

PISTIS SOPHIA

The Savior and the Mysteries of the Father

A literary retelling in three chapters
with Babylon Encyclopedia commentary

A note before the story

This book retells the ancient story of Pistis Sophia in three chapters. It follows the English translation by Violet MacDermot in the 1978 edition of the Coptic text edited by Carl Schmidt, checked against the supplied modern adaptation. The ancient work survives in the Askew Codex. The uploaded scholarly edition is a translation and edition of that manuscript, not the manuscript itself.

The central figure is called the Savior. The divine origin is called the Father. Other names and titles remain where they distinguish beings, offices, or regions that should not be merged. The thirteen repentances are thirteen spoken prayers. The later songs of deliverance remain songs of deliverance.

This is an original literary abridgment, not a new translation from Coptic and not an unabridged replacement for the source. Its speeches are newly worded adaptations. The dialogue follows the source's speakers and subjects, with connective prose added for continuity. Repeated explanations, long catalogues, and some ritual details are condensed. The closing editorial note identifies these choices. Babylon Encyclopedia's interpretation appears after the three chapters, where its voice can speak openly without being placed in the mouths of the ancient characters.

Chapter I

The Savior Ascends in Light

For eleven years after he rose from the dead, the Savior remained among his disciples.

They heard him speak of mysteries. They heard of the first ordinance, of the veil, of the great Light, of five helpers and five impressions, and of the Treasury of the Light. They learned names that opened an unfamiliar vastness before them. Yet the names were not the whole revelation.

He had taught them to the boundary of the First Mystery. He had not shown them everything within it.

The disciples did not know this. They thought that what they had received was the fullness. They thought that the mystery from which he had come was the end of every question, the summit beyond which nothing remained.

They did not yet know the regions of the great Invisible, or the three triple-powered ones, or the twenty-four invisible emanations and the orders that extended from them. They did not know the guardians at the gates, the arrangement of the Treasury, or the place of the Twin Savior. They had heard of the three Amens, the five trees, and the seven voices; they had not seen their extension.

One morning they sat together on the Mount of Olives and spoke with joy about their good fortune.

The Savior sat a little apart.

It was the fifteenth day of the moon in the Egyptian month Tybi. The moon was full. As the sun rose, a radiance came from behind it, surpassing the light that the disciples knew.

It descended upon the Savior and surrounded him completely.

They could no longer distinguish his face. The light sent out rays of different kinds, rising from below toward the heights, each more glorious than the one beneath it. It reached from the earth into heaven. Their joy gave way to fear.

The Savior rose within that radiance and ascended.

They watched until he passed beyond their sight. No one spoke.

Then the heavens were disturbed. Powers moved against powers; regions and orders trembled. The earth shook beneath those who lived upon it. From the third hour of that

day until the ninth hour of the next, the upheaval continued. Voices of angels and archangels sounded through the world.

The disciples wept.

They feared that the places of creation would be destroyed. They had believed themselves to stand at the completion of knowledge. Now they could not explain what was happening before them.

At the ninth hour of the following day, the heavens opened.

The Savior descended, bearing a radiance greater than the one in which he had ascended. His light appeared in three glories. The glory above surpassed the glory in the middle; the middle surpassed the one below. Even the lowest recalled the brilliance that had first surrounded him.

They drew back from him.

He saw their fear and spoke with compassion.

"Take courage. I am here."

They asked him to withdraw the overwhelming light so that they could approach and hear him. He gathered its radiance into himself, and they saw the Savior again.

They came before him and bowed.

"Rejoice," he told them. "The time has come for me to speak of what I have not yet revealed. I will tell you the mysteries from the outermost places to the innermost. I will speak of the heights and the depths, of the visible and the invisible."

The garment

The Savior told them why the light had descended.

When he entered the world, he had left his garment of Light in the place from which he came. Until its appointed time, he had remained among them without revealing its full glory. Now the garment had been sent to him.

It carried the names and mysteries of the regions through which he would pass. What the disciples had witnessed was not a light borrowed from the sun. It came from the heights beyond the dominion of the rulers.

He described the writing within the garment. It called him to the heights as one to whom its speakers belonged, members joined in one mystery. It declared their unity with him and spoke of a name embracing them all.

The time of his fulfillment had arrived: the work for which he had come was to proceed, the mysteries were to be disclosed, and the powers that had withheld their light were to meet an authority beyond their own.

The garment bore the knowledge of the places of the Light. It declared his belonging before beings who had not known him.

He spoke also of what he had done before the disciples understood his presence among them.

In the realm of the rulers, he had taken the likeness of Gabriel and brought a power to Mary, who would become his mother according to the world. He had received the power of the Great Sabaoth, the Good, for the earthly coming. The account joined the descent of his power, the body that Mary bore, and the work of Barbelo without making these one undifferentiated thing.

He told the disciples that powers belonging to the twelve saviors of the Treasury had been placed within them. Their coming into the world was connected to the work of the Light, though they had not understood it while living ordinary human lives.

He told them also of John the Baptist: a power sent in preparation, a soul associated with Elijah, and a coming that preceded his own.

They listened as he opened the hidden history beneath the history they remembered.

The Savior had not first become known to the heavens on the morning they saw him ascend. Yet many powers had failed to recognize him before the garment disclosed his authority.

The gates and the rulers

"When I put on the garment," he said, "I rose to the firmament. Its gates opened before me."

The guardians were afraid. They saw the radiance and the mysteries upon him, and the places that had appeared immovable were shaken.

He passed into the first sphere. He passed into the realm of destiny, the Heimarmene, in which the powers ordered the courses of embodied life.

Their rulers did not remain calmly upon their thrones. They saw the mysteries of their own names upon his garment. They knew that the one before them could pass their boundaries.

He entered the twelve aeons. Adamas and the tyrants rose against the Light. Their resistance did not make them its equal.

The Savior took a third part of their power. He changed the arrangement through which they acted. Those who had turned in one direction according to their former order were made to turn for six months to the left and six months to the right.

The change reached the practices by which people on earth called upon those powers. The heavenly machinery was no longer arranged entirely as the practitioners had learned it.

Mary Magdalene came forward.

"Savior, what will happen to those who calculate the courses of the stars? And what will happen to the invocations that the transgressing angels taught?"

He answered her without treating every practice as identical.

When the powers returned to the orientation associated with their old arrangement, some calculations and operations could still correspond to it. When they turned the other way, the former knowledge would fail. The power of the thirteenth aeon had not been taken away in the same manner, and its workings were not to be confused with those of the twelve.

