

LIFE FOR GOD · APOCRYPHA

THE SOPHIA OF JESUS CHRIST

Two Coptic witnesses in translation · Nag Hammadi and
Berlin

Translated from Coptic by
Samuel Zinner
Edited by Mark M. Mattison

Reading edition
Life for God

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About this edition

The Sophia of Jesus Christ, also known as The Wisdom of Jesus Christ, depicts a conversation of the risen Savior with twelve disciples and seven women. Philip, Matthew, Thomas, Mary and Bartholomew ask questions about He Who Is, spiritual worlds, Sophia and awakening from oblivion. These names and the resurrection setting do not establish a historical conversation or apostolic authorship. Both witnesses are included in full in the selected translation: NHC III,4, pages 90.14–119.18, and BG 8502,3, pages 77.8–127.12. The Nag Hammadi manuscript dates to the fourth century and the Berlin Codex to the fifth; manuscript dates do not establish the date of composition. The publisher notes the close relationship to Eugnostos the Blessed, whose material is incorporated into a Christian dialogue framework. Pages 109–110 and 115–116 are missing in the first witness; these losses are marked, while the corresponding Berlin passages can be read in the second part. Neither witness is silently completed from the other.

Translated from Coptic by Samuel Zinner and edited by Mark M. Mattison. Luminescence expressly dedicates the translation to the public domain and permits unrestricted use and adaptation. The Russian translation was prepared by Priest Sergey Koudy for Life for God from this English version, separately for each manuscript witness. No independent collation of the complete Coptic text was undertaken; this is a reading edition, not a new critical edition. Reference numbers, explanatory notes and comparisons are by Life for God. The source English web edition contains no numbered footnotes.

Sections 1–10 present Nag Hammadi, 56 paragraphs; sections 11–20 present Berlin, 61 paragraphs. These are modern reference numbers, not ancient chapters. The first ten thematic headings follow the English source; matching headings for Berlin are supplied by Life for God. Manuscript pages are labelled separately. [. . .] or [...] indicates a loss; bracketed words supply proposed restorations; parentheses clarify the translation; angle brackets mark editorial corrections. The source's special < . . > in 15:5 is retained without supplying words. Notices of missing pages are distinguished from ancient text. All

notes are by Life for God and explain the selected translation and differences between its witnesses.

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Online edition:

<https://lifeforgod.church/en/books/sophia-of-jesus-christ.html>

Sources

1. Samuel Zinner / Mark M. Mattison — The Sophia of Jesus Christ

Complete English basis of both witnesses and of the Russian translation, with express permission for unrestricted reuse. The source links to Nag Hammadi page photographs and prints Berlin separately.

2. Brill — Coptic Gnostic Library Online

The academic catalogue records the limits: NHC III,4, 90.14–119.18; BG3, 77.8–127.12. Used to verify the manuscript catalogue entries, not as a claim of independently collating the complete critical apparatus.

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Part I. Nag Hammadi Codex III,4. Opening title: The Sophia of Jesus Christ.

1. Nag Hammadi · The Savior Appears to His Disciples

Manuscript page reference: NHC III,4: 90-93

1. After he had risen from among the dead, his twelve disciples and seven women continued as his followers and traveled to Galilee, to the mountain called “Harvesting Place and Joy.” When they came together, they were puzzled about the fundamental nature of the world, the plan, divine providence, the power of the authorities, and how the Savior interacts with them in the mystery of the divine plan. The Savior appeared, not with his previous (visible) form, but as the invisible spirit. And his likeness is like that of a tall radiant angel, but what he resembles I must not describe, no mortal being able to bear it, it being entirely pure, perfect flesh like what he taught us about on the mountain called “Of Olives” in Galilee. ^{[1] [2] [3]}

2. And he said: “Peace be with you! My peace I give you!” And they were all in awe, being afraid. ^[4]

3. The Savior laughed and asked them: “What are you pondering? (Why) are you puzzled? What are you seeking?”

4. Philip said: “For the fundamental nature of the world and its plan.”

5. The Savior said to them: “I want you to understand that all born on earth from the foundation of the world until now, being dust, even though they have inquired into God, about his being and likeness, have failed to find him. The greatest sages among them have guessed on the basis of how the

world is ordered and (how it) moves along, but their guessing has not attained to the truth. ^[5]

6. “It is said by all philosophers that the (cosmic) order is guided in three (different) ways, thus they are in disagreement. Some of them propose that the world guides itself. Others propose that providence does this, still others that it is fate, but none of these is the case.

7. “To repeat, none of the three propositions I have just related approaches the truth, being human (guesses). I, however, originated from the Infinite Light, because I know him, and I am here so I can tell you exactly what the truth is. The life of whatever is self-originated is impure, being self-made. There is nothing clever in (the theory of) providence, and (the theory of) fate is not insightful.

8. “To you, though, it is given to know, and anyone (else) who deserves knowledge will receive, anyone who was not begotten by the sowing of impure rubbing, but by the one who was first sent, because he is an immortal among mortals.” ^[6]

2. Nag Hammadi • He Who Is

Manuscript page reference: NHC III,4: 93-95

1. Matthew said to him: “Lord, none are able to discover the truth but through you, so instruct us in the truth.”

2. The Savior said: “He Who Is is inexpressible. No power knew him, no authority, nothing contingent, or anything created since the foundation of the world until now, but he alone and any to whom he wishes to grant revelation through the one who originated from the First Light.

Beginning now, I am the Great Savior. This is because he is deathless and eternal. ^[7]

3. “He is eternal, without birth, because anyone who has been born will be destroyed (in death). He is unbegotten, without beginning, because anyone who had a beginning will have an end. Because no one rules him, he is nameless, because anyone with a name has been created by someone else. And He Who Is possesses an appearance peculiarly his own, unlike anything you have seen and comprehended, yet it is an enigmatic appearance that transcends everything and that excels the world. It gazes at all sides (simultaneously) and beholds itself from itself.”

