

matter of saying 'Here it is' or 'There it is.' Rather, the Kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, and men do not see it."

(114) Simon Peter said to them, "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of Life."

Jesus said, "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

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From *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*

When and where this Nag Hammadi text was written remain unclear, but it certainly presents Gnostic ideas, including Docetism—the denial of Christ's real humanity. According to this selection, the Savior entered a human body but remained somehow quite distinct from that body, and Simon of Cyrene not only carried Jesus' cross [Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26] but also died on it in Jesus' place. The text also refers to a number of the spiritual powers common in the complex Gnostic systems.

I visited a bodily dwelling. I cast out the one who was in it first, and I went in. And the whole multitude of the archons became troubled. And all the matter of the archons as well as all the begotten powers of the earth were shaken when it saw the likeness of the Image, since it was mixed. And I am the one who was in it, not resembling him who was in it first. For he was an earthly man, but I, I am from above the heavens. I did not refuse them even to become a Christ, but I did not reveal myself to them in the love which was coming forth from me. I revealed that I am a stranger to the regions below. . . .

And there came about a disturbance and a fight around the Seraphim and Cherubim since their glory will fade, and the confusion around Adonaios on both sides and their dwelling—to the Cosmocrator and him who said, "Let us seize him"; others again, "The plan will certainly not materialize." For Adonaios knows me because of hope. And I was in the mouths of lions. And the plan which they

devised about me to release their error and their senselessness—I did not succumb to them as they had planned. But I was not afflicted at all. Those who were there punished me. And I did not die in reality but in appearance, lest I be put to shame by them because these are my kinsfolk. I removed the shame from me and I did not become fainthearted in the face of what happened to me at their hands. I was about to succumb to fear, and I <suffered> according to their sight and thought, in order that they may never find any word to speak about them. For my death which they think happened, (happened) to them in their error and blindness, since they nailed their man unto their death. For their Ennoias did not see me, for they were deaf and blind. But in doing these things, they condemn themselves. Yes, they saw me; they punished me. It was another, their father, who drank the gall and the vinegar; it was not I. They struck me with the reed; it was another, Simon, who bore the cross on his shoulder. It was another upon whom they placed the crown of thorns. But I was rejoicing in the height over all the wealth of the archons and the offspring of their error, of their empty glory. And I was laughing at their ignorance.

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Ignatius of Antioch (d. c.110)

From *Letter to the Trallians*

Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch in Syria and a great opponent of the Gnostics, was arrested for his Christian faith and led off to his death in Rome about 110. On the way from Syria to Rome, under arrest and facing death, he wrote a number of letters to Christian churches in the regions through which he traveled, urging faithfulness to their bishops and belief in Christ's real humanity.

1. Well do I realize what a character you have—above reproach and steady under strain. It is not just affected, but it comes naturally to you, as I gathered from Polybius, your bishop. By God's will and that of Jesus Christ, he came to me in Smyrna, and so heartily congratulated me on being a prisoner for Jesus Christ that in him I

saw your whole congregation. I welcomed, then, your good will, which reached me by him, and I gave thanks that I found you, as I heard, to be following God.

2. For when you obey the bishop as if he were Jesus Christ, you are (as I see it) living not in a merely human fashion but in Jesus Christ's way, who for our sakes suffered death that you might believe in his death and so escape dying yourselves. It is essential, therefore, to act in no way without the bishop, just as you are doing. Rather submit even to the presbytery as to the apostles of Jesus Christ. He is our Hope [cf. 1 Tim. 1:1], and if we live in union with him now, we shall gain eternal life. . . .

6. I urge you, therefore—not I, but Jesus Christ's love—use only Christian food. Keep off foreign fare, by which I mean heresy. For those people mingle Jesus Christ with their teachings just to gain your confidence under false pretenses. It is as if they were giving a deadly poison mixed with honey and wine, with the result that the unsuspecting victim gladly accepts it and drinks down death with fatal pleasure.

7. Be on your guard, then, against such people. This you will do by not being puffed up and by keeping very close to [our] God, Jesus Christ, and the bishop and the apostles' precepts. Inside the sanctuary a man is pure; outside he is impure. That means: whoever does anything without the bishop, presbytery, and deacons does not have a clear conscience.

8. It is not because I have heard of any such thing in your case that I write thus. No, in my love for you I am warning you ahead, since I foresee the devil's wiles. Recapture, then, your gentleness, and by faith (that's the Lord's flesh) and by love (that's Jesus Christ's blood) make yourselves new creatures. Let none of you hold anything against his neighbor. Do not give the heathen opportunities whereby God's people should be scoffed at through the stupidity of a few. For, "Woe to him by whose folly my name is scoffed at before any" [Isa. 52:5].

9. Be deaf, then, to any talk that ignores Jesus Christ, of David's lineage, of Mary; who was really born, ate, and drank; was really persecuted under Pontius Pilate; was really crucified and died, in the sight of heaven and earth and the underworld. He was really raised from the dead, for his Father raised him, just as his Father will raise us, who believe on him, through Christ Jesus, apart from whom we have no genuine life.

10. And if, as some atheists (I mean unbelievers) say, his suffering

was a sham (it's really *they* who are a sham!), why, then, am I a prisoner? Why do I want to fight with wild beasts? In that case I shall die to no purpose. Yes, and I am maligning the Lord too!

From *Early Christian Fathers*, edited and translated by Cyril C. Richardson (Volume I: The Library of Christian Classics), pages 98–100. First published in MCMLIII by the SCM Press Ltd., London, and The Westminster Press, Philadelphia. Used by permission of the publishers.