Mary listened. The distinctions mattered: a sphere was not an aeon; one order was not all orders; an alteration of a ruler's power was not the disappearance of every heavenly region.

The Savior spoke of Melchisedek, the receiver and purifier of the Light. He described the taking of purified light from the rulers and its passage toward the Treasury. What was not purified entered the processes through which souls and bodies were formed.

The rulers tried to consume the material associated with their own power, prolonging the old order and obstructing the completion of the number of souls. The Savior shortened their courses and changed their paths. He prevented their resistance from indefinitely delaying the work for which he had come.

The Light was to be gathered. Souls were to receive mysteries. The dominion of the tyrants would not define the whole of existence.

Beyond the twelve aeons

He continued through the regions until he came to the veil of the thirteenth aeon.

The veil opened.

The great Invisible and the triple-powered ones beheld the garment and were disturbed. Those who had assumed that their region marked the highest authority saw a radiance they had not measured.

Then, below the thirteenth aeon, he found Pistis Sophia.

She was alone.

She had not yet been returned to her place. She grieved over the afflictions that Authades, the Self-willed one, had brought upon her.

The Savior shone before her beyond measure. She looked at his garment and saw the mystery of her own name within it, with the glory belonging to that mystery.

The garment in which he had ascended carried her name also. The disciples had seen its radiance from the mountain. Sophia saw within that radiance the mystery that belonged to her.

Mary rose again.

"You have said that Sophia belongs among the twenty-four invisible emanations. How did she come to be below their region?"

The Savior began to unfold the events that had brought her to this encounter: her desire for the higher Light, the deception, the words she had spoken in Chaos, and the help he had already given her.

His telling turned back through those events. The one whom she now saw blazing before her had reached her before she could recognize him.

Chapter II

Sophia Speaks and Rises in His Light

Pistis Sophia had dwelt in the thirteenth aeon. With her partner and twenty-two other invisible emanations, she belonged to the twenty-four.

From her region she saw the Light upon the veil of the Treasury.

She desired it.

She could not yet reach it. But she ceased performing the mystery of her own aeon and sang praises to the higher Light. The rulers below hated her for looking beyond them.

Authades hated her also.

He was the third of the triple-powered ones. He had withheld the purification of his power and desired dominion over the thirteenth aeon and the places beneath it. Sophia's longing directed her toward a height above his authority.

He brought forth a lion-faced power, bright enough to deceive her. He sent it down into Chaos with other violent emanations from his matter.

Sophia looked below and saw its light.

She thought it belonged to the Light she had seen above. She thought she could descend without her partner, take that light, and make aeons of light for herself, through which she could reach the height she desired.

She left her region.

The rulers pursued her as she passed through the twelve aeons. She came to Chaos and approached the lion-faced power, intending to take its light into herself.

Instead, it consumed hers.

The emanations of Authades surrounded her. Her light was taken; her matter was cast into Chaos. The account speaks here of Yaldabaoth, a lion-faced ruler, half fire and half darkness.

Sophia was weakened, and still the powers pressed against her to take what remained.

She turned toward the Light in which she had believed.

She spoke.

The first repentance

"Light above every light, hear me here. I trusted you before I entered this darkness. Let my confession reach you now.

"I saw a brightness below and believed that it was yours. I went to receive it, and came instead into Chaos. The lion-faced power took the light within me. The emanations of Authades surrounded me, and I could not return.

"I called, but my voice did not escape the darkness. I looked upward for help and saw the rulers rejoicing over my suffering. I had done them no injury. Their rejoicing strengthened those who were taking my power.

"You know the error I made. I mistook an imitation for the light of your dwelling. What I did is open before you. Do not leave me empty of the light in which I have believed.

"My longing for your place has brought me shame. I have become a stranger to the invisible ones and to the great emanations of Barbelo. Authades is angry because I did not continue his mystery. The watchers seek me, and those who remain in the mysteries of the aeons mock me.

"Yet I turn toward you. Hear me in your compassion. Draw me out of this dark matter. Do not let Chaos close over my power or the lion-faced one consume it entirely.

"Look upon my distress. You see those who have afflicted me; let your judgment reach them. I waited for my partner to fight beside me. I searched for his strength and did not find it. I sought light and received darkness; I sought power and received matter.

"Let the darkness they prepared become their own confinement. Let the snare they made hold them. Keep them from the height while they persist in taking light that is not theirs. Let them not share the inheritance of those who purify themselves and turn toward you.

"Authades boasts as though his will alone has accomplished this. He does not understand the ordinance under which I have been brought low. Yet he and his emanations have increased the suffering of my humiliation. They have taken from me again and again.

"Still I praise the light that is with you and within me. Receive my praise as a mystery at the gates of Light. Let those who turn toward you speak it and be purified.

"Let the souls and the material things seek the Light, that their power may live. Let them praise the Lord of the aeons. A dwelling shall be prepared in the Light for the souls that are saved, and those who receive its mysteries shall inherit it."

When the Savior had recounted her words, Mary Magdalene came forward.

The light within her had heard. She recognized Sophia's cry in Psalm 68: the appeal from engulfing waters, the hatred without cause, the estrangement, and the plea for deliverance. She showed how the earthly words of the psalm corresponded to the suffering the Savior described.

He received her interpretation.

The second repentance

Sophia spoke again.

"Light in whom I trust, do not leave me here until my allotted time is spent. Hear me and bring me into the heights through your mysteries.

"Save me from the lion-faced power and from the emanations of Authades. I have trusted you since the beginning of my coming forth. When the rulers mocked me for leaving their mystery, you remained the one toward whom I looked.

"Let my mouth declare your greatness. Do not abandon me while my power diminishes. My enemies surround me and watch for what is left. They say to one another that the Light has forsaken me, that they may take everything within me.

"Turn toward me. Rescue me from their cruelty. Let those who seek my power lose the strength with which they seize it. Let the darkness wrap those who would strip me of light."

Peter rose, troubled by the prominence of Mary's speech. He complained that she took the opportunity to speak from the others.

The Savior answered that whoever understood through the power of the Spirit could come forward. He invited Peter himself to give the interpretation he had understood.

Peter recognized Psalm 70: trust from the beginning, the prayer against abandonment, and enemies who mistake weakness for proof that help will never come.

The Savior affirmed his understanding, without making Mary's silence its condition.

The third repentance

"Light of the powers, come to my aid.

