: the thing that matters from the thing that only shines. ✧

11 Before you speak, pause. Before you choose, pray. Before you act, ask: where does this road lead? ✧

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 7 is Proverbs 22:3; 8 Matthew 10:16; 9 *Gospel of Thomas* 8.

READ FURTHER

· Proverbs 1–4.

III. JUSTICE, THE BALANCE

verses 12–18

12 Justice is the balance held level: giving to each what is truly theirs. ✧

13 What does God require of you, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to be ready to walk with your God? +

14 Let justice roll down like water, and righteousness like an impassable torrent. +

15 In Egypt it was said that when a soul came before the judges of heaven, its heart was laid on a scale against a single feather, the feather of Truth. ✧

16 Live so that your heart is light enough to balance a feather. ✧

17 Learn to do good; seek justice with diligence; deliver the one who suffers wrong; plead for the orphan, and obtain justice for the widow. +

18 Justice without mercy is cold, and mercy without justice is weak; in the house of God the two are married. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Justice gives each person what is truly theirs. Micah sums up what God asks: do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God. Amos wants justice to roll like a river that never dries up. In ancient Egypt, a soul's heart was said to be weighed against the feather of Truth (Ma'at): "live so that your heart is light enough to balance a feather." Isaiah's call: learn to do good, seek justice, lift up the crushed, defend the orphan and widow. And justice and mercy must be married: "Justice without mercy is cold, and mercy without justice is weak."

WHO'S WHO

Micah, Amos, Isaiah: prophets of Israel in the 8th century BC who spoke for the poor.

Ma'at: the Egyptian principle (and goddess) of truth, balance, and justice.

KEY WORDS

Weighing of the heart: the Egyptian picture of judgment after death (*Book of the Dead*, spell 125).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 13 is Micah 6:8; 14 Amos 5:24; 15 the *Book of the Dead*, spell 125; 17 Isaiah 1:17.

READ FURTHER

· Micah 6; Amos 5; Isaiah 1.

IV. FORTITUDE, THE STEADY HEART

verses 19–25

19 Fortitude is courage that stays: the strength to stand, to endure, and to keep going when the road is hard. ✧

20 Be strong and of good courage; do not tremble and do not lose heart; for your God is with you wherever you go. +

21 Daniel would not stop praying, though he knew the den of lions waited for him; and the mouths of the lions were shut. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

Fortitude is courage that stays: strength to stand, endure, and keep going. Joshua was told to be strong and of good courage, for God is with you wherever you go. Daniel kept praying though it meant the lions' den, and the lions' mouths were shut. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus blesses the one who has struggled and found life. Science gives a picture: bones grow stronger when made to carry weight; so the soul grows strong through what it bears. "Courage is not the absence of trembling. It is the choice

22 Jesus said: Blessed is the one who has struggled, and through it has found life. †

23 The bones of the body grow stronger when they are made to carry weight; so the soul grows strong through what it is asked to bear.

✧ ✧

24 Courage is not the absence of trembling. It is the choice to do what is right while your knees still shake. ✧

25 Be the tree that bends in the storm and does not break. ✧

to do what is right while your knees still shake.” Be the tree that bends in the storm and doesn’t break.

WHO’S WHO

Joshua: Moses’ successor who led Israel into the promised land.

KEY WORDS

Wolff’s law: bone strengthens in response to the loads placed on it.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 20 is Joshua 1:9; 21 Daniel 6; 22 *Gospel of Thomas* 58; 23 Wolff’s law.

READ FURTHER

- Daniel 6.
- Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place* (1971).

V. TEMPERANCE, THE MASTER OF THE SOUL

verses 26–31

26 Temperance is the hand on the reins. ✧

27 Plato pictured the soul as a chariot pulled by two horses, one noble and one wild; and the wise driver is the one who holds both in hand and drives toward the heavens. ✧

28 The one who governs the temper is better than the one who takes a city. †

29 But the one who acts without counsel is like a city whose walls are broken down. †

30 This is the first temperance: not of the plate but of the soul, the mastery of anger, of craving, of every passion that would pull the chariot off the road. ✧

31 Our congregation holds temperance so dear that it stands twice among our virtues: here as the master of the soul, and again among the daily lamps as the keeper of the body. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Temperance is “the hand on the reins.” Plato pictured the soul as a chariot pulled by two horses, one noble and one wild, and the wise driver holds both and steers toward heaven. Proverbs says one who rules their own spirit is mightier than one who conquers a city, and one with no self-control is like a city with broken walls. This is the “first temperance”: mastery of the soul (anger, craving, every passion). Our congregation holds temperance so dear that it appears twice: here as master of the soul, and among the daily virtues as keeper of the body. Each will have its own book.

WHO’S WHO

Plato: see Chapter 5.

KEY WORDS

The charioteer: Plato’s image of reason guiding the soul’s passions (*Phaedrus*).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 27 is Plato, *Phaedrus* 246a–254e; 28 Proverbs 16:32; 29 Proverbs 25:28; 30–31 the founder’s teaching on temperance (Temperance I, foundation).

READ FURTHER

- Plato, *Phaedrus*.
- Proverbs 16 and 25.

VI. FAITH, THE FIRST STEP

verses 32–37

32 Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not. †

33 By faith Abraham went out, not knowing where he was going. †

34 Faith is the step you take before you can see the next stone. ♦

35 It is the trust of a child who leaps from the step into a parent's arms, knowing that the arms are there. ♦

36 Remember her name: Pistis Sophia, Faith-Wisdom; for even in the chaos, she kept trusting the Light, and the Light came for her. †

37 Faith does not close the eyes; it opens them, and keeps walking toward the One even when the path turns. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Hebrews defines faith as “the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not.” Abraham set out “not knowing where he was going.” Faith is the step before you can see the next stone; the trust of a child leaping into a parent's arms. Pistis Sophia (“Faith-Wisdom”) kept trusting the Light even in chaos, and the Light came for her (Chapter 4). “Faith does not close the eyes; it opens them,” and keeps walking toward the One.

WHO'S WHO

Abraham: the father of faith for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 32 is Hebrews 11:1; 33 Hebrews 11:8; 36 *Pistis Sophia*.

READ FURTHER

· Hebrews 11.

VII. HOPE, THE ANCHOR

verses 38–43

38 Hope is the anchor of the soul, sure and steady, holding firm through every storm. †

39 Tribulation brings patience; patience brings trial; and trial brings hope; and hope does not put us to shame. †

40 Hesiod, a poet of Greece, told of a jar from which every sorrow flew out into the world; and when the lid was closed, one thing remained inside: Hope. ♦

41 In the fortress of Masada, a seed of the date palm lay sleeping for two thousand years; and when it was planted in our own day, it woke, and grew into a living tree. ✱

42 If a seed can wait two thousand years and still rise, do not tell yourself your hope has died. ♦

43 Hope is not wishing. Hope is knowing the dawn is coming, and getting up to meet it. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Hope is “the anchor of the soul,” holding firm in storms. Paul says suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope that doesn't disappoint. The Greek poet Hesiod told of a jar from which every sorrow escaped into the world; only Hope remained inside. And a true story: a date-palm seed found at the fortress of Masada lay dormant for about two thousand years; planted in 2005, it sprouted into a living tree. “If a seed can wait two thousand years and still rise, do not tell yourself your hope has died.” Hope isn't wishing; it's knowing dawn is coming and getting up to meet it.

WHO'S WHO

Hesiod (about 700 BC): an early Greek poet; his story is often called “Pandora's box.”

Masada: a mountain fortress by the Dead Sea.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 38 is Hebrews 6:19; 39 Romans 5:3–5; 40 Hesiod, *Works and Days* 90–105; 41 the Judean date palm (germinated 2005).

READ FURTHER

· Romans 5 and 8.

VIII. LOVE, THE CROWN

verses 44–50

44 And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love. †

45 Love is patient, love is kind; love does not envy, does not deal perversely, is not puffed up. †

46 Love does not seek its own; it thinks no evil; it rejoices with the truth. †

47 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never falls away. †

48 Much water cannot quench love, and rivers shall not drown it. †

49 The Gospel of Philip says that love never says: this is mine; it says: all that is mine is yours. †

50 Every other virtue is a pillar; love is the roof that shelters them all. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Paul's great hymn: faith, hope, and love remain, and the greatest is love. Love is patient and kind; doesn't envy, boast, or puff itself up; doesn't insist on its own way; keeps no record of wrongs; rejoices in truth; bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things; never fails. The Song of Songs says many waters can't quench it. The *Gospel of Philip* says love never says "this is mine," but "all that is mine is yours." "Every other virtue is a pillar; love is the roof that shelters them all."

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 44–47 are 1 Corinthians 13:4–8, 13; 48 Song of Songs 8:7; 49 the *Gospel of Philip*.

READ FURTHER

- 1 Corinthians 13.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (1960).

IX. THE SEVEN LAMPS

verses 51–54

51 Now hear of the seven daily virtues, which are like the seven lamps of a holy lampstand, lit each morning and tended each night. ✧ †

52 Each lamp drives back a shadow that lives in every human heart: pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony, and lust. ✧

53 These shadows are not who you are. They are clouds across the face of your Sun; and every lamp you light thins the cloud. ✧

54 Light them one by one, day by day, and the house of your soul will be filled with light. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The seven daily virtues are like the seven lamps of the holy lampstand (the menorah), lit each morning and tended each night. Each drives back a "shadow" in the heart: humility against pride, kindness against envy, patience against anger, diligence against sloth, charity against greed, temperance against gluttony, chastity against lust. These shadows "are not who you are"; they are clouds over your Sun, and each lamp thins the cloud.

KEY WORDS

Menorah: the seven-branched lampstand of the Tabernacle and Temple.

The seven deadly sins: the traditional list of vices (pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony, lust).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 51 recalls Exodus 25:31–37; 52 our congregation's list of daily virtues, each the cure for a vice.

READ FURTHER

- Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, *Glittering Vices* (2009).

X. HUMILITY, THE CURE FOR PRIDE

verses 55–60

55 Look at a field of wheat at harvest: the heads that are full bow low, and the empty ones stand tall. ♦

56 Lao Tzu, the old teacher of China, said: the rivers and the seas are kings over a hundred valleys because they lie lower than them all. ♦

57 In humility, count others as greater than yourselves. †

58 The word humility comes from the earth itself, the humus, the rich soil from which all things grow. ♦

59 Pride is the sickness of Yaldabaoth, who thought itself the highest and knew nothing above it. Humility is the health of the soul, which knows the One above all. ♦

60 Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself less, and of God and others more. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

In a wheat field at harvest, the full heads bow low while the empty ones stand tall. Lao Tzu said rivers and seas rule a hundred valleys because they lie lowest. Paul: count others as greater than yourselves. The word “humility” comes from *humus*, rich earth from which all grows. Pride is “the sickness of Yaldabaoth,” which thought itself the highest; humility is the soul’s health, knowing the One above all. “Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself less.”

WHO’S WHO

Lao Tzu: see Chapter 1.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 56 is *Tao Te Ching* 66; 57 Philippians 2:3; 58 Latin *humilitas* from *humus*; 59 Chapter 7.

READ FURTHER

- Philippians 2.
- Andrew Murray, *Humility* (1895).

XI. KINDNESS, THE CURE FOR ENVY

verses 61–67

61 Envy looks at another’s light and feels its own grow dim. Kindness looks at another’s light and rejoices. ♦

62 Cain looked at his brother’s offering and burned with envy; and envy led him to the first murder. †

63 So the old story warns: envy, left alone, does not stay small. ♦

64 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. †

65 The followers of the Buddha practise a joy they call *mudita*: to be glad in the good fortune of another as if it were your own. ♦

66 Be kind to one another, merciful, forgiving one another. †

67 When your neighbour’s garden blooms, bring water, not a frown; for the same Sun that opened their flower will open yours. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Envy sees another’s light and feels its own dim; kindness sees it and rejoices. Cain’s envy of his brother led to the first murder: envy left alone doesn’t stay small. Paul says rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Buddhists practise *mudita*, joy in another’s good fortune. Be kind and tender-hearted, forgiving one another. “When your neighbour’s garden blooms, bring water, not a frown.”

WHO’S WHO

Cain and Abel: the first sons of Adam and Eve (Genesis 4).

KEY WORDS

Mudita: Pali for “sympathetic joy.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 62 is Genesis 4:3–8; 64 Romans 12:15; 65 Buddhist teaching; 66 Ephesians 4:32.

READ FURTHER

- Romans 12; Genesis 4.

XII. PATIENCE, THE CURE FOR ANGER

verses 68–74

68 A tiny intruder slips inside an oyster and wounds it; and the oyster does not rage, but covers the wound, layer upon layer, until it becomes a pearl. ✱

69 This is patience: to turn what wounds you into something precious. ✧

70 Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. †

71 A submissive answer turns away wrath, but a grievous word stirs up anger. †

72 Do not let the Sun go down upon your anger. †

73 The Buddha taught: hatred is never ended by hatred; it is ended only by its opposite. This is the eternal law. ✧

74 Anger is a fire that burns first the house of the one who lights it. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

A tiny intruder gets inside an oyster and hurts it; instead of raging, the oyster covers it layer by layer until it becomes a pearl. “This is patience: to turn what wounds you into something precious.” James: quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. Proverbs: a gentle answer turns away wrath. Paul: don’t let the Sun go down on your anger. The Buddha: hatred never ends by hatred, only by its opposite. “Anger is a fire that burns first the house of the one who lights it.”

KEY WORDS

Nacre: mother-of-pearl, the substance oysters use to coat an irritant.

Dhammapada: a collection of the Buddha’s sayings.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 68 is marine biology; 70 James 1:19; 71 Proverbs 15:1; 72 Ephesians 4:26; 73 *Dhammapada* 5.

READ FURTHER

· James 1 and 3.

· Thich Nhat Hanh, *Anger* (2001).

XIII. DILIGENCE, THE CURE FOR SLOTH

verses 75–81

75 Your heart beats about a hundred thousand times each day, and has never once asked for a day off. ✱

76 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your strength. †

77 Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as for the Master, and not for people. †

78 Jesus told of servants entrusted with talents of silver; the ones who put them to work were blessed, and the one who buried his talent in the ground lost even what he had. †

79 Krishna taught Arjuna: do your work as an offering, and let go of your grasping at its fruits. ✧

80 Diligence is not endless work. Even the heart rests between its beats; and the diligent also keep the rest that God gives. ✧

81 Do the small thing faithfully today. Small things done every day become great things. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Your heart beats about 100,000 times a day without a day off. Ecclesiastes: whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your strength. Paul: work with all your heart, as for God. Jesus’ parable of the talents praises those who put their gifts to work. Krishna told Arjuna to do his work as an offering and let go of grasping at results. But diligence isn’t endless work: even the heart rests between beats. “Small things done every day become great things.”

WHO’S WHO

Krishna and Arjuna: the divine teacher and the warrior-student of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

KEY WORDS

Talent: in Jesus’ parable, a large sum of silver; now also meaning a gift or ability.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 75 is physiology; 76 Ecclesiastes 9:10; 77 Colossians 3:23; 78 Matthew 25:14–30; 79 *Bhagavad Gita* 2.47; 80 Chapter 10 (fasting from overwork).

READ FURTHER

- Matthew 25.
- Eknath Easwaran, *The Bhagavad Gita*.

XIV. CHARITY, THE CURE FOR GREED

verses 82–90

82 In the holy land there are two seas, fed by the same river. ✱

83 The Sea of Galilee receives the water and gives it out again, and it is full of life. ✱

84 The Dead Sea receives the water and gives none away; and its water has grown so bitter with salt that hardly anything can live in it. ✱

85 So is the soul that only receives, and the soul that gives. ✧

86 It is more blessed to give than to receive. +

87 A person's life does not consist in the abundance of what they possess. +

88 Jesus watched a poor widow drop two small coins into the treasury, and said that she had given more than all the rich, for she gave all she had. +

89 In the houses of prayer of the Sikhs, a free kitchen feeds every visitor, rich or poor, of every faith, all seated together on the floor as equals. ✧

90 Give, not only from your money, but from your time, your skill, your attention, your table. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The Jordan River feeds two seas. The Sea of Galilee receives and gives water onward, and it's full of life. The Dead Sea only receives; with no outlet, it's grown so salty almost nothing lives in it. "So is the soul that only receives, and the soul that gives." It's more blessed to give than receive; life isn't measured by possessions; the poor widow's two coins were the greatest gift because she gave all. In Sikh temples, a free kitchen (*langar*) feeds everyone, of every faith, seated as equals. Give not only money but time, skill, attention, and your table.

WHO'S WHO

The Sikhs: followers of the faith founded by Guru Nanak in the Punjab (15th–16th centuries).

KEY WORDS

Charity: from Latin *caritas*, "love"; generous giving.

Langar: the free community kitchen of every Sikh gurdwara.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 82–84 are geography; 86 Acts 20:35; 87 Luke 12:15; 88 Mark 12:41–44; 89 the Sikh *langar*.

READ FURTHER

- Luke 12; Mark 12.

XV. TEMPERANCE, THE KEEPER OF THE BODY

verses 91–95

91 And here temperance returns, as the keeper of the body, the measure of the plate and the cup. ✧

92 If you find honey, eat just what you need; too much of even the sweetest gift will sicken you. +

93 A young monk named Sona once pushed himself so hard that his feet bled; and the Buddha asked him: when you played the harp, did it sound well when the strings were too tight? And Sona said: no. And when they were too loose? No. When they were tuned just right? Yes. So it is with the soul, said the Buddha. ✧

94 Tune your life as a string is tuned: not too tight, not too loose, and it will sing. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Temperance returns as "the keeper of the body," the measure of plate and cup (the second Temperance book). Proverbs: if you find honey, eat only what you need, or it will sicken you. The Buddha asked the over-striving monk Sona, a former harpist, whether his harp sounded good with strings too tight, or too loose; only when tuned just right. "Tune your life as a string is tuned: not too tight, not too loose, and it will sing." Eat to live, live to love, and give thanks at every meal.

WHO'S WHO

Sona: a monk and disciple of the Buddha.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 91 is the founder's teaching (Temperance II, daily); 92 Proverbs 25:16; 93 the Buddha's teaching to Sona (*Anguttara Nikaya* 6.55).

