



THE Gnostic SOCIETY LIBRARY

The Nag Hammadi Library

The Gospel of Truth

Translated by Harold W. Attridge and George W. MacRae

Nag Hammadi

Introduction

Alphabetic Index

Codex Index

Thomas Gospel

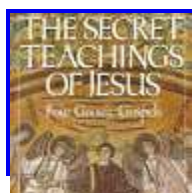
Search the NHL

Library

Gnosis Archive

(Above image of the Gospel of Thomas courtesy of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont Graduate University)

Visit the [Bookstore](#) for a complete selection of translations and books about The Nag Hammadi Library

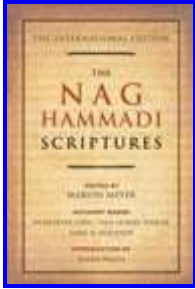


The gospel of truth is joy for those who have received from the Father of truth the grace of knowing him, through the power of the Word that came forth from the pleroma, the one who is in the thought and the mind of the Father, that is, the one who is addressed as 'the Savior', (that) being the name of the work he is to perform for the redemption of those who were ignorant of the Father, while in the name of the gospel is the proclamation of hope, being discovery for those who search for him.

When the totality went about searching for the one from whom they had come forth - and the totality was inside of him, the incomprehensible, inconceivable one who is superior to every thought - ignorance of the Father brought about anguish and terror; and the anguish grew solid like a fog, so that no one was able to see. For this reason, error became powerful; it worked on its own matter foolishly, not having known the truth. It set about with a creation, preparing with power and beauty the substitute for the truth.

This was not, then, a humiliation for him, the incomprehensible, inconceivable one, for they were nothing, the anguish and the oblivion and the creature of deceit, while the established truth is immutable, imperturbable, perfect in beauty. For this reason, despise error.

Thus, it had no root; it fell into a fog regarding the Father, while it was involved



in preparing works and oblivions and terrors, in order that by means of these it might entice those of the middle and capture them.

The oblivion of error was not revealed. It is not a [...] from the Father. Oblivion did not come into existence from the Father, although it did indeed come into existence because of him. But what comes into existence in him is knowledge, which appeared in order that oblivion might vanish and the Father might be known. Since oblivion came into existence because the Father was not known, then if the Father comes to be known, oblivion will not exist from that moment on.

Through this, the gospel of the one who is searched for, which <was> revealed to those who are perfect, through the mercies of the Father, the hidden mystery, Jesus, the Christ, enlightened those who were in darkness through oblivion. He enlightened them; he showed (them) a way; and the way is the truth which he taught them.

For this reason, error grew angry at him, persecuted him, was distressed at him, (and) was brought to naught. He was nailed to a tree (and) he became fruit of the knowledge of the Father. It did not, however, cause destruction because it was eaten, but to those who ate it, it gave (cause) to become glad in the discovery, and he discovered them in himself, and they discovered him in themselves.

As for the incomprehensible, inconceivable one, the Father, the perfect one, the one who made the totality, within him is the totality, and of him the totality has need. Although he retained their perfection within himself, which he did not give to the totality, the Father was not jealous. What jealousy indeed (could there be) between himself and his members? For if this aeon had thus received their perfection, they could not have come [...] the Father. He retains within himself their perfection,

granting it to them as a return to him, and a perfectly unitary knowledge. It is he who fashioned the totality, and within him is the totality, and the totality was in need of him.

As in the case of a person of whom some are ignorant, he wishes to have them know him and love him, so - for what did the totality have need of if not knowledge regarding the Father? - he became a guide, restful and leisurely. In schools he appeared, (and) he spoke the word as a teacher. There came the men wise in their own estimation, putting him to the test. But he confounded them, because they were foolish. They hated him, because they were not really wise.