4. “Because it is infinite, he can never be comprehended. He is forever indestructible, nothing resembling him. He is the good that never changes. He is without defect. He is eternal. He is blessed. He cannot be known, but he knows himself. He is beyond measure; he cannot be traced out. He is perfect, without imperfection. His blessedness is indestructible. He is called ‘Father of the World.’”

3. Nag Hammadi · The Appearance of He Who Is

Manuscript page reference: NHC III,4: 95-98

1. Philip asked: “Lord, how, then, did he appear to the perfect ones?”

2. The perfect Savior said to him: “Before anything that is visible became visible, the majesty and authority existed in him, because he embraces the entirety of the Totalities, whereas nothing embraces him. This is because he is entirely mind, and he is thought and reflection, consideration, reasoning, and power. They all are equivalent powers, being the sources of the Totalities. And their entire race, from first to last, is in his foreknowledge, of the infinite unbegotten Father.” [8]

3. Thomas asked him: “Lord, Savior, what is the reason these came into being, and why were they revealed?”

4. The perfect Savior said: “I originated from the Infinite in order to tell you everything. The Spirit Who Is was the one who begot, having the power <of> a begetter and the nature of one who [bestows] form, so that the great wealth concealed in him could be revealed. On account of his mercy and his love he desired to produce fruit by himself, to avoid <enjoying> his goodness all alone (by himself), but so that other spirits of the unmoving generation could produce bodies and spirits, glory and honor in indestructibility, and his infinite gift, so that his treasure could be manifested by the self-begotten God, the Father of all indestructibility and of those that afterward would come into existence, but who had not yet appeared visibly. A great difference prevails among the indestructible ones.” [9]

5. He cried out and said: “Let whoever has ears to hear about those who are infinite, hear!” And: “I have spoken to those who are awake!”

6. He continued further and said: “Everything that originated from what is perishable will perish, because it originated from what is perishable, but what has originated

from what is imperishable will not perish, but will be imperishable.

7. Consequently, many erred because they were unaware of this difference, and they died.”

4. Nag Hammadi • The Father and the Generation Above Which There Is No Kingdom

Manuscript page reference: NHC III,4: 98-100

1. Mary asked him: “Then how, Lord, can we come to know that?”

2. The perfect Savior said: “Begin from concealed things to the end of visible things, and the emanation of Thought will itself reveal to you how faith in things invisible is to be found in what is visible, things that belong to the unbegotten Father. Let whoever has ears to hear, hear!

3. “The Lord of the World is not called ‘Father,’ but ‘Forefather,’ <because the Father is> the originative principle of those that will become visible, yet he is [the] Forefather without beginning. He beholds himself within himself, as in a mirror, having appeared in his likeness as the divine Self-Father, and <as> the reflector over the reflecting ones, the first existent, the unbegotten Father. He is in fact as old <as> the light that is before him, but he does not equal him in power.”^[10]

4. “Afterward he revealed many reflecting, self-begotten ones, of equal age and power, subsisting in glory, (even) without number, whose nation is called ‘The Generation Above Which There Is No Kingdom,’ from the one in which you yourselves have become visible among these

<kingdoms>. And that whole multitude above which there is no kingdom is called 'the Children of the Unbegotten Father,' 'God,' '[Savior],' and 'Son of God,' whose likeness dwells with you. ^[11]

5. "He is the Unknowable, full of every indestructible glory and unspeakable joy. They are all at repose in him, continually rejoicing in unspeakable joy over his glory that never changes and immeasurable rejoicing. Before now, this was never heard or known among all the aeons and their worlds."

5. Nag Hammadi · The Immortal Human, Sophia, and Ogdoad

Manuscript page reference: NHC III,4: 100-103

1. Matthew asked him: "Lord, Savior, how was the Human revealed?"

2. The perfect Savior said: "I desire that you know the one who appeared before the world.

3. "In the beginning, the infinite, self-grown, self-made Father, who was replete with radiant and unspeakable light, when he chose for his likeness to become a great power, the originative principle of that light suddenly appeared as the deathless androgynous Human, so that through that immortal Human they could obtain their salvation and wake up from oblivion through the one sent as the interpreter, who dwells with you until the end of the impoverished thieves. And his consort is the Great Sophia, who in him was ordained from the beginning for union by the self-begotten Father, from the Immortal Human who was first to appear, even as divinity and kingdom, because this was revealed by

the Father, who is called 'the Human,' 'the Self-Father.' And for his own majesty, he created a mighty aeon, whose name is Ogdoad, who was granted great authority, even ruling over the impoverished creation. ^[12] ^[13]

4. "From that light and the threefold male Spirit, which belongs to Sophia, his consort, he created gods and angels <and> archangels, countless myriads for service. This was because this God created divinity and kingdom, so that he was called 'God of gods,' 'King of kings.' Within him, the Primal Human possesses his singular mind and thought, being precisely (thought), reflection and contemplation, reason and power. All the existent qualities are perfect and deathless.

5. "Regarding indestructibility, they are in fact equal, though regarding power, there is a difference similar to the difference between father and son, <and son> and thought, and the thought and what remains (thereafter). As I stated before, among created entities, the monad comes first. And after everything (else), anything that appeared was revealed from his power. And from created entities appeared everything that was fashioned, and from what was fashioned appeared what was formed, (and) from what was formed (appeared) what was named. This is how from beginning to end the difference arose among the unbegotten ones." ^[14]

6. Nag Hammadi • The First-Begotten Androgynous Son

Manuscript page reference: NHC III,4: 103-106

1. Bartholomew then asked him: "How (is) <he> named 'the Human' and 'the Son of Man' in the Gospel? So, which one of them pertains to the Son?" ^[15]

2. He who is holy said to him, “I desire that you know that the Primal Human is called ‘the Begetter,’ ‘the Self-Completed Mind.’ He contemplated with his consort, Great Sophia, and manifested his first-begotten, androgynous son. Its male name is called ‘First-Begetting Son of God,’ while its female name is ‘First-Begetting Sophia, Mother of the Universe,’ some calling her ‘Love.’ The first-begotten, who is called ‘Christ,’ created a multitude of countless angels for service from the Spirit and the Light because he wields authority from his Father.” [16]

3. His disciples said to him: “Lord, disclose to us concerning the one called ‘the Human’ so that we can also precisely understand his glory.”