95 Eat to live, and live to love; and let every meal be eaten with thanks. ✧

READ FURTHER

· Chapter 10 of *Truth from Monad* (Healing the Temple).

XVI. CHASTITY, THE CURE FOR LUST

verses 96–102

96 Chastity is love kept holy. ✧

97 It is not hatred of the body, nor fear of desire; it is honouring desire as a sacred fire, kept in the hearth where it warms, and never in the field where it burns. ✧

98 My beloved is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed. +

99 The Gospel of Philip speaks of the undefiled marriage, a true mystery, belonging not to craving but to the will and to the light. +

100 For the one who is married, chastity is faithfulness; for the one who is not, it is purity; for all, it is honouring every person as an image of God, and never as a thing. ✧

101 Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. +

102 Lust takes; love gives. Lust devours; love protects. Choose love. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

“Chastity is love kept holy.” It isn’t hatred of the body or fear of desire, but honouring desire as a sacred fire kept “in the hearth where it warms, and never in the field where it burns.” The Song of Songs pictures a beloved as a locked garden and sealed fountain. The *Gospel of Philip* speaks of the “undefiled marriage,” a holy mystery. For the married, chastity is faithfulness; for the unmarried, purity; for all, honouring every person as God’s image, never as a thing. “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.” “Lust takes; love gives... Choose love.”

KEY WORDS

Undefiled marriage: the *Gospel of Philip*’s phrase for holy union.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 98 is Song of Songs 4:12; 99 the *Gospel of Philip*; 101 Matthew 5:8.

READ FURTHER

· Song of Songs.
· Matthew 5 (the Beatitudes).

XVII. THE GARMENT OF LIGHT AND THE BLESSING

verses 103–113

103 Fourteen virtues; and yet they are one. ✧

104 They are like threads woven into one garment; pull out one, and the cloth begins to come apart. ✧

105 And above all these, put on love, which is the bond of perfection. +

106 You will not become perfect in a day; no one does. But each day, light one more lamp, and strengthen one more pillar. ✧

107 And when you stumble, do not despair; rise, and light the lamp again. ✧

108 For the virtues are not chains laid upon you; they are the shape of your own soul when it is free. ✧

109 Blessed be Monad, the source of every good. ✧

110 Blessed be the seven foundation virtues and the seven lamps. ✧

111 Blessed be every soul that tends them, day by day, until the whole house is full of light. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Fourteen virtues, yet one: like threads in one garment, pull one out and the cloth unravels. Over all, Paul says, put on love, which binds everything in unity. No one becomes perfect in a day; each day light one more lamp and strengthen one more pillar; when you stumble, rise and light the lamp again. “The virtues are not chains laid upon you; they are the shape of your own soul when it is free.” The Blessing praises the seven pillars and seven lamps, and closes with this chapter’s motto variation: “Pure thoughts. True words. Loving deeds.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 105 is Colossians 3:14.

READ FURTHER

· Colossians 3.
· N. T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (2010).

112 Pure thoughts. True words. Loving deeds.

◇

113 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love.

◇

THOUGHT, WORD, AND DEED

CHAPTER 14

I. THE THREE LIGHTS

verses 1–5

1 There are three lights by which every life is lit: the thought, the word, and the deed. ✧

2 The thought is the seed. The word is the sprout. The deed is the fruit. ✧

3 Everything you will ever build begins as something you think, becomes something you say, and is finished by something you do. ✧

4 So this is our way, written on the heart of our congregation: Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. ✧

5 Three short commands; and a whole life is not long enough to fulfil them. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

This is the chapter of our motto. Every life is lit by three lights: thought, word, and deed. “The thought is the seed. The word is the sprout. The deed is the fruit.” Everything you’ll ever build starts as a thought, becomes a word, and is finished by a deed. So our way is: Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. “Three short commands; and a whole life is not long enough to fulfil them.”

KEY WORDS

Motto: a short saying that sums up a way of life; ours was chosen by the founder in 2026.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 4 is our motto.

READ FURTHER

II. THE OLDEST WAY

verses 6–14

6 Long before our congregation, a prophet of Persia named Zoroaster taught the same three lights. ✧

7 Good thoughts, good words, good deeds: in his tongue, Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta. ✧

8 His followers keep a sacred fire burning in their temples, and they say these three words as they tie the sacred cord around their waist each day. ✧

9 And from his people came the Magi, who followed the star to the child who would be King of Kings. ✧ †

10 So the three lights were carried to the manger, and laid before the Christ. ✧

11 They taught that when a soul dies it comes to a bridge over the abyss; and there it is met by its own conscience, in the shape of a maiden. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Long ago the Persian prophet Zoroaster taught the same three lights: good thoughts, good words, good deeds (*Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta*). His followers still keep sacred fires burning in their temples and say these words as they tie a sacred cord around their waist each day. From his people came the Magi, who followed the star to the infant Jesus, so “the three lights were carried to the manger.” Zoroastrians teach that after death the soul crosses a bridge and meets its own conscience as a maiden: radiant if its thoughts, words, and deeds were good, and the bridge wide; grieved if not, and the bridge narrow as a blade. She says, “I am your own thoughts, your own words, your own deeds.” “Every day, you are shaping the one who will meet you at the bridge.”

WHO’S WHO

Zoroaster (Zarathustra): the prophet of ancient Persia.

The Magi: Zoroastrian priests; see Chapter 9.

The Parsis: Zoroastrians of India, who keep the faith alive today.

12 If its thoughts and words and deeds were good, she is radiant and fair, and the bridge grows wide; if not, she is grieved, and the bridge grows narrow as a blade. ♦

13 For she says: I am your own thoughts, your own words, your own deeds. ♦

14 Every day, you are shaping the one who will meet you at the bridge. ♦

KEY WORDS

Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta: Avestan for “good thoughts, good words, good deeds.”

Kusti: the sacred cord Zoroastrians tie around the waist while praying.

Chinvat Bridge: the bridge of judgment the soul crosses after death.

Daena: the soul’s own conscience, met at the bridge.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 6–8 and 11–13 are Zoroastrian teaching (the Gathas; the Hadokht Nask); verse 9 is Matthew 2:1–11.

READ FURTHER

- Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (1979).
- Jenny Rose, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction* (2011).

III. THINK IN LIGHT

verses 15–25

15 Every deed was first a thought. ♦

16 Guard the gate of the mind, for whatever you let in will one day walk out through your hands. ♦

17 The Buddha taught: Mind goes before all things; all things are made by mind. Speak or act with a pure mind, and joy follows you like a shadow that never leaves. ♦

18 The seekers of science have found that the brain is shaped by what it repeats: thoughts held often carve paths, as water carves a riverbed. *

19 So the thought you think today becomes the road your mind will travel tomorrow. ♦

20 Your thoughts reach even into your body: a mind held in fear floods the blood with the waters of alarm, and a mind at peace lets the body rest and mend. *

21 So a thought is never only a thought. It is a seed planted in your own flesh. ♦

22 To think in light is not to pretend the world is without evil. It is to look at everything, even evil, from the place of light. ♦

23 It is to think the best of others until you know otherwise; to think of solutions before complaints; to think of God before fear. ♦

24 The good person brings forth good from the good treasure of the heart; for out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

Every deed was first a thought, so guard the gate of the mind: what you let in will one day walk out through your hands. The Buddha taught that mind goes before all things; act with a pure mind, and joy follows like a shadow. Science finds that the brain is shaped by what it repeats: thoughts held often carve paths, like water carving a riverbed. And thoughts reach into the body: a fearful mind floods the blood with alarm, a peaceful one lets the body rest and heal. “A thought is never only a thought. It is a seed planted in your own flesh.” Thinking in light isn’t pretending there’s no evil; it’s looking at everything from the place of light: thinking the best of others, seeking solutions before complaints, thinking of God before fear. A good person brings good out of the good treasure of the heart, so fill your heart with light.

KEY WORDS

Neuroplasticity: the brain’s ability to rewire itself through repeated thought and action.

Cortisol: a stress hormone released when we are afraid.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 17 is *Dhammapada* 1–2; 18 neuroscience (Donald Hebb, 1949: “cells that fire together wire together”); 20 stress physiology; 24 Luke 6:45 and *Gospel of Thomas* 45.

READ FURTHER

- Eknath Easwaran, *The Dhammapada* (1985).
- Rick Hanson, *Hardwiring Happiness* (2013).

25 Fill the treasure-house of your heart with light, and light is what will flow out of you. ✧

IV. SPEAK IN TRUTH

verses 26–35

26 The word is a little thing, and it can set a whole forest on fire. †

27 A small rudder turns a great ship; and so the small tongue turns the course of a whole life. †

28 Life and death are in the power of the tongue. †

29 Jesus said: Do not lie, and do not do what you hate; for all things are seen openly before heaven. †

30 To speak in truth is to say only what is true, and to say it so that it can be heard. ✧

31 Truth without love is a stone thrown at another's head; love without truth is a sweet that rots the teeth. Do the truth in love. ✧ †

32 Let no evil speech come out of your mouth, but only what is good for building up, so that it gives grace to those who hear. †

33 Before you speak, let your words pass through three gates: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it needed? ✧ ✧

34 A promise is a word that has been given its own life; keep it, and it will keep you. ✧

35 Let the sayings of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing before You always, O God, my helper and my redeemer. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

James says the tongue is small but can set a forest ablaze, and a small rudder turns a great ship. Proverbs: death and life are in the power of the tongue. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus says don't lie and don't do what you hate. To speak in truth is to say only what is true, and to say it so it can be heard. "Truth without love is a stone thrown at another's head; love without truth is a sweet that rots the teeth": speak the truth in love. Let your words build others up. Before speaking, pass through three gates: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it needed? Keep your promises. And pray: let the words of my mouth and thoughts of my heart please You.

KEY WORDS

The three gates: an old teaching for wise speech, found in several traditions.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 26–27 are James 3:4–5; 28 Proverbs 18:21; 29 *Gospel of Thomas* 6; 31 Ephesians 4:15; 32 Ephesians 4:29; 35 Psalm 18:15.

READ FURTHER

- James 3.
- Proverbs 10–18 (many sayings on speech).

V. THE WORD THAT CREATES

verses 36–45

36 In the beginning was the Word; and all things came into being through the Word. †

37 And at the first dawn, God spoke, and what was spoken came to be. †

38 If the Word of God brought forth the worlds, do not think your own words are empty. Every word you speak builds something, or breaks something. ✧

39 A blessing spoken over a child can carry them for a lifetime; a curse spoken over a child can wound them for a lifetime. ✧

40 So learn the ancient blessing, and speak it over those you love: ✧

41 May God bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you, and have mercy on

IN PLAIN WORDS

"In the beginning was the Word," and God spoke creation into being. If God's word made worlds, our words aren't empty: every word builds or breaks. A blessing spoken over a child can carry them for life; a curse can wound them for life. So learn the ancient priestly blessing and speak it over those you love: "May God bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you, and have mercy on you. May God look upon you, and give you peace." It's a blessing of light, God's face shining on you like the Sun on the Earth. There's a time to keep silence and a time to speak; let your words be few and weighty. "The wisest word is often the one that waits until it is ready."

you. May God look upon you, and give you peace. +

42 See how the blessing is a blessing of light: the face of God shining upon you as the Sun shines upon the Earth. ✧

43 There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak. +

44 Do not be hasty with your mouth, nor let your heart be swift to speak before God; let your words be few. +

45 The wisest word is often the one that waits until it is ready. ✧

KEY WORDS

The priestly blessing: the blessing Aaron and his sons spoke over Israel (Numbers 6).

The Word (Logos): John's name for Christ, through whom all things were made.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 36 is John 1:1–3; 37 Genesis 1; 41 Numbers 6:24–26; 42 our Helio teaching; 43 Ecclesiastes 3:7; 44 Ecclesiastes 5:1.

READ FURTHER

· John 1; Numbers 6.

VI. ACT IN LOVE

verses 46–55

46 The thought is planted, the word is spoken; but it is the deed that feeds the hungry. ✧

47 Let us not love only in word or in speech, but in deed and in truth. +

48 Faith without works is dead, as a body without breath is dead. +

49 Jesus said: Everyone who hears my words and does them is like the one who built a house upon the rock; and when the rain fell and the floods came and the winds beat upon that house, it did not fall. +

50 And he said: I was hungry, and you fed me; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; I was sick, and you visited me. +

51 And when they asked: When did we see you so? he answered: Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me. +

52 The Gospel of Truth says: speak of the truth to those who seek it; steady the feet of those who stumble; reach out to those who are sick; feed the hungry; give rest to the weary; raise up those who wish to rise; and wake those who sleep. +

53 Shimon, son of Gamliel, a sage of Israel, said: it is not the studying that matters most, but the doing. ✧

54 Love is a verb. If it does not move your hands, it has not yet reached your heart. ✧

55 And those who give of themselves to help others are often found to live with more joy and better health. *

IN PLAIN WORDS

The thought is planted and the word spoken, “but it is the deed that feeds the hungry.” John: love not only in word but in deed and truth. James: faith without works is dead. Jesus: whoever hears his words and does them builds a house on rock that stands through every storm. And he said, “I was hungry, and you gave me to eat... as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.” The *Gospel of Truth* gives a list of loving deeds: speak truth to seekers, steady those who stumble, reach out to the sick, feed the hungry, give rest to the weary, raise those who want to rise, wake those who sleep. Rabbi Shimon son of Gamliel said the doing matters more than the studying. “Love is a verb.” And studies find that people who help others often live with more joy and better health.

WHO'S WHO

Shimon son of Gamliel: a Jewish sage of the first century, quoted in *Pirkei Avot* (“Sayings of the Fathers”).

KEY WORDS

Pirkei Avot: a book of the Mishnah collecting the wisdom of the early rabbis.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 47 is 1 John 3:18; 48 James 2:17, 26; 49 Matthew 7:24–25; 50–51 Matthew 25:35–40; 52 the *Gospel of Truth*; 53 *Pirkei Avot* 1:17; 55 studies on volunteering and wellbeing.

READ FURTHER

· Matthew 25:31–46; James 2.

VII. THE SMALLEST DEED

verses 56–63

56 Do not wait for a great deed. Great deeds are only small deeds that were done faithfully. ♦

57 The sages of Israel taught: whoever saves a single life, it is as though they had saved a whole world. ♦

58 There is an old story of a child on a beach after a storm, throwing stranded starfish back into the sea one by one; and a passerby laughed and said: there are thousands; what difference can you make? ♦

59 And the child picked up one more, and threw it into the water, and said: it made a difference to that one. ♦

60 A cup of cold water given to a little one is not forgotten in heaven. †

61 Hold the door. Learn the name. Share the bread. Visit the lonely. Say the kind thing out loud. ♦

62 These are the deeds that change the world, one person at a time, because they change the person who receives them. ♦

63 And every loving deed is a ray of the Sun that reaches somewhere it has never been before. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Don't wait for a great deed; great deeds are small ones done faithfully. The Jewish sages taught that whoever saves one life saves a whole world. A familiar story: a child throws stranded starfish back into the sea one by one; a passerby scoffs, "there are thousands, what difference can you make?" The child throws another and says, "It made a difference to that one." Jesus said even a cup of cold water given to a little one is remembered. Hold the door, learn the name, share bread, visit the lonely, say the kind thing out loud: these change the world one person at a time.

KEY WORDS

Mishnah: the first great written collection of Jewish oral law (about AD 200).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 57 is Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 4:5; 58–59 a well-known modern parable (adapted from an essay by Loren Eiseley, 1969); 60 Matthew 10:42.

READ FURTHER

· Matthew 10:40–42.

VIII. WHEN THE THREE AGREE

verses 64–71

64 The thought, the word, and the deed must walk together, like three strands of one cord. ♦

65 When you think one thing, say another, and do a third, your soul is divided against itself, and a house divided cannot stand. † ♦

66 But when what you think is what you say, and what you say is what you do, you are whole; and the whole person shines. ♦

67 This is integrity: to be one, as Monad is One. ♦

68 The people of India have three words for this: in mind, in speech, in action; and they teach that a vow must be kept in all three. ♦

69 The followers of the Buddha walk a path whose steps include right intention, right speech, and right action: thought, word, and deed again. ♦

70 And it is taught in Islam that every deed is weighed by the intention behind it. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Thought, word, and deed must walk together like three strands of one cord. If you think one thing, say another, and do a third, your soul is divided, and "a house divided cannot stand." When they agree, you're whole, and "the whole person shines": that is integrity, "to be one, as Monad is One." India has three words for it (*manasa, vacha, karmana*: in mind, speech, action). The Buddha's path includes right intention, right speech, and right action. Islam teaches that every deed is weighed by its intention. The same three lights shine across many faiths, "for the same Light gave them."

KEY WORDS

Integrity: from Latin *integer*, "whole."

Noble Eightfold Path: the Buddha's way, including right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration.

71 So see: the same three lights shine in the teaching of many peoples, for the same Light gave them. ✧

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 65 is Mark 3:25; 67 recalls Chapter 1; 68 Sanskrit teaching (Hindu and Jain); 69 the Noble Eightfold Path; 70 Hadith (Sahih al-Bukhari 1).

READ FURTHER

· Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*, on Buddhism.

IX. THE WAY OF EVERY DAY

verses 72–80

72 Let the three lights guide you from the morning to the night. ✧

73 When you wake, give your first thought to God, and to gratitude. ✧

74 At the table, speak words that build up your family; let no one leave the meal smaller than they came. ✧

75 At your work, do your labour honestly, and treat the one beside you as you would want to be treated. ✧

76 On the road, let one deed of kindness be done for someone who can never repay you. ✧

77 Once in each week, give a whole day to rest, to family, and to God, and let your hands cease from their labour. ✧ †

78 And on that day, look back on the week, and ask: which thoughts lifted me, which words healed, which deeds gave light? ✧

79 And at night, before you sleep, ask yourself the three questions Pythagoras gave his students: Where did I go wrong? What did I do well? What did I leave undone? ✧

80 Then give thanks, and let it go, and rest; for tomorrow the Sun will rise and give you another day. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

A day guided by the three lights: when you wake, give your first thought to God and gratitude. At the table, speak words that build up your family; “let no one leave the meal smaller than they came.” At work, labour honestly and treat others as you’d want to be treated. On the road, do one kindness for someone who can’t repay you. Once a week, rest a whole day for family and God, and look back on which thoughts lifted you, which words healed, which deeds gave light. And each night ask Pythagoras’s three questions: Where did I go wrong? What did I do well? What did I leave undone? Then give thanks, let it go, and rest; tomorrow the Sun will rise again.