After all these, there came the little children also, those to whom the knowledge of the Father belongs. Having been strengthened, they learned about the impressions of the Father. They knew, they were known; they were glorified, they glorified. There was manifested in their heart the living book of the living - the one written in the thought and the mind of the Father, which from before the foundation of the totality was within his incomprehensibility - that (book) which no one was able to take, since it remains for the one who will take it to be slain. No one could have become manifest from among those who have believed in salvation unless that book had appeared. For this reason, the merciful one, the faithful one, Jesus, was patient in accepting sufferings until he took that book, since he knows that his death is life for many.

Just as there lies hidden in a will, before it is opened, the fortune of the deceased master of the house, so (it is) with the totality, which lay hidden while the Father of the totality was invisible, being something which is from him, from whom every space comes forth. For this reason Jesus appeared; he put on that book; he was nailed to a tree; he published the edict of the Father on the cross. O such great

teaching! He draws himself down to death, though life eternal clothes him. Having stripped himself of the perishable rags, he put on imperishability, which no one can possibly take away from him. Having entered the empty spaces of terrors, he passed through those who were stripped naked by oblivion, being knowledge and perfection, proclaiming the things that are in the heart, [...] teach those who will receive teaching.

But those who are to receive teaching are the living, who are inscribed in the book of the living. It is about themselves that they receive instruction, receiving it from the Father, turning again to him. Since the perfection of the totality is in the Father, it is necessary for the totality to ascend to him. Then, if one has knowledge, he receives what are his own, and draws them to himself. For he who is ignorant is in need, and what he lacks is great, since he lacks that which will make him perfect. Since the perfection of the totality is in the Father, and it is necessary for the totality to ascend to him, and for each one to receive what are his own, he enrolled them in advance, having prepared them to give to those who came forth from him.

Those whose name he knew in advance were called at the end, so that one who has knowledge is the one whose name the Father has uttered. For he whose name has not been spoken is ignorant. Indeed, how is one to hear, if his name has not been called? For he who is ignorant until the end is a creature of oblivion, and he will vanish along with it. If not, how is it that these miserable ones have no name, (that) they do not have the call? Therefore, if one has knowledge, his is from above. If he is called, he hears, he answers, and he turns to him who is calling him, and ascends to him. And he knows in what manner he is called. Having knowledge, he does the will of the one who called him, he wishes to be pleasing to him, he receives rest. Each one's name comes to him. He who is to have

knowledge in this manner knows where he comes from and where he is going. He knows as one who, having become drunk, has turned away from his drunkenness, (and) having returned to himself, has set right what are his own.

He has brought many back from error. He has gone before them to their places, from which they had moved away, since it was on account of the depth that they received error, the depth of the one who encircles all spaces, while there is none that encircles him. It was a great wonder that they were in the Father, not knowing him, and (that) they were able to come forth by themselves, since they were unable to comprehend or to know the one in whom they were. For if his will had not thus emerged from him - for he revealed it in view of a knowledge in which all its emanations concur.

This is the knowledge of the living book, which he revealed to the aeons at the end as his letters, revealing how they are not vowels nor are they consonants, so that one might read them and think of something foolish, but (rather that) they are letters of the truth, which they alone speak who know them. Each letter is a complete <thought>, like a complete book, since they are letters written by the Unity, the Father having written them for the aeons, in order that by means of his letters they should know the Father.

While his wisdom contemplates the Word, and his teaching utters it, his knowledge has revealed <it>. While forbearance is a crown upon it, and his gladness is in harmony with it, his glory has exalted it, his image has revealed it, his repose has received it into itself, his love has made a body over it, his fidelity has embraced it. In this way, the Word of the Father goes forth in the totality, as the fruit of his heart and an impression of his will. But it supports the totality, purifying them, bringing them back into the Father, into the Mother, Jesus of

the infinite sweetness.