4. The perfect Savior said: “Let whoever has ears to hear, hear! On account of his origin from radiant light, the first-begetting Father is named ‘Adam, the Eye of Light,’ [and] his inexpressible, shadowless holy angels continually rejoice in gladness over the reflections they obtained from their Father. The entire kingdom of the Son of Man, who is called ‘the Son of God,’ is replete with inexpressible and shadowless joy, and rejoicing that never changes, rejoicing over his indestructible glory, until now unheard and unrevealed in the aeons and their worlds that originated thereafter. I originated from the self-begotten and primal Infinite Light so that I could reveal all things to you.” [17]

7. Nag Hammadi • Savior and Pistis Sophia

Manuscript page reference: NHC III,4: 106–108

1. His disciples spoke yet again: “Tell us plainly how they descended from the invisibilities, from what is deathless to the world of mortality.”

2. The perfect Savior said: “The Son of Man consorted with his companion Sophia, and manifested a mighty androgynous light. Its male name is called ‘Savior, All-Begetter.’ Its female name is ‘All-Begetter Sophia,’ some calling her ‘Pistis.’ [18]

3. “Like a droplet from the light, everyone who enters the world is sent by him to the world of the Almighty, so that they can be watched over by him. And by the will of Sophia the fetter of his oblivion bound the light, so that by means of this, the affair could be <revealed> to the entire impoverished world, namely, (the Almighty’s) pride and blindness, and the ignorance that named him. [19]

4. “I, however, by the will of the great Light, originated from the places above, <loosing> from that fetter, having halted the activity of the thieves. I have aroused that droplet sent from Sophia, so that through me it could bear much fruit and be perfected, and never again become defective, but through me, the Great Savior, be <joined> so that his glory could be manifested, so that Sophia could also be rectified of that defect, so that her children could never again grow defective, but could obtain honor and glory and ascend to their Father, and understand the speech of the masculine Light.

5. “And you were sent by the Son, who (himself) was sent so that you could obtain light and separate yourselves from the oblivion of the authorities, and that it could never again come to manifestation on your account, that is, the impure rubbing that originates from the fearsome fire that issued from their phallus. Tread on their evil intention.”

8. Nag Hammadi • The Aeons

Manuscript page reference: NHC III,4: 108–114

1. Then Thomas asked [him]: “Lord, Savior, how many aeons surpass the heavens?”

2. The perfect Savior said: “I praise you for asking about the great aeons, because your roots dwell in the infinities. When those whom I discussed before were revealed, he [supplied . . .]”^[20]

Coptic Nag Hammadi manuscript pages 109–110 are missing.

3. [...] and arrive at a unity, we name them ‘Assembly of the Ogdoad.’ It manifested as androgynous and was named part male and part female. The male is called ‘Assembly,’ whereas the female is called ‘Life,’ so that it could be demonstrated that the life for all the aeons came from a female.^[21]

4. “And all names were obtained from the originative principle. This was because from his harmony with his thought, the powers appeared most rapidly who were called ‘gods,’ and on the basis of their wisdom, [the] gods of the gods revealed gods, <and the gods> on the basis of their wisdom revealed lords, and the lords of the lords on the basis of their acts of thought revealed lords, and the lords on the basis of their power revealed archangels, the archangels on the basis of their words revealed angels, simulacra appearing from them possessing structure and shape and appellation for all the aeons and their worlds.

5. “And the immortals I have just now described, they all wield authority from the Immortal Human, who is called ‘Silence,’ because when they contemplated (silently) without (outward) speech, the majesty that is hers was brought to

completion. Because the indestructible ones possessed authority, each one created a large kingdom in the Ogdoad, and thrones and temples, firmaments for their respective majesties, because all of them originated through the will of the Mother of the World.” [22]

6. The holy apostles then said to him: “Lord, Savior, speak to us of those who dwell in the aeons, because it is necessary for us to inquire concerning them.”

7. The perfect Savior said: “You can ask about anything, and I will give you the answer.

8. “They created angelic hosts, countless myriads for service and their glory. They created virgin spirits, the inexpressible and unwavering lights, because they experience no infirmity or weakness, but (instead show) will.

9. “In this way were the aeons rapidly completed together with the heavens and the firmaments in the glory of the Immortal Human and his consort Sophia. From there all the aeons and worlds and those that arrived thereafter obtained the model for the creation of their likenesses, (both) in the heavens of chaos and in their worlds. And every nature, beginning with the revelation of chaos, dwells in the shadowless light and in indescribable joy and in unspeakable rejoicing. They continually enjoy their glory that never fades and their infinite repose, which is indescribable among all the aeons and all their powers that came into being thereafter. Everything I have now told you, I said so that you could shine in the light even more than these.”

9. Nag Hammadi · Mother Sophia and Yaldabaoth

Manuscript page reference: NHC III,4: 114-118

1. Mary asked him: “Holy Lord, from where did your disciples originate, and to where are they going, and how should they act here?”

2. The perfect Savior said to them: “I desire that you know that Sophia, the Mother of the World and the consort, by herself, without her male (counterpart), wanted to bring these into existence. However, by the will of the Father of the World, so that his ungraspable benevolence could be manifested, he created the curtain between the immortals and those that arrived thereafter, that the result could follow that [. . .] ^[23]

Coptic Nag Hammadi manuscript pages 115-116 are missing.