WHO’S WHO

Pythagoras: see Chapter 1.

KEY WORDS

Examination of conscience: a nightly review of one’s day, practised by many traditions.

Golden Verses: a short ancient poem of Pythagorean teaching.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 77 is the Sabbath principle (Exodus 20:8–10) and Sunday, the day of the Sun (Chapter 5); 79 the *Golden Verses* of Pythagoras, lines 40–44.

READ FURTHER

· Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*: a Roman’s private notes on living well.
· Ignatius of Loyola’s *Examen* (the daily review of conscience).

X. WHEN WE FALL SHORT

verses 81–86

81 No one keeps the three lights perfectly. ✧

82 There will be dim thoughts, careless words, and deeds you wish you could take back. ✧

83 Do not hide them; bring them into the light, for what is brought into the light can be healed. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

No one keeps the three lights perfectly. There will be dim thoughts, careless words, and deeds we wish we could take back. Don’t hide them: bring them into the light, where they can heal. If your word wounded someone, let your next word heal; if your deed harmed someone, let your next deed repair it. Forgive yourself as you forgive others, and begin again. “The way of

84 If your word wounded someone, let your next word heal them. If your deed harmed someone, let your next deed repair it. ✧

85 Forgive yourself as you forgive others; and begin again. ✧

86 The way of light is not walked by those who never fall, but by those who rise each time and keep walking. ✧

light is not walked by those who never fall, but by those who rise each time and keep walking."

BEHIND THE VERSES

This section is our congregation's teaching (✧).

READ FURTHER

· Psalm 50.

XI. THE BRIDGE AND THE BLESSING

verses 87–96

87 We cannot choose the day we will come to the bridge. ✧

88 But we choose, every day, the thoughts we think, the words we speak, and the deeds we do. ✧

89 They are the stones with which we build the bridge, and the light by which we will cross it. ✧

90 What you leave behind in the world is not your wealth, but your thoughts that became words, and your words that became deeds, and your deeds that became someone else's light. ✧

91 So think in light, and the bridge will be lit. Speak in truth, and the bridge will be strong. Act in love, and you will cross it into the Light. ✧

92 Blessed be Monad, the Source from whom every good thought comes. ✧

93 Blessed be every true word, and every loving deed. ✧

94 Blessed be the Magi of Persia, who carried the three lights to the King. ✧

95 Good thoughts, good words, good deeds. ✧

96 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

We can't choose the day we'll come to the bridge, but every day we choose our thoughts, words, and deeds; they are the stones of the bridge and the light we'll cross it by. What you leave behind isn't wealth but "your deeds that became someone else's light." "Think in light, and the bridge will be lit. Speak in truth, and the bridge will be strong. Act in love, and you will cross it into the Light." The Blessing praises Monad, every true word and loving deed, and the Magi who carried the three lights to the King, and closes with the ancient triad, "Good thoughts, good words, good deeds," and our motto.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 95 is the Zoroastrian triad, honouring the roots of our motto.

READ FURTHER

· Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians*.

EVERY CALLING IS SACRED

CHAPTER 15

I. CALLED BY NAME

verses 1–7

- 1 Listen: you are being called. ✧
- 2 Not by a voice from outside you only, but by the light within you that knows why it was sent. ✧
- 3 God gives each soul its own mission, and its own truth with God. ✧
- 4 The Gospel of Truth says that the One calls each by name; and the one who knows hears the call, and answers, and turns toward the One who calls. †
- 5 You were not made by accident, and you were not made to be someone else. ✧
- 6 There is a work in this world that has your name on it, and no one else can do it the way you can. ✧
- 7 This is your calling; and every calling given by God is sacred. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

“Listen: you are being called,” not only by an outside voice but by the light within that knows why it was sent. Our congregation believes God gives every soul its own mission. The *Gospel of Truth* says the One calls each by name, and the one who knows hears, answers, and turns toward the caller. You weren’t made by accident or to be someone else; there’s a work with your name on it that no one else can do as you can. That’s your calling, and every calling God gives is sacred.

KEY WORDS

Calling (vocation): from Latin *vocare*, “to call”; the life-work God gives each person.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 3 is our Statement of Beliefs (article 9); 4 the *Gospel of Truth*; 7 the founder’s revelation that every calling is sacred.

READ FURTHER

- Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak* (2000).
- Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking* (1973), where he describes vocation as “the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

II. BEFORE YOU WERE FORMED

verses 8–13

- 8 Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came forth from the womb I sanctified you. †
- 9 Of all the people who have ever lived, not one has had your face, your voice, or the lines on the tips of your fingers. ✧
- 10 The book of life written within you, letter by letter, belongs to you alone, unless you were born a twin; and even twins grow into two different souls. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

God told Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.” No one in history has had your face, voice, or fingerprints, and your DNA is yours alone (and even identical twins grow into two different souls). “If the One took such care to make you unlike any other, do you think your life has no purpose?” Paul says we are God’s handiwork, made for good works prepared beforehand. “The path was laid before your feet were made. You have only to find it, and walk.”

11 If the One took such care to make you unlike any other, do you think your life has no purpose? ✧

12 We are God's handiwork, created for good works, which were prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. +

13 The path was laid before your feet were made. You have only to find it, and walk. ✧

WHO'S WHO

Jeremiah: a prophet of Judah (about 626–586 BC), called as a young man.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 8 is Jeremiah 1:5; 9–10 biology (fingerprints and the genome); 12 Ephesians 2:10 (rendered without gendered words).

READ FURTHER

· Jeremiah 1.

III. THE CALLING OF THE FAMILY

verses 14–21

14 For many, the calling is marriage and the raising of a family; and this calling is holy. ✧

15 The family is the first congregation, and the home is its temple. ✧

16 The mother who rocks a crying child at midnight is doing holy work. ✧

17 The father who works long days and still comes home with patience is doing holy work. ✧

18 The grandparent who tells the old stories, so the children remember who they are, is doing holy work. ✧

19 No one may write songs about the meals you cook, the floors you sweep, the lessons you teach at the kitchen table; but heaven sees every one. ✧

20 To raise a child in love is to send a new light into a world that needs it. ✧

21 Do not let anyone tell you that the calling of the home is small. Every great soul who ever lived was first a child in someone's arms. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

For many, the calling is marriage and raising a family, and it is holy: "the family is the first congregation, and the home is its temple." The mother rocking a crying child at midnight, the father coming home patient after a long day, the grandparent telling old stories so the children remember who they are: all are doing holy work. No one writes songs about cooking, sweeping, or homework help at the kitchen table, "but heaven sees every one." To raise a child in love is to send a new light into the world. "Every great soul who ever lived was first a child in someone's arms."

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 14–15 are our Statement of Beliefs (articles 9 and 11) and Chapter 6; verse 20 recalls Chapter 2 (the child is God's).

READ FURTHER

· Our Statement of Beliefs, articles 9 and 11.

IV. THE CALLINGS OF LIGHT

verses 22–30

22 Others are called to teach, and to open minds to the truth. ✧

23 Others are called to heal, and to tend the temples of the sick. ✧

24 Others are called to serve: to feed, to build, to carry, to protect, to keep the world running while others sleep. ✧

25 Others are called to create: to make music, to paint, to write, to shape beauty from wood and stone and word. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Others are called to teach, to heal, to serve (feeding, building, carrying, protecting, keeping the world running while others sleep), to create (music, art, writing, craft), to grow food and tend creation, to seek and study, or to carry the light of the One to people who've never heard. Some have more than one calling; some callings change with life's seasons. "None of them is greater than another in the sight of God, for all of them are lit from the same Light."

26 Others are called to grow: to tend the fields, the gardens, and the animals, and to bring the food of the Earth to the table. ✧

27 Others are called to seek: to study the stars and the cells, and to read the book of creation. ✧

28 And others are called to carry light where none has shone: to speak of the One to those who have never heard. ✧

29 Some are called to more than one; and some callings change with the seasons of a life. ✧

30 But none of them is greater than another in the sight of God, for all of them are lit from the same Light. ✧

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 26 recalls the founder's Clean Food Vision; 27 Chapter 12; 28 our Statement of Beliefs (article 9).

READ FURTHER

· Dorothy L. Sayers, "Why Work?" (1942 essay).

V. THE CALLING OF THE SINGLE HEART

verses 31–36

31 And some are called to walk without a spouse, for a season or for a life; and their calling, too, is holy. ✧

32 Their hearts are not empty; they are open, and their love can flow to many. ✧

33 Jesus walked the roads of his ministry without a household of his own to tend, and gave himself to all who came to him. † ✧

34 The apostle Paul wrote that the one who is unmarried can give an undivided heart to the work of God. †

35 So let no one be made to feel less for walking alone; for no one who walks with God walks alone. ✧

36 And let the congregation be family to them, and let them be family to the congregation. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Some are called to live without a spouse, for a season or for life, and that calling is holy too. Their hearts aren't empty but open, so their love can reach many. Jesus walked his ministry without a household of his own; Paul wrote that the unmarried can give an undivided heart to God's work. No one should feel less for walking alone, "for no one who walks with God walks alone," and the congregation should be family to them, and they to it.

WHO'S WHO

Paul: see Chapter 8.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 33 is our congregation's teaching drawn from the Gospels; 34 is 1 Corinthians 7:32–35.

READ FURTHER

· 1 Corinthians 7.

· Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved* (1992).

VI. MANY GIFTS, ONE SPIRIT

verses 37–44

37 There are many kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit; many kinds of service, but the same Master; many kinds of working, but the same God at work in them all. †

38 The body is one, and has many parts; and all the parts, though many, are one body. †

39 The eye cannot say to the hand: I have no need of you; nor the head to the feet: I have no need of you. †

40 Indeed, the parts that seem weakest are the ones we cannot do without. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

Paul teaches there are many kinds of gifts but one Spirit; the body is one with many parts; the eye can't tell the hand "I don't need you"; and the parts that seem weakest are the ones we can't do without. Look at the bee: small, yet a large part of our food depends on bees carrying pollen. "Take away the smallest worker, and the whole field goes hungry." So never call your gift small. Peter says to use whatever gift you've received to serve others, as stewards of God's many-coloured grace.

41 Look at the bee: so small, and yet a great part of the food we eat comes to us because the bees carry life from flower to flower. ✱

42 Take away the smallest worker, and the whole field goes hungry. ✧

43 So never call your gift small. In the body of light, there is no small part. ✧

44 Each of you has received a gift; use it to serve one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. +

KEY WORDS

Steward: someone trusted to care for what belongs to another.

Pollinators: bees and other creatures that carry pollen, supporting roughly a third of the food we eat.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 37–40 are 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, 12, 21–22; 41 science on pollinators; 44 1 Peter 4:10.

READ FURTHER

· 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12.

VII. HOW THE CALLED WERE CALLED

verses 45–53

45 Do you feel you are not ready? Neither did those who were called before you. ✧

46 The boy Samuel heard his name in the night, and did not know who was calling, until at last he answered: Speak, for your servant hears. +

47 Moses, called from the burning bush, said: I am weak in speech and slow of tongue; and he was told: Go, and I will open your mouth, and teach you what to say. +

48 Mary, a young woman of Nazareth, heard the angel's message and said: Be it done to me according to your word. +

49 Fishermen were mending their nets by the lake when Jesus passed and said: Follow me; and they left their nets and followed. +

50 And Esther, a young queen in a foreign land, was told: Who knows whether you have come to this place for such a time as this? +

51 None of them felt worthy. None of them felt ready. All of them said yes. ✧

52 The One does not call the ready; the One makes ready those who are called. ✧

53 Perhaps you, too, have come to this place for such a time as this. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Feel unready? So did everyone called before you. Young Samuel heard his name at night and finally answered, "Speak, for your servant hears." Moses said he was slow of speech, and God promised to be with his mouth. Mary, a young woman of Nazareth, said "Be it done to me according to your word." Fishermen left their nets when Jesus said "Follow me." Queen Esther was told, "Who knows whether you have come to this place for such a time as this?" None felt worthy or ready; all said yes. "The One does not call the ready; the One makes ready those who are called." Perhaps you too have come "for such a time as this."

WHO'S WHO

Samuel: a prophet and judge of Israel, called as a boy (1 Samuel 3).

Mary: the mother of Jesus.

Peter, Andrew, James, and John: fishermen called to be disciples (Matthew 4).

Esther: a Jewish queen of Persia who risked her life to save her people.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 46 is 1 Samuel 3:1–10; 47 Exodus 4:10–12; 48 Luke 1:38; 49 Matthew 4:18–20; 50 Esther 4:14.

READ FURTHER

· The Book of Esther (short and gripping).

· 1 Samuel 3.

VIII. EVERY AGE IS CALLED

verses 54–61

54 Do not say: I am too young. ✧

55 When Jeremiah said, I am only a child, he was told: Do not say, I am only a child; for you shall go to all to whom I send you. †

56 Let no one look down on you because you are young; but be an example in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. †

57 And do not say: I am too old. ✧

58 Abraham was seventy-five years old when he was called to leave his land and go to a place he did not know. †

59 It is promised: your old ones will dream dreams, and your young ones will see visions. †

60 From the cradle to the last breath, there is no age at which the One stops calling. ✧

61 The child is called to wonder; the young to dare; the grown to build; the old to bless; and all of them to love. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Don't say "I'm too young": Jeremiah said "I'm only a child" and was told not to say it; Paul told young Timothy not to let anyone look down on his youth, but to be an example. And don't say "I'm too old": Abraham was seventy-five when called to leave his homeland. The prophet Joel promised that old people will dream dreams and young people see visions. "There is no age at which the One stops calling": the child is called to wonder, the young to dare, the grown to build, the old to bless, and all to love.

WHO'S WHO

Timothy: Paul's young companion and fellow worker.

Joel: a prophet of Israel.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 55 is Jeremiah 1:6–7; 56 1 Timothy 4:12; 58 Genesis 12:1–4; 59 Joel 3:1 (2:28 in other Bibles).

READ FURTHER

· Genesis 12; Joel 2.

IX. FINDING YOUR CALLING

verses 62–70

62 How then will you know your calling? ✧

63 Look where your gifts meet the world's need; that is often where your calling waits. ✧

64 Look at what you cannot stop thinking about, what breaks your heart, what makes you forget the hour. ✧

65 Look at what others come to you for, again and again, without being asked. ✧

66 Pray, and then be still, and listen with the ear of the heart. ✧

67 Try, and do not fear a wrong turn; a road walked is never wasted, for it teaches you the way. ✧

68 And remember: you do not need to see the whole road. You need only the next step. ✧

69 Thy law is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths. †

70 A lamp lights only a few steps at a time; and that is enough to walk by. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

How do you find your calling? Look where your gifts meet the world's need. Look at what you can't stop thinking about, what breaks your heart, what makes you lose track of time. Look at what people keep coming to you for. Pray, be still, and listen. Try things; no road walked is wasted. You don't need to see the whole road, just the next step: God's word is "a lamp unto my feet," and a lamp lights only a few steps at a time, "enough to walk by."

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 63 echoes Frederick Buechner's well-known definition of vocation (see Read further, section I); verse 69 is Psalm 118:105.

READ FURTHER

· Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*.

· Psalm 118:105–112.

X. EVERY CALLING, EVERY PEOPLE

verses 71–77

71 The wise of every people have known that each soul has its own work. ♦

72 Krishna taught Arjuna: better is your own path, though walked imperfectly, than the path of another walked well. ♦

73 Zusha of Hanipol, a gentle teacher of Israel, said before he died: When I pass from this world and appear before the court of heaven, they will not ask me, Zusha, why were you not as wise as Moses, or as kind as Abraham? Rather, they will ask me: Zusha, why were you not Zusha? Why did you not fulfil your potential? Why did you not follow the path that could have been yours? ♦

74 The Quran teaches that God does not lay upon any soul a burden greater than it can carry. ♦

75 The followers of the Buddha seek a right livelihood: work that harms no one and helps the world. ♦

76 Kahlil Gibran, a poet of Lebanon, wrote: work is love made visible. ♦

77 Many faiths, one truth: be who you were made to be, and do the work you were given with love. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Krishna taught that it's better to walk your own path imperfectly than another's perfectly. Rabbi Zusha of Hanipol said before he died that in heaven they wouldn't ask why he wasn't as wise as Moses or as kind as Abraham, but "Zusha, why were you not Zusha? Why did you not fulfil your potential? Why did you not follow the path that could have been yours?" The Quran says God never burdens a soul beyond what it can carry. Buddhists seek "right livelihood," work that harms no one. Kahlil Gibran wrote, "Work is love made visible." Be who you were made to be.

WHO'S WHO

Krishna: the divine teacher of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Rabbi Meshulam Zusha of Hanipol (died 1800): a beloved early Hasidic teacher, known for his humility.

Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931): a Lebanese-American poet and artist, author of *The Prophet*.

KEY WORDS

Svadharmā: Sanskrit for "one's own path or duty."

Hasidism: a joyful Jewish spiritual movement of 18th-century Eastern Europe.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 72 is *Bhagavad Gita* 3.35; 73 the Hasidic teaching of Rabbi Zusha (in the founder's chosen wording); 74 Quran 2:286; 75 the Noble Eightfold Path; 76 Gibran, *The Prophet*, "On Work."

READ FURTHER

· Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (1923).

· Eknath Easwaran, *The Bhagavad Gita*.

