The Gospel of Mary of Magdala

Jesus and the first woman apostle

Leather cover of the Berlin Codex.
antiquity it was not necessary to burn books one wanted to suppress (although this was occasionally done); if they weren’t recopied, they disappeared through neglect. As far as we know, the Gospel of Mary was never recopied after the fifth century; it may have been that the Gospel of Mary was actively suppressed, but it is also possible that it simply dropped out of circulation. Either way, whether its loss resulted from animosity or neglect, the recovery of the Gospel of Mary, in however fragmentary condition, is due in equal measure to phenomenal serendipity and extraordinary good fortune.

Achmim is located in central Egypt along the Nile, less than a hundred miles from the site of another important manuscript find near Nag Hammadi. Oxyrhynchus, the site of the discovery of the Greek fragments of the Gospel of Mary, lies far to the north.

Chapter 2

Translation

Papyrus Berolinensis 8502.1

1 (Pages 1-6 are missing.)

2 The nature of matter
   “... Will matter then be utterly destroyed or not?”
   The Savior replied, “Every nature, every modeled form, every creature, exists in and with each other. They will dissolve again into their own proper root. For the nature of matter is dissolved into what belongs to its nature. Anyone with two ears able to hear should listen!”

3 The nature of sin and the Good
   Then Peter said to him, “You have been explaining every topic to us; tell us one other thing. What is the sin of the world?”
   The Savior replied, “There is no such thing as sin; rather you yourselves are what produces sin when you act in accordance with the nature of adultery, which is called ‘sin.’ For this reason, the Good came among you, pursuing (the good) which belongs to every nature. It will set it within its root.”
Then he continued. He said, "This is why you get [c]k and die: because [you love] what de[c]e[ve]s [you]. [(Anyone who) thinks should consider (these matters)!]

A letter gave birth to a passion that has no Image because it derives from what is contrary to nature. A disturbing confusion then occurred in the whole body. That is why I told you, 'Become content at heart,' while also remaining discontent and disobedient; indeed become contented and agreeable (only) in the presence of that other Image of nature. Anyone with two ears capable of hearing should listen!"

4 The Savior's farewell
1. When the Blessed One had said these things, he greeted them all. "Peace be with you!" he said. "Acquire my peace within yourselves!"
2. Be on your guard so that no one deceives you by saying, 'Look over here!' or 'Look over there!' For the child of true Humanity exists within you. Follow it! Those who search for it will find it.
3. Go then, preach the good news about the Realm. Do not lay down any rule beyond what I determined for you, "nor promulgate law like the lawgiver, or else you might be dominated by it."

Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 3525
11. ... having said [th]ese things, he de[parted.]

5 Mary comforts the other disciples
1. But they were distressed and wept greatly. [How are we going to go out to the rest of the world to announce the good news about the Realm of the child of true Humanity?] they said. 3. If they did not spare him, how will they spare us?

Then Mary stood up. She greeted them all, addressing her brothers and sisters, "Do not weep and be distressed nor let your hearts be irresolute. For his grace will be with you all and will shelter you. Rather we should praise his greatness, for he has prepared us and made us true Human beings."

When Mary had said these things, she turned their heart toward the Good, and they began to debate about the words of the Savior.

Peter asks Mary to teach
1. Peter said to Mary, "Sister, we know that the Savior loved you more than all other women. Tell us the words of the Savior which you remember, the things which you know that we don't because we haven't heard them."

Mary responded, "I will teach you about what is hidden from you." And she began to speak these words to them.

Vision and mind
1. He said, "I saw the Lord in a vision and I said to him, 'Lord, I saw you today in a vision.'"
2. He answered me, 'How wonderful you are for not wavering at seeing me! For where the mind is, there is the treasure."
3. I said to him, 'So now, Lord, does a person who sees a vision see it with the soul or with the spirit?"

POxy 3525
weep, do not be distressed nor be in doubt. "[For his grace will be with you sheltering you."
"Rather [we should] praise his [great]ness, for he has united us and [made (us)] true Human beings."
"[When Mary said these things] she turned their mind to[ward the Good] and they
to debate about the sayings of the Savior.

Peter asks Mary to teach
1. Peter said to Mary, "Sister, we know that you were greatly [loved by the Sav]ior, as no other woman.
2. Therefore tell us [those wor]ds of the Savior which [you know] but which we haven't heard."
3. Mary replied, "I will report to you as much as I remember that is unknown to you." [And she began (to speak) the]se words [to them].

