

# THE GOSPEL OF MARY MAGDALENE

## Page 7 (Pages 1-6 are missing)

The disciples asked:<sup>1</sup> "Teach us about the material world. Will it last forever, or is everything impermanent?"<sup>2</sup>

The Saviour answered: "All that is created, everything that is formed, every natural thing, all exist interdependently<sup>3</sup> in and with each other. Then each will be dissolved again back into its own roots. It is the way of nature that everything will eventually decompose back into its own elements<sup>4</sup>. Those who have ears, let them hear."

Peter said to him: "While you are explaining everything to us, tell us one more thing: What is the sin of the world?"

The Saviour answered: "There is no such thing as sin<sup>5</sup>, you only make it appear when you act according to the habits of your adulterated nature: that is how what you call 'sin' manifests<sup>6</sup>. This is why the Good has come into your midst, pursuing the good which is in everyone, to restore it inward to its root." Then he continued, saying: "This is what sickens and destroys you: it is your love for the things that deceive you. Those who have ears, let them hear. Whoever can understand, let them understand!"

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<sup>1</sup> 'The disciples asked' is an addition but is helpful to set the scene and seems uncontroversial.

<sup>2</sup> Intentional Buddhist reference in using 'impermanent'. Some of the interpretations in this translation include understandings from a Buddhist perspective.

<sup>3</sup> Another intentional Buddhist reference 'interdependent', this also sits well with a Franciscan view of our relationship and connection with the rest of creation.

<sup>4</sup> Tuckett p139 The Saviour's answer here is that, while all material things—'all natures, all forms, all creatures' form a unity at present, they will all 'be dissolved again into their roots'. 'Root' here probably means 'original state', so that what is being claimed is that the destiny of all material things, all 'matter', is that they will be dissolved into their original constituent parts.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward* p12 'theologically and objectively speaking, we are already in union with God. But it is very hard for people to believe or experience this....' See also Julian of Norwich

<sup>6</sup> Buddhist understanding that ultimately suffering and the causes of suffering are essentially illusory, we make them appear. In more Christian language, we are always in direct personal union with God if only we knew it, but we habitually behave in ways which obscure this and we reap the consequences of our actions, of our falling in love with the things that deceive us. *Quaker Faith and Practice* 26.31 – Divine Love "does not create heaven and hell for us, but allows us to do that for ourselves."

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“Attachment<sup>7</sup> to matter gives rise to incomparable<sup>8</sup> suffering<sup>9</sup>, because it goes against your true nature<sup>10</sup>. Then the whole body becomes disturbed. This is why I taught you to find contentment at the level of the heart. When you feel disturbed and out of balance, you can find that contentment again through revelations of your true nature. Those who have ears, let them hear.”

When the Blessed One had said these things, he embraced them all and took his leave<sup>11</sup>, saying:

“Peace be with you! Cultivate<sup>12</sup> my peace within yourselves!

Be vigilant, and don't let anyone lead you astray by saying 'Here it is' or 'There it is', for the Son of Man, the Child of True Humanity, lives within each one of you. This is what you should follow! I tell you, those who look for this within will surely find it.

Go then and proclaim the gospel of the New Realm<sup>13</sup>!”

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<sup>7</sup> Following deBoer's understanding that it is not matter per se which is problematic, but our distorted relationship with it. Another Buddhist reference in 'attachment', following Leloup and Bauman

<sup>8</sup> **Incomparable** passion or suffering as it cannot be **compared** with any worldly or divine blueprint see Tuckett p145 At one level, the claim that the 'passion' concerned has 'no image' and comes from what is 'contrary to nature' may simply be claiming that it has no ultimate reality, or at least no corresponding entity in the world of ultimate reality.

<sup>9</sup> Suffering, passion, instability, confusion.

<sup>10</sup> Compare with the 'adulterated nature' of page 7

<sup>11</sup> Parkhouse “Translation issues 8,13. ἀναξέ from ἀπάζομαι is usually translated as 'greeted' as Wilson/MacRae, Tuckett, Bass; 'salua', Pasquier. However, it can also be used as to 'say farewell', e.g. Acts 20.1, 21.6. | 8,15”

<sup>12</sup> See Tuckett p152 peace, that is to be 'acquired' or 'engendered' by the disciples themselves. The precise meaning of the verb used here is not certain, though it does seem to imply an element of active involvement and responsibility on the part of the disciples. The peace, although it is in one sense Jesus' peace, is also something they are meant to acquire and/or engender for themselves.

<sup>13</sup> The usual translation as Kingdom has connotations of empire and imposed hierarchical authority which seem inconsistent with the message of this gospel. An alternative might be 'commonwealth' although this too has colonial overtones.

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“Do not lay down any rules other than what I have given you.