XI. WORK AS WORSHIP

verses 78–83

78 Every honest work, done with love, is a prayer. ♦

79 Brother Lawrence, a humble cook in a monastery of France, said that he felt as close to God among his pots and pans as when he knelt at prayer. ♦ †

80 So the carpenter's plane, the nurse's hands, the farmer's plough, the mother's spoon, and the teacher's chalk can all be holy instruments. ♦

81 Remember that the King of Kings himself worked with his hands as a builder. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

"Every honest work, done with love, is a prayer." Brother Lawrence, a humble cook in a French monastery, felt as close to God among his pots and pans as at the altar. So a carpenter's plane, a nurse's hands, a farmer's plough, a mother's spoon, and a teacher's chalk can all be holy tools. The King of Kings himself worked as a builder. Don't divide life into holy days and ordinary days: "with God, every day is holy." Do your work so that at day's end you can lift it to the One without shame.

WHO'S WHO

Brother Lawrence (about 1614–1691): a lay brother and cook in a Carmelite monastery in Paris.

82 Do not divide your life into holy days and ordinary days. With God, every day is holy, and every task can be offered. ✧

83 And whatever your work, do it so that, at the end of the day, you can lift it up to the One without shame. ✧

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 79 is Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*; 81 recalls Chapter 9.

READ FURTHER

· Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (free online).

XII. WHEN THE CALLING IS HARD

verses 84–90

84 Sometimes the calling is hard, and the road is long, and the fruit is slow to come. ✧

85 Moses kept sheep in the wilderness for forty years before he was called to lead his people. +

86 So the years of waiting are not wasted; they are the years of making ready. ✧

87 Sometimes you will doubt. Sometimes you will fail. Sometimes you will want to lay the calling down. ✧

88 Rest, then, but do not leave it. The One who called you does not take back the call. ✧ +

89 And if your calling changes, do not grieve the old one; it was a step on the road to the new. ✧

90 No calling lived in love is ever lost. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Sometimes the road is long and the fruit slow. Moses kept sheep in the wilderness for forty years before being called to lead; “the years of waiting are not wasted; they are the years of making ready.” You’ll doubt, fail, and want to quit. “Rest, then, but do not leave it,” because God doesn’t take back a calling. If your calling changes, don’t grieve the old one; it was a step toward the new. “No calling lived in love is ever lost.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 85 is Acts 7:29–30; 88 Romans 11:29 (“the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance”: God does not take them back).

READ FURTHER

· Exodus 2–4 (Moses in the wilderness).

XIII. THE CALLING OF THE CONGREGATION AND THE BLESSING

verses 91–99

91 And the congregation, too, has a calling: to seek the truth of God, to spread God’s love, and to build a community rooted in family, faith, and the virtues. ✧

92 We do not ask everyone to walk the same road. We help each one find their own. ✧

93 We honour the mother and the teacher, the healer and the builder, the farmer and the seeker, the singer and the servant, all alike. ✧

94 For a congregation is like a choir: each voice different, and every voice needed for the song. ✧

95 And when each one answers their own calling, together we become a light that no single lamp could ever be. ✧

96 Blessed be Monad, who calls each soul by name. ✧

97 Blessed be every calling, great and small, for in the sight of God, none is small. ✧

98 Blessed be every soul that hears, and answers, and says yes. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The congregation has a calling too: our mission, to seek the truth of God, spread God’s love, and build community rooted in family, faith, and the virtues. We don’t ask everyone to walk the same road; we help each find their own. We honour mother and teacher, healer and builder, farmer and seeker, singer and servant alike. A congregation is like a choir: different voices, all needed. When each answers their own calling, together we become “a light that no single lamp could ever be.” The Blessing praises Monad who calls each by name, every calling great and small, and every soul that says yes.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 91 is our mission statement.

READ FURTHER

99 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love.

✧

THE CONGREGATION

CHAPTER 16

I. THE GATHERING

verses 1–7

1 No flame burns long alone; gather the coals together, and the fire lives. ✧

2 So the One gathers the children of light, and makes of them a congregation. ✧

3 A congregation is not a building of stone. It is a living family of seekers, gathered around one Light. ✧

4 Even in the Fullness there is a Gathering; for among the first lights of heaven, the wise of old named one Church, the assembly of the holy. +

5 And the first followers of the Saviour devoted themselves to the teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer; and they shared what they had, so that no one among them was in need. +

6 Let us not give up meeting together, but encourage one another, and stir one another up to love and to good works. +

7 For the light within each of us grows brighter when it stands beside the light within another. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

“No flame burns long alone; gather the coals together, and the fire lives.” A congregation isn’t a stone building but a living family of seekers gathered around one Light. Even in the Fullness there’s an Aeon called “Church” (the Gathering). The first followers of Jesus devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer, and shared everything so no one was in need. Hebrews urges us not to give up meeting together, but to encourage one another to love and good works, because the light in each of us grows brighter beside the light in another.

KEY WORDS

Congregation: a gathered community of faith (we use this word rather than “church” first).

Ekklesia: Greek for “assembly” or “those called out,” the word translated “church.”

Fellowship (koinonia): sharing life together.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 3 is our mission and vision (a gathered family of seekers); 4 the Aeon *Ekklesia* in the Valentinian Fullness (Chapter 3); 5 Acts 2:42–45; 6 Hebrews 10:24–25.

READ FURTHER

· Acts 2–4.

· Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out* (1975), on hospitality and community.

II. THE DAY OF GATHERING

verses 8–15

8 On the first day of the week, the day of the Sun, the congregation gathers. ✧ +

9 We gather first to welcome one another, for every face that comes through the door is a gift. ✧

10 Then we are still together for a moment, and let the noise of the week fall away. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The congregation gathers on the first day of the week, the day of the Sun (Sunday). The order of the gathering is written as scripture: first, welcome one another, because every face at the door is a gift; then a moment of stillness to let the week’s noise fall away; then readings from the holy writings and the hidden books; then one teaches and all listen, then all speak and each listens; then we pray for one another by name (the sick, the grieving, the

11 Then we read from the holy writings and from the hidden books, that the old words may speak again. ✧

12 Then one teaches, and all listen; and then all speak, and each one listens. ✧

13 Then we lift up the needs of one another in prayer, naming the sick, the grieving, and the far away. ✧

14 And at the end we are sent out with a blessing, back into the world, carrying the light we have gathered. ✧

15 Whether we gather in a home, in a hall, under the open sky, or across great distances by the voice and the screen, the One is in the midst of us. ✧

far away); and at the end we're sent out with a blessing, carrying the light back into the world. Whether in a home, a hall, under the sky, or over a screen across great distances, the One is in our midst.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 8 is Sunday as the day of the Sun and the Resurrection (Chapter 5); 9–14 follow our weekly gathering order; 15 our decision to begin online first.

READ FURTHER

· Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67 (the oldest description of a Christian Sunday gathering, about AD 155; free online).

III. PRAYER

verses 16–22

16 Prayer is the breath of the congregation. ✧

17 Pray each day in silence, even for a few minutes, and seek the light within. ✧

18 Turn toward the morning, and greet the Light that rises. ✧

19 And learn the prayer the founder of our congregation prayed when these words were first being written: Be with us, God, for we are with You, and You with us. ✧

20 And learn the prayer of thanksgiving found among the hidden books: We give You thanks; every soul and every heart is lifted up to You. +

21 We rejoice, for You have shown us Yourself; we rejoice, for while we are still in the body You have made us divine through Your knowledge. +

22 We ask only this: that we may be kept in this knowledge, and never stumble from this way of life. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

"Prayer is the breath of the congregation." Pray in silence each day, even a few minutes, and seek the light within. Turn toward the morning and greet the rising Light. Learn the founder's prayer, prayed as these words were first written: "Be with us, God, for we are with You, and You with us." And learn the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* from the Nag Hammadi books: "We give You thanks; every soul and every heart is lifted up to You... we rejoice, for You have shown us Yourself... while we are still in the body You have made us divine through Your knowledge... keep us in this knowledge."

KEY WORDS

Prayer of Thanksgiving: a short Hermetic prayer found in Nag Hammadi Codex VI.

Sunrise prayer: turning toward the morning light in prayer, a practice of our Helio faith.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 17 is our daily practice; 18 the sunrise prayer; 19 the founder's prayer; 20–22 the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (NHC VI,7).

READ FURTHER

· Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (1992).
· The *Prayer of Thanksgiving* in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.

IV. THE FOUR HOLY MYSTERIES

verses 23–26

23 From the hidden books our congregation keeps four holy mysteries: Baptism, Anointing, the Shared Bread, and the Bridal Chamber. ✧

24 A mystery is not a riddle to be solved. It is a door through which the unseen is touched by the seen. ✧

25 In each of them, something of earth is used: water, oil, bread, and the joining of two hands; and through each of them, something of heaven is given. ✧

26 They do not belong to the leaders of the congregation. They belong to the One, and are given to all who come in faith. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Our congregation keeps four holy mysteries (sacraments), drawn from the *Gospel of Philip*: Baptism, Anointing, the Shared Bread, and the Bridal Chamber. A mystery “is not a riddle to be solved. It is a door through which the unseen is touched by the seen.” Each uses something of earth (water, oil, bread, joined hands) and gives something of heaven. They don’t belong to leaders; they belong to the One and are given to all who come in faith.

KEY WORDS

Sacrament / mystery: a holy act in which earthly things carry heavenly grace.

Gospel of Philip: a Valentinian collection of teachings on the sacraments.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 23 is the founder’s decision on our four holy mysteries; the *Gospel of Philip* names five (baptism, chrism, eucharist, redemption, bridal chamber).

READ FURTHER

- Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (1963): a beautiful book on sacraments as windows into heaven.
- The *Gospel of Philip* in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.

V. BAPTISM

verses 27–33

27 The first mystery is Baptism: the washing in living water. ✧

28 Jesus said: Unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God. +

29 In baptism the old garments of forgetting are laid down, and the soul is clothed in light, and begins again. ✧

30 The Mandaean, the oldest living people of the Gnostic way, still baptise in flowing rivers, which they call living water, dressed in white. ✧

31 So we too prefer living water: a river, a spring, the sea; or water poured, if no river is near. ✧

32 Whoever comes to be baptised comes freely, by their own will, when their heart is ready. ✧

33 And when they rise from the water, let the congregation receive them with joy, as a family receives a child coming home. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Baptism is washing in living water. Jesus said one must be born of water and Spirit to enter God’s kingdom. In baptism the soul lays down the old garments of forgetting, is clothed in light, and begins again. The Mandaean, the oldest living Gnostic community, still baptise in flowing rivers dressed in white. So we prefer “living water” (river, spring, sea), or poured water if none is near. People come to baptism freely, by their own will, when their heart is ready, and rising from the water they’re welcomed with joy, “as a family receives a child coming home.”

WHO’S WHO

The Mandaean: an ancient Gnostic people of southern Iraq and Iran (now spread worldwide) who honour John the Baptist and baptise often in flowing water.

KEY WORDS

Living water: flowing water (rivers, springs), seen as alive and holy.

Masbuta: the Mandaean baptism.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 28 is John 3:5; 29 recalls the Five Seals (Chapter 11); 30 Mandaean practice.

READ FURTHER

- Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Mandaeans: Ancient Texts and Modern People* (2002).
- John 3.

VI. ANOINTING

verses 34–40

34 The second mystery is the Anointing, the holy chrism of oil. ✧

35 The oil of the olive is pressed from fruit that ripened in the Sun; it is sunlight made into healing. ✧

36 The Gospel of Philip says that whoever is anointed has everything: the resurrection, the light, the cross, and the holy Spirit. +

37 You have anointed my head with oil; and Your cup cheers me like the best wine. +

38 Kings were anointed for their thrones; and in this mystery every child of light is anointed for their calling. ✧

39 And the disciples of the Saviour anointed many who were sick with oil, and they were healed. +

40 So we anoint the newly baptised, the one beginning a calling, and the one who is sick, and we pray over them. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The second mystery is anointing with holy oil (chrism). Olive oil is pressed from fruit ripened in the Sun, “sunlight made into healing.” The *Gospel of Philip* says whoever is anointed has everything: resurrection, light, the cross, and the holy Spirit. The Psalm says, “You have anointed my head with oil; and Your cup cheers me like the best wine.” Kings were anointed for their thrones; in this mystery every child of light is anointed for their calling. Jesus’ disciples anointed the sick, and they were healed. So we anoint the newly baptised, those beginning a calling, and the sick, and pray over them.

KEY WORDS

Chrism: holy anointing oil; the root of the word “Christ.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 35 is our Helio teaching (Chapter 5); 36 the *Gospel of Philip*; 37 Psalm 22:5; 38 Chapters 9 and 15; 39 Mark 6:13.

READ FURTHER

- Psalm 22.

VII. THE SHARED BREAD

verses 41–47

41 The third mystery is the Shared Bread, the holy meal of the congregation. ✧

42 On the night before he gave himself, the Saviour took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to his friends, and said: Do this in remembrance of me. +

43 And after he rose, two of his disciples walked with him on the road to Emmaus without knowing him; and he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. +

44 The Gospel of Philip says the cup of prayer holds wine and water, and is filled with the holy Spirit. +

45 An ancient prayer of the first Christians says: as this bread was once scattered as grain upon the hills, and was gathered together and

IN PLAIN WORDS

The third mystery is the holy meal of bread and cup. The night before he gave himself, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said “Do this in remembrance of me.” After rising, he walked with two disciples to Emmaus unrecognised, and was known to them “in the breaking of the bread.” The *Gospel of Philip* says the cup of prayer holds wine and water and is filled with the Spirit. An early Christian prayer says that as grain scattered on the hills became one loaf, so may God’s people be gathered from the ends of the earth. So sharing bread, we remember the Saviour and become one, and we hope one day to share bread grown in our own fields and baked by our own hands.

became one, so let your people be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. †

46 So when we share the bread, we remember the Saviour, and we become one. ✧

47 And may the day come when the bread on our table is grown in our own fields, baked by our own hands, and shared with all who hunger. ✧

KEY WORDS

Eucharist: Greek for “thanksgiving,” the holy meal of bread and cup.

Didache: “The Teaching,” a very early Christian handbook (late 1st century).

Emmaus: a village near Jerusalem.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 42 is Luke 22:19; 43 Luke 24:30–35; 44 the *Gospel of Philip*; 45 the *Didache* 9:4; 47 the founder’s Clean Food Vision.

READ FURTHER

- Luke 24.
- *The Didache* (short, free online).

VIII. THE BRIDAL CHAMBER

verses 48–55

48 The fourth mystery is the Bridal Chamber: the holy union of a man and a woman before God. ✧

49 In it the pattern of the Mother-Father is seen again on the earth: two made one, and from their oneness, new life. ✧

50 The Gospel of Philip says: whoever becomes a child of the bridal chamber will receive the light. †

51 And it speaks of a hidden marriage beyond the marriage of the body: the union of the soul with its heavenly partner, the image joined to its angel. †

52 So the Bridal Chamber is open to all in its hidden meaning; for every soul, married or not, is called to be joined to the Light. ✧

53 And when two come to be joined in marriage, let them speak the old vow of Ruth: Where you go, I will go; where you stay, I will stay; your people shall be my people. †

54 And let them say with the Song: My kinsman is mine, and I am his. †

55 And let the congregation surround them, and bless them, and help them keep their vow through every season. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The fourth mystery is the holy union of a man and a woman before God, where the pattern of the Mother-Father appears again on earth: two made one, and from them new life (Chapter 2). The *Gospel of Philip* says whoever becomes “a child of the bridal chamber” receives the light, and speaks of a hidden marriage beyond the body: the soul joined to its heavenly partner, “the image joined to its angel.” So in its hidden meaning the Bridal Chamber is open to everyone, married or not, “called to be joined to the Light.” For weddings the book offers Ruth’s vow (“Where you go, I will go... your people shall be my people”) and the Song’s “My kinsman is mine, and I am his,” and calls the congregation to bless couples and help them keep their vows.

WHO’S WHO

Ruth: a Moabite woman whose loyalty to her mother-in-law Naomi is told in the Book of Ruth; she became an ancestor of King David.

KEY WORDS

Bridal Chamber: the highest Valentinian mystery; for us, holy marriage and the soul’s union with the Light.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 49 recalls Chapter 2; 50–51 the *Gospel of Philip*; 53 Ruth 1:16; 54 Song of Songs 2:16.

READ FURTHER

- The Book of Ruth (four short chapters).
- Jean-Yves Leloup, *The Gospel of Philip* (2004), on the Bridal Chamber.

IX. THE DAYS OF LIGHT

verses 56–63

56 The congregation keeps time by the light. ✧
57 Each week, the day of the Sun is our day of gathering and of rest. ✧
58 Each morning, the rising Sun calls us to prayer. ✧
59 At the winter turning, when the nights are longest and the light begins to return, we celebrate the coming of the Light into the world. ✧
✱
60 At the spring turning, when day and night are equal and the light grows, we celebrate the rising of the King with the Sun. ✧ ✱
61 At the summer turning, when the light is fullest, we give thanks for the harvest and the fullness of the One. ✧ ✱
62 At the autumn turning, when day and night are equal again and the light begins to rest, we give thanks for what has been gathered, and prepare for the long nights in faith. ✧ ✱
63 So the year itself becomes a prayer, turning with the light. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

“The congregation keeps time by the light.” Each week, the day of the Sun is for gathering and rest; each morning, the rising Sun calls us to prayer. Four great turnings of the year are kept as days of light: at the winter solstice (longest night) we celebrate the Light coming into the world; at the spring equinox we celebrate the King rising with the Sun; at the summer solstice (fullest light) we give thanks for harvest and the fullness of the One; at the autumn equinox we give thanks for what’s been gathered and prepare in faith for the long nights. “So the year itself becomes a prayer.”

KEY WORDS

Solstice: the longest (summer) or shortest (winter) day of the year.

Equinox: when day and night are equal (spring and autumn).

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 59–62 follow the solstices and equinoxes (around 21 December, 20 March, 21 June, and 22 September in the northern hemisphere), drawn from the practice ideas of our Helio faith.

READ FURTHER

· Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun* (1996): the history of the seasonal festivals (scholarly).

X. CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

verses 64–70

64 A congregation is known by how it loves. ✧
65 By this all will know that you are my disciples: if you love one another. +
66 Pure and holy faith is this: to look after the orphans and the widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. +
67 So we visit the sick, we feed the hungry, we sit with the grieving, and we welcome the stranger. ✧
68 Do not forget to welcome strangers; for by doing so, some have welcomed angels without knowing it. +
69 What is given to the congregation is given freely, never by pressure; and every gift is kept in the open, with honesty, and used for the good of all. ✧
70 Let no one in our family go hungry while another has bread to share. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

“A congregation is known by how it loves.” Jesus said everyone will know his disciples by their love. James defines pure faith as caring for orphans and widows. So we visit the sick, feed the hungry, sit with the grieving, and welcome strangers, remembering that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Gifts to the congregation are always free, never pressured, kept openly and honestly, and used for everyone’s good. “Let no one in our family go hungry while another has bread to share.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 65 is John 13:35; 66 James 1:27; 68 Hebrews 13:2; 69 our giving and donations policy.

READ FURTHER

· James 1–2.
· Hebrews 13.

XI. LEADERS WHO SERVE

verses 71–76

71 Those who lead the congregation are shepherds, not owners. ✧

72 Feed the flock that is among you, willingly and not for gain; not ruling over those in your care, but being a pattern to the flock. †

73 The greatest among you must be the servant of all, as the King of Kings washed the feet of his friends. ✧

74 No leader may own the light of another, nor lay upon anyone a burden that God did not give. ✧

75 Leaders are to be honest in teaching, open in money, and humble in heart; and they too answer to the congregation and to God. ✧

76 For we do not gather to control, but to enlighten; not to bind, but to set free. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Leaders are “shepherds, not owners.” Peter told leaders to care for the flock willingly, not for gain, “not ruling over those in your care, but being a pattern to the flock.” The greatest must be servant of all, as the King of Kings washed his friends’ feet. No leader may own another’s light or add burdens God didn’t give. Leaders must be honest in teaching, open with money, humble in heart, and answerable to the congregation and God. “We do not gather to control, but to enlighten; not to bind, but to set free.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 72 is 1 Peter 5:2–3; 73 recalls Chapter 9; 74 recalls Chapter 8; 75 our core value of integrity.

READ FURTHER

- 1 Peter 5.
- Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus* (1989).

XII. AN OPEN DOOR AND THE BLESSING

verses 77–87

77 The door of the congregation is open. ✧

78 Whoever seeks the One may come in: of any people, of any past, of any faith or of none. ✧

79 We respect the beliefs of others, and we ask no one to leave behind the light they already carry. ✧

80 Let the children be welcomed, and guarded, and taught with love; for they are the light of tomorrow. ✧

81 And let the one who comes in weary find rest, and the one who comes in lost find a family. ✧

82 For the congregation is the household of the One on the earth, and in the household of the One, there is room for all. ✧

83 Blessed be Monad, who gathers the scattered light into one. ✧

84 Blessed be the water, the oil, the bread, and the vow. ✧

85 Blessed be every hand that welcomes, and every heart that serves. ✧

86 Be with us, God, for we are with You, and You with us. ✧

87 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The door is open: anyone seeking the One may come, of any people, past, faith, or none. We respect others’ beliefs and ask no one to give up the light they already carry. Children are welcomed, guarded, and taught with love. The weary find rest, the lost find family: “in the household of the One, there is room for all.” The Blessing praises Monad who gathers the scattered light, the water, oil, bread, and vow, every welcoming hand and serving heart, and closes with the founder’s prayer and our motto.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 79 is the founder’s teaching (respect one another’s beliefs); 86 the founder’s prayer.

READ FURTHER

- Luke 14:15–24 (the great banquet with an open invitation).

THE RETURN

CHAPTER 17

I. WHERE WE ARE GOING

verses 1–7

1 Every river remembers the sea. ✧

2 It runs through mountains and valleys, it is held in lakes and turned by stones; but it never forgets where it is going. ✧

3 So it is with the soul. It came from the Light, and it is returning to the Light. ✧

4 The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. +

5 The disciples asked Jesus: Tell us how our end will come. And he said: Have you found the beginning, that you ask about the end? For where the beginning is, there the end will be. +

6 Blessed is the one who stands at the beginning; that one will know the end, and will not taste death. +

7 The beginning is Monad, and the end is Monad; and the whole journey between is held in the hands of the One. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The last chapter is about going home. “Every river remembers the sea”: however it winds, it never forgets where it’s going; so the soul came from the Light and is returning to it. Ecclesiastes says the dust returns to the earth and the spirit to God who gave it. When the disciples asked Jesus how their end would come, he answered (in the *Gospel of Thomas*) that the end will be where the beginning is; whoever stands at the beginning will know the end and not taste death. “The beginning is Monad, and the end is Monad,” and the whole journey between is held in God’s hands.

KEY WORDS

The Return: the soul’s journey back to God, the great theme of Gnostic teaching.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 4 is Ecclesiastes 12:7; 5–6 *Gospel of Thomas* 18.

READ FURTHER

· Ecclesiastes 12.

II. STRANGERS ON THE EARTH

verses 8–13

8 The faithful of old confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, seeking a homeland. +

9 Have you ever felt like a stranger here, as though you belonged to somewhere you could not name? ✧

10 That feeling is not a mistake. It is the memory of home. ✧

11 Rumi, the poet of the Persian lands, began his great book with a reed flute, cut from its reed bed; and every song it plays is a cry of longing to return to where it grew. ✧

12 Every soul is that reed, and every true longing is that song. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Hebrews says the faithful of old saw themselves as strangers and pilgrims on earth, seeking a homeland. Have you ever felt like a stranger here, as if you belonged somewhere you can’t name? “That feeling is not a mistake. It is the memory of home.” Rumi opens his great poem with a reed flute cut from its reed bed, whose every song is a cry of longing to return. “Every soul is that reed.” So don’t be ashamed of your longing: it’s the compass God placed in you, and it always points home.

WHO’S WHO

Rumi: see Chapter 9.

13 Do not be ashamed of your longing. It is the compass the One placed within you, and it always points home. ✧

KEY WORDS

Masnavi: Rumi's great spiritual poem, often called "the Quran in Persian."

Pilgrim: a traveller on a holy journey.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 8 is Hebrews 11:13–14; 11 Rumi, *Masnavi*, Book I, "The Song of the Reed."

READ FURTHER

- Coleman Barks, *The Essential Rumi* (1995).
- Hebrews 11.

III. THE LETTER FROM HOME

verses 14–20

14 There is an old hymn of a prince who went down into a far country, and forgot who he was, and fell asleep. +

15 And his father and mother, the king and the queen of the East, wrote him a letter, and sealed it with the royal hand. +

16 And the letter rose up and flew like an eagle, and came down beside him, and became a voice. +

17 And the voice said: Wake up, and rise from your sleep. Remember that you are the child of kings. Remember the pearl you were sent to find. Remember your robe of glory. +

18 And at the sound of the voice, he woke. +

19 Every holy word you have ever heard is a page of that letter. Every sunrise is its seal. Every act of love is its voice. ✧

20 Wake, child of the King. The letter has reached you. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The *Hymn of the Pearl* tells of a prince of the East sent to Egypt to fetch a pearl guarded by a serpent; there he forgot who he was and fell asleep. His royal parents wrote him a letter, which flew like an eagle, landed beside him, and became a voice: "Wake up... remember that you are the child of kings... remember the pearl... remember your robe of glory." At the voice, he woke. Our congregation says every holy word you've heard is a page of that letter, every sunrise its seal, every act of love its voice. "Wake, child of the King. The letter has reached you."

KEY WORDS

Hymn of the Pearl: a Syriac poem in the *Acts of Thomas* (3rd century), loved by Gnostics as the story of the soul.

Robe of glory: the soul's heavenly self, waiting for it at home.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 14–18 render the *Hymn of the Pearl* (G. R. S. Mead's 1908 translation is in the public domain).

READ FURTHER

- G. R. S. Mead, *The Hymn of the Robe of Glory* (1908; free online).
- Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, chapter on the Hymn of the Pearl.

IV. THE WAY HOME

verses 21–28

21 And Jesus told of a son who asked for his inheritance and went away to a far country, and spent it all, until he was feeding pigs and longing to eat what they ate. +

22 And when he came to himself, he said: I will rise, and go home. +

23 He had rehearsed his words of shame all the long road back. +

IN PLAIN WORDS

Jesus' parable of the prodigal son: a son took his inheritance, wasted it in a far country, and ended feeding pigs and hungry for their food. "When he came to himself" he decided to go home, rehearsing an apology all the way. But while he was still far off, his father saw him, was filled with compassion, ran to him, embraced and kissed him, and called for the best robe, a ring, shoes, and a feast: "this child of mine was dead and is alive again; was lost and is found." The book's lesson: the One "does not wait

24 But while he was still far off, his father saw him, and was filled with compassion, and ran to him, and threw his arms around him, and kissed him. †

25 He did not wait at the door with his arms folded. He ran. ✧

26 And he called for the best robe, and a ring for his hand, and shoes for his feet, and a feast; for, he said, this child of mine was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found. †

27 Hear this, all who think they have wandered too far: the One does not wait with folded arms. The One runs. ✧

28 The moment you turn toward home, home is already running toward you. ✧

with folded arms. The One runs." "The moment you turn toward home, home is already running toward you."

KEY WORDS

Prodigal: wastefully extravagant.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 21–26 are Luke 15:11–24.

READ FURTHER

- Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1992).
- Luke 15.

V. THE RETURN BEGINS NOW

verses 29–35

29 Do not think the return waits only at the end of your days. ✧

30 The Gospel of Philip says: those who say they will die first and then rise are mistaken; if they do not receive the resurrection while they live, they will receive nothing when they die. †

31 And the Treatise on the Resurrection says: the resurrection is the revealing of what is. Flee from divisions and chains, and already you have the resurrection. †

32 Every time you choose love over fear, you are rising. ✧

33 Every time you remember who you are, you are going home. ✧

34 Every time you forgive, a chain falls from your soul. ✧

35 So the return is not only a door at the end of the road. It is the road itself, walked in the light. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The return isn't only at the end of life. The *Gospel of Philip* says those who think they'll die first and then rise are mistaken; you must receive the resurrection while you live. The *Treatise on the Resurrection* calls resurrection "the revealing of what is": flee divisions and chains and you already have it. So every time you choose love over fear, you are rising; every time you remember who you are, you're going home; every time you forgive, a chain falls. "The return... is the road itself, walked in the light."

KEY WORDS

Treatise on the Resurrection (Letter to Rheginos): a short Valentinian letter on resurrection, found at Nag Hammadi.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 30 is the *Gospel of Philip*; 31 the *Treatise on the Resurrection* (NHC I,4).

READ FURTHER

- Bentley Layton and David Brakke, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (the *Treatise on the Resurrection*).

VI. THE ASCENT

verses 36–45

36 And when the day comes for the soul to leave the body, it rises. †

37 It passes up through the heavens, and the Rulers cannot hold it, for it knows its own name, and it knows the way. †

38 Jesus said: If they ask you, Where did you come from? say: We came from the light, the place where the light came into being by itself. †

IN PLAIN WORDS

When the soul leaves the body, it rises through the heavens, and the Rulers can't hold it, because it knows its own name and the way. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus teaches the answers: "Where did you come from?" "We came from the light." "Who are you?" "We are its children, the chosen of the living One." "What is the sign of the One within you?" "Movement and rest." The soul goes up into the "Treasury of Light," where every scattered spark is gathered. And at the end of the *Hymn of the Pearl*, the prince

39 If they ask you, Who are you? say: We are its children, the chosen of the living One. +

40 If they ask you, What is the sign of the One within you? say: It is movement, and it is rest. +

41 And the soul goes up into the Treasury of Light, the storehouse where every scattered spark is gathered in. +

42 And there, the old hymn says, the prince met his robe of glory, which he had left behind long ago. +

43 And as he looked upon it, he saw that it was like a mirror, and in it he saw himself whole. +

44 He said: I saw it all in all of me, and I saw all of me in it; we were two, and yet we were one, in one likeness. +

45 This is the return: to meet at last the self you were always meant to be, and to find that it was waiting for you all along. ✧

meets his robe of glory, which is like a mirror: he sees himself whole in it, "two, and yet one." "This is the return: to meet at last the self you were always meant to be, and to find that it was waiting for you all along."

KEY WORDS

Treasury of Light: the highest realm of light in *Pistis Sophia*.

Heavenly double: the soul's true, heavenly self (the "robe," the "twin," the "angel").

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 38–40 are *Gospel of Thomas* 50; 41 *Pistis Sophia*; 42–44 the *Hymn of the Pearl*; 37 recalls Chapter 7.

READ FURTHER

· G. R. S. Mead, *Pistis Sophia* (free online).

VII. DEATH IS NOT THE END

verses 46–54

46 Behold, I tell you a mystery: the dead shall rise incorruptible, and we shall be changed; for this corruptible must put on incorruption. +

47 O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? +

48 For we know that if our earthly house is dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven. +

49 The seekers of science have found that in all the universe, nothing that is truly there is ever destroyed; it is only changed from one form into another. *

50 The light of a star can travel for thousands of years after the star itself has gone; and still it shines on, and reaches the eyes of those who look up. *

51 So a life lived in love keeps shining, long after the one who lived it has gone home. ✧

52 Look at the caterpillar: it wraps itself in a shell, and inside, it is undone and made new; and it comes out with wings. *

53 And the seekers have found that a moth can remember what it learned as a caterpillar, even after all that change. *

54 So what you truly are passes through the change, and is not lost. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Paul: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: the dead shall rise incorruptible, and we shall be changed... O death, where is your sting?" And: if our earthly "tent" is taken down, we have an eternal house from God. Science offers pictures: in the universe nothing truly there is ever destroyed, only changed in form; starlight keeps traveling for thousands of years after its star has gone, so "a life lived in love keeps shining." A caterpillar dissolves inside its chrysalis and emerges with wings, and scientists have found a moth can remember what it learned as a caterpillar. "So what you truly are passes through the change, and is not lost."

KEY WORDS

Conservation of energy: the law of physics that energy is never destroyed, only changed.

Metamorphosis: the transformation of a caterpillar into a moth or butterfly.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verses 46–47 are 1 Corinthians 15:51–53, 55; 48 2 Corinthians 5:1; 49 physics; 50 astronomy; 52–53 biology (Blackiston and colleagues, 2008).

READ FURTHER

· 1 Corinthians 15.

· C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (1945), an imaginative story about heaven.

VIII. FOR THOSE WHO GRIEVE

verses 55–60

55 And to you who have laid someone you love in the earth: hear these words. ♦

56 God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain; for the old things have passed away. †

57 Jesus said: Do not let your hearts be troubled. In the house of the One there are many dwelling places; I go to prepare a place for you. †

58 Your grief is the shape of your love; do not be ashamed of it. ♦

59 The ones you have lost are not lost to God. They have gone ahead of you on the road home. ♦

60 And the light they gave you is still in you; carry it, and let it shine, and they shine through you. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

To anyone who has buried someone they love: God will wipe every tear away; there will be no more death, sorrow, or pain. Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. In the house of the One there are many dwelling places; I go to prepare a place for you.” “Your grief is the shape of your love; do not be ashamed of it.” Those you’ve lost aren’t lost to God; they’ve gone ahead on the road home. The light they gave you is still in you: carry it, and they shine through you.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 56 is Revelation 21:4; 57 John 14:1–2 (rendered without gendered words for God).

READ FURTHER

- C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (1961).
- John 14.

IX. ONE RETURN ACROSS THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD

verses 61–67

61 Every people under heaven has known that the soul is on its way home. ♦

62 When the faithful of Islam hear of a death, they say: Surely we belong to God, and to God we are returning. ♦

63 The sages of India say: as the rivers flowing into the sea lose their names and forms and become the sea, so the one who knows, set free from name and form, goes into the shining One beyond all. ♦

64 The people of Egypt called their book of the soul’s journey the Book of Coming Forth by Day; for they believed the soul would go out into the light. ♦

65 The Buddha, at the end of his life, said to his friends: all things that are made will pass away; walk on with diligence. ♦

66 The Mandaean pray for the soul of the one who has died, that it may rise past every gate and return safely to the World of Light. ♦

67 Many peoples, one hope: we came from the Light, and we are going home. ♦

IN PLAIN WORDS

Every people knows the soul is going home. When Muslims hear of a death they say, “Surely we belong to God, and to God we are returning.” The Mundaka Upanishad says that as rivers flowing into the sea lose their names and become the sea, the knower, freed from name and form, goes into the shining One. The Egyptians called their book of the soul’s journey “the Book of Coming Forth by Day.” The Buddha’s last words: “All things that are made will pass away; walk on with diligence.” The Mandaean pray for the dead that the soul may rise past every gate and return safely to the World of Light. “We came from the Light, and we are going home.”

KEY WORDS

Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji’un: Arabic, “Surely we belong to God, and to God we return.”

Book of Coming Forth by Day: the Egyptian name of the “Book of the Dead.”

Masiqta: the Mandaean rite for the soul’s ascent.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 62 is Quran 2:156; 63 *Mundaka Upanishad* 3.2.8; 64 the Egyptian *Book of Coming Forth by Day*; 65 the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*; 66 the Mandaean *masiqta*.

READ FURTHER

- Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*.
- Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Mandaean*.

X. THE RETURN OF ALL THINGS

verses 68–74

68 And not only the soul returns. In the end, all things return. †

69 The wise of old spoke of the restoration of all things: every scattered spark gathered home, every wound healed, every lost thing found. †

70 Wisdom, who fell for love, will be lifted fully into the Fullness, joined at last to the Saviour, and the separation will be healed. †

71 The rule of the Rulers will end, and the light they held will be set free. †

72 And the One who sits upon the throne said: Behold, I make all things new. †

73 And God will be all in all. †

74 Then the Fullness will be full indeed; and the One who brought forth all things will gather all things home. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Not only souls but all things return. Gnostic teachers spoke of the “restoration of all things”: every spark gathered home, every wound healed, every lost thing found. Wisdom, who fell for love, will be lifted fully into the Fullness and joined to the Saviour; the Rulers’ reign will end and their stolen light be freed. In Revelation, the One on the throne says, “Behold, I make all things new,” and Paul says God will be “all in all.” Then the Fullness will truly be full, and the One will gather all things home.

KEY WORDS

Apokatastasis: Greek for “restoration,” the return of all things to God.