The Father reveals his bosom. - Now his bosom is the Holy Spirit. - He reveals what is hidden of him - what is hidden of him is his Son - so that through the mercies of the Father, the aeons may know him and cease laboring in search of the Father, resting there in him, knowing that this is the (final) rest. Having filled the deficiency, he abolished the form - the form of it is the world, that in which he served. - For the place where there is envy and strife is deficient, but the place where (there is) Unity is perfect. Since the deficiency came into being because the Father was not known, therefore, when the Father is known, from that moment on, the deficiency will no longer exist. As in the case of the ignorance of a person, when he comes to have knowledge, his ignorance vanishes of itself, as the darkness vanishes when the light appears, so also the deficiency vanishes in the perfection. So from that moment on, the form is not apparent, but it will vanish in the fusion of Unity, for now their works lie scattered. In time, Unity will perfect the spaces. It is within Unity that each one will attain himself; within knowledge, he will purify himself from multiplicity into Unity, consuming matter within himself like fire, and darkness by light, death by life.

If indeed these things have happened to each one of us, then we must see to it above all that the house will be holy and silent for the Unity - as in the case of some people who moved out of dwellings having jars that in spots were not good. They would break them, and the master of the house would not suffer loss. Rather, <he> is glad, because in place of the bad jars (there are) full ones which are made perfect. For such is the judgment which has come from above. It has passed judgment on everyone; it is a drawn sword, with two edges, cutting on either side. When the Word appeared, the one that is within the heart of those who utter it - it is not a sound

alone, but it became a body - a great disturbance took place among the jars, because some had been emptied, others filled; that is, some had been supplied, others poured out, some had been purified, still others broken up. All the spaces were shaken and disturbed, because they had no order nor stability. Error was upset, not knowing what to do; it was grieved, in mourning, afflicting itself because it knew nothing. When knowledge drew near it - this is the downfall of (error) and all its emanations - error is empty, having nothing inside.

Truth appeared; all its emanations knew it. They greeted the Father in truth with a perfect power that joins them with the Father. For, as for everyone who loves the truth - because the truth is the mouth of the Father; his tongue is the Holy Spirit - he who is joined to the truth is joined to the Father's mouth by his tongue, whenever he is to receive the Holy Spirit, since this is the manifestation of the Father, and his revelation to his aeons.

He manifested what was hidden of him; he explained it. For who contains, if not the Father alone? All the spaces are his emanations. They have known that they came forth from him, like children who are from a grown man. They knew that they had not yet received form, nor yet received a name, each one of which the Father begets. Then, when they receive form by his knowledge, though truly within him, they do not know him. But the Father is perfect, knowing every space within him. If he wishes, he manifests whomever he wishes, by giving him form and giving him a name, and he gives a name to him, and brings it about that those come into existence who, before they come into existence, are ignorant of him who fashioned them.

I do not say, then, that they are nothing (at all) who have not yet come into existence, but they are in him who will wish that they

come into existence when he wishes, like the time that is to come. Before all things appear, he knows what he will produce. But the fruit which is not yet manifest does not know anything, nor does it do anything. Thus also, every space which is itself in the Father is from the one who exists, who established it from what does not exist. For he who has no root has no fruit either, but though he thinks to himself, "I have come into being," yet he will perish by himself. For this reason, he who did not exist at all will never come into existence. What, then, did he wish him to think of himself? This: "I have come into being like the shadows and phantoms of the night." When the light shines on the terror which that person had experienced, he knows that it is nothing.

Thus, they were ignorant of the Father, he being the one whom they did not see. Since it was terror and disturbance and instability and doubt and division, there were many illusions at work by means of these, and (many) empty fictions, as if they were sunk in sleep, and found themselves in disturbing dreams. Either (there is) a place to which they are fleeing, or without strength they come (from) having chased after others, or they are involved in striking blows, or they are receiving blows themselves, or they have fallen from high places, or they take off into the air, though they do not even have wings. Again, sometimes (it is as) if people were murdering them, though there is no one even pursuing them, or they themselves are killing their neighbors, for they have been stained with their blood. When those who are going through all these things wake up, they see nothing, they who were in the midst of all these disturbances, for they are nothing. Such is the way of those who have cast ignorance aside from them like sleep, not esteeming it as anything, nor do they esteem its works as solid things either, but (rather,) they leave them behind like a dream in the night. The knowledge of the Father, they value as the dawn. This is the way each one has acted, as though asleep at the time when he was

ignorant. And this is the way he has <come to knowledge>, as if he had awakened. {and} Good for the man who will return and awaken. And blessed is he who has opened the eyes of the blind.