"Turn back those who seek the light within me. Let them fall into the darkness they brought upon another. Let those who claim dominion over me return to Chaos without their stolen strength.

"Let all who seek your Light rejoice. Let those who desire your mystery give it honor.

"I have been made poor in light. My power is missing, and I cannot supply it to myself. You are the one who can rescue me. Come quickly into this Chaos."

Martha came forward weeping and bowed at the Savior's feet. He gave her his hand and invited her to speak.

She found Sophia's appeal in Psalm 69: help sought without delay, the humiliation of those who hunt the soul, and the joy of those who love salvation.

The fourth repentance

The lion-faced power had not yet begun its next assault when Sophia spoke the fourth prayer.

"Light I have trusted, let my voice enter your dwelling. Do not hide your radiance from me. When oppression comes, hear me quickly.

"My time is passing like a breath. My light has been taken, my strength has dried up, and I have forgotten the mystery I once performed. Fear has diminished what remains within me.

"I have become like a dark spirit inhabiting matter, like an isolated power in the air. My partner sees Chaos where my light had been. I swallow the tears and bitterness of my own matter lest my enemies take even these.

"Your ordinance has brought me into this place. I have descended and become cold within myself. Yet your Light endures, and you seek those who are oppressed.

"Rise and seek the power of my soul. Let the appointed time of compassion arrive. Let those sent to save me find what is bound, and let the rulers fear before your mystery.

"Look upon the repentance of those below. Let this become a witness for those who will come after us, and let them praise the heights.

"Look from your dwelling upon matter. Hear the groaning of the bound. Release the imprisoned power of souls. Place your name within the soul and your mystery within its power."

John approached the Savior and asked to speak. He interpreted her prayer through Psalm 101: the wasting of life, the loneliness, the appeal that the appointed time might come, and the release of those held captive.

The fifth repentance

The emanations returned to their assault. The command for Sophia's deliverance had not yet come.

She raised her voice from the place where her light was failing.

"Light of my salvation, I praised you in the heights, and I praise you here. Let the song I sang above reach you from Chaos.

"Darkness fills my power. I have become like those who descend to the lowest regions, like matter with no one above to rescue it. I lie among powers emptied of life.

"Your ordinance has reached me. The Spirit has withdrawn. My companions do not come, and those of my aeon have turned away. Yet I have not wholly ceased to exist.

"With the light that remains, I stretch my hands toward you. Will your work be accomplished even here? Will those you send rise in the darkness and become your disciples? Will your name be spoken in Chaos, and your mystery in matter?

"My praise still seeks the heights. Let your Light descend upon me. From the time of my coming forth I have suffered for the Light. I looked above; then I looked below. I rose, and I descended.

"The terrors of your ordinance surround me like waters. Neither my companions nor my partner has been allowed to rescue me. Hear the voice that remains."

Philip set down the book in his hands.

He had been writing the Savior's words, and his own understanding had often stirred while he remained silent at that work. He asked whether the responsibility rested upon him alone.

The Savior named Philip, Thomas, and Matthew as witnesses appointed to record what they heard and saw. Mary understood the three witnesses through the teaching that a matter is established by two or three testimonies.

Then Philip interpreted Sophia's fifth prayer through Psalm 87: the cry from the pit, the separation from companions, and the question whether wonders can reach the place of darkness and forgetfulness.

He returned to his writing.

The sixth repentance

Sophia called again, seeking forgiveness for abandoning her place and descending into darkness.

"I have praised you from below. Hear my repentance and attend to my entreaty.

"If you hold my transgression against me, how shall I stand before you? But the mystery of your name brings salvation, and I believe in you.

"My power trusted you in the heights. Let it trust you here also. Let every power within me turn toward the Light in darkness and in ascent.

"You have compassion upon us. Your mystery holds a great deliverance. Save the powers that have come into Chaos through my leaving the region that was mine."

Andrew recognized Psalm 129: the cry from the depths, the waiting for the word, and the mercy in which redemption becomes possible.

The Savior promised the disciples a knowledge extending from the innermost to the outermost, from the heights to the darknesses below. They were to understand what they heard, not merely preserve its sound.

Sophia looked upward to see whether she would now be brought out. But the appointed deliverance had not yet been fulfilled. The rulers mocked her waiting.

The seventh repentance

"I lift the power of my soul toward you, my Light. Do not let my enemies make my trust a cause for shame.

"Let those who have stolen my power find no lasting gain in it. Show me your roads. Teach me the paths by which I may be saved from Chaos.

"Lead me into your Light. Let me know the one who saves me, for I will wait upon you throughout my time.

"Remember your compassion. Do not reckon the ignorance of my beginning as though it were the whole truth of me. Forgive the great transgression I have made.

"You are good and upright. Teach the powers that fear has weakened. Draw them from their bondage. Your knowledge brings salvation to those who seek your mysteries and their inheritance.

"Give your mystery to those who trust you. Let their souls dwell in the places of Light, and their powers inherit its Treasury.

"I have trusted that you will loosen the bonds around my feet. Look toward me: even my name has been taken in Chaos. My afflictions are many. See my distress and the envy of those who hate me.

"Guard my power. Do not leave me in the darkness. Save what remains from the emanations of Authades."

Thomas came forward. He had waited while the others spoke, and now his understanding was ready. He interpreted Sophia's prayer through Psalm 24: the lifted

soul, the request for paths, the forgiveness of ignorance, and the inheritance of those who wait.

Compassion before the command

The Savior paused in his account.

"The command to bring her fully out of Chaos had not yet come," he said. "But from my own compassion I brought her to a place within Chaos where there was more room."

The powers relaxed their assault, believing that she was about to be taken beyond their reach.

Sophia did not know who had helped her. She continued praising the true Light she had seen in the heights. Her understanding of her helper was incomplete; the help had nevertheless reached her.

When the emanations saw that she had not left Chaos altogether, they closed around her again.

The eighth repentance

"Light in whom I hope, do not leave me in Chaos. Save me through your knowledge. Bring me into your presence and lead me by the mystery of your name.

"Draw me from the lion-faced snare. Into your keeping I give the purified light within me. You have had compassion upon my suffering and brought me where the oppression could ease.

"I rejoice in that mercy. Yet the powers have returned. My understanding is shaken, and my remaining strength diminishes. Those of the aeons look upon me as though I were matter without light. My partner fears to help me.

"They say that I have become Chaos. They gather together to take what remains. But I call you my Savior.