3. “[. . .] and breath, and could from two become one, just as it was from the beginning, that you could produce much fruit and ascend to He Who Is from the beginning, in unspeakable joy and glory, and [honor and] the gift of [the Father of the World].

4. “[Consequently], whoever knows [the Father in perfect] knowledge [will go] to the Father [and repose in] the unbegotten [Father]. However, [whoever knows him imperfectly] will go [to the deficiency] and the repose [of the Ogdoad]. ^[24]

5. “[Now], whoever silently knows the immortal [Spirit] of light, by reflecting and agreeing with the truth, if he gives to me signs of the Invisible One, he will become a light in the silent Spirit. Whoever knows the Son of Man in knowledge

and love, if he gives me a sign of the Son of Man, he can go to the dwelling-places of those in the Ogdoad.” [25]

10. Nag Hammadi • Conclusion

Manuscript page reference: NHC III,4: 118-119

1. “Behold! I have disclosed to you the name of the Perfect One, the entire will of the Mother of the holy angels, so that here the masculine [host] may be brought to completion, so that [in the aeons] there [could appear the infinities, as well as] those that [came into existence in the] unfathomable [riches of the Great] Invisible [Spirit, so that they] all [could partake in his benevolence], even the riches [of their repose] without any [kingdom over it].

2. “I originated [from the first] sent one, that I could disclose to you He Who Is from the beginning, on account of the pride of the arch-begetter and his angels, because they boast about themselves, saying that they are gods. And I came to free them from their blindness, so that I could announce to everyone concerning the God who dwells above the world.

3. “Tread, therefore, on their graves, shame their evil intention, break their yoke, and awaken my own. I have granted you authority over everything as the Sons of Light, so that with [your] feet you could tread on their power.”

4. These are the matters [the] blessed Savior [spoke, and he vanished] from their midst. [All the disciples] were then in [great, unspeakable joy] in [the Spirit from] that day onward. [And his disciples] began preaching [the] divine Gospel of [the] eternal, indestructible [Spirit]. Amen. [26]

The Sophia of Jesus Christ

Part II. Berlin Codex BG 8502,3. A second witness of the same dialogue begins here. Opening title: The Sophia of Jesus Christ.

11. Berlin · The Savior Appears to His Disciples

Manuscript page reference: BG 8502,3: 77-82

1. After he had risen from among the dead, when his twelve disciples and seven women continued as his followers and traveled to Galilee, to the mountain called “Harvesting Place and Joy,” and consequently were puzzled about the fundamental nature of the world, the plan, divine providence, the power of the authorities, how the Savior interacts with them, and the mysteries of the divine plan. Then the Savior appeared to them, not with his previous (visible) form, but as the invisible spirit. And his likeness was like that of a tall radiant angel, but what he resembles I must not describe, no mortal being able to bear it, it being entirely pure, perfect flesh like what he taught us about on the mountain called “Of Olives” in Galilee. ^[27]

2. He said: “Peace be with you! My peace I give you!” And they were all in awe, being afraid.

3. The Savior laughed and asked them: “What are you pondering? Why are you puzzled? What are you seeking?”

4. Philip said: “For the fundamental nature of the world and the plan of the Savior.”

5. He said: “I want you to understand that all born on earth from the foundation of the world until now, even though they have inquired into God, about his being and likeness, have failed to find him. The greatest sages among them have guessed on the basis of how the world is ordered and (how

it) moves along, but their guessing has not attained to the truth.

6. “Because it is said by all philosophers that the (cosmic) order is guided in three (different) ways, thus they are in disagreement. Because some of them propose that it is self-inspired. Others propose that providence does this, still others that it is fate, but none of these is the case.

7. “To repeat, these three propositions I have just related are from humans born on earth; none of them approaches the truth. I, however, originated from the Infinite Light, whom I know, so I can tell you exactly what the truth is. The life of whatever is self-originated is impure, being self-made. There is nothing clever in (the theory of) providence, and (the theory of) fate is not insightful.

8. “To you, though, it is given to know, and anyone (else) who deserves knowledge will receive, anyone who was not begotten by the sowing of impure rubbing, but by the one who was first sent, because he is an immortal among mortals.”

12. Berlin · He Who Is

Manuscript page reference: BG 8502,3: 82-86

1. Matthew said to him: “Christ, none are able to discover the truth but through you, so instruct us in the truth.”

2. The Savior said: “He Who Is is inexpressible. No power knew him, no authority, nothing contingent, or power or anything created since the foundation of the world until now, but he alone and any he wishes through me, who originated from the First Light. Beginning now, he will grant revelation

to you through me, because I am the Great Savior. Because he is deathless and eternal.

3. “<He is> eternal, without birth, because anyone who has been born will be destroyed (in death). And as unbegotten, he is without beginning, because anyone who had a beginning will have an end. And no one rules him: He is nameless, because anyone with a name is the <creation> of someone else, (so) he is nameless. He possesses no human form, because whoever possesses human form is the creation of someone else. He possesses an appearance peculiarly his own unlike anything you have seen and comprehended, yet it is an enigmatic appearance that transcends everything and that excels the Totalities. It gazes at all sides (simultaneously) and beholds itself from itself.”
[28]

4. “And he is infinite and indestructible.
He is ungraspable and eternal, and nothing resembles him.
He is the good that never changes.
He is without defect.
He is eternal.
He is blessed.
He cannot be known, but he knows himself continually.
He is beyond measure; he cannot be traced out.
He is perfect, without imperfection.
He is blessed, without fault,
who is called ‘Father of the World.’”

13. Berlin · The Appearance of He Who Is

Manuscript page reference: BG 8502,3: 86–89

1. Philip asked: “Christ, how, then, did he appear to the perfect ones?”

2. The perfect Savior said: “Before anything <of> what is visible became visible, the majesty and the authorities existed in him, because he embraces the Totalities of the world, whereas nothing embraces him. This is because he is entirely mind; he is reflection; he is thought and wisdom; he is reasoning and power. They all are equivalent powers, being the source of the Totalities. And all of them that came to be, from first to <last>, were in his foreknowledge, of the infinite unbegotten Father.”