And the Spirit ran after him, hastening from waking him up. Having extended his hand to him who lay upon the ground, he set him up on his feet, for he had not yet risen. He gave them the means of knowing the knowledge of the Father and the revelation of his Son. For when they had seen him and had heard him, he granted them to taste him, and to smell him, and to touch the beloved Son.

When he had appeared, instructing them about the Father, the incomprehensible one, when he had breathed into them what is in the thought, doing his will, when many had received the light, they turned to him. For the material ones were strangers, and did not see his likeness, and had not known him. For he came by means of fleshly form, while nothing blocked his course, because incorruptibility is irresistible, since he, again, spoke new things, still speaking about what is in the heart of the Father, having brought forth the flawless Word.

When light had spoken through his mouth, as well as his voice, which gave birth to life, he gave them thought and understanding, and mercy and salvation, and the powerful spirit from the infiniteness and the sweetness of the Father. Having made punishments and tortures cease - for it was they which were leading astray from his face some who were in need of mercy, in error and in bonds - he both destroyed them with power and confounded them with knowledge. He became a way for those who were gone astray, and knowledge for those who were ignorant, a discovery for those who were searching, and a support for those who were wavering, immaculateness for those who were defiled.

He is the shepherd who left behind the

ninety-nine sheep which were not lost. He went searching for the one which had gone astray. He rejoiced when he found it, for ninety-nine is a number that is in the left hand, which holds it. But when the one is found, the entire number passes to the right (hand). As that which lacks the one - that is, the entire right (hand) - draws what was deficient and takes it from the left-hand side and brings (it) to the right, so too the number becomes one hundred. It is the sign of the one who is in their sound; it is the Father. Even on the Sabbath, he labored for the sheep which he found fallen into the pit. He gave life to the sheep, having brought it up from the pit, in order that you might know interiorly - you, the sons of interior knowledge - what is the Sabbath, on which it is not fitting for salvation to be idle, in order that you may speak from the day from above, which has no night, and from the light which does not sink, because it is perfect.

Say, then, from the heart, that you are the perfect day, and in you dwells the light that does not fail. Speak of the truth with those who search for it, and (of) knowledge to those who have committed sin in their error. Make firm the foot of those who have stumbled, and stretch out your hands to those who are ill. Feed those who are hungry, and give repose to those who are weary, and raise up those who wish to rise, and awaken those who sleep. For you are the understanding that is drawn forth. If strength acts thus, it becomes even stronger. Be concerned with yourselves; do not be concerned with other things which you have rejected from yourselves. Do not return to what you have vomited, to eat it. Do not be moths. Do not be worms, for you have already cast it off. Do not become a (dwelling) place for the devil, for you have already destroyed him. Do not strengthen (those who are) obstacles to you, who are collapsing, as though (you were) a support (for them). For the lawless one is someone to treat ill, rather than the just one. For the former does his work as a lawless person;

the latter as a righteous person does his work among others. So you, do the will of the Father, for you are from him.

For the Father is sweet, and in his will is what is good. He has taken cognizance of the things that are yours, that you might find rest in them. For by the fruits does one take cognizance of the things that are yours, because the children of the Father are his fragrance, for they are from the grace of his countenance. For this reason, the Father loves his fragrance, and manifests it in every place. And if it mixes with matter, he gives his fragrance to the light, and in his repose, he causes it to surpass every form (and) every sound. For it is not the ears that smell the fragrance, but (it is) the breath that has the sense of smell and attracts the fragrance to itself, and is submerged in the fragrance of the Father, so that he thus shelters it, and takes it to the place where it came from, from the first fragrance, which is grown cold. It is something in a psychic form, being like cold water which has frozen (?), which is on earth that is not solid, of which those who see it think it is earth; afterwards, it dissolves again. If a breath draws it, it gets hot. The fragrances, therefore, that are cold are from the division. For this reason, faith came; it dissolved the division, and it brought the warm pleroma of love, in order that the cold should not come again, but (that) there should be the unity of perfect thought.