Do not establish more laws like the lawmaker, or else you too will become constrained by them.”

When he had said these things, he departed from them.

The disciples grieved bitterly, shedding many tears and saying:

“How are we supposed to go out preaching to the rest of the world, proclaiming the gospel of the New Realm? If they did not spare him, then how will they spare us?”

Then Mary stood up. She embraced them all, kissing<sup>14</sup> them tenderly and began to speak to her brothers and sisters:

“There is no need<sup>15</sup> to remain stuck<sup>16</sup> in sorrow, grief, and doubt! For his Grace will be with you all; it will guide you, comfort you, shelter, and protect you<sup>17</sup>.

Rather, let us be thankful and praise his greatness, for he has brought us together and prepared us for this. Through him, we too can become fully human.”

Saying these things, Mary turned their hearts inward toward the Good, and they began to wrestle<sup>18</sup> with the meaning of the Saviour's words and to discuss his sayings<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Including both Coptic and Greek, see King

<sup>15</sup> Invitational language rather than a command

<sup>16</sup> Not to say that grief is wrong, rather that it is a process to pass through rather than to remain stuck in. And that ‘his Grace’ will help that process.

<sup>17</sup> Expanded translation, see Leloup, King and Parkhouse

<sup>18</sup> Parkhouse points out that gymnazo has a combative meaning, it derives from athletic training and is where we get the word ‘gym’ from.

<sup>19</sup> Jennnott + Bauman + Tuckkett(Gk)

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Then Peter said to Mary, "Sister, we know that you are greatly loved by the Saviour, more than any other woman. Tell us those words of His that you remember, the things which you know and we don't, the teachings we never heard."

Mary answered, saying: "What is hidden from you I shall reveal to you. Whatever is unknown to you, and I remember, I will tell you."<sup>20</sup>

And she began saying these words to them.

She said, "Once I saw the Lord in a vision and I said to him: 'Lord, Rabouni, now I see you in this vision.'

He answered me and said: 'Blessed are you Mary, for you do not waver at the sight of me. How wonderful you are!<sup>21</sup> For this is where the treasure lies - in the *nous*, that place where heaven and earth meet, where deep understanding arises in the heart and mind."<sup>22</sup>

I asked him this: 'Now tell me Lord, how does a person see such a vision, is it through their soul or through the Spirit?'

The Saviour answered: 'It is neither through the soul nor through the Spirit, but through the *nous*, the understanding which arises between the two, that is how the vision is seen.'"

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<sup>20</sup> Using both the Gk and the Coptic

<sup>21</sup> Using both the Gk and the Coptic

<sup>22</sup> The term 'nous' is left untranslated, as there is no exact English equivalent, but it then warrants some explanation which is an addition.

**Pages 11-14 are missing.**

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And Craving spoke:

“I didn't see you on your way down, but now I see you ascending.

Why are you lying? You're controlled by me!”

The Soul responded: “I saw you, but you never really saw me or knew me. You mistook the cloak I was wearing for my true self, so you didn't recognise me.” Having said all this, the Soul went away rejoicing.

Again, the Soul came into the realm of the third Authority<sup>23</sup>, which is called Ignorance.

This scrutinised the Soul closely and interrogated it, saying: “Where do you think you're going? You are the slave of malicious habits, trapped and held prisoner by your own wicked inclinations. You lack discrimination, so your judgement is unsound!<sup>24</sup>”

The Soul said: “Why are you being judgemental to me, even though I have not been judgemental? I have been dominated, but I myself have not constrained anyone. I was never recognised for my true self, but I have recognised this: that everything is impermanent, the whole of creation will be dissolved. All worldly things, all heavenly things, everything passes, everything will be released.”

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<sup>23</sup> These authorities or powers can be seen in relation to our adulterated nature p7, the causes of ‘incomparable suffering’ p8, the cultivation of divine peace p8 and the Good coming into our midst p7 Dialogue with shadow side – see Gabor Mate, Carl Jung etc .....Release comes with divine assistance, and through non-judgemental recognition and the practice of speaking truth to power (see Saxon), Parrhesia. See also *No Bad Parts*, Richard Schwartz

<sup>24</sup> literally, ‘do not judge!’ Note the subtle difference between ‘being judgemental’ and ‘having good judgement.’

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Liberated from the realm of the third Authority, the Soul continued its ascent, and came face to face with the fourth, the Authority of Wrath.

This took on seven manifestations. The first was obscurity<sup>25</sup>; the second, craving; the third, ignorance, the fourth, the longing for oblivion<sup>26</sup>; the fifth, enslavement to the demands of the body, the sixth was foolish worldly wisdom, the seventh, the hot-tempered certainty of anger.

These formed the seven-fold Authority of Wrath, which interrogated the Soul, demanding: "Where do you come from, murderer? and, where do you think you're going, deserter?"