BEHIND THE VERSES

Verse 69 is Valentinian teaching and Acts 3:21; 70 recalls Chapter 4; 71 Chapter 7; 72 Revelation 21:5; 73 1 Corinthians 15:28.

READ FURTHER

- Revelation 21–22.
- Ilaria Ramelli, *A Larger Hope? Universal Salvation from Christian Beginnings to Julian of Norwich* (2019) (scholarly).

XI. LIVING TOWARD HOME

verses 75–80

75 Until that day, how shall we live? ✧

76 Live as one who is going home: lightly, gratefully, and with your face toward the Light. ✧

77 Hold the things of this world with an open hand, for you cannot carry them through the gate; but carry love, for love goes with you. ✧

78 Make peace while it is still day; say the loving word while there is time; give the gift while your hand is warm. ✧

79 And help others find the road. For no one goes home alone; we carry one another on the road. ✧

80 And when your own day comes, go peacefully, as a child who has heard their name called from the door at evening, and runs home to the light of the house. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

Until then, live as someone going home: lightly, gratefully, facing the Light. Hold worldly things with an open hand (you can’t carry them through the gate), but carry love, which goes with you. Make peace while it’s still day; say the loving word while there’s time; give while your hand is warm. Help others find the road, “for no one goes home alone; we carry one another on the road.” And when your day comes, go peacefully, “as a child who has heard their name called from the door at evening, and runs home to the light of the house.”

READ FURTHER

- Henri Nouwen, *Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring* (1994).

XII. THE BENEDICTION AND THE BLESSING

verses 81–99

81 Hear now the whole truth from Monad, in the fewest words. ✧

82 There is One, beyond all names, the Source of all that is. ✧

83 From the One came the Mother-Father, and in her the pattern of all creation. ✧

84 From her came the Fullness, the house of the Eternal Ones, where nothing is missing. ✧

85 Wisdom fell from the Fullness for love, and her light was scattered into us; and she is the Moon who keeps watch in the night. ✧

86 The Sun is the nearest image of the One, the great Giver; and every home is lit by the love of father and mother. ✧

87 The Rulers bind the soul with forgetting, but they cannot keep the light. ✧

88 The kingdom of God is within you. ✧

89 Jesus Christ is King of Kings, who obeyed in love, and revealed the hidden One. ✧

90 Heal the temple. Walk both paths with humility. Read the two books of God. Tend the fourteen lights. ✧

91 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. Answer your calling. Gather with the family of God. ✧

92 And return home to the Light, from which you came. ✧

93 This is the truth from Monad. ✧

94 Blessed be Monad, the beginning and the end, the Source and the Home. ✧

95 Blessed be every soul on the road, and every hand that helps another along the way. ✧

96 Blessed be the day when all the light comes home. ✧

97 Let the light within guide every thought, word, and deed, until we are home. ✧

98 Think in light. Speak in truth. Act in love. ✧

99 Amen. ✧

IN PLAIN WORDS

The book ends with “the whole truth from Monad, in the fewest words,” a summary of all seventeen chapters: There is One beyond all names (Chapter 1). From the One came the Mother-Father, the pattern of creation (2), and the Fullness where nothing is missing (3). Wisdom fell for love, her light scattered into us, and she is the Moon watching over the night (4). The Sun is the nearest image of the One; the father is the sun of his family, the mother the earth of the living (5–6). The Rulers bind with forgetting but can’t keep the light (7). The kingdom of God is within you (8). Jesus Christ is King of Kings, who obeyed in love and revealed the hidden One (9). Heal the temple; walk both paths humbly; read God’s two books; tend the fourteen lights (10–13). Think in light, speak in truth, act in love; answer your calling; gather with God’s family (14–16). And return home to the Light (17). “This is the truth from Monad.” The final Blessing praises Monad, the beginning and the end, the Source and the Home, and closes with the motto and “Amen.”

KEY WORDS

Benediction: a closing blessing.

Amen: Hebrew for “so be it” or “truly.”

BEHIND THE VERSES

Each verse of the Benediction points to a chapter of the book; verse 98 is our motto, the closing benediction.

READ FURTHER

· Begin again at the Opening of *Truth from Monad*, and read it through slowly with this companion beside you.

WHO'S WHO, A TO Z

- Abraham:** the father of faith for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. (Ch. 13)
- Achamoth:** the “lower Wisdom” in Valentinian teaching; the name comes from the Hebrew *Hokhmah*. (Ch. 4)
- Adam and Eve:** the first man and woman in Genesis; the *Gospel of Philip* speaks of their separation. (Ch. 2)
- Akhenaten:** a pharaoh of Egypt (14th century BC) who worshipped the Aten, the disk of the Sun, and wrote the *Great Hymn to the Aten*. (Ch. 5)
- Allogenes:** “the Stranger,” the visionary in the book named after him. (Ch. 11)
- Amaterasu:** the Sun goddess of Japan’s Shinto faith. (Ch. 5)
- Apophis (Apep):** the serpent enemy of the Sun god Ra in Egyptian belief. (Ch. 7)
- The Architect:** our congregation’s name for God as the designer and builder of all creation. (Ch. 2)
- Ardhanarishvara:** “the form that is half woman,” the image of Shiva and Shakti in one body. (Ch. 2)
- Aristophanes:** a Greek comic poet; in Plato’s dialogue *Symposium* he tells the story of the divided humans. (Ch. 2)
- Athanasius of Alexandria (about 296–373):** bishop of Alexandria. (Ch. 11)
- Atum:** the creator god of Heliopolis in Egypt, who brought forth Shu (air) and Tefnut (moisture). (Ch. 2)
- Augustine of Hippo (354–430):** an African bishop and writer; his famous line “our heart is restless until it rests in You” echoes this section. (Ch. 3)
- Barbelo:** the first emanation of the One in Sethian Gnostic teaching, the “Mother-Father.” See Chapter 2. (Ch. 1)
- Brother Lawrence (about 1614–1691):** a lay brother and cook in a Carmelite monastery in Paris. (Ch. 15)
- The Buddha:** see Chapter 7. Sujata was the young woman who offered him rice and milk. (Ch. 10)
- The Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama, about 5th century BC):** the founder of Buddhism. (Ch. 7)
- Caiaphas:** the Jewish high priest (AD 18–36) who handed Jesus to the Romans. (Ch. 9)
- Cain and Abel:** the first sons of Adam and Eve (Genesis 4). (Ch. 13)
- Clement of Alexandria (about 150–215):** a Christian teacher who preserved many Valentinian sayings. (Ch. 8)
- Confucius (551–479 BC):** the great teacher of China; *The Great Learning* comes from his school. (Ch. 6)
- Daniel:** a young Jewish nobleman taken to Babylon (6th century BC), famed for faith and wisdom. (Ch. 10)
- David:** Israel’s greatest king (about 1000 BC), from whose line the Messiah was promised. (Ch. 9)
- Delphi:** the most famous temple and oracle of ancient Greece. (Ch. 8)
- Eldad and Medad:** two elders who prophesied in the camp of Israel (Numbers 11). (Ch. 11)
- Eleleth:** one of the four great Lights (Chapter 3), who appears to Norea. (Ch. 11)
- Esther:** a Jewish queen of Persia who risked her life to save her people. (Ch. 15)
- Flora:** a Christian woman to whom Ptolemy wrote, explaining the Law of Moses. (Ch. 7)
- George Fox (1624–1691):** founder of the Religious Society of Friends (the Quakers) in England. (Ch. 8)
- Georges Lemaître (1894–1966):** a Belgian priest and astronomer who proposed the “primeval atom,” the beginning of the universe. (Ch. 12)
- Harmozel, Oroiael, Daveithai, Eleleth:** the Four Luminaries (great Lights) of Sethian teaching. (Ch. 3)
- The heavenly Adam (Pigeradamas or Geradamas):** the perfect, heavenly pattern of humanity. (Ch. 3)
- Heracleon:** a Valentinian teacher whose commentary on John is quoted by Origen. (Ch. 11)
- Hermes Trismegistus:** the legendary teacher to whom the Hermetic writings (and the Emerald Tablet) are attributed; the writings come from Egypt in the early centuries AD. (Ch. 1)
- Hesiod (about 700 BC):** an early Greek poet; his story is often called “Pandora’s box.” (Ch. 13)
- Hillel and Shammai:** two great Jewish teachers of the first century BC, founders of rival schools. (Ch. 11)
- Iblis:** the one who refused to bow to Adam in the Quran. (Ch. 7)

Ibn al-Haytham (about 965–1040): an Arab scientist in Cairo, a founder of optics and of the experimental method. (Ch. 12)

The Inca: the people of the great Andean empire of South America, who kept the festival Inti Raymi. (Ch. 5)

Indra: a Hindu god of the heavens; “Indra’s net” is a Buddhist picture of how all things reflect one another. (Ch. 3)

The Invisible Spirit: the Sethian name for the One (Monad). (Ch. 2)

Irenaeus of Lyon: a bishop who wrote *Against Heresies* (about AD 180), our main early source for the Valentinian system. (Ch. 3)

Irenaeus of Lyon (about 130–202): bishop in Gaul (France), author of *Against Heresies*. (Ch. 11)

Isa: the Quran’s name for Jesus. (Ch. 9)

Isaac Luria (1534–1572): a great Jewish mystic of Safed, in the land of Israel. (Ch. 8)

Isaac Newton (1643–1727): the English scientist who showed with a prism that white light contains all colours. (Ch. 3)

Isis and Osiris: Egyptian goddess and god; Isis restored her murdered husband Osiris. (Ch. 4)

Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207–1273): the great Sufi poet, born in Balkh and living in Konya (in today’s Turkey). (Ch. 9)

James: the brother of Jesus; in the *First Apocalypse of James*, Jesus teaches him answers for the soul’s journey. (Ch. 7)

Jeremiah: a prophet of Judah (about 626–586 BC), called as a young man. (Ch. 15)

Jesus Christ: the King of Kings, the Anointed of God, the Light of the world. (Ch. 9)

Joel: a prophet of Israel. (Ch. 15)

Johannes Kepler (1571–1630): the German astronomer who discovered the laws of planetary motion. (Ch. 12)

John: one of Jesus’ twelve disciples; in the *Secret Book of John* the risen Saviour appears to him on a mountain and reveals the hidden mysteries. (Ch. 1)

John the Baptist: the prophet who baptised Jesus in the Jordan. (Ch. 9)

Joshua: Moses’ successor who led Israel into the promised land. (Ch. 13)

Justin Martyr (about 100–165): an early Christian teacher who described Christians gathering on “the day of the Sun.” (Ch. 5)

Juvenal (about AD 55–130): a Roman poet. (Ch. 10)

The Kabbalists: Jewish mystics whose teaching is called Kabbalah (“receiving”). (Ch. 2)

Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931): a Lebanese-American poet and artist, author of *The Prophet*. (Ch. 15)

Karl von Frisch (1886–1982): the Austrian scientist who decoded the honeybee’s dance. (Ch. 12)

Krishna: the divine teacher of the *Bhagavad Gita*. (Ch. 15)

Krishna and Arjuna: the divine teacher and the warrior-student of the *Bhagavad Gita*. (Ch. 13)

The Lakota: a Native American people of the Great Plains. (Ch. 6)

Lao Tzu: see Chapter 1. (Ch. 13)

Lao Tzu (the “old teacher of China”): the traditional author of the *Tao Te Ching*, the founding book of Taoism (perhaps 6th–4th century BC). (Ch. 1)

Lazarus: Jesus’ friend at whose grave he wept (John 11). (Ch. 9)

Ma’at: the Egyptian principle (and goddess) of truth, balance, and justice. (Ch. 13)

The Magi: priest-astrologers of Persia; Matthew’s Gospel says they followed a star to Bethlehem. (Ch. 9)

Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon, 1138–1204): Jewish philosopher, legal scholar, and physician, born in Córdoba in Al-Andalus (Muslim Spain), later physician in Cairo. (Ch. 10)

Malachi: the last of the Old Testament prophets (5th century BC). (Ch. 5)

The Mandaean: an ancient Gnostic people of southern Iraq and Iran (now spread worldwide) who honour John the Baptist and baptise often in flowing water. (Ch. 16)

Mani (216–274 or 277): a prophet from Babylonia who founded Manichaeism, a religion of light that spread from Rome to China. (Ch. 5)

Mara: the tempter in Buddhist teaching. (Ch. 7)

Mary: the mother of Jesus. (Ch. 15)

Mary Magdalene: a close disciple of Jesus, the first witness of the Resurrection; the *Gospel of Mary* gives her vision of the soul’s ascent. (Ch. 7)

Masada: a mountain fortress by the Dead Sea. (Ch. 13)

Micah, Amos, Isaiah: prophets of Israel in the 8th century BC who spoke for the poor. (Ch. 13)

Monad: the name this book uses for the One God, from the Greek word *monas*, “the one” or “the unit.” See Chapter 1. (Ch. 0)

Moses: the great prophet of Israel who led his people out of Egypt and received the Law; at the burning bush he asked God’s name (Exodus 3). (Ch. 1)

Muhammad Ali al-Samman: the Egyptian farmer who found the Nag Hammadi codices in 1945. (Ch. 11)

Norea: in Sethian books, the daughter of Eve, a heroine who resisted the Rulers. (Ch. 11)

The Parabolani: Christian brotherhoods (best known in Alexandria, 4th–5th centuries) whose name means

- "those who risk their lives"; they cared for the sick and the dead. (Ch. 10)
- The Parsis:** Zoroastrians of India, who keep the faith alive today. (Ch. 14)
- Paul:** the apostle who, in Athens, said "in God we live, and move, and are" (Acts 17:28). (Ch. 1)
- Peter:** the disciple who drew a sword in the garden (named in John 18:10). (Ch. 9)
- Peter, Andrew, James, and John:** fishermen called to be disciples (Matthew 4). (Ch. 15)
- Pistis Sophia:** "Faith-Wisdom," Sophia's name in the book *Pistis Sophia*. (Ch. 4)
- Plato:** see Chapter 5. (Ch. 13)
- Plato (about 428–348 BC):** a great Greek philosopher, student of Socrates. (Ch. 5)
- Plotinus:** see Chapter 1. (Ch. 3)
- Plotinus (about 204–270 AD):** a great Greek philosopher in Rome who taught that everything flows out of "the One" the way light flows out of the Sun. (Ch. 1)
- Pontius Pilate:** the Roman governor of Judea (AD 26–36) who tried and crucified Jesus. (Ch. 9)
- Prajnaparamita:** "the Perfection of Wisdom," honoured as a mother in Mahayana Buddhism. (Ch. 4)
- Protennoia:** "First Thought," the speaker in the book *Trimorphic Protennoia*. (Ch. 2)
- Ptolemy:** a Valentinian teacher in Rome around AD 150–160, whose list of thirty Aeons was recorded by Irenaeus. (Ch. 3)
- Pythagoras:** see Chapter 1. (Ch. 12)
- Pythagoras (about 570–495 BC):** a Greek philosopher and mathematician who founded a community devoted to number, music, and the soul. (Ch. 1)
- Rabbi Meshulam Zusha of Hanipol (died 1800):** a beloved early Hasidic teacher, known for his humility. (Ch. 15)
- The Rulers (Archons):** evil powers of the lower world in Gnostic teaching. See Chapter 7. (Ch. 2)
- Rumi:** see Chapter 9. (Ch. 17)
- Ruth:** a Moabite woman whose loyalty to her mother-in-law Naomi is told in the Book of Ruth; she became an ancestor of King David. (Ch. 16)
- The sages of India:** the teachers of the Upanishads, the deep spiritual writings of Hinduism. (Ch. 1)
- The sages of the Upanishads:** Hindu teachers whose writings are among the oldest spiritual texts in the world. (Ch. 3)
- Samuel:** a prophet and judge of Israel, called as a boy (1 Samuel 3). (Ch. 15)
- Saraswati:** the Hindu goddess of knowledge, music, and speech; also a sacred river. (Ch. 4)
- The Saviour / Christ / Jesus:** the one who comes down to rescue Wisdom (see Chapter 9). (Ch. 4)
- The Self-Begotten (Autogenes):** the Child of Light, the Christ, in Sethian teaching. (Ch. 2)
- Self-Willed (Authades):** the arrogant power whose false light deceived her in *Pistis Sophia*. (Ch. 4)
- Seth:** the third son of Adam and Eve (Genesis 4:25); in Sethian teaching also a heavenly figure and the ancestor of the spiritual people. (Ch. 3)
- The Sethians and Valentinians:** the two great Gnostic schools (see Chapter 11). (Ch. 4)
- Shimon son of Gamliel:** a Jewish sage of the first century, quoted in *Pirkei Avot* ("Sayings of the Fathers"). (Ch. 14)
- Shiva and Shakti:** in Hinduism, the divine masculine (pure consciousness) and the divine feminine (power and energy). (Ch. 2)
- The Sikhs:** followers of the faith founded by Guru Nanak in the Punjab (15th–16th centuries). (Ch. 13)
- Solomon:** king of Israel (10th century BC), famous for his wisdom; the *Wisdom of Solomon* was written in his name centuries later. (Ch. 4)
- Sona:** a monk and disciple of the Buddha. (Ch. 13)
- Sophia:** Wisdom, the youngest Aeon. See Chapter 4. (Ch. 2)
- Sophia / Hokhmah:** Wisdom, pictured as a holy woman beside God in the Bible and as the youngest Aeon in Gnostic teaching. (Ch. 4)
- Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886):** a Hindu mystic of Bengal who honoured all religions as paths to God. (Ch. 9)
- The tempter:** the evil one who tested Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4). (Ch. 9)
- Tertullian (about 155–220):** a North African Christian writer who wrote against the Valentinians. (Ch. 11)
- Theodotus:** a Valentinian teacher of the second century, quoted by Clement of Alexandria. (Ch. 8)
- Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–2022):** a Vietnamese Zen monk and teacher of mindfulness. (Ch. 9)
- Thomas:** one of the twelve disciples, called "the Twin" (Didymus); the *Gospel of Thomas* is a collection of Jesus' sayings in his name. (Ch. 1)
- Thomas (Didymus Judas Thomas):** the disciple in whose name the *Gospel of Thomas* was written. (Ch. 8)
- Timothy:** Paul's young companion and fellow worker. (Ch. 15)
- Uddalaka Aruni:** a sage of the Chandogya Upanishad who taught his son Shvetaketu. (Ch. 8)