Ignatius of Antioch

From *Letter to the Romans*

Ignatius feared that Christians in Rome might try to arrange his escape; he wrote ahead to assure them of his willingness to die for his faith.

4. I am corresponding with all the churches and bidding them all realize that I am voluntarily dying for God—if, that is, you do not interfere. I plead with you, do not do me an unseasonable kindness. Let me be fodder for wild beasts—that is how I can get to God. I am God's wheat and I am being ground by the teeth of wild beasts to make a pure loaf for Christ. I would rather that you fawn on the beasts so that they may be my tomb and no scrap of my body be left. Thus, when I have fallen asleep, I shall be a burden to no one. Then I shall be a real disciple of Jesus Christ when the world sees my body no more. Pray Christ for me that by these means I may become God's sacrifice. I do not give orders like Peter and Paul. They were apostles: I am a convict. They were at liberty: I am still a slave [Cf. 1 Cor. 7:22]. But if I suffer, I shall be emancipated by Jesus Christ; and united to him, I shall rise to freedom.

5. Even now as a prisoner, I am learning to forego my own wishes. All the way from Syria to Rome I am fighting with wild beasts, by land and sea, night and day, chained as I am to ten leopards (I mean to a detachment of soldiers), who only get worse the better you treat them. But by their injustices I am becoming a better disciple, "though not for that reason am I acquitted" [1 Cor. 4:4]. What a thrill I shall have from the wild beasts that are ready for me! I hope they will make short work of me. I shall coax them on to eat me up at once and not to hold off, as sometimes happens, through fear. And if they are reluctant, I shall force them to it. Forgive me—I know

what is good for me. Now is the moment I am beginning to be a disciple. May nothing seen or unseen begrudge me making my way to Jesus Christ. Come fire, cross, battling with wild beasts, wrenching of bones, mangling of limbs, crushing of my whole body, cruel tortures of the devil—only let me get to Jesus Christ!

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Irenaeus (c.140–c.202)

From *Against Heresies*

*Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor around 140 but moved to what is now France, where he served as bishop of the city of Lyons until his death around 202. His *Against Heresies* tried to summarize and refute all the heresies he saw threatening the church. His summaries remain a crucial source of information about his opponents. This passage discusses the system of Ptolemaeus, an Egyptian Gnostic of the late second century. As in many Gnostic theories, a large number of divine powers or aeons separates the highest divinity from the creation of the physical world. One of the lower aeons is Sophia, or Wisdom, whose fall brought about the real beginning of evil.*

Book 1

Chapter 1. 1. They maintain, then, that in the invisible and ineffable heights above there exists a certain perfect, pre-existent Aeon, whom they call Proarche, Propator, and Bythus and describe as being invisible and incomprehensible. Eternal and unbegotten, he remained throughout innumerable cycles of ages in profound serenity and quiescence. There existed along with him Ennoea, whom they also call Charis and Sige. At last this Bythus determined to send forth from himself the beginning of all things, and deposited this production (which he had resolved to bring forth) in his contemporary Sige, even as seed is deposited in the womb. She then, having received this seed, and becoming pregnant, gave birth to Nous, who was both similar and equal to him who had produced him, and was alone capable of comprehending his father's greatness. This Nous they call also Monogenes, and Father, and the Beginning of all

Things. Along with him was also produced Aletheia; and these four constituted the first and first-begotten Pythagorean Tetrad, which they also denominate the root of all things. For there are first Bythus and Sige, and then Nous and Aletheia.

And Monogenes, perceiving for what purpose he had been produced, also himself sent forth Logos and Zoe, being the father of all those who were to come after him, and the beginning and fashioning of the entire Pleroma.* By the conjunction of Logos and Zoe were brought forth Anthropos and Ecclesia; and thus was formed the first-begotten Ogdoad, the root and substance of all things, called among them by four names, viz., Bythus, and Nous, and Logos, and Anthropos. For each of these is masculo-feminine, as follows: Propator was united by a conjunction with his Ennoea; then Monogenes, that is Nous, with Aletheia; Logos with Zoe, and Anthropos with Ecclesia. . . .

2. . . . Logos and Zoe, after producing Anthropos and Ecclesia, sent forth other ten Aeons, whose names are the following: Bythus and Mixis, Ageratos and Henosis, Autophyes and Hedone, Acinetos and Syncrasis, Monogenes and Macaria. These are the ten Aeons whom they declare to have been produced by Logos and Zoe. They then add that Anthropos himself, along with Ecclesia, produced twelve Aeons, to whom they give the following names: Paracletus and Pistis, Patricos and Elpis, Metricos and Agape, Ainos and Syesis, Ecclesiasticus and Macariotes, Theletos and Sophia. . . .

Chapter 2. 2. But there rushed forth in advance of the rest that Aeon who was much the latest of them, and was the youngest of the Duodecad† which sprang from Anthropos and Ecclesia, namely Sophia, and suffered passion apart from the embrace of her consort Theletos. This passion, indeed, first arose among those who were connected with Nous and Aletheia, but passed as by contagion to this degenerate Aeon, who acted under a pretence of love, but was in reality influenced by temerity, because she had not, like Nous, enjoyed communion with the perfect Father. This passion, they say, consisted in a desire to search into the nature of the Father; for she wished, according to them, to comprehend his greatness. When she could not attain her end, inasmuch as she aimed at an impossibility,

*The heavenly hierarchy of the aeons.

†The twelve aeons just mentioned.