This <is> the word of the gospel of the discovery of the pleroma, for those who await the salvation which is coming from on high. While their hope, for which they are waiting, is in waiting - they whose image is light with no shadow in it - then, at that time, the pleroma is proceeding to come. The <deficiency> of matter came to be not through the limitlessness of the Father, who is coming to give time for the deficiency, although no one could say that the incorruptible one would come in this way. But the depth of the Father was

multiplied, and the thought of error did not exist with him. It is a thing that falls, (and) it is a thing that easily stands upright (again), in the discovery of him who has come to him whom he shall bring back. For the bringing-back is called 'repentence'.

For this reason, incorruptibility breathed forth; it pursued the one who had sinned, in order that he might rest. For forgiveness is what remains for the light in the deficiency, the word of the pleroma. For the physician runs to the place where sickness is, because that is the will that is in him. He who has a deficiency, then, does not hide it, because one has what the other lacks. So the pleroma, which has no deficiency, but (which) fills up the deficiency, is what he provided from himself for filling up what he lacks, in order that therefore he might receive the grace. For when he was deficient, he did not have the grace. That is why there was diminution existing in the place where there is no grace. When that which was diminished was received, he revealed what he lacked, being (now) a pleroma; that is the discovery of the light of truth which rose upon him because it is immutable.

That is why Christ was spoken of in their midst, so that those who were disturbed might receive a bringing-back, and he might anoint them with the ointment. This ointment is the mercy of the Father, who will have mercy on them. But those whom he has anointed are the ones who have become perfect. For full jars are the ones that are usually anointed. But when the anointing of one (jar) is dissolved, it is emptied, and the reason for there being a deficiency is the thing by which its ointment goes. For at that time a breath draws it, a thing in the power of that which is with it. But from him who has no deficiency, no seal is removed, nor is anything emptied, but what he lacks, the perfect Father fills again. He is good. He knows his plantings, because it is he who planted them in his paradise. Now his

paradise is his place of rest.

This is the perfection in the thought of the Father, and these are the words of his meditation. Each one of his words is the work of his one will in the revelation of his Word. While they were still depths of his thought, the Word, which was first to come forth, revealed them, along with a mind that speaks the one Word in silent grace. He was called 'thought', since they were in it before being revealed. It came about, then, that he was first to come forth, at the time when the will of him who willed desired it. And the will is what the Father rests in, and is pleased with. Nothing happens without him, nor does anything happen without the will of the Father, but his will is unsearchable. His trace is the will, and no one will know him, nor is it possible for one to scrutinize him, in order to grasp him. But when he wills, what he wills is this - even if the sight does not please them in any way before God - desiring the Father. For he knows the beginning of all of them, and their end. For at their end, he will question them directly. Now, the end is receiving knowledge about the one who is hidden, and this is the Father, from whom the beginning came forth, (and) to whom all will return who have come forth from him. And they have appeared for the glory and the joy of his name.

Now the name of the Father is the Son. It is he who first gave a name to the one who came forth from him, who was himself, and he begot him as a son. He gave him his name, which belonged to him; he is the one to whom belongs all that exists around him, the Father. His is the name; his is the Son. It is possible for him to be seen. The name, however, is invisible, because it alone is the mystery of the invisible, which comes to ears that are completely filled with it by him. For indeed, the Father's name is not spoken, but (rather,) it is apparent through a Son.

In this way, then, the name is a great thing.

Who, therefore, will be able to utter a name for him, the great name, except him alone to whom the name belongs, and the sons of the name, in whom rested the name of the Father, (who) in turn themselves rested in his name? Since the Father is unengendered, he alone is the one who begot him for him(self) as a name, before he brought forth the aeons, in order that the name of the Father should be over their head as lord, that is the name in truth, which is firm in his command, through perfect power. For the name is not from (mere) words, nor does his name consist of appellations, but (rather,) it is invisible. He gave a name to him alone, since he alone sees him, he alone having the power to give him a name. For he who does not exist has no name. For what name is given to him who does not exist? But the one who exists, exists also with his name, and he alone knows it, and (he) alone (knows how) to give him a name. It is the Father. The Son is his name. He did not, therefore, hide it in the thing, but it existed; as for the Son, he alone gave a name. The name, therefore, is that of the Father, as the name of the Father is the Son. Where indeed would compassion find a name, except with the Father?