3. Thomas asked: “Christ, Savior, what is the reason these came into being, and why were they revealed?”

4. The perfect Savior said, “I originated from the Infinite in order to tell you everything. The Spirit Who Is was the one who begot, having the power of a begetter and the nature of one who [bestows] form, so that the great wealth that dwelt in him could be revealed. On account of his mercy and his love he desired to produce fruit by himself, to avoid <enjoying> his goodness all alone (by himself), but so that other spirits of the unmoving generation could produce bodies and fruit, glory and indestructibility, and his infinite gift, so that his treasure could be manifested by the unbegotten God, the Father of all indestructibility and of those that afterward would come into existence, but who had not yet appeared visibly. A great difference prevails among the indestructible ones.”

5. And he cried out: “Let whoever has ears to hear, hear about the indestructible ones! I will speak to those who are awake!”

6. He continued further and said: “Everything that originated from what is perishable will perish, because it originated from what is perishable. Whatever originated

from what is imperishable will not perish, because it is from what is imperishable.

7. Consequently, many erred because they were unaware of this difference, and they died.”

14. Berlin · The Father and the Generation Above Which There Is No Kingdom

Manuscript page reference: BG 8502,3: 89–93

1. Mary asked him: “Christ, how will that become known?”

2. The perfect Savior said: “Begin from concealed things to the end of visible things, and the emanation of Thought will itself reveal to you how faith in things invisible is to be found in what is visible, things that belong to the unbegotten Father. Let whoever has ears to hear, hear!

3. “The Lord of the World is not called ‘Father,’ but ‘Forefather,’ because the Father is the originative principle of those that will become visible, yet he is the Forefather without beginning.

4. “He beholds himself within himself, as in a mirror, having appeared in his likeness as the divine Self-Father, and as the reflector, because he is in the presence of He Who Is, the first existent, the unbegotten Father. He is in fact as old <as> the light that is before him, but he does not equal him in power.

5. “Afterward he revealed many reflecting, self-begotten ones, of equal age and power, subsisting in glory, (even) without number, whose nation is called ‘The Generation Above Which There Is No Kingdom,’ (because) in this (kingdom) you have become visible. And by these humans of

the place above which there is no kingdom, <he> is called 'the Unbegotten,' 'God,' 'Savior of the Children of God,' 'He Who Is Without A Likeness Among You.'

6. "The Unknowable is full of every glory and indestructibility and unspeakable joy. And they are all at repose in him, continually rejoicing in unspeakable joy over his glory that never changes and immeasurable rejoicing that until now was never heard or even known among all the aeons and their worlds."

15. Berlin · The Immortal Human, Sophia, and Ogdoad

Manuscript page reference: BG 8502,3: 93-98

1. Matthew asked him: "How was the Human revealed?"

2. The perfect Savior said: "I desire that you know the one who appeared before the world.

3. "In the beginning, the infinite, self-grown, self-made Father, who was replete with radiant and unspeakable light, when he chose for his likeness to become a great power, the originative principle of that light suddenly appeared as the deathless androgynous Human, so that through that immortal Human they could obtain their salvation and wake up from oblivion through the one sent as the interpreter, who dwells with you until the end of the impoverished thieves, because his consort is Sophia, the great one, who in him was ordained from the beginning for union by the self-begotten Father, from the Immortal Human. We then were the first to appear in divinity and kingdom, because the Father, who is called 'the Human,' 'the Self-Father,' revealed <this>. And for his own majesty, he created a mighty aeon,

whose name is Ogdoad, and he granted him great authority, even ruling over the impoverished creation. ^[29]

4. "From that light and the threefold male Spirit, which belongs to Sophia, his consort, he created gods and angels and archangels, countless myriads for service. This was because divinity and kingdom originated from this God, so that he was called 'God of gods,' 'King of kings.' Within him, the Primal Human possesses his singular mind and thought, being precisely (thought), reflection and contemplation, reason and power. All the existent qualities are [perfect, deathless].

5. "Regarding indestructibility, they are in fact equal, though regarding power, there is a difference similar to the difference between father and son, and son and thought, and the thought and what remains (thereafter). As I stated before, among created entities, the monad < . . . > comes first. And at the end, he who revealed everything, revealed everything from his power. And from created entities appeared everything that was fashioned, and from what was fashioned appeared what was formed, (and) from what was formed (appeared) what was named. This is how from beginning to end the difference arose among the unbegotten ones." ^[30]

16. Berlin · The First-Begotten Androgynous Son

Manuscript page reference: BG 8502,3: 98-102

1. Bartholomew then asked him: "How is he named 'the Human' and 'the Son of Man' in the Gospel? So, which one of them pertains to the Son?"

2. He who is holy said to him, “I desire that you know that the Primal Human who is called ‘the Begetter,’ ‘the Self-Completed Mind,’ contemplated with his consort, [Great] Sophia, and manifested his first-<begotten>, androgynous son. Its male name is called ‘First-Begetting Son of God,’ its female name being ‘First-Begetting Sophia, Mother of the Universe,’ some calling her ‘Love.’ Consequently, the first-begotten, who is called ‘Christ,’ created a multitude of countless angels for [service] from [the Spirit and] the Light because he wields authority from his Father.”

3. His disciples said to him: “Christ, instruct us concerning the Father, who is called ‘the Human,’ so that we can also precisely understand his glory.”