"My appointed course is in your hands. Rescue me from those who pursue me. Let your Light rest upon me in compassion.

"Do not let my praise end in humiliation. Let darkness close upon the cruel powers. Silence the mouths that plot to consume me when I have done them no injury."

Matthew interpreted the prayer through Psalm 30. He recognized the refuge, the hidden snare, the giving of the spirit into divine keeping, and the broad place that did not yet end the struggle.

The ninth repentance

"Light, take power from those who have taken mine. I belong to your Light; come to my aid.

"Speak to what remains within me and assure it of rescue. Let those who intend to empty me lose the strength with which they do it. Let Jeu, your angel, scatter their power and turn them from the heights.

"They made a snare though I had not wronged them. Take the stolen light from the lion-faced power. Turn the intention of Authades against his own dominion.

"Then the powers within me will rejoice. They will know who delivered them from the one who consumed them.

"My enemies stand around me and demand the mystery of the Light above. They accuse me of possessing what I do not yet know. They flatter me to extract it, then rage because I cannot give it.

"I sat in darkness with a humbled soul. I sought your dwelling while I was still in my aeon. I suffered because I believed in your Light.

"They return with clenched teeth and renewed violence. How long shall they do this? Save the one who is alone in this place. I will praise you even among those who oppress me.

"You see their cunning. Do not remain distant from my aid. Judge according to your goodness, and do not let them call their theft a victory.

"Let them not say that my light has satisfied them, or that my power has been swallowed forever. Cover their boasting with darkness.

"Restore me to the region of righteousness. Let the light of your angel Jeu shine more greatly, and let my voice praise your knowledge throughout my time."

James understood Psalm 34: the appeal against persecutors, the demand for justice, and the refusal to let predatory power decide the meaning of the victim's life.

The Savior told the disciples that those who received his mysteries could come before beings created earlier than humanity. Mary understood: the last could become first. Ancient origin did not by itself confer the highest inheritance.

After this ninth repentance, the lion-faced power attacked again. Sophia cried for help, and her repentance was accepted. The First Mystery sent the Savior secretly to her aid.

The ancient account speaks of her being brought up from Chaos here, then continues to recount struggles and stages of release. Its telling returns to the rescue more than once. What matters in this movement is that the Savior now appears to Sophia herself.

She saw a light incomparably greater than the lion-faced brightness. She also saw compassion. He did not come toward her with the insolence of the one who had consumed her.

She recognized that he came from the height of heights, from the Light in which she had believed from the beginning. Her next repentance was spoken with him before her.

She took courage.

The tenth repentance

"Light above every light, I called in distress, and you heard me.

"Save my power from deceitful speech and the snares that have wounded it. The stolen light gathered by treachery will not become a true offering to you.

"The traps of Authades spread widely. I have lived far from my dwelling, in the houses of Chaos. My power has remained in a region that was never mine.

"I tried to appease those who had no mercy. When I did so, they attacked me again. Deliver me from their cunning."

Peter interpreted Psalm 119: exile among those who hate peace, the lying tongue, and the cry that is heard.

The eleventh repentance

The lion-faced power saw the Savior approach and became more violent. It brought forth further emanations.

Sophia answered its rage with another prayer.

"Why does this power exalt itself through wrongdoing? Its designs cut into my strength as a blade cuts flesh.

"I chose to descend rather than remain in the region of righteousness, and they used that choice to ensnare me. They intended to consume the light within me.

"But the Light will reclaim what they have withheld. Their matter will not preserve their dominion. Their names will not stand among those who live in the heights.

"The invisible ones will see the fate of this lion-faced power. Let them learn to release the purification of their light instead of withholding it.

"It boasted in its strength and refused to give what it possessed. It planned to take Sophia's light. Let its boast be exposed before those who see it."

Salome recognized Psalm 51: a mighty one boasting in evil, deceit sharpened like a blade, and power uprooted because it trusted its own abundance.

The twelfth repentance

The Savior entered Chaos in great radiance to reclaim the light of the lion-faced power.

It cried to Authades for help. Authades looked down in anger from the thirteenth aeon. The emanations turned upon Sophia once more, and she was afraid.

"Light, do not disregard my praise. Authades and the lion-faced power open their mouths against me. They surround me to take my strength. They hate me because I love your Light.

"Let darkness stand beside Authades. When judgment reaches him, take away the power by which he would take mine. Let another receive the greatness he has misused.

"Let his emanations lose their stolen brightness and remain in Chaos. Let the purifier gather what is light within them. Let them not return to their old region while they persist in their cruelty.

"Remember the wrongdoing that brought forth this lion-faced power. Remove the names of these oppressors from the dwelling they claimed. They did not spare the one they had already emptied; they sought to consume the remnant also.

"They chose darkness as a garment. Let the Chaos they embraced become the boundary of their dominion. Let their own intentions return upon them.

"But turn toward me in the mercy of your name. My power trembles. I cannot stand upright among them. I am driven from side to side, and my matter has withered because my light was taken.

"They look upon me and mock. Help me in your compassion."

Andrew interpreted Psalm 108: love answered with hatred, the stripping away of an oppressor's office, and the final appeal of the poor and afflicted.

The prayer did not disguise Sophia's anger. It asked for judgment as well as rescue.

The thirteenth repentance

Sophia spoke of the twelve aeons through which she had descended. Her twelve repentances corresponded to them. Now she spoke concerning the thirteenth aeon, the region she had left.

"Light above every light, hear the praise of the one who came from the thirteenth aeon. Let this repentance complete the confession of my descent.

"Hear me concerning the dwelling I abandoned. Save me through your great mystery. Forgive me in your mercy.

"Give me purification and the baptism that releases transgression. The lion-faced power through which I fell has never been hidden from you.

"Among the invisible ones of my region, I was the one who descended into Chaos. My transgression stands before you, and your ordinance has been fulfilled through what has happened. Receive my repentance."

Martha came forward once more. She interpreted Sophia's appeal through Psalm 50: mercy, washing, the acknowledged transgression, and the justice of the divine word.

The thirteen repentances had been spoken.

The crown and the meeting of the lights

The Savior sent a power from himself into Chaos and brought Sophia into its upper places. The emanations followed, attempting to drag her down again.

She sang of the help that had reached her and asked that their renewed designs fail. Salome interpreted this praise through the fifth Psalm of Solomon.

Then the Savior made his light-power a crown upon Sophia's head.

The harmful matter within her was disturbed and cast into Chaos. The light that remained in her was gathered within the protecting radiance.