But no doubt one will say to his neighbor: "Who is it who will give a name to him who existed before himself, as if offspring did not receive a name from those who begot <them>?" First, then, it is fitting for us to reflect on this matter: What is the name? It is the name in truth; it is not therefore the name from the Father, for it is the one which is the proper name. Therefore, he did not receive the name on loan, as (do) others, according to the form in which each one is to be produced. But this is the proper name. There is no one else who gave it to him. But he <is> unnamable, indescribable, until the time when he who is perfect spoke of him alone. And it is he who has the power to speak his name, and to see it.

When, therefore, it pleased him that his

name, which is loved, should be his Son, and he gave the name to him, that is, him who came forth from the depth, he spoke about his secret things, knowing that the Father is a being without evil. For that very reason, he brought him forth in order to speak about the place, and (about) his resting-place, from which he had come forth, and to glorify the pleroma, the greatness of his name, and the sweetness of the Father. About the place each one came from, he will speak, and to the region where he received his establishment, he will hasten to return again and to take from that place - the place where he stood - receiving a taste from that place, and receiving nourishment, receiving growth. And his own resting-place is his pleroma.

Therefore, all the emanations of the Father are pleromas, and the root of all his emanations is in the one who made them all grow up in himself. He assigned them their destinies. Each one, then, is manifest, in order that through their own thought <...>. For the place to which they send their thought, that place, their root, is what takes them up in all the heights, to the Father. They possess his head, which is rest for them, and they are supported, approaching him, as though to say that they have participated in his face by means of kisses. But they do not become manifest in this way, for they are not themselves exalted; (yet) neither did they lack the glory of the Father, nor did they think of him as small, nor that he is harsh, nor that he is wrathful, but (rather that) he is a being without evil, imperturbable, sweet, knowing all spaces before they have come into existence, and he had no need to be instructed.

This is the manner of those who possess (something) from above of the immensurable greatness, as they wait for the one alone, and the perfect one, the one who is there for them. And they do not go down to Hades, nor have they envy nor groaning nor death within them, but (rather) they rest in him who is at rest, not

striving nor being twisted around the truth. But they themselves are the truth; and the Father is within them, and they are in the Father, being perfect, being undivided in the truly good one, being in no way deficient in anything, but they are set at rest, refreshed in the Spirit. And they will heed their root. They will be concerned with those (things) in which he will find his root, and not suffer loss to his soul. This is the place of the blessed; this is their place.

For the rest, then, may they know, in their places, that it is not fitting for me, having come to be in the resting-place, to speak of anything else. But it is in it that I shall come to be, and (it is fitting) to be concerned at all times with the Father of the all, and the true brothers, those upon whom the love of the Father is poured out, and in whose midst there is no lack of him. They are the ones who appear in truth, since they exist in true and eternal life, and (since they) speak of the light which is perfect, and (which is) filled with the seed of the Father, and which is in his heart and in the pleroma, while his Spirit rejoices in it and glorifies the one in whom it existed, because he is good. And his children are perfect and worthy of his name, for he is the Father; it is children of this kind that he loves.

Original translation of this text was prepared by members of the Coptic Gnostic Library Project of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont Graduate School.

The Coptic Gnostic Library Project was funded by UNESCO, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and other Institutions.

E. J. Brill has asserted copyright on texts published by the Coptic Gnostic Library Project.

The translation presented here has been edited, modified and formatted for use in the Gnostic Society Library.

For academic citation, please refer to published editions of this text.

| [Nag Hammadi Library](#) | [Gnostic Society Library](#) | [Gnosis Archive](#) |