4. The perfect Savior said: “Let whoever has ears to hear, hear! On account of his origin from light, the first-begetting Father is named ‘Adam, the Eye of Light,’ and his entire kingdom comprises shining light, and his [inexpressible, shadowless] holy angels continually rejoice in gladness over the reflections they obtained from their Father. The kingdom of the Son of Man, who is called ‘Christ,’ is replete with inexpressible and shadowless joy, <and> rejoicing that never changes, rejoicing over his indestructible glory, until now unheard and unrevealed in <the> aeons and their worlds that originated thereafter. [I] originated [from the self-begotten] and from the primal Infinite Light so that I could instruct you in all these things.”

17. Berlin · Savior and Pistis Sophia

Manuscript page reference: BG 8502,3: 102-106

1. His disciples yet again said: “Christ, instruct us plainly about <how> the truly existent ones descended from the invisibilities, from the deathless (realms) to the world of mortality.”

2. The perfect Savior said: “The Son of Man consorted with his companion Sophia, and manifested a [mighty] androgynous [light]. Its male name is called ‘Savior, All-Begetter,’ and its female name is ‘All-Begetter Sophia,’ some calling her ‘Pistis.’

3. “Like a droplet from the light, everyone who enters the world is sent by him to the world of the Almighty, so that they can be watched over by him. And by the will of Sophia the fetter of his oblivion bound the light, [so that] by means of this, the affair could be revealed [to] the entire impoverished world, namely, (the Almighty’s) pride and blindness, and the ignorance that named him.

4. “I, however, by the will of the great Light, originated from the places above. I have loosed that <fetter>, having halted the activity of the thieving tomb. I have aroused that droplet sent from Sophia, so that through me it could bear much fruit and be perfected, and never again become defective, but through me, I being the Great Savior, that his glory could be manifested, so that Sophia could also be rectified of <that> defect, so <that> her children <could never> again grow defective, but could obtain honor and glory and ascend to their Father, and understand the manner of the speech of the Light.”^[31]

5. "And you were sent by the Son, who (himself) was sent so that you could obtain light and separate yourselves from the oblivion of the authorities, and that it could never again come to manifestation on your account, that is, the impure rubbing that originates from the envy that comes from their phallus, and so that you could tread on his evil intention."
[32]

18. Berlin · The Aeons

Manuscript page reference: BG 8502,3: 106-117

1. Then Thomas asked him: "Christ, Savior, how many aeons surpass the heavens?"

2. The perfect Savior said: "I praise you for asking about the great aeons, because your roots dwell in the infinities. When those whom I discussed before were revealed, the self-begetting Father rapidly took to creating twelve aeons for service for the twelve angels. All of them are perfect and good. In this way the deficiency in the female appeared."

3. And <he> asked him: "How many aeons of the immortals are there, beginning with the infinities?"

4. The perfect Savior said: "Let whoever has ears to hear, hear! The first aeon is the Son of Man, who is called 'First-Begetter,' who is called 'Savior,' the one who has appeared. The second aeon is the Human, who is called 'Adam, the Eye of Light.' What encompasses these is the aeon above which there is no kingdom, of the eternal, infinite God, the self-begotten aeon of the aeons that dwell therein, of the immortals, whom I explained earlier, being above the Seventh that manifested from Sophia, who is the first aeon."
[33]

5. “The Immortal Human manifested aeons and powers and kingdoms and granted authority to everyone who appears in him, so that they might carry out their wishes until the last things above chaos, because these united with one another and revealed every magnificence, even from the Spirit, multitudes of glorious and countless lights. In the beginning, these were named the first aeon, and <the second>, and <the third>. The first <is> called ‘Unity and Repose.’ Each one bears its (appropriate) name, because the <third> aeon was called ‘Assembly’ on account of the great multitude that had appeared, a multitude revealing itself as one. It is because the multitudes gather together and become one that <they> are called ‘Assembly,’ on account of that Assembly that transcends heaven.

6. Therefore the Assembly <of> the Ogdoad was manifested as androgynous and was named part masculine and part feminine. The male is called ‘Assembly,’ whereas the female is called ‘Life,’ so that it could be demonstrated that the life for all the aeons came from a female.

7. “And all names were obtained from the originative principle. This was because from his harmony with his thought, the powers appeared most rapidly who were called ‘gods,’ and on the basis of <their> contemplation, the gods of the gods revealed <the> divine gods, and on the basis of their wisdom the gods revealed <the lords> of <lords>, and <on the basis> of their acts of thought the <lords> of the <lords> revealed <lords>, and on the basis of their power the <lords> revealed archangels, and on the basis of their words the archangels revealed angels, and <simulacra> appeared from them possessing structure and shape and appellation for all the aeons and their worlds. ^[34]

8. “And the immortals I have just now described, they all wield authority from the Immortal Human, who is called ‘Silence,’ <because> by reflecting (silently) without (outward) speech, the majesty that is his was brought to completion. Because the indestructible ones possessed authority, they created a large kingdom, each one dwelling [in] his Ogdoad together with his firmament <and> thrones and temples for their respective majesties, because all of them originated through the will of the Mother of the World.”

9. The holy apostles then said to him: “Christ, Savior, reveal the aeons to us, because it is necessary for us to inquire concerning them.”

10. The perfect Savior said: “You can ask about anything, and I will give you the answer.

11. “They created angelic hosts, countless myriads for service and their glory. And they created virgin spirits, the inexpressible and unwavering lights, because they experience no infirmity or weakness, but (instead show) will. In this way were the aeons rapidly completed together with the heavens and the firmaments in the glory of the Immortal Human and his consort Sophia. [From there] all the aeons and worlds <and> those that arrived thereafter obtained models for the creation of <their> likenesses, (both) in the heavens <of> chaos and in their worlds. And every nature, beginning with the revelation of chaos, dwells in the shadowless light and in indescribable joy and in unspeakable rejoicing. They continually rejoice over their glory that never fades and their infinite repose, which is indescribable among all the aeons and all their powers that came into being thereafter. Everything I have now told you, I said so that you could shine in the light even more than these.”