7 Vision and mind
1. "When [the Lord] appeared to me in a vision, [I said], 'Lord, today I saw you.'"
2. "He replied, 'How wonderful you are ... ' "}
BG 8502

"The Savior answered, 'A person does not see with the soul or with the spirit. Rather the mind, which exists between these two, sees the vision and that is what …'

8 (Pages 11-14 are missing.)

9 The ascent of the soul

22And Desire said, "I did not see you go down, yet now I see you go up. So why do you lie since you belong to me?"

24The soul answered, 'I saw you. You did not see me nor did you know me. You (mis)took the garment (I wore) for my (true) self. And you did not recognize me.'

27After it had said these things, it left rejoicing greatly.

28Again, it came to the third Power, which is called 'Ignorance.'

"[It] examined the soul closely, saying, 'Where are you going?' You are bound by wickedness. Indeed you are bound! Do not judge!"

29And the soul said, 'Why do you judge me, since I have not passed judgement? I have been bound, but I have not bound anything. They did not recognize me, but I have recognized that the universe is to be dissolved, both the things of earth and those of heaven.'

16"When the soul had brought the third Power to naught, it went upward and saw the fourth Power. It had seven forms. The first is darkness; the second is desire; the third is ignorance; the fourth is zeal for death; the fifth is the realm of the flesh; the sixth is the foolish wisdom of the flesh; the seventh is the wisdom of the wrathful person. These are the seven Powers of Wrath.

28"They interrogated the soul, 'Where are you coming from, human-killer, and where are you going, space-conqueror?'

29"The soul replied, saying, 'What binds me has been slain, and what surrounds me has been destroyed, and my desire has been brought to an end, and ignorance has died.' In a world, I was set loose from a world in a type, from a type which is above, and (from) the chain of forgetfulness which exists in time. From this hour on, for the time of the due season of the aeon, I will receive rest silence.'"

Papyrus Rylands 463 (PRy1)

29a "… for the rest of the course of the [due] measure of the time of the aeon, I will rest silence."

BG 8502

30After Mary had said these things, she was silent, since it was up to this point that the Savior had spoken to her.

10 The disciples' dispute over Mary's teaching

1Andrew responded, addressing the brothers and sisters, "Say what you will about the things she has said, but I do not believe that the Savior said these things, for indeed these teachings are strange ideas."

3Peter responded, bringing up similar concerns. He questioned them about the Savior: "Did he, then, speak with a woman in private without our knowing about it? Are we to turn around and listen to her? Did he choose her over us?"

5Then Mary wept and said to Peter, "My brother Peter, what are you imagining? Do you think that I have thought up these things by myself in my heart or that I am telling lies about the Savior?"

7Levi answered, speaking to Peter, "Peter, you have always been a wrathful person. Now I see you contending against the woman like the A撒irs. For if the Savior made her worthy, who are you then for your part to reject her? Assuredly the Savior's knowledge of her is completely reliable. That is why he loved her more than us. Rather we should be

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30After she had said these words, Mary was silent, for the Savior had spoken up to this point.

10 The disciples' dispute over Mary's teaching

1Andrew said, "Brothers, what is your opinion of what was just said? Indeed I do not believe that the Savior said these things, for what she said appears to give views that are different from what is thought."

2After examining these matters, Peter said, "Has the Savior spoken secretly to whom and not openly so that we would all hear? Surely he did not want to show that she is more worthy than we are?"

4... about the Savior.

7Levi said to Peter, "Peter, you are all ways ready to give way to your perpetual inclination to anger. And even now you are doing exactly that by questioning the woman as though you're her adversary. If the Savior considered her to be worthy, who are you to disregard her? For he knew her completely (and) loved her steal[d]ast[ly]."

11Rath[e]r [we] should be ashamed and, once we have clothed ourselves with the
BG 8502

Is ashamed. We should clothe ourselves with the perfect Human, acquire it for ourselves as he commanded us, and announce the good news, not laying down any other rule or law that differs from what the Savior said.

After he had said these things, they started going out to teach and to preach.

PRyI 463

Perfect Human, we should do what we were commanded. We should announce the good news as the Savior said, and not be laying down any rules or making laws.

After he had said these things, Levi left (and) began to announce the good news.

[The Gospel according to Mary]