The Soul responded: "It is what constrained<sup>27</sup> me that has been vanquished, and what surrounded me that has been overcome. It's my craving that has come to an end, and my ignorance that has died."

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<sup>25</sup> The term 'Darkness' has hurtful connotations for some people and is best avoided here. Let us find an alternative! Unseeing, Lost and unseeing, Hidden, head-in-the-sand, obscurity, murkiness, fear of darkness....?

<sup>26</sup> Literally, jealousy of death

<sup>27</sup> The Soul has not murdered its human body or self. Rather what has been vanquished has been those patterns of thought and behaviour which were constraining the soul from reaching its full human potential in this worldly existence. Has it murdered aspects of personality, or liberated the self to become more authentic? In Gabor Mate's understanding, some aspects of our personalities are maladaptive behaviour patterns which we adopt in early childhood to shield ourselves from hurt. But they have been effective and necessary coping strategies, which we can now learn to grow out of, in order to better access and express our authentic selves. Thus, they are to be approached with compassion, rather than with a judgemental or aggressive attitude.

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I have been set free from one world with the aid of another world, from one way of doing things through a higher way. I have been liberated from the chains of forgetfulness which are both temporary and temporal<sup>28</sup>. From this moment on, now and for all seasons, I am released into silent restfulness<sup>29</sup>, where time rests in the eternity of time<sup>30</sup>.”

After saying these things Mary settled into silence: that place of sanctuary<sup>31</sup> to which the Saviour’s words had brought her.

But Andrew responded and said to the brothers and sisters: “Tell me, what do you think about all that she has been telling us? Say what you will, but I for one don’t believe that the Saviour would have said such things! Certainly, these are strange teachings, it all seems quite different from his way of thinking.”

After some consideration, Peter responded in a similar way.

He questioned the brothers about the Saviour:

“Did he really speak secretly with a woman and not openly so that we could all hear? Are we just going to turn around and listen to her?

Did he really choose her and prefer her to us? Surely, he wouldn't have wanted to show that she is more worthy than we are?”

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<sup>28</sup> “Which exist only for a time” AND “which exist only within the dimension of time” - both are valid and meaningful translations, both apply.

<sup>29</sup> Wisdom of the Desert Fathers : “A clear unobstructed vision of the true state of affairs; an intuitive grasp of one’s own inner reality as anchored, or rather lost, in God through Christ. The fruit of this was *quies*: ‘rest.’....a kind of simple nowhere-ness and no-mindedness that had lost all preoccupation with a false or limited ‘self.’”

<sup>30</sup> “Where the soul, purified of all that it is not, comes into possession of its own timelessness.” - W.B.Yeats

<sup>31</sup> Often translated as ‘point’, the Coptic word here for ‘place’ has meanings of dwelling place or home, and can also refer to a temple, shrine, monastery, or a monk’s cell. After the Soul is released into silent restfulness, Mary as narrator also settles into silence with a sense of coming home to that peaceful place to which the Saviour had guided her.

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Then Mary wept. She said to Peter:

"My brother, Peter, what are you thinking? Do you really believe that I made all this up, or that I would tell lies about our Saviour?"

Levi also responded to Peter, saying:

"Peter, you have always been hot-tempered from the beginning, and now we see you arguing against this woman as if you were her adversary.

Yet if the Saviour deemed her worthy, indeed if he himself has made her worthy<sup>32</sup>, then who are you to despise and reject her?

Surely the Saviour's knowledge of her is completely reliable. That is why he loved her more than us.

Brothers, we should be ashamed of our behaviour<sup>33</sup>. We should cloak ourselves with True Humanity<sup>34</sup>. Let us follow his instructions and cultivate this in ourselves. We should do as we were instructed and proclaim the good news the Saviour taught, never laying down any rules or laws beyond what he himself gave.

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<sup>32</sup> Giving both the Coptic and Greek readings here

<sup>33</sup> 'ashamed' has difficult connotations – However, there is a case for arguing that the patriarchal forces of power in the church might indeed express regret for some of its past behaviour. Blame is as unconstructive as denial and can perpetuate a victim narrative without resolving anything. Shame is better applied to actions than to people, lest they are made to seem irredeemable. But for an individual or group to be ashamed of past behaviour can mean the open recognition of mistakes which have been made, and a declared intention to change those patterns of behaviour. There is a clear difference between the shaming of others, and a free personal choice to be ashamed of one's past actions, which might lead to the changes of heart required as we learn to cloak ourselves with True Humanity.

<sup>34</sup> Like Paul's 'cloak ourselves with Christ.' Also referencing the garments from p15



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After Levi had said these things, they started going out to teach and to proclaim the gospel.....

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARY

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