Sophia sang that even if her matter were shaken and dispersed, the Light would remain with her, and she with it.

Mary, the Savior's mother according to the world, came forward to interpret the crown. She was not Mary Magdalene. Both women spoke in the gathering, and their voices were distinct.

She recognized the living crown in the nineteenth song attributed to Solomon. It did not wither; its life gave growth to the one who wore it.

The Savior continued the account of Sophia's rescue. With her thirteenth repentance, the appointed afflictions had reached their completion. A great light-power came from the First Mystery in the heights to bring her out of darkness.

The Savior, above Chaos, saw it hastening toward him. Another light-power came forth from him to help Sophia. The power from above descended upon the power from him. They met and became a single great outpouring.

As he unfolded the mystery of that meeting, he identified the power sent from the height as himself, sent by his Father to save Sophia. He spoke of its joining with the power that came from him and with the soul he had received from the Great Sabaoth, the Good. Their union shone exceedingly.

Mary Magdalene interpreted the meeting through Psalm 84: mercy meeting truth, righteousness embracing peace, truth rising from below, and righteousness looking from above. The power from the heights answered Sophia's suffering; the power from the Savior restored what had been taken.

The Savior's mother offered another interpretation of the same words.

She remembered a day when he was young. A figure resembling him had come into her house and asked for his brother. She feared that it was a phantom and bound it to the bed while she went to find the child with Joseph in the vineyard.

When they returned, the child and the Spirit recognized one another. They embraced and became one.

The memory stood within her understanding of the meeting of mercy and truth. The heavenly coming and the earthly body were joined in the Savior's work.

The disciples heard more than one true correspondence in the same psalm. One interpretation did not silence the next.

The final assaults

The outpouring of Light entered Chaos. Michael and Gabriel helped carry it to Sophia. It returned the light taken from her and renewed her power.

Authades did not yield quietly. He sent another force, swift as an arrow. His emanations changed their faces, becoming serpentine and monstrous. Adamas, the Tyrant, sent a power of his own to join the assault.

Sophia cried again to the Light that had sheltered her.

At the Father's command, the Savior sent Michael and Gabriel with the great outpouring. They carried Sophia in their hands so that her feet would not touch the darkness below.

The Light surrounded her on the left and on the right and on every side, and became a crown upon her head. She stood within its immeasurable radiance and took courage. The emanations fell on either side. Their altered faces could not overcome its light.

The disciples had seen the Savior surrounded by Light before he rose from the mountain. Now they heard of Sophia standing within the outpouring that came from him.

Then, at the Father's command, the Savior himself descended into Chaos, shining exceedingly.

He went to the lion-faced power and took its light. He restrained the hostile emanations and stripped them of their strength. He brought Sophia forth beside Michael and Gabriel, and the great outpouring of Light entered her again.

She saw the powers that had oppressed her deprived of their stolen brightness. He brought her out of Chaos as she trod upon the lion, the serpent, and the dragon. The Savior stood upon the strongest of the monstrous powers and destroyed its power to rise again.

James recognized the ancient promise of protection in Psalm 90: the refuge, the falling enemies, the angels who bear the endangered one, and the trampling of lion and serpent.

Sophia sang many songs after this deliverance. She praised the breaking of her bonds, the renewal of her light, and the Savior who had not left her beneath the powers. The disciples answered these songs with psalms and songs attributed to Solomon.

Mary Magdalene wanted to interpret again, but she told the Savior that she feared Peter, who threatened her and opposed the women.

He upheld the right of whoever was filled with the Spirit of Light to speak. Her understanding would not be barred because she was a woman.

The new mystery

The Savior brought Sophia to a place below the thirteenth aeon.

There he gave her a new mystery of the Light, a mystery that did not belong to the aeon from which she had come. He gave her also a song of praise through which the rulers would no longer exercise their former power over her.

She sang of being heard. She sang of being placed upon a firm way toward her dwelling. She sang of the mystery she had not possessed before.

Andrew recognized the new song in Psalm 39: the cry heard, the feet placed upon firmness, and praise given to one who had been drawn from the pit.

Still Sophia had not entered her former region.

The Savior told her that she would remain below it until the completion of three appointed times. When the gate of the Treasury opened, its radiance would make that completion known throughout the aeons.

She feared being left. She asked him to strip the hostile powers of their light so that they could never attack her again.

He told her that the Father had not yet commanded the complete taking of their power. He would seal their places until the appointed time. When the struggle returned, she was to call, and he would come swiftly.

The Savior returned in his telling to the time just before the garment had descended upon him. He was sitting with these same disciples on the Mount of Olives, awaiting the garment and his passage to the heights. At that time, the renewed oppression he had foretold to Sophia began.

Adamas renewed the pursuit. He prepared dark emanations and a place of Chaos in which to imprison Sophia. He wished to use her light to revive the power that had been taken from him.

She sang for help according to the promise she had received. She also spoke toward the pursuing rulers, warning that the Light would judge them. James and Martha understood her words through Psalm 7.

The Savior fulfilled his promise.

At last he took Sophia with him and brought her into the thirteenth aeon.

He entered the gathering of the twenty-four invisible ones shining beyond measure. They trembled before the radiance. They looked and saw Sophia with him.

They recognized her. They did not recognize who he was, and thought him an emanation from the Land of the Light.

Sophia rejoiced to see her companions. She went into their midst to praise the one whose Light had reached her in Chaos and who had brought her up with him.

She stood among them and told of what he had done.

"I went into places where I could not find my way. My power failed, and no companion could bring me back. I called to the Light, and it heard me.

"It broke the bonds of Chaos. It opened what had been barred. When I lacked power, it gave power; when I lacked light, it filled me with purified light.

"Let my companions hear the wonders of the one who saved me."

Philip interpreted her thanksgiving through Psalm 106: the lost who are gathered, the hungry who are filled, the prisoners released, and the gates broken open.

Sophia had returned to her dwelling. She had also received a mystery that was not the mystery with which she had left it.

Chapter III

The Mysteries and the Ascent of Souls

The disciples had heard of the Light descending upon the Savior, his passage through the powers, Sophia's name within his garment, and his Light reaching into Chaos to bring her up. Now Sophia's praise opened toward the mysteries he had brought to humanity.

When the Savior had finished her account, Mary Magdalene came before him with further questions.

She did not ask only for herself. The disciples would speak to people who suffered, and she wanted them to know what they were giving.

She asked him not to be angry with the persistence of her inquiry.

