

# *The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit*

Translated by Alexander Bohlig and Frederik Wisse

Two versions of the formerly lost *Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit*, also inappropriately called the *Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians* (which is quite distinct from the Greek Gospel of the Egyptians), were among the codices in the Nag Hammadi library, discovered in 1945.

The main contents concern the Sethian Gnostic understanding of how the earth came into being, how Seth, in the Gnostic interpretation, is incarnated as Jesus in order to release people's souls from the evil prison that is creation.

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The holy book of the Egyptians about the great invisible Spirit, the Father whose name cannot be uttered, he who came forth from the heights of the perfection, the light of the light of the aeons of light, the light of the silence of the providence <and> the Father of the silence, the light of the word and the truth, the light of the incorruptions, the infinite light, the radiance from the aeons of light of the unrevealable, unmarked, ageless, unproclaimable Father, the aeon of the aeons, Autogenes, self-begotten, self-producing, alien, the really true aeon.

Three powers came forth from him; they are the Father, the Mother, (and) the Son, from the living silence, what came forth from the incorruptible Father. These came forth from the silence of the unknown Father.

And from that place, Domedon Doxomedon came forth, the aeon of the aeons and the light of each one of their powers. And thus the Son came forth fourth; the Mother fifth; the Father sixth. He was [...] but unheralded; it is he who is unmarked among all the powers, the glories, and the incorruptions.

From that place, the three powers came forth, the three ogdoads that the Father brings forth in silence with his providence, from his bosom, i.e., the Father, the Mother, (and) the Son.

The <first> ogdoad, because of which the thrice-male child came forth, which is the thought, and the word, and the incorruption, and the eternal life, the will, the mind, and the foreknowledge, the androgynous Father.

The second ogdoad-power, the Mother, the virginal Barbelon, epititioch[...]ai, memeneaimen[...], who presides over the heaven, karb[...], the uninterpretable power, the ineffable Mother. She originated from herself [...]; she came forth; she agreed with the Father of the silent silence.

The third ogdoad-power, the Son of the silent silence, and the crown of the silent silence, and the glory of the Father, and the virtue of the Mother, he brings forth from the bosom the seven powers of the great light of the seven voices. And the word is their completion.

These are the three powers, the three ogdoads that the Father, through his providence, brought forth from his bosom. He brought them forth at that place.

Domedon Doxomedon came forth, the aeon of the aeons, and the throne which is in him, and the powers which surround him, the glories and the incorruptions. The Father of the great light who came forth from the silence, he is the great Doxomedon-aeon, in which the thrice- male child rests. And the throne of his glory was established in it, this one on which his unrevealable name is inscribed, on the tablet [...] one is the word, the Father of the light of everything, he who came forth from the silence, while he rests in the silence, he whose name is in an invisible symbol. A hidden, invisible mystery came

forth:

iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE oooooooooooooooooooooo  
uuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa  
OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO (the 7 vowels, 22 times each).

And in this way, the three powers gave praise to the great, invisible, unnameable, virginal, uncallable Spirit, and his male virgin. They asked for a power. A silence of living silence came forth, namely glories and incorruptions in the aeons [...] aeons, myriads added on [...], the three males, the three male offspring, the male races ...(IV 55, 5-7 adds: ... the glories of the Father, the glories of the great Christ, and the male offspring, the races ...)

... filled the great Doxomedon-aeon with the power of the word of the whole pleroma.

Then the thrice-male child of the great Christ, whom the great invisible Spirit had anointed - he whose power was called 'Aion' - gave praise to the great invisible Spirit and his male virgin Yoel, and the silence of silent silence, and the greatness that [...] ineffable. [...] ineffable [...] unanswerable and uninterpretable, the first one who has come forth, and (who is) unproclaimable, [...] which is wonderful [...] ineffable [...], he who has all the greatnesses of greatness of the silence at that place. The thrice-male child brought praise, and asked for a power from the great, invisible, virginal Spirit.

Then there appeared at that place [...], who [...], who sees glories [...] treasures in a [...] invisible mysteries to [...] of the silence, who is the male virgin Youel.

Then the child of the child, Esephech, appeared.

And thus he was completed, namely, the Father, the Mother, the Son, the five seals, the unconquerable power which is the great Christ of all the incorruptible ones. ... (one line unrecoverable)... holy [...] the end, the incorruptible [...], and [...], they are powers and glories and incorruptions [...]. They came forth ... (5 lines unrecoverable)... This one brought praise to the unrevealable, hidden mystery [...] the hidden ... (4 lines unrecoverable)... him in the [...], and the aeons [...] thrones, [...] and each one [...] myriads of powers without number surround them, glories and incorruptions [...] and they [...] of the Father, and the Mother, and the Son, and the whole pleroma, which I mentioned before, and the five seals, and the mystery of mysteries. They appeared ... (3 lines unrecoverable)... who presides over [...], and the aeons of [...] really truly [...] and the ... (4 lines unrecoverable)... and the really truly eternal aeons.