19. Berlin · Mother Sophia and Yaldabaoth

Manuscript page reference: BG 8502,3: 117-124

1. Mary asked him: “Holy Christ, from where did your disciples originate, and to where are they going, and how should they act here?”
2. The perfect Savior said: “I desire that you know concerning Sophia, the Mother of the Totalities. I will manifest his benevolence, and it will be manifested (that) together with his mercy and his unfathomable nature he created the curtain between the immortals and those that arrived thereafter, that the result could follow every aeon and chaos, so that the deficiency of the female could <appear>, and that it could transpire that Error would struggle with her. And these came to comprise the curtain of the Spirit. ^[35]
3. “As I earlier mentioned, from <the> aeons above the emanations of Light, a droplet from the Light and the Spirit descended to the lower places of chaos belonging to the Almighty, so that their molded shapes could appear from that droplet, because it is a judgment on him, the arch-begetter, who is called ‘Yaldabaoth.’ That droplet revealed their molded shapes through breath, operating as a living soul. It was wilted and it slept in the ignorance of the soul. Then it grew hot because of the breath of the great male light, and it contemplated, (and) when the breath blew into (the immortal one), names were obtained from that immortal one by everyone in the world of chaos and by everything in it. ^[36]
4. “When, however, this transpired by the will of Mother Sophia, so that in that place the Immortal Human could sew together garments as a judgment against the thieves, <he>

subsequently greeted the exhalation of that breath. Because, however, he was soulish, he was unable to gain that power for himself before the number of those of chaos was completed, before the time ordained by the great angel is completed. ^[37]

5. "I have now instructed you concerning the Immortal Human, and have loosed the fetters of the thieves from him. In front of them I shattered the gates of the merciless ones, shaming their evil intention, and all of them have been disgraced, and have <not> risen from their ignorance. This is why, then, I came to this place, that they could be joined with that Spirit and breath, and could from two become one, just as it was from the beginning, that you could produce much fruit and ascend to He Who Is from the beginning, in unspeakable joy and glory and honor and the gift of the Father of the World. ^[38]

6. "Consequently, whoever knows the Father in perfect knowledge will go to the Father and repose in the unbegotten Father. However, whoever knows him imperfectly will remain in the deficiency and repose in the Ogdoad.

7. "Now, whoever silently knows the immortal Spirit of light, by reflecting and agreeing with the truth, if he gives to me signs of the Invisible One, he will become a light in the silent Spirit. Whoever knows the Son of Man in knowledge and love, if he gives me a sign of the Son of Man, he can go to dwell with those in the Ogdoad."

20. Berlin • Conclusion

Manuscript page reference: BG 8502,3: 124-127

1. “Behold! I have instructed you concerning the name of the Perfect One, the entire will of the holy angels and of the Mother, so that the male host may be brought to completion, so that in all the aeons they could appear, from the infinities to those that came into existence in the unfathomable riches of the Great Invisible Spirit, so that they all could partake in his benevolence, even the riches <of their place of repose> without any kingdom over it.

2. “And I originated from first sent one, that I could disclose to you He Who Is from the beginning, on account of the pride of the arch-begetter and his angels, because they boast about themselves, saying that they are gods. And I came to free them from their blindness, so that I could announce to everyone concerning the God who dwells above the world.

3. “Tread, therefore, on their graves, shame their evil intention, break their yoke, and awaken whoever is my own, because I have granted you authority over everything as the Sons of Light, so that with your feet you could tread on their power.” [39]

4. These are the matters the blessed Savior spoke, and he vanished from their midst. And they were in great, unspeakable joy in the Spirit from that day onward. And his disciples began preaching the divine Gospel of the eternal Father, indestructible forever. [40]

The Sophia of Jesus Christ

Translation notes

1. 1:1 — Part I presents NHC III,4; Part II, beginning with section 11, presents BG 8502,3. Section and paragraph numbers are modern reading aids. Each part retains its own readings, losses and concluding title. Codex page numbers are not chapter numbers.

2. 1:1 — Both witnesses name twelve disciples and seven women. Mary later speaks, but the text does not supply her full name here. Identifying the literary characters with particular historical people requires separate evidence.

3. 1:1 — Both witnesses place the mountain called Of Olives in Galilee. This unusual geography is retained from the selected translation. The juxtaposition of invisible spirit and perfect flesh is also retained as a feature of the narrative.

4. 1:2 — Compare the greeting with John 14:27 and 20:19,21. The comparison identifies similar sayings; it does not by itself establish the precise history of literary dependence.

5. 1:5 — Here and in 11:5–7 the Savior contrasts human conjecture with the knowledge he brings. This is the work's argument, not a survey of all philosophical schools. An accidental English capital in 1:5 is normalized: Guessed → guessed. The source's spelling indestructability is normalized throughout to indestructibility, without changing its sense.

6. 1:8 — The sowing of impure rubbing is a stark image of bodily conception contrasted with another birth. Related imagery returns in 7:5 and 17:5. It belongs to the work's ascetic language, not to a medical account.

7. 2:2 — He Who Is names the ultimate principle through negative descriptions: without beginning, birth, name or external ruler. Shifts among he, I and his appearance follow the translation and are not replaced by a single explanatory scheme.

8. 3:2 — The lists of mind, thought, reflection and related powers differ in 3:2 and 13:2. English Totalities is rendered in Russian as everything that exists, according to context, rather than

automatically replaced by the separate term Pleroma. The lists are not harmonized into an identical system of entities.

9. 3:4 — This passage has self-begotten God, whereas parallel 13:4 has unbegotten God. The terms are not interchangeable; the selected English translation's difference is preserved. Square brackets supply proposed restorations and angle brackets mark editorial corrections, not securely read words.

10. 4:3 — The distinction between Father and Forefather and the image's relation to the light are difficult here; compare the fuller wording of 14:3-4. In this mirror context the Russian translation renders reflecting and reflector through the idea of reflection in a mirror; elsewhere reflection can denote thought.