He invited it.

"Ask what you wish to know. I rejoice when you seek understanding."

The inheritance beyond birth

Mary asked about the invisible ones: their forms, their light, and their places.

The Savior told her that earthly likenesses could not adequately describe them. Yet even their glory was not the limit of the Light.

He spoke of the helpers surrounding the Treasury. The greatness of one surpassed another beyond the measures the disciples could imagine. What seemed immense from below could appear small when seen from a higher region.

He spoke also of the mysteries through which souls would receive their inheritance. The rank of a soul was related to the mystery it received. The higher mysteries opened higher places; the lower mysteries opened the regions proper to them.

But embodied humanity was not condemned to stand forever beneath beings created before it.

Those who received the mysteries could surpass the invisible ones and the rulers. The order of birth was not the final order of the Kingdom.

The disciples had heard of souls formed from the remnants of the mixture. Andrew struggled to understand how such souls could rise above the exalted powers.

The Savior answered through purification. The mixture had to be separated; the light had to be gathered from what held it. Souls were not to be abandoned because their present condition was mixed.

He had come to bring the mysteries through which they could be purified and receive the inheritance of Light.

The mystery beyond comparison

The Savior spoke of the Ineffable, beyond the language by which one thing is measured against another.

Its mystery brought knowledge of why the whole had come into being: light and darkness, life and death, the powers above and the beings below, the creation of humanity and the creation of animals, the things that nourish and the things that destroy.

The disciples were overwhelmed by the vastness of what he described. They feared that no human being could perform a mystery of such greatness.

He answered that its greatness did not make it inaccessible in the manner they imagined. Renunciation and reception of the mystery, rather than worldly strength, opened its way.

He spoke of the soul that received this knowledge. Released from the body, it would become light and pass beyond those who attempted to detain it. It would reach the inheritance belonging to the mystery it had received. Those perfected through the highest mysteries would share in his Kingdom.

He used the image of a body with many members to help them understand the relation of the mysteries within the Ineffable: the head, the eyes, the ears, the remaining members, different in their places yet belonging to one whole.

Then he warned that the image was an image. He had not described the Ineffable as a literal human body. A likeness could open understanding without containing what it disclosed.

The disciples bowed and asked forgiveness for their ignorance.

The Savior received their prayer.

What the disciples must give

He told them to preach throughout the world after his departure into the Light.

People were to seek the mysteries without ceasing, by day and by night. They were to renounce the world's binding attachments and the wrongs through which they remained subject to its judgments.

He named falsehood, false witness, theft, murder, arrogance, slander, cruelty, and the other acts that turned one person against another. He spoke of patience, gentleness, mercy, justice, and love for humanity.

The path was not a matter of acquiring names while continuing unchanged in the conduct those names were meant to release.

The disciples were not to hide the mysteries from people simply because they had sinned. The Savior had brought them for those who needed purification.

Those who came sincerely, listened, and turned from wrongdoing were to receive what they were ready to receive. A former life of sin was not by itself a reason to deny a genuine turning.

The gift carried responsibility. The mysteries were not to be treated as a disguise beneath which deliberate harm could continue.

Mary asked about those who received and then fell again. She asked about forgiveness, about faith, and about the one who turned sincerely rather than pretending.

The Savior distinguished the mysteries instead of giving every one the same rule. Some admissions and renewals had limits. The mysteries of the Ineffable were merciful to the living person who genuinely turned and repented again, without hypocrisy.

He also spoke severely of receiving the highest mysteries and then abandoning them, dying without repentance. He did not describe such knowledge as an unconditional immunity from judgment.

The disciples heard mercy and warning together.

The companions of the embodied soul

Mary asked what compelled a soul toward wrongdoing and what followed it after death.

The Savior distinguished five things within embodied life: the soul, the light-power, the body, destiny, and the spirit counterpart.

The spirit counterpart, also understood as a counterfeit spirit, had been bound to the soul by the rulers. It urged the soul toward passions and sins, recorded what it did, and afterward accused it for the acts into which it had drawn it.

Destiny belonged to the ordering of embodied life. It brought the person toward the completion of the allotted course. The light-power was not identical with the body, nor with the accusing counterpart.

At death these were not all released in the same way.

The receivers took the soul from the body. In the account of a soul without the releasing mysteries, destiny and the counterpart followed it. Its light-power withdrew toward the Virgin of the Light. The soul was taken through the places of the world and then into the regions of punishment.

The counterpart became an accuser and escort. It reproached the soul for what it had done. After the appointed punishments, the soul came before the Virgin of the Light, who examined it and judged its further course.

Souls could be returned into bodies, bound again to the cycles from which they had not been freed.

Mary listened closely. The enemy accompanying the soul was not a stranger appearing only at judgment. It had been within its household.

The words that release

The Savior described another course.

A soul that had received and fulfilled the mysteries spoke the mystery that released the bonds and seals of the counterpart. The binding authority ceased. It spoke also the mystery by which destiny was dismissed to its own place.

The soul became a radiant outpouring, winged with light.

The receivers who had come to seize it were afraid. The hostile rulers could not retain it under the same law that held a soul without the mysteries.

At each region it gave the appointed defense and seal. To the powers of destiny it returned what belonged to them. To the light it offered the praise and signs belonging to its inheritance.

"Receive what is yours," the soul declared to the rulers. "My way no longer ends in your region."

The receivers of the Light carried it upward. It came before the Virgin of the Light and the other virgins, who found their signs within it. It received their seals and their spiritual anointing.

It passed to the Great Sabaoth, the Good, and through the places of the right. Melchisedek and his receivers sealed it and brought it toward the Treasury. It entered the region corresponding to the mysteries it had received.

The Savior spoke also of different outcomes for souls who had received different mysteries and whose conduct afterward differed. The path was ordered; it was not a single undifferentiated passage for every life.

Mary interpreted the returning of seals and defenses through the saying about giving the ruler what belonged to the ruler and God what belonged to God. She understood the mixed coin as a likeness of the light-power and the material counterpart.

She interpreted the household enemies as the counterpart and destiny. She understood the warning about being handed to a judge as an image of the soul that had not found the releasing mystery.

The Savior affirmed her understanding.

Here the spoken word had a definite place in the ancient teaching. The soul named the mystery of release, and the bonds lost their authority over it.

The purifying fire

Mary asked how baptism and the mysteries forgave wrongdoing.