Then providence came forth from silence, and the living silence of the Spirit, and the Word of the Father, and a light. She [...] the five seals which the Father brought forth from his bosom, and she passed through all the aeons which I mentioned before. And she established thrones of glory, and myriads of angels without number who surrounded them, powers and incorruptible glories, who sing and give glory, all giving praise with a single voice, with one accord, with one never-silent voice, [...] to the Father, and the Mother, and the Son [...], and all the pleromas that I mentioned before, who is the great Christ, who is from silence, who is the incorruptible child Telmael Telmachael Eli Eli Machar Machar Seth, the power which really truly lives, and the male virgin who is with him, Youel, and Esephech, the holder of glory, the child of the child, and the crown of his glory, [...] of the five seals, the pleroma that I mentioned before. There, the great self-begotten living Word came forth, the true god, the unborn physis, he whose name I shall tell, saying, [...]iaia[...] thaOthOsth[...], who is the son of the great Christ, who is the son of the ineffable silence, who came forth from the great invisible and incorruptible Spirit. The son of the silence and silence appeared ... (one line unrecoverable)... invisible [...] man and the treasures of his glory. Then he appeared in

the revealed [...]. And he established the four aeons. With a word he established them. He brought praise to the great, invisible, virginal Spirit, the silence of the Father, in a silence of the living silence of silence, the place where the man rests ... (two lines unrecoverable) Then there came forth at/from that place the cloud of the great light, the living power, the mother of the holy, incorruptible ones, the great power, the Mirothoe. And she gave birth to him whose name I name, saying, ien ien ea ea ea, three times. For this one, Adamas, is a light which radiated from the light; he is the eye of the light. For this is the first man, he through whom and to whom everything came into being, (and) without whom nothing came into being. The unknowable, incomprehensible Father came forth. He came down from above for the annulment of the deficiency. Then the great Logos, the divine Autogenes, and the incorruptible man Adamas mingled with each other. A Logos of man came into being. However, the man came into being through a word.

He gave praise to the great, invisible, incomprehensible, virginal Spirit, and the male virgin, and the thrice-male child, and the male virgin Youel, and Esephech, the holder of glory, the child of the child and the crown of his glory, and the great Doxomedon-aeon, and the thrones which are in him, and the powers which surround him, the glories and the incorruptions, and their whole pleroma which I mentioned before, and the ethereal earth, the receiver of God, where the holy men of the great light receive shape, the men of the Father of the silent, living silence, the Father and their whole pleroma, as I mentioned before.

The great Logos, the divine Autogenes, and the incorruptible man Adamas gave praise, (and) they asked for a power and eternal strength for the Autogenes, for the completion of the four aeons, in order that, through them, there may appear [...] the glory and the power of the invisible Father of the holy men of the great light which will come to the world, which is the image of the night. The incorruptible man Adamas asked for them a

son out of himself, in order that he (the son) may become father of the immovable, incorruptible race, so that, through it (the race), the silence and the voice may appear, and, through it, the dead aeon may raise itself, so that it may dissolve.

And thus there came forth from above the power of the great light, the Manifestation.

She gave birth to the four great lights: Harmozel, Oroiael, Davithe, Eleleth, and the great incorruptible Seth, the son of the incorruptible man Adamas.

And thus the perfect hebdomad, which exists in hidden mysteries, became complete.

When she receives the glory, she becomes eleven ogdoads.

And the Father nodded approval; the whole pleroma of the lights was well pleased.

Their consorts came forth for the completion of the ogdoad of the divine Autogenes: the Grace of the first light Harmozel, the Perception of the second light Oroiael, the Understanding of the third light Davithe, the Prudence of the fourth light Eleleth. This is the first ogdoad of the divine Autogenes.

And the Father nodded approval; the whole pleroma of the lights was well pleased. The <ministers> came forth: the first one, the great Gamaliel (of) the first great light Harmozel, and the great Gabriel (of) the second great light Oroiael, and the great Samlo of the great light Davithe, and the great Abrasax of the great light Eleleth. And the consorts of these came forth by the will of the good pleasure of the Father: the Memory of the great one, the first, Gamaliel; the Love of the great one, the second, Gabriel; the Peace of the third one, the great Samblo; the eternal Life of the great one, the fourth, Abrasax. Thus were the five ogdoads completed, a total of forty, as an uninterpretable power.