The Valentinians: followers of Valentinus, a great Christian teacher of the second century (see Chapter 11). (*Ch. 1*)

Valentinus (about 100–160): a great Christian teacher and poet of Alexandria and Rome. (*Ch. 11*)

William Blake (1757–1827): an English poet, painter, and visionary. (*Ch. 12*)

Yaldabaoth: the ignorant maker of the lower world in Sethian teaching (see Chapter 7). (*Ch. 4*)

Yaldabaoth / Saklas / Samael: the ignorant, arrogant maker of the lower world in Sethian Gnostic teaching. (*Ch. 7*)

Zhuangzi (about 369–286 BC): a Chinese Taoist sage known for his stories and humour. (*Ch. 12*)

Zoroaster: the prophet of Persia (see Chapter 14). (*Ch. 9*)

Zoroaster (Zarathustra): the prophet of ancient Persia, founder of Zoroastrianism (dates debated, perhaps 1500–1000 BC). (*Ch. 7*)

GLOSSARY, A TO Z

- Aeon:** an eternal being or “light” in the divine world; literally “age” or “eternity.” (Ch. 2)
- Al-Andalus:** Muslim-ruled Spain and Portugal (711–1492), known for its flowering of learning among Muslims, Jews, and Christians. (Ch. 10)
- Alexandria:** the great Greek-speaking city of Egypt, a centre of learning. (Ch. 11)
- The allegory of the cave:** Plato’s story in *Republic* VII. (Ch. 7)
- Amen:** Hebrew for “so be it” or “truly.” (Ch. 17)
- Anointing:** blessing with oil (see Chapter 16). (Ch. 10)
- Apokatastasis:** Greek for “restoration,” the return of all things to God. (Ch. 17)
- Apolytrosis:** Greek for “redemption,” a Valentinian rite that included words for the soul’s ascent. (Ch. 7)
- Archon:** Greek for “ruler.” (Ch. 7)
- As above, so below:** the Hermetic teaching that the same pattern appears in heaven and on earth. (Ch. 5)
- Ascent of the soul:** the soul’s journey up through the heavens back to God. (Ch. 7)
- Asceticism:** strict self-denial of the body; some ancient Gnostics practised it, while our congregation teaches balance (temperance). (Ch. 10)
- Asha and Druj:** Truth/Order and the Lie in Zoroastrian teaching. (Ch. 7)
- Aurora:** the northern and southern lights. (Ch. 5)
- Autophagy:** Greek for “self-eating,” the cell’s way of cleaning and recycling its own parts. (Ch. 10)
- Axial tilt:** the Earth’s lean of about 23.4 degrees, which causes the seasons. (Ch. 6)
- Ayurveda:** the traditional medicine of India (“knowledge of life”). (Ch. 10)
- Baptism:** washing in water as a sign of new life (see Chapter 16). (Ch. 9)
- Benediction:** a closing blessing. (Ch. 17)
- Bhakti yoga:** the path of loving devotion (Hindu). (Ch. 11)
- Big Bang:** the scientific account of the universe’s beginning about 13.8 billion years ago. (Ch. 12)
- Binocular (stereoscopic) vision:** seeing depth by combining the views of two eyes. (Ch. 11)
- Bioluminescence:** light made by living things. (Ch. 12)
- Bone remodelling:** the body’s constant breaking down and rebuilding of bone. (Ch. 10)
- Book of Coming Forth by Day:** the Egyptian name of the “Book of the Dead.” (Ch. 17)
- Bridal Chamber:** a holy mystery of the Valentinians; the reunion of what was separated. See Chapter 16. (Ch. 2)
- Bythos:** Greek for “Depth,” the Valentinian name for the highest God. (Ch. 1)
- Calling (vocation):** from Latin *vocare*, “to call”; the life-work God gives each person. (Ch. 15)
- Canon:** the official list of books accepted as scripture. (Ch. 11)
- Cardinal virtues:** from Latin *cardo*, “hinge”; prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, on which the moral life turns. (Ch. 13)
- Carrington Event:** the great solar storm of 1859. (Ch. 5)
- The charioteer:** Plato’s image of reason guiding the soul’s passions (*Phaedrus*). (Ch. 13)
- Charity:** from Latin *caritas*, “love”; generous giving. (Ch. 13)
- Chinvat Bridge:** the bridge of judgment the soul crosses after death. (Ch. 14)
- Chokhmah and Binah:** Hebrew for Wisdom and Understanding; in the Zohar they are called Father and Mother. (Ch. 2)
- Chrism:** holy anointing oil; the root of the word “Christ.” (Ch. 16)
- Christ:** from the Greek *Christos*, “anointed one.” (Ch. 2)
- Chromosomes:** packages of DNA; a child receives 23 from the mother and 23 from the father. (Ch. 2)
- Circadian rhythm:** the body’s daily clock, set by light. (Ch. 5)
- Clean eating:** eating whole, natural foods. (Ch. 10)
- Codex (plural codices):** an ancient book with pages, as opposed to a scroll. (Ch. 11)
- Congregation:** a gathered community of faith (we use this word rather than “church” first). (Ch. 16)
- Conservation of energy:** the law of physics that energy is never destroyed, only changed. (Ch. 17)

- Consort / partner:** Sophia's paired Aeon in the Fullness. (Ch. 4)
- Cortisol:** a stress hormone released when we are afraid. (Ch. 14)
- Cosmic microwave background:** the afterglow of the early universe, released about 380,000 years after the beginning. (Ch. 12)
- Cosmic web:** the vast network of galaxies stretching across the universe. (Ch. 3)
- Counterfeit spirit (antimimon pneuma):** the false spirit that leads people astray in the *Secret Book of John*. (Ch. 7)
- Daena:** the soul's own conscience, met at the bridge. (Ch. 14)
- Dark matter and dark energy:** the scientific names for the unseen matter and energy of the universe (the book says "unseen" to keep "dark" for God's good creation). (Ch. 12)
- Decad and Dodecad:** the "ten" and the "twelve," the further Aeons. (Ch. 3)
- Decomposition:** the breaking down of dead things into soil and nutrients. (Ch. 12)
- Deep time:** the immense age of the Earth revealed by geology. (Ch. 12)
- Demiurge:** Greek for "craftsman," the maker of the material world in Gnostic and Platonic thought. (Ch. 7)
- Dhammapada:** a collection of the Buddha's sayings. (Ch. 13)
- Didache:** "The Teaching," a very early Christian handbook (late 1st century). (Ch. 16)
- Divine right:** kingship given by God. (Ch. 9)
- Divine spark:** the light of God within every human soul. (Ch. 1)
- DNA:** the molecule in our cells that carries the instructions for life. (Ch. 1)
- DNA double helix:** the two-stranded shape of DNA, discovered in 1953. (Ch. 2)
- Docetism:** the belief that Christ only seemed to suffer (held by some Gnostics, not by the Valentinians). (Ch. 9)
- Eclipse:** when the Moon passes in front of the Sun (solar eclipse). (Ch. 4)
- Edict:** a public decree, posted for all to read. (Ch. 9)
- Ekklesia:** Greek for "assembly" or "those called out," the word translated "church." (Ch. 16)
- Electromagnetic spectrum:** the full range of light, from radio waves to gamma rays. (Ch. 12)
- Emanation:** the idea that all things flow out from God's fullness, as rays from the Sun. (Ch. 1)
- The Emerald Tablet:** a short, ancient Hermetic text containing "as above, so below." (Ch. 1)
- Emmaus:** a village near Jerusalem. (Ch. 16)
- Ennoia:** Greek for "Thought." (Ch. 2)
- Enthymesis:** Greek for "intention" or "desire," Sophia's longing that was cast out. (Ch. 4)
- Epinoia:** Greek for "Insight," the hidden light of God in humanity (Sethian). (Ch. 8)
- Equinox:** when day and night are equal (spring and autumn). (Ch. 16)
- Eucharist:** Greek for "thanksgiving," the holy meal of bread and cup. (Ch. 16)
- Examination of conscience:** a nightly review of one's day, practised by many traditions. (Ch. 14)
- Excerpts from Theodotus:** Clement's collection of Theodotus's teaching. (Ch. 8)
- Exoplanet:** a planet circling another star; thousands have been found. (Ch. 6)
- Fasting:** going without something (food or other things) for a time, for the sake of the spirit. (Ch. 10)
- Fellowship (koinonia):** sharing life together. (Ch. 16)
- Fibonacci numbers:** the series 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13... in which each number is the sum of the two before; it appears in the spirals of sunflower seeds and pinecones. (Ch. 1)
- Fine-tuning:** the observation that the constants of physics fall within the narrow range that allows stars and life. (Ch. 12)
- First Human:** the heavenly pattern of humanity (Chapter 2). (Ch. 7)
- First Jewish–Roman War (AD 66–73):** the revolt that ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple in AD 70. (Ch. 9)
- Five mysteries:** the sacraments named in the *Gospel of Philip*. (Ch. 11)
- Five Seals:** the Sethian baptism of light. (Ch. 11)
- Foot washing:** Jesus' act of service at the Last Supper (John 13). (Ch. 9)
- Fractal:** a pattern that repeats itself at smaller and smaller scales. (Ch. 12)
- Frankincense and myrrh:** costly fragrant resins used in worship and in burial. (Ch. 9)
- Galactic year:** the time the Sun takes to circle the galaxy's centre. (Ch. 6)
- Galaxy:** a vast family of stars; ours is the Milky Way. (Ch. 1)
- Gayatri mantra:** an ancient Hindu prayer to the divine light of the Sun (Rig Veda 3.62.10). (Ch. 5)
- Genome:** the complete set of DNA instructions in a living thing. (Ch. 12)
- Gethsemane:** the olive garden where Jesus prayed the night before he died. (Ch. 9)

- Giant-impact hypothesis:** the leading scientific explanation of the Moon's origin; a Mars-sized body (called Theia) struck the young Earth about 4.5 billion years ago. (Ch. 4)
- Glymphatic system:** the brain's cleaning process, most active during deep sleep. (Ch. 10)
- Gnosis:** knowing God by experience (see Chapter 8). (Ch. 1)
- Golden Verses:** a short ancient poem of Pythagorean teaching. (Ch. 14)
- The Good:** in Plato, the highest reality, the source of all truth and being. (Ch. 5)
- Gospel of Mary:** a 2nd-century Gospel, partly preserved, found in the Berlin Codex (published 1955). (Ch. 8)
- Gospel of Philip:** a Valentinian collection of teachings on the sacraments. (Ch. 16)
- Gospel of Thomas:** a collection of 114 sayings of Jesus, found complete at Nag Hammadi in 1945, with Greek fragments found at Oxyrhynchus around 1900. (Ch. 8)
- The Gospel of Truth:** a gentle Valentinian meditation found at Nag Hammadi. (Ch. 1)
- Gravity:** the pull that holds the planets to the Sun. (Ch. 5)
- Greenhouse effect:** heat trapped by a thick atmosphere (extreme on Venus). (Ch. 6)
- Grihastha:** the "householder" stage of life in Hindu tradition. (Ch. 6)
- Gut microbiome:** the community of microbes living in our digestive system. (Ch. 10)
- Göbekli Tepe:** a hilltop site in Turkey with huge carved stone pillars arranged in circles, about 11,600 years old, older than writing, farming villages, and Stonehenge. (Ch. 0)
- Habitable zone:** the distance from a star where liquid water can exist on a planet's surface. (Ch. 6)
- Hadith:** reported sayings of the Prophet of Islam. (Ch. 10)
- Hasidism:** a joyful Jewish spiritual movement of 18th-century Eastern Europe. (Ch. 15)
- Hearth:** the fireplace at the centre of an old home; a picture of warmth, food, and gathering. (Ch. 2)
- Heavenly double:** the soul's true, heavenly self (the "robe," the "twin," the "angel"). (Ch. 17)
- Heimarmene:** Greek for "fate." (Ch. 7)
- Helio-Gnosticism:** our congregation's identity: Gnostic Christian faith that sees God as Light, Christ as the Sun of righteousness, and the visible Sun as the great image of divine light. (Ch. 5)
- Heliopolis:** "City of the Sun" in Greek; an ancient Egyptian holy city. (Ch. 2)
- The Hidden, the First-Appearing, the Self-Begotten:** Kalypptos, Protophanes, and Autogenes, three powers within Barbelo in some Sethian books. (Ch. 2)
- Horos:** Greek for "Limit" or "Boundary"; also called Stauros, "Cross." (Ch. 3)
- Horos / Stauros:** Limit / Cross, the boundary of the Fullness. (Ch. 4)
- Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta:** Avestan for "good thoughts, good words, good deeds." (Ch. 14)
- Hydrogen:** the simplest and most abundant element. (Ch. 12)
- Hymn of the Pearl:** a poem in the *Acts of Thomas* (3rd century); see Chapter 17. (Ch. 7)
- Hysterema:** Greek for "deficiency" or "lack." (Ch. 3)
- I AM THAT I AM:** the name given to Moses (Exodus 3:14), meaning God simply is. (Ch. 1)
- Idol:** anything we treat as God that is less than God. (Ch. 1)
- Image of God (*imago Dei*):** the teaching that human beings reflect God. (Ch. 2)
- Immovable race:** the Sethians' name for themselves. (Ch. 11)
- The Incorruptible:** a name for the highest realm or power in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*. (Ch. 7)
- Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un:** Arabic, "Surely we belong to God, and to God we return." (Ch. 17)
- Integrity:** from Latin *integer*, "whole." (Ch. 14)
- Jnana yoga:** the path of knowledge (Hindu). (Ch. 11)
- Kenoma:** Greek for "emptiness." (Ch. 3)
- Kepler's laws:** the three laws, found by Johannes Kepler, that describe the paths of the planets around the Sun. (Ch. 1)
- The kingdom of God:** God's reign, God's presence and way of life; in our teaching, found first within. (Ch. 8)
- Kusti:** the sacred cord Zoroastrians tie around the waist while praying. (Ch. 14)
- Langar:** the free community kitchen of every Sikh gurdwara. (Ch. 13)
- The Law:** the commandments given through Moses in the Torah. (Ch. 7)
- Laying on of hands:** placing hands on someone while praying for them. (Ch. 10)
- The Living One:** the *Gospel of Thomas's* name for the living God (the text says "the living Father," rendered here without gendered words). (Ch. 8)
- Living water:** flowing water (rivers, springs), seen as alive and holy. (Ch. 16)
- Luminary:** a source of light; here, one of the four great Lights. (Ch. 3)

Lunar cycle: the Moon's monthly round of phases, about 29.5 days. (*Ch. 4*)

Magnetic field: the invisible field around the Earth that shields life from the solar wind. (*Ch. 2*)

Magnetoreception: sensing Earth's magnetic field. (*Ch. 12*)

Manger: a feeding trough for animals. (*Ch. 9*)

Manichaeism: Mani's religion, which taught a struggle between Light and evil and the return of light to its source. (*Ch. 5*)

The marks: every verse ends with a mark showing where its truth comes from: ✧ our congregation's belief or revelation, ✚ scripture, ✱ science and history, ✦ other faiths. (*Ch. 0*)

Masbuta: the Mandaean baptism. (*Ch. 16*)

Masculine and feminine energies: in our Helio teaching, giving (masculine) and receiving (feminine). This is our own teaching; classical astrology called some planets masculine and others feminine in a different way. (*Ch. 6*)

Masiqta: the Mandaean rite for the soul's ascent. (*Ch. 17*)

Masnavi: Rumi's great spiritual poem, often called "the Quran in Persian." (*Ch. 17*)

Matter (hyle): the physical stuff of the world. (*Ch. 4*)

Maya: illusion (Hindu, Vedanta). (*Ch. 7*)

Menorah: the seven-branched lampstand of the Tabernacle and Temple. (*Ch. 13*)

Messiah / Christ: Hebrew and Greek words meaning "anointed one." (*Ch. 9*)

Metamorphosis: the transformation of a caterpillar into a moth or butterfly. (*Ch. 17*)

Microcosm: "small world," the human being as a picture of the universe. (*Ch. 8*)

Middle Way: the Buddha's path between too much and too little. (*Ch. 10*)

Mishnah: the first great written collection of Jewish oral law (about AD 200). (*Ch. 14*)

Mitákuye Oyás'ín: Lakota for "all my relations." (*Ch. 6*)

Monad: Greek for "the one" or "the unit." Our title for the One God, used as a name. (*Ch. 1*)

Mother-Father: a title of Barbelo, showing that both the feminine and the masculine are in her. (*Ch. 2*)

Motto: a short saying that sums up a way of life; ours was chosen by the founder in 2026. (*Ch. 14*)

Mudita: Pali for "sympathetic joy." (*Ch. 13*)

Mustard Seed System: our congregation's planning system, named after this parable. (*Ch. 12*)

Mycorrhizal network: the web of fungi joining plant roots. (*Ch. 12*)

Nacre: mother-of-pearl, the substance oysters use to coat an irritant. (*Ch. 13*)

Nag Hammadi: a town in Upper Egypt near which the books were found. (*Ch. 11*)

Negative theology: describing God by what God is not, because God is beyond every positive description. (*Ch. 1*)

Neti neti: Sanskrit for "not this, not this," from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. (*Ch. 1*)

Neuron: a nerve cell; the adult brain has about 86 billion. (*Ch. 8*)

Neuroplasticity: the brain's ability to rewire itself through repeated thought and action. (*Ch. 14*)

The Ninety-Nine Names: the "most beautiful names" of God in Islam, such as the Merciful, the Light, and the Peace. (*Ch. 3*)

Noble Eightfold Path: the Buddha's way, including right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration. (*Ch. 14*)

"Not as Moses said": the refrain of the *Secret Book of John*, correcting Genesis. (*Ch. 7*)

Nous: Greek for "Mind," the first-born Aeon of the Valentinians. (*Ch. 3*)

Nuclear fusion: the joining of light atoms (hydrogen) into heavier ones (helium) in the Sun's core, releasing enormous energy. (*Ch. 5*)