The Savior described baptism as a wise and powerful fire. It entered the soul's condition and separated what had been joined. The soul and its light-power were distinguished from the body, destiny, and counterfeit spirit.

The mysteries did not all purify at the same level. The mysteries of the three spaces, the First Mystery, and the Ineffable had different reach and efficacy.

Mary saw in the separation a meaning of the saying about five within one house: three set apart from two, and two from three. The division was within the structure of embodied life.

She continued questioning because forgiveness could not be understood by simply declaring every act erased in every circumstance.

The Savior spoke of repentance after receiving mysteries, of those who remained faithful under constraint, and of those who sought help for others. He explained ways in which the highest mysteries could be invoked for a soul undergoing judgment.

Compassion extended beyond the one who possessed the mystery. Yet the teaching retained its particular conditions, its appointed signs, and its warnings against guile.

The outer darkness

Mary asked about the outer darkness.

The Savior described it as a great dragon surrounding the world, its tail within its mouth. Within it were twelve chambers of punishment, with rulers of different faces and forms.

The darkness held cold, fire, terror, and the places into which souls were taken under severe judgments. The rulers bore names; their chambers had boundaries and doors. The account did not present this merely as an unhappy mood of the human mind.

Mary asked whether souls could be rescued from it. The Savior spoke of names and mysteries through which release could occur, and of the authority of the Ineffable. He also spoke of souls whose course ended in destruction.

The disciples were not told that every confinement necessarily ended in another ordinary opportunity.

Nor were they told to delay their own seeking because another embodied life might come.

The Savior warned that the time of reception was limited. When the appointed number of perfected souls was fulfilled, the gates would be closed. Those who relied on indefinite future cycles could come too late.

The warning unsettled the gathering. The Savior's gift was merciful, but it was not presented as a reason to remain careless about the present life.

The making of a human life

The Savior spoke of the rulers' work in bringing souls into the world. They drew upon the mixture and bound the counterfeit spirit to the soul. They joined light-power, destiny, and body within an embodied course.

The earthly body was formed through the mother. Its days unfolded amid powers that the person did not remember choosing.

The soul could receive a cup of forgetfulness. What it had passed through before entering a body was not available to ordinary recollection. Its forgetfulness was part of its condition within the cycles.

The Savior spoke of righteous people who had not yet received the mysteries, as well as of those who had sinned. Their courses were not identical. A soul could be brought toward a life in which it would seek and find what it had lacked.

The disciples asked about prophets and patriarchs, about the faithful who came before the revelation, and about the soul whose good conduct did not yet include the knowledge by which it could pass the rulers.

The answers returned to the mysteries. Goodness mattered, but in this teaching the ascent also required the release of the bonds and the knowledge of the way.

The other vision

Another account preserved in the book begins again after the resurrection. It does not simply continue the eleven-year gathering as though no time had changed.

The Savior stood with his disciples and called upon the Father of the Treasury of the Light. In this account he also bears the sacred name Aberamentho.

At his invocation the heavens and the world moved toward the west. The disciples stood with him in the air upon the way of the Midst.

They saw the sun in the form of a dragon with its tail in its mouth, drawn by powers like white horses. The moon appeared as a boat, guided by dragons and drawn by white bulls, with a childlike figure and a cat-faced form attending it.

The mountains and seas withdrew with the world.

The disciples asked what place they had entered.

The Savior explained the way of the Midst and the ordering that Jeu had established after the rebellion of the rulers.

Jabraoth and his rulers had turned toward the mysteries of the Light. Sabaoth-Adamas and his rulers had persisted in the sexual generation of further powers. Jeu separated the orders, receiving those who believed into a purified region and binding the others within the sphere.

Five great rulers stood over the bound orders. People in the world knew them as Cronos, Ares, Hermes, Aphrodite, and Zeus.

The Savior disclosed also their imperishable names: Orimuth, Munichunaphor, Tarpetanuph, Chosi, and Chonbal.

Powers from the higher regions had been joined to these rulers. A power from Sophia, daughter of Barbelo, had been bound to Aphrodite. A power from the Little Sabaoth, the Good, had been joined to Zeus so that goodness could govern and restrain the destructive order.

The celestial arrangement included the zodiacal regions and appointed movements through them. These movements affected the opening of boundaries and the release of souls from particular punishments.

This was not the same account as the earlier change to the courses of the twelve aeons. The Savior was revealing another part of the ordering.

Mercy upon those below

Mary asked about the rulers of punishment along the way of the Midst.

The Savior named Paraplex and other rulers over the powers that incited wrongdoing and seized souls. Their punishments were connected to anger, slander, false witness, theft, violence, and other acts. Their periods and places differed.

He told how appointed configurations of Zeus and Aphrodite could bring the good powers of the Midst to look upon these regions. Their boundaries were opened, their dominion interrupted, and souls returned toward the sphere.

The disciples fell before him.

They asked for compassion upon humanity, which moved in blindness and forgetfulness. They saw souls pursued like prey by powers that had first incited the acts for which they afterward punished them.

The Savior told them to take courage. He would give them the mysteries, the seals, the signs, and the means of calling through the regions. He would reveal the baptisms of the Midst and of the right, and the mystery of the Treasury.

Their fear was answered by the promise of knowledge and release.

Fire and water and wine and blood

He spoke the great name, and the places of the Midst were hidden from their sight. They remained in an air of strong light.

He called them near. He turned toward the four corners of the world, blessed them, and breathed upon their eyes.

They looked upward and saw a radiance they could not describe.

He asked what they saw when they turned from it.

"Fire and water and wine and blood," they answered.

He told them that fire and water belonged to the lights of the Treasury, while wine and blood were associated with Barbelo. The blood signified the human body he had

received. The Father sent the Holy Spirit in the likeness of a dove; the Spirit gathered souls and brought them toward the Light.

The teaching joined what the disciples had seen to the mysteries he brought into the world.

He prepared an offering with fire, vine branches, vessels of wine, water, and loaves. The disciples stood behind him in linen garments, bearing the cipher of the Father's name.

He called upon the Father of all fatherhoods and upon the powers that forgave sins and purified wrongdoing. He asked that the disciples' known and unknown transgressions be forgiven, that they be made worthy of the Kingdom and of the offering before them.

He asked for a sign that the prayer had been heard.

The sign came.

He told the disciples to rejoice. Their sins had been forgiven, and they had been numbered within the Father's Kingdom.

He instructed them concerning the offering and its reception by those who came without guile and kept the injunctions he had given. The mystery was sacred; its giving carried conditions.