Then the great Logos, the Autogenes, and the word of the pleroma of the four lights gave praise to the great, invisible, uncallable, virginal Spirit, and the male virgin, and the great Doxomedon-aeon, and the thrones which are in them, and the powers which surround them, glories, authorities, and the powers, <and> the thrice-male child, and the male virgin Youel, and Esephech, the holder of glory, the child of the child and the crown of his glory, the whole pleroma, and all the glories which are there, the infinite pleromas <and> the unnameable aeons, in order that they may name the Father the fourth, with the incorruptible race, (and) that they may call the seed of the Father the seed of the great Seth.

Then everything shook, and trembling took hold of the incorruptible ones. Then the three male children came forth from above, down into the unborn ones, and the selfbegotten

ones, and those who were begotten in what is begotten. The greatness came forth, the whole greatness of the great Christ. He established thrones in glory, myriads without number, in the four aeons around them, myriads without number, powers and glories and incorruptions. And they came forth in this way.

And the incorruptible, spiritual church increased in the four lights of the great, living Autogenes, the god of truth, praising, singing, (and) giving glory with one voice, with one

accord, with a mouth which does not rest, to the Father, and the Mother, and the Son, and their whole pleroma, just as I mentioned <before>. The five seals which possess the myriads, and they who rule over the aeons, and they who bear the glory of the leaders, were given the command to reveal to those who are worthy. Amen.

\* \* \* Then the great Seth, the son of the incorruptible man Adamas, gave praise to the great, invisible, uncallable, unnameable, virginal Spirit, and the <male virgin, and the thrice-male child, and the male> virgin Youel, and Esephech, the holder of glory and the crown of his glory, the child of the child, and the great Doxomedon-aeons, and the pleroma which I mentioned before; and asked for his seed.

Then there came forth from that place the great power of the great light Plesithea, the mother of the angels, the mother of the lights, the glorious mother, the virgin with the four breasts, bringing the fruit from Gomorrah, as spring, and Sodom, which is the fruit of the spring of Gomorrah which is in her. She came forth through the great Seth.

Then the great Seth rejoiced about the gift which was granted him by the incorruptible child. He took his seed from her with the four breasts, the virgin, and he placed it with him in the fourth aeon (or, in the four aeons), in the third great light Davithe.

After five thousand years, the great light Eleleth spoke: "Let someone reign over the chaos and Hades." And there appeared a cloud whose name is hylis Sophia [...] She looked out on the parts of the chaos, her face being like [...] in her form [...] blood. And the great angel Gamaliel spoke to the great Gabriel, the minister of the great light Oroiael; he said, "Let an angel come forth, in order that he may reign over the chaos and Hades." Then the cloud, being agreeable, came forth in the two monads, each one of which had light. [...] the throne, which she had placed in the cloud above. Then Sakla, the great angel, saw the great demon who is with him, Nebruel. And they became together a begetting spirit of the earth. They begot assisting angels. Sakla said to the great demon Nebruel, "Let the twelve aeons come into being in the [...] aeon, worlds [...]." [...] the great angel Sakla said by the will of the Autogenes, "There shall be the [...] of the number of seven [...]." And he said to the great angels, "Go and let each of you reign over his world." Each one of these twelve angels went forth. The first angel is Athoth. He is the one whom the great generations of men call [...]. The second is

Harmas, who is the eye of the fire. The third is Galila. The fourth is Yobel. The fifth is Adonaios, who is called 'Sabaoth'. The sixth is Cain, whom the great generations of men call the sun. The seventh is Abel; the eighth Akiressina; the ninth Yubel. The tenth is Harmupiael. The eleventh is Archir-Adonin. The twelfth is Belias. These are the ones who preside over Hades and the chaos.

And after the founding of the world, Sakla said to his angels, "I, I am a jealous god, and apart from me nothing has come into being," since he trusted in his nature.

Then a voice came from on high, saying, "The Man exists, and the Son of the Man." Because of the descent of the image above, which is like its voice in the height of the image which has looked out through the looking out of the image above, the first creature was formed. Because of this, Metanoia came into being. She received her completion and her power

by the will of the Father, and his approval, with which he approved of the great, incorruptible, immovable race of the great, mighty men of the great Seth, in order that he may sow it in the aeons which had been brought forth, so that through her (Metanoia), the deficiency may be filled up. For she had come forth from above, down to the world, which is the image of the night. When she had come, she prayed for (the repentance of) both the seed of the archon of this aeon, and <the> authorities who had come forth from him, that defiled (seed) of the demon-begetting god which will be destroyed, and the seed of Adam and the great Seth, which is like the sun.