11. 4:4 — The Generation Above Which There Is No Kingdom is a designation within the work's spiritual world, indicating no superior rule. The Berlin witness, 14:5, distributes the names Unbegotten, God and Savior differently; both sequences remain in their own witnesses.

12. 5:3 — Androgynous is rendered in Russian as combining male and female. It describes figures and generation within the spiritual world, not the anatomy of a historical person. Sophia means Wisdom and functions here as a named figure in the narrative.

13. 5:3 — Ogdoad means a group of eight. Here it names an aeon or spiritual realm. Its relation to other aeons and the highest Father is described differently across passages; the number eight alone does not provide a complete cosmic scheme.

14. 5:5 — Monad means a unit or single principle. The discourse moves from differences of power to the origin of fashioned, formed and named things. The juxtaposition of created entities and unbegotten ones follows the English translation and is not removed to produce a tidier system.

15. 6:1 — Both witnesses say in the Gospel, but no particular book is named here. The phrase cannot automatically be treated as a precise reference to one of the four canonical Gospels.

16. 6:2 — The English distinguishes first-begotten from first-begetting; Russian preserves that difference. The designations

Son, Sophia and Love belong to this account of generation and are not reduced to a single name.

17. 6:4 — Adam, the Eye of Light is a name and interpretation within this work. Its presence here does not make it an established etymology of the Hebrew name Adam. In 16:4 the Berlin witness adds a description of the kingdom as shining light.

18. 7:2 — Pistis means faith and is another name of Sophia here. Context matters: recurring names such as Sophia, Human and Son of Man can refer to different stages in the described generation.

19. 7:3 — Almighty here refers to a power of the lower world associated with blindness and pride. The Berlin witness explicitly names the arch-begetter Yaldabaoth in 19:3. A familiar religious title need not have the same referent in different works.

20. 8:2 — NHC III lacks pages 109–110 at this point. Part II, 18:2–6, preserves the corresponding discussion of the aeons and Assembly. It is not inserted into the first witness's gap: a parallel does not establish the exact wording of the lost pages.

21. 8:3 — The female is named here as the source of life for all the aeons. This should be read alongside the more critical statements elsewhere. The narrative does not fit a simple rule that male always means good and female always means evil.

22. 8:5 — This witness says the majesty is hers; Berlin 18:8 says it is his. Each witness's pronouns follow its English text. Unclear shifts of person and gender are not silently corrected without a separate textual investigation.

23. 9:2 — Pages 115–116 of NHC III are missing here; compare Part II, 19:2–5. Mother Sophia and Yaldabaoth is a modern heading from the English publication. Yaldabaoth's name does not occur in this surviving NHC section's body text, but appears in Berlin 19:3.

24. 9:4 — The passage distinguishes perfect and imperfect knowledge, repose in the Father and repose in the Ogdoad; compare the less damaged 19:6.

25. 9:5 — The text mentions signs of the Invisible One and the Son of Man without specifying their exact form here. No particular ritual or password is supplied in this passage.

26. 10:4 — The endings differ: here the Gospel is of the eternal, indestructible Spirit and ends with Amen; 20:4 has the eternal Father and no Amen. Each ending is followed by the work's title. These differences are retained.

27. 11:1 — The independent Berlin witness, BG 8502,3, begins here. The narrative repeats intentionally: this is a second witness, not a continuation after section 10. Sections 11–20 are editorial divisions aligned by topic with 1–10; the source does not provide separate thematic headings for Berlin.

28. 12:3 — Berlin expressly denies human form to the ultimate principle; this separate sentence is absent from 2:3. It then retains the statement about a distinctive mysterious appearance. The distinction between human shape and another kind of manifestation belongs to the text itself.

29. 15:3 — Berlin has the first-person plural, We then were the first to appear. It is not replaced by the first witness's statement about the Immortal Human who first appeared. Both follow the selected English translation.

30. 15:5 — The source places < . . . > after monad. It is retained, rendered (...) in Russian, rather than replaced by a guessed phrase. These particular angle brackets do not enclose supplied words.

31. 17:4 — Berlin reads thieving tomb, whereas 7:4 has thieves. The unusual image is not replaced with the other witness's more familiar wording. Identifying the tomb with the body would be interpretation, not a literal rendering of this phrase.

32. 17:5 — Impure rubbing is associated with envy here and with fearsome fire in 7:5. The differing their and his pronouns are also retained. Parallel passages have not been harmonized.

33. 18:4 — The enumeration has recurring names and a complex relation among first, second, Seventh and Sophia. The Russian does

not correct the sequence or replace it with one modern diagram. Ogdoad and Assembly subsequently receive further descriptions.

34. 18:7 — The numerous angle-bracketed words are corrections already proposed in the selected English translation. The sequence of gods, lords, archangels and angels is not represented as an entirely secure manuscript reading.

35. 19:2 — Error is capitalized as an acting figure in the narrative. The shift from Sophia to his benevolence and he created is retained: the English changes pronoun gender. A conjectured subject's name has not been inserted into the main translation.

36. 19:3 — The arch-begetter is named Yaldabaoth. Compare the imagery of breath and living soul with Genesis 2:7; here it belongs to a distinct account of the droplet of Light, chaos and awakening. Similar imagery does not make the narratives identical.

37. 19:4 — Soulish denotes the level of soul, not the everyday sense of warm-hearted. The text distinguishes soul, breath and spirit, though their relations remain difficult in individual sentences.

38. 19:5 — The negation not is angle-bracketed as an editorial correction in the selected English translation. It materially affects the sense: these figures have not risen from ignorance. The correction marks are preserved.

39. 20:3 — Graves, the yoke and evil intention belong to the narrative's struggle against enslaving powers.

40. 20:4 — The conclusion and following title complete the Berlin witness. All 61 of its paragraphs and all 56 Nag Hammadi paragraphs are included. Completeness refers to the selected surviving translation, not to reconstruction of lost pages.