Nutrient cycle: the way the building blocks of life are used again and again. (*Ch. 12*)

Octave and fifth: the most basic musical harmonies (ratios 2:1 and 3:2). (*Ch. 12*)

Ogdoad: the "eight," the first four pairs of Aeons. (*Ch. 3*)

Optics: the science of light and sight. (*Ch. 12*)

Orbital resonance: moons or planets keeping time in simple ratios (Io, Europa, and Ganymede in 1:2:4). (*Ch. 12*)

Orders of magnitude: steps of ten times; from the smallest measurable length (the Planck length) to the observable universe is about 62 such steps. (*Ch. 12*)

Overtones (harmonics): the higher notes that sound together with a plucked string. (*Ch. 3*)

Perihelion: the point where Earth is closest to the Sun (early January). (*Ch. 6*)

Photon: a particle of light. (*Ch. 5*)

Photoreceptor: a light-sensing cell in the eye. (*Ch. 12*)

Photosynthesis: how plants turn light, water, and carbon dioxide into food and oxygen. (*Ch. 5*)

Pilgrim: a traveller on a holy journey. (*Ch. 17*)

Pirkei Avot: a book of the Mishnah collecting the wisdom of the early rabbis. (*Ch. 14*)

Pistis, Elpis, Agape: Greek for Faith, Hope, and Love. (*Ch. 3*)

- Pleroma:** “the Fullness,” the whole divine world of the Aeons (Chapter 3). (*Ch. 2*)
- Pneuma:** Greek for “spirit”; the spiritual part of a person. (*Ch. 8*)
- Pneumatic, psychic, hylic:** Greek for spiritual, soul-bearing, and material people in Valentinian teaching. (*Ch. 11*)
- Pollinators:** bees and other creatures that carry pollen, supporting roughly a third of the food we eat. (*Ch. 15*)
- Prayer of Thanksgiving:** a short Hermetic prayer found in Nag Hammadi Codex VI. (*Ch. 16*)
- The priestly blessing:** the blessing Aaron and his sons spoke over Israel (Numbers 6). (*Ch. 14*)
- Prism:** a clear, angled piece of glass that splits light into colours. (*Ch. 3*)
- Proarche:** Greek for “Fore-Beginning.” (*Ch. 1*)
- Prodigal:** wastefully extravagant. (*Ch. 17*)
- Pronoia:** Greek for “Forethought” or “Providence.” (*Ch. 2*)
- Protanthropos:** Greek for “First Human,” a title of Barbelo. (*Ch. 2*)
- Proverbs:** a book of the Bible full of short wise sayings; chapter 8 is Wisdom’s own speech. (*Ch. 4*)
- Psalms 2:** a royal psalm sung at the crowning of Israel’s kings. (*Ch. 9*)
- Purnamadah:** the opening words of the Hindu “fullness” prayer. (*Ch. 3*)
- Qafzeh:** a cave in Israel where people were buried about 100,000 years ago, some with red ochre (a red earth pigment) and grave gifts. (*Ch. 0*)
- Quakers:** the Society of Friends, who seek “the inner light.” (*Ch. 8*)
- Recovery:** the journey out of addiction, often one day at a time, with support. (*Ch. 10*)
- Red giant:** a late stage in a star’s life, when it swells greatly. (*Ch. 5*)
- Repentance:** turning back toward God. (*Ch. 4*)
- Retrograde rotation:** spinning in the opposite direction to most planets (Venus). (*Ch. 6*)
- The Return:** the soul’s journey back to God, the great theme of Gnostic teaching. (*Ch. 17*)
- Robe of glory:** the soul’s heavenly self, waiting for it at home. (*Ch. 17*)
- Root verse:** the verse at the centre of our congregation’s faith (Luke 17:21). (*Ch. 8*)
- Sabbath:** the Jewish day of rest, from Friday evening to Saturday evening. (*Ch. 6*)
- Sacrament / mystery:** a holy act in which earthly things carry heavenly grace. (*Ch. 16*)
- Seed of Seth:** the Sethians’ name for the people who carry the light and remember where they came from. (*Ch. 3*)
- Sefirot:** in Kabbalah, the ten emanations or powers of God. (*Ch. 3*)
- Sethian:** the Gnostic school that called itself the “children of Seth.” (*Ch. 11*)
- The seven deadly sins:** the traditional list of vices (pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony, lust). (*Ch. 13*)
- Shekhinah:** the indwelling Presence of God in Jewish teaching. (*Ch. 2*)
- Sige:** Greek for “Silence,” the companion of the Depth in Valentinian teaching. (*Ch. 1*)
- Simple first, deep later:** a guiding rule of our congregation; we teach the heart of faith plainly, and leave room to go deeper. (*Ch. 1*)
- Sirach (Ecclesiasticus):** a book of wisdom from about 180 BC, in the Apocrypha. (*Ch. 10*)
- Solar family:** our congregation’s name for the Sun and its planets, seen as a household. (*Ch. 6*)
- Solar flare / coronal mass ejection:** bursts of energy and matter from the Sun. (*Ch. 5*)
- Solar system:** the Sun and everything held in orbit around it. (*Ch. 5*)
- Solar wind:** the stream of charged particles flowing from the Sun. (*Ch. 5*)
- Solstice:** the longest (summer) or shortest (winter) day of the year. (*Ch. 16*)
- Son of Humanity (Son of Man):** Jesus’ name for himself and, in the *Gospel of Mary*, for the true human within. (*Ch. 8*)
- Soul (psyche):** in Valentinian teaching, made from Sophia’s turning back to the light. (*Ch. 4*)
- Spiritual seed:** the light Sophia conceived, sown into human souls. (*Ch. 4*)
- Stamen and pistil:** the pollen-giving and seed-bearing parts of a flower. (*Ch. 2*)
- Steward:** someone trusted to care for what belongs to another. (*Ch. 15*)
- Sunrise prayer:** turning toward the morning light in prayer, a practice of our Helio faith. (*Ch. 16*)
- Svadharmā:** Sanskrit for “one’s own path or duty.” (*Ch. 15*)
- Synapse:** a connection between nerve cells; there are on the order of 100 trillion. (*Ch. 8*)
- Syzygy:** Greek for “yoking together,” a pair of Aeons, male and female. (*Ch. 2*)
- Talent:** in Jesus’ parable, a large sum of silver; now also meaning a gift or ability. (*Ch. 13*)

Talmud: the great collection of Jewish teaching and debate. (Ch. 11)

Tat tvam asi: Sanskrit, "That art thou." (Ch. 8)

Tektōn: Greek for a craftsman or builder in wood and stone. (Ch. 9)

Temple of the Spirit: the body as a holy dwelling of God's light. (Ch. 10)

Theological virtues: faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13). (Ch. 13)

The three gates: an old teaching for wise speech, found in several traditions. (Ch. 14)

Tidal locking: why the Moon always shows us the same face. (Ch. 4)

Tikkun: Hebrew for "repair," the lifting of the holy sparks. (Ch. 8)

Transfiguration: the moment on a mountain when Jesus shone with light before three disciples. (Ch. 5)

Treasury of Light: the highest realm of light in *Pistis Sophia*. (Ch. 17)

Treatise on the Resurrection (Letter to Rheginos): a short Valentinian letter on resurrection, found at Nag Hammadi. (Ch. 17)

Triumphal entry: Jesus' humble ride into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). (Ch. 9)

Truth from Monad: the title of this book. It means that all truth comes from the One God. (Ch. 0)

The two books: Scripture and Nature, an old picture used by Christian, Jewish, and Muslim thinkers. (Ch. 12)

Ubuntu: a southern African idea of shared humanity. (Ch. 6)

Ultra-processed food: industrially made food with many additives, far from its natural form. (Ch. 10)

Undeified marriage: the *Gospel of Philip's* phrase for holy union. (Ch. 13)

Valentinian: the Gnostic school founded by Valentinus. (Ch. 11)

Vatican necropolis: the ancient burial ground under St Peter's Basilica; the "Christ as Helios" mosaic is in the tomb of the Julii (3rd century). (Ch. 5)

Virtue: a lasting strength of character, a habit of doing good. (Ch. 13)

Vitamin D: a vitamin the skin makes in sunlight, needed for strong bones. (Ch. 5)

Wave-particle duality: the quantum discovery that light and matter behave both as waves and as particles. (Ch. 12)

The Way (Tao): in Chinese wisdom, the hidden source and order of all things. (Ch. 1)

Weighing of the heart: the Egyptian picture of judgment after death (*Book of the Dead*, spell 125). (Ch. 13)

Wisdom of Solomon: a book written in Greek about a century before Christ, found in the Apocrypha. (Ch. 4)

Wolff's law: bone strengthens in response to the loads placed on it. (Ch. 13)

The Word (Logos): John's name for Christ, through whom all things were made. (Ch. 14)

Yin and yang: in Chinese thought, the receptive and the active forces, always together. (Ch. 2)

Zygote: the single cell formed when a new human life begins. (Ch. 12)

RECOMMENDED READING

All the books recommended in this companion, in one list. Many classic texts (the Nag Hammadi writings, G. R. S. Mead's translations, the Bible, the Quran, the Upanishads, early Christian writings) can be read free online at the Gnostic Society Library (gnosis.org), sacred-texts.com, earlychristianwritings.com, and newadvent.org.

- Alcoholics Anonymous* (the "Big Book," 1939) and other twelve-step fellowships, free to attend.
- Allogenes* and *Zostrianos* in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.
- Earthrise* and *Pale Blue Dot*: the famous photographs of Earth from space (free online).
- Powers of Ten* (1977), a nine-minute film by Charles and Ray Eames (free online): a journey from the edge of the universe to inside an atom.
- The Cloud of Unknowing* (14th century): a classic Christian guide to meeting God in silence.
- The Didache* (short, free online).
- Trimorphic Protennoia* and *Thunder, Perfect Mind* in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.
- Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud* (1976).
- Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (1963): a beautiful book on sacraments as windows into heaven.
- Andrew Murray, *Humility* (1895).
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (the classic book on virtue).
- Augustine, *Confessions*, Book I (Henry Chadwick's translation is clear).
- Bentley Layton and David Brakke, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (2nd edition, 2021): includes the Valentinian writings with excellent introductions.
- Bill Bryson, *A Short History of Nearly Everything* (2003): science told as a story.
- Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (on the "God-shaped" emptiness in the human heart).
- Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (17th century): a humble cook's way of living with God every hour.
- Burton Watson (translator), *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings* (1964).
- C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (1961).
- C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (1960).
- C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (1945), an imaginative story about heaven.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (1942): a famous, witty picture of how evil works by distraction.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (1941), a sermon on the longing for our true home.
- Caitlín Matthews, *Sophia: Goddess of Wisdom, Bride of God* (1991; revised 2001).
- Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (1980): the classic, wonder-filled journey through the universe.
- Carlo Rovelli, *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics* (2014).
- Chapter 6 of *Truth from Monad* (The Solar Family).
- Coleman Barks, *The Essential Rumi* (1995).
- Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place* (1971): a true story of forgiving those who did great harm.
- Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus* (2008).
- Dan Buettner, *The Blue Zones* (2008): what the longest-lived peoples of the world have in common.
- Daniel C. Matt, *The Essential Kabbalah* (1995).
- Dava Sobel, *The Planets* (2005).
- David Brakke, *The Gnostics* (2010): a clear introduction to who the Gnostics were.
- David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (2010): a short, clear guide.
- David Eagleman, *The Brain: The Story of You* (2015).
- David Whitehouse, *The Sun: A Biography* (2005).
- E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (1993).
- Ed Yong, *An Immense World* (2022).
- Ed Yong, *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us* (2022).
- Edith Widder, *Below the Edge of Darkness* (2021): a scientist's journey into the glowing deep sea.
- Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed* (2006) (advanced).
- Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the Valentinians* (2006): the most thorough study of the Valentinians (for advanced readers).
- Eknath Easwaran, *The Bhagavad Gita* (1985).
- Eknath Easwaran, *The Dhammapada* (1985).

- Eknath Easwaran, *The Upanishads* (1987): an easy, trustworthy introduction.
- Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (1988).
- Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (2003).
- Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (1979): an accessible introduction to how the Gnostic Christians spoke of God.
- Francis H. Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra* (1977).
- Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God* (2006): a geneticist on faith and science.
- Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking* (1973), where he describes vocation as “the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”
- G. R. S. Mead, *Pistis Sophia* (1921; free online at sacred-texts.com).
- G. R. S. Mead, *The Hymn of the Robe of Glory* (1908; free online).
- Gabor Maté, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* (2008): a compassionate look at addiction.
- Gary B. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity* (2009).
- Genesis 1–11, read side by side with the *Secret Book of John* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons*.
- Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (1958): a classic study (advanced).
- Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus* (1989).
- Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (1989).
- Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved* (1992).
- Henri Nouwen, *Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring* (1994).
- Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out* (1975), on hospitality and community.
- Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1992).
- Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* (1981).
- Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries* (1992): a practical book on healthy boundaries in life and love.
- Huston Smith, *The World’s Religions* (1958, revised 1991): a warm, fair introduction to the great faiths.
- Ignatius of Loyola’s *Examen* (the daily review of conscience).
- Ilaria Ramelli, *A Larger Hope? Universal Salvation from Christian Beginnings to Julian of Norwich* (2019) (scholarly).
- Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book I (free at newadvent.org).
- Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (2008).
- J. B. Phillips, *Your God Is Too Small* (1952): a short classic on outgrowing small ideas of God.
- James D. Watson, *The Double Helix* (1968), with Brenda Maddox, *Rosalind Franklin: The Dark Lady of DNA* (2002), for the full story of the discovery.
- James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979), on the Earth as a living system (read critically).
- James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Story* (2014).
- Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries* (1985), especially “The Light of the World.”
- Jean-Yves Leloup, *The Gospel of Philip* (2004): a readable translation with commentary.
- Jenny Rose, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction* (2011).
- Jim Al-Khalili, *The House of Wisdom* (2011): the great scientists of the Islamic golden age.
- John D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (2001) (advanced).
- John Farrell, *The Day Without Yesterday: Lemaître, Einstein, and the Birth of Modern Cosmology* (2005).
- John McPhee, *Annals of the Former World* (1998), on deep time.
- Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Mandeans*.
- Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Mandeans: Ancient Texts and Modern People* (2002).
- Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (1966), the chapter on temperance.
- Josephus, *The Jewish War* (an eyewitness history of the war with Rome; free online).
- Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67 (the oldest description of a Christian Sunday gathering, about AD 155; free online).
- Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (1923), the chapter “On Children.”
- Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (1993): how people’s understanding of God grew across the ages.
- Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala* (2003).
- Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (2006): a careful translation and explanation of the *Secret Book of John*.
- Kitty Ferguson, *Pythagoras* (2008).
- Kitty Ferguson, *Pythagoras: His Lives and the Legacy of a Rational Universe* (2008).
- Klaus Schmidt, *Göbekli Tepe: A Stone Age Sanctuary* (2006, in English 2012), or a good documentary on Göbekli Tepe.
- Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis* (1983).
- Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (1983): a full, careful survey.
- Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (2003).
- Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1894).

- Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*: a Roman's private notes on living well.
- Marcus J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (1994).
- Mario Livio, *The Golden Ratio* (2002): a careful look at where numbers really appear in nature (and where they don't).
- Martin Rees, *Just Six Numbers* (1999).
- Marvin Meyer (editor), *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (2007): the standard one-volume English edition of the Nag Hammadi library.
- Marvin Meyer, *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus* (1992) and *The Gospels of Mary* (2004).
- Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians* (on the Magi's faith).
- Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (1979).
- Matthew Walker, *Why We Sleep* (2017).
- Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life* (2020): the hidden world of fungi.
- Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"* (1996), on "biblical demiurgical traditions" (advanced).
- Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (2009): the African teaching "I am because we are."
- Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food* (2008): "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."
- N. T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (2010).
- Neil deGrasse Tyson, *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry* (2017): short and clear.
- Oliver Morton, *Eating the Sun: How Plants Power the Planet* (2007).
- Oliver Morton, *The Moon: A History for the Future* (2019).
- Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak* (2000).
- Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees* (2015) (popular; some claims are debated).
- Philip Ball, *Patterns in Nature* (2016): beautiful photographs and explanations.
- Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (1978): a careful reading of Genesis on man and woman (advanced).
- Plato, *Phaedrus*.
- Plato, *Republic*, Books VI–VII (the Sun and the Cave).
- Plato, *Symposium* (any translation; Aristophanes' speech).
- Plotinus, *The Enneads* (the selections in Stephen MacKenna's translation are a good start; advanced).
- Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris* (ancient; free online).
- Ptolemy, *Letter to Flora* (in Layton and Brakke, *The Gnostic Scriptures*).
- Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, *Glittering Vices* (2009).
- Rex Ambler, *Truth of the Heart: An Anthology of George Fox* (2001).
- Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (1978).
- Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (1992).
- Rick Hanson, *Hardwiring Happiness* (2013).
- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013).
- Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun* (1996): the history of the seasonal festivals (scholarly).
- Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (1985) (advanced).
- Seyyed Hossein Nasr (editor), *The Study Quran* (2015).
- Sherwin B. Nuland, *Maimonides* (2005): a short, readable life.
- Siddhartha Mukherjee, *The Gene* (2016).
- Siddhartha Mukherjee, *The Gene: An Intimate History* (2016).
- Simon Singh, *Big Bang: The Origin of the Universe* (2004).
- Stephen Mitchell, *Tao Te Ching* (1988): a clear, beautiful version for beginners.
- Stevan Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas: Annotated and Explained* (2002).
- Stuart Clark, *The Sun Kings* (2007): the story of the 1859 solar storm.
- Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus* (2001).
- The Gospel of Philip in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.
- The Gospel of the Egyptians (also called *The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit*) in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.
- The Hypostasis of the Archons (also called *The Reality of the Rulers*) in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.
- The Prayer of Thanksgiving in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*.
- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Anger* (2001).
- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (1995).
- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Old Path White Clouds* (1987): the life of the Buddha.
- Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness* (1975).
- Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (1961).
- Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (15th century).
- Tim Spector, *The Diet Myth* (2015), on the gut microbiome.
- Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (1946).