Then the great angel Hormos came to prepare, through the virgins of the corrupted sowing of this aeon, in a Logos-begotten, holy vessel, through the holy Spirit, the seed of the great Seth.

Then the great Seth came and brought his seed. And it was sown in the aeons which had been brought forth, their number being the amount of Sodom. Some say that Sodom is the place of pasture of the great Seth, which is Gomorrah. But others (say) that the great Seth took his plant out of Gomorrah and planted it in the second place, to which he gave the name 'Sodom'.

This is the race which came forth through Edokla. For she gave birth through the word, to Truth and Justice, the origin of the seed of the eternal life, which is with those who will persevere, because of the knowledge of their emanation. This is the great, incorruptible race which has come forth through three worlds to the world.

And the flood came as an example, for the consummation of the aeon. But it will be sent into the world because of this race. A conflagration will come upon the earth. And grace will be with those who belong to the race, through the prophets and the guardians who guard the life of the race. Because of this race, famines will occur, and plagues. But these things will happen because of the great, incorruptible race. Because of this race, temptations will come, a falsehood of false prophets.

Then the great Seth saw the activity of the devil, and his many guises, and his schemes, which will come upon his (Seth's) incorruptible, immovable race, and the persecutions of his powers and his angels, and their error, that they acted against themselves.

Then the great Seth gave praise to the great, uncallable, virginal Spirit, and the male virgin Barbelon, and the thrice-male child Telmael Telmael Heli Heli Machar Machar Seth, the power which really truly lives, and the male virgin Youel, and Esephech, the holder of glory and the crown of his glory, and the great Doxomedon-aeon, and the thrones which are in him, and the powers which surround them, and the whole pleroma, as I mentioned before. And he asked for guards over his seed.

Then there came forth from the great aeons four hundred ethereal angels, accompanied by the great Aerosiel and the great Selmechel, to guard the great, incorruptible race, its fruit, and the great men of the great Seth, from the time and the moment of Truth and Justice, until the consummation of the aeon and its archons, those whom the great judges have condemned to death.

Then the great Seth was sent by the four lights, by the will of the Autogenes and the whole pleroma, through <the gift> and the good pleasure of the great invisible Spirit, and the five seals, and the whole pleroma.

He passed through the three parousias which I mentioned before: the flood, and the conflagration, and the judgment of the archons and the powers and the authorities, to save her (the race) who went astray, through the reconciliation of the world, and the baptism through a Logos-begotten body which the great Seth prepared for himself secretly through the virgin, in order that the saints may be begotten by the holy Spirit, through invisible, secret symbols, through a reconciliation of the world with the world, through the renouncing of the world, and the god of the thirteen aeons, and (through) the convocations of the saints and the ineffable ones, and (through) the incorruptible bosom, and (through) the great light of the Father, who pre-existed with his Providence, and established through her the holy baptism that surpasses the heaven, through the incorruptible, Logos-begotten one, even Jesus the living one, even he whom the great Seth has put on. And through him, he nailed the powers of the thirteen aeons, and established those who are brought forth and taken away. He armed them with an armor of knowledge of this truth, with an unconquerable power of incorruptibility.

There appeared to them the great attendant Yesseus Mazareus Yessedekus, the living water, and the great leaders, James the great and Theopemptos and Isaouel, and they who preside over the spring of truth, Micheus and Michar and Mnesinous, and he who presides over the baptism of the living, and the purifiers, and Sesengenpharanges, and they who preside over the gates of the waters, Micheus and Michar, and they who preside over the mountain, Seldao and Elainos, and the receivers of the great race, the incorruptible, mighty men <of> the great Seth, the ministers of the four lights, the great Gamaliel, the great Gabriel, the great Samblo, and the great Abrasax, and they who preside over the sun, its rising, Olses and Hypneus and Heurumaious, and they who preside over the entrance into the rest of eternal life, the rulers Mixanther and Michanor, and they who guard the souls of the elect, Akramas and Strempsouchos, and the great power Heli Heli Machar Machar Seth, and the great invisible, uncallable, unnameable, virginal Spirit, and the silence, and the (first) great light Harmozel, the place of the living Autogenes, the God of the truth, and <he> who is with him, the incorruptible man Adamas, the second, Oroiael, the place of the great Seth, and Jesus, who possesses the life, and who came and crucified that which is in the law, the third, Davithe, the place of the sons of the great Seth, the fourth, Eleleth, the place where the souls of the sons are resting, the fifth, Yoel, who presides over the name of him to whom it will be granted to baptize with the holy baptism that surpasses the heaven, the incorruptible one. But from now on, through the incorruptible man Poimael, and they who are worthy of (the) invocation, the renunciations of the five seals in the spring-baptism, these will know their receivers as they are instructed about them, and they will know them (or: be known) by them. These will by no means taste death.

\* \* \* IE ieus EO ou EO Oua! Really, truly, O Yesseus Mazareus Yessedekus, O living water, O child of the child, O glorious name! Really truly, aiOn o On (or: O existing

aeon), iiiii EEEE eeee oooo uuuu OOOO aaaa{a}. Really, truly, Ei aaaa OOOO, O existing one who sees the aeons! Really, truly, aee EEE iiiii uuuuuu OOOOOOOO, who is eternally eternal! Really, truly, iEa aiO, in the heart, who exists, u aei eis aei, ei o ei, ei os ei (or: (Son) forever, You are what you are, You are who you are)!

This great name of yours is upon me, O self-begotten Perfect one, who is not outside me. I see you, O you who are visible to everyone. For who will be able to comprehend you in another tongue? Now that I have known you, I have mixed myself with the immutable. I have armed myself with an armor of light; I have become light! For the Mother was at that place because of the splendid beauty of grace. Therefore, I have stretched out my hands while they were folded. I was shaped in the circle of the riches of the light which is in my bosom, which gives shape to the many begotten ones in the light into which no complaint reaches. I shall declare your glory truly, for I have comprehended you, sou iEs ide aeiO aeie ois, O aeon, aeon, O God of silence! I honor you completely. You are my place of rest, O Son Es Es o e, the formless one who exists in the formless ones, who exists raising up the man in whom you will purify me into your life, according to your imperishable name. Therefore, the incense of life is in me. I mixed it with water after the model of all archons, in order that I may live with you in the peace of the saints, you who exist really truly forever.

\* \* \* This is the book which the great Seth wrote, and placed in high mountains on which the sun has not risen, nor is it possible (that it should do so). And since the days of the prophets and the apostles and the preachers, the name has not at all risen upon their hearts, nor is it possible (that it should do so). And their ear has not heard it.

The great Seth wrote this book with letters in one hundred and thirty years. He placed it in the mountain that is called 'Charaxio,' in order that, at the end of the times and the eras, by the will of the divine Autogenes and the whole pleroma, through the gift of the untraceable, unthinkable, fatherly love, it may come forth and reveal this incorruptible, holy race of the great savior, and those who dwell with them in love, and the great, invisible, eternal Spirit, and his only-begotten Son, and the eternal light, and his great, incorruptible consort, and the incorruptible Sophia, and the Barbelon, and the whole pleroma in eternity. Amen.

\* \* \* The Gospel of <the> Egyptians. The God-written, holy, secret book. Grace, understanding, perception, (and) prudence (be) with him who has written it - Eugnostos the beloved, in the Spirit - in the flesh, my name is Gongessos - and my fellow lights in incorruptibility. Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior, Ichthus. God-written (is) the holy book of the great, invisible Spirit. Amen.

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### **The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit (120-180AD)**

Two versions of The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit were discovered in 1945 among the papyri of the Nag Hammadi Library in Egypt. Based on the Gnostic contents of the text and its position among other documents, scholars place the writing of the book in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century as yet another Gnostic Sethian document.

#### **Why Isn't It Considered Reliable?**

The text is a 2<sup>nd</sup> century document and is therefore far too late to have been written by one of the apostolic eyewitnesses. More importantly, The Holy Book of the Great

Invisible Spirit has been dramatically influenced by the heretical Sethians who predate Christians. Sethian Gnosticism was condemned as heretical by many early Church Fathers.

#### **How Does It Corroborate the Life of Jesus?**

The text diverges from Christian orthodoxy in many ways, but also refers to many points of agreement. The God described in The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit is triune, but the Spirit is described as a “mother”. Interestingly, this member of the triune godhead is also a virgin. The member of the Godhead who is described as the “Son” is also described as the “Christ”. Jesus is only mentioned in the text in three places, but He is described as the “Son of God” and the “living one” who “possesses the life, and who came and crucified that which is in the law”.

#### **Where (and Why) Does It Differ from the Reliable Accounts?**

Sethian Gnostics believed that Seth was the first of several incarnations of God on earth. For this reason, The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit describes Jesus as merely another divine incarnation who resides with God, along with Seth, Adamas, Oroiael, Davithe, Eleleth, Yoel and Poimel. Very little of text is in any way similar to the Old Testament creation story or the life of Jesus due to the influence and corruption of Sethianism.

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