They asked about the baptism of fire, the baptism of the Holy Spirit of Light, and spiritual anointing.

He spoke of the place to which these led: beyond the division of male and female, beyond forms, in perpetual ineffable light.

He spoke further of the seven voices, their forty-nine powers, and the name beyond them that contained names and lights and powers. No hostile region could hold the soul that possessed that name and spoke it with its appointed authority.

The disciples cried out at what they heard.

The final questions

At this point part of the surviving manuscript is missing. The ancient book resumes amid an account of punishments. The missing passage cannot be supplied as though its words were known.

The disciples ask what follows particular acts: cursing, slander, murder, theft, pride, blasphemy, and sexual wrongdoing. The Savior describes different receivers, periods of punishment, and outcomes.

Some souls pass through purifying judgments and return into embodied life. Others are assigned to the outer darkness and destruction. The account condemns certain sexual practices and bodily-substance rites with particular severity. Its judgments are not made gentler by calling all of them lessons.

For some wrongs it describes bodies marked by disability or ugliness as punishments in a later life. These are judgments within the ancient text's worldview; their presence is retained here as part of what the disciples hear, rather than concealed within a promise that every outcome is the same.

John asks about a person who has continually done good but has not found the mysteries.

The Savior describes a soul received with gladness. It is taught concerning the world and the places of correction, without undergoing the same vengeance as a soul that has done evil. It comes before the Virgin of the Light and is placed with the Little Sabaoth, the Good, until the appointed turning of the sphere.

It receives forgetfulness before another embodied life. But it receives also a cup of wisdom and sober understanding. That gift becomes an inward urgency to seek the mysteries until it finds them.

John asks another question.

"If a person has committed every kind of wrong, but at last finds the mysteries of the Light, can that person be saved?"

The Savior answers that the one who finds, performs, and completes the mysteries, remains in them, and ceases from wrongdoing can inherit the Treasury of the Light.

The past is not erased by denial. Neither is it declared stronger than a genuine turning and the Savior's gift.

He speaks once more of the movements of the sphere, of the Virgin's judgment, and of the conditions under which souls are sent into the world to seek the mysteries.

The disciples weep.

They do not separate themselves from the people whose sufferings they have heard described. They confess that they too have sinned. They ask the Son of the Holy One for mercy and release from the judgments prepared for wrongdoing.

The surviving main account ends with that plea.

It leaves their voices raised toward the Savior, asking for compassion upon themselves and upon the souls who live in forgetfulness.

Babylon Encyclopedia Commentary

Repentance and the becoming of Sophia

The commentary that follows develops the interpretation agreed for this book. It is Babylon Encyclopedia's reading of the ancient narrative. It does not claim that every conclusion below is an explicit statement of the Askew Codex.

Repentance has a voice

Sophia's repentance is actual speech. She does not silently acquire an insight while the book moves past her. She names what she saw, what she mistook, what she desired, and what happened when she acted upon that desire.

For BE, recognition and repentance belong to the same transformation. Recognition sees differently. Repentance gives that changed seeing a voice and a direction. The spoken recognition becomes a commitment from which life can be rebuilt.

Sophia's first prayer does not abolish Chaos. Her enemies continue to act. Her later prayers still contain confusion, fear, and anger. The process is not portrayed as a single perfect statement followed by immediate freedom.

Yet she begins speaking before she is free. She names the counterfeit while it still surrounds her. She addresses the Light before she fully recognizes the Savior who helps her. Her allegiance changes within the place of confinement.

When BE says that words build reality, this is the movement we mean here: the word gives form to a recognition that changes perception, allegiance, choice, and participation in life. Within the book's sacred cosmology, certain words also act as mysteries that release bonds. These are related ideas, but they should not be made interchangeable without explanation. The ancient text does not say that any ordinary assertion automatically produces any desired event.

Repentance has to be spoken from what is becoming true in the speaker. The book's repeated warning against hypocrisy matters. Words without a turning can become another imitation of Light.

Remembrance beyond ordinary memory

BE begins from remembrance, but remembrance here is not the recovery of an ordinary autobiographical scene. The human mind cannot necessarily retrieve the beginning to which the soul responds.

The ancient text offers a meaningful correspondence in its cup of forgetfulness. A soul enters embodied life without conscious access to the regions through which it has passed. Another cup, associated with wisdom and sobriety, can give it an urgency to seek.

That is a point of contact with BE's remembrance; it is not proof that the two systems are identical. The remembrance we are naming is an awakening toward what ordinary memory cannot contain.

It begins a movement. It does not complete that movement.

Sophia already believes in the Light before she falls. Her desire is real, but she cannot yet distinguish the higher Light from an appearance made to resemble it. An original orientation toward the Light does not mean that every discernment has already been acquired.

Why the descent matters

The governing BE interpretation of this book is that Sophia's descent was necessary to her becoming capable of receiving a greater Light than she had known.

She becomes someone she has never been before.

This is stronger than saying that she eventually feels grateful for returning home. In Chaos she confronts imitation, the misuse of power, the abandonment of companions, and the limits of what she thought she could take for herself. Her prayers give these recognitions a form. She cannot leave the experience unchanged merely because she returns to her former dwelling.

The original contains real support for discussing this, and it also contains a limit on the claim. Sophia speaks repeatedly of an ordinance under which she has been brought low. Her thirteenth repentance links her transgression to the fulfillment of that ordinance. But the narrative does not simply explain the whole purpose of her suffering as a doctrine of necessary personal evolution.

BE supplies that interpretation openly. We should not attribute it to a direct quotation that the manuscript does not contain.

Nor does the interpretation require us to call Authades compassionate. He seeks dominion and takes light. His predation remains predation. What Sophia becomes through suffering does not make his acts benevolent.

In this reading the Father's mystery exceeds both Sophia's original comprehension and Authades' claim to control the meaning of her descent.

The new mystery is decisive

The source says that the Savior gives Sophia a new mystery that does not belong to her former aeon. This occurs after she has been brought beyond Chaos and before she is returned to the thirteenth aeon. She receives a new song also.

That detail should never disappear beneath a general sentence about restoration.

At the same time, the source also speaks of Sophia being lighted like the invisible ones as she was at her beginning. The restoration language is genuine. A faithful retelling preserves it.

BE reads the new mystery alongside that restoration: her light is renewed, her dwelling is recovered, and her capacity has changed. Returning to a place does not require returning to an unchanged condition.

The Sophia who returns can testify to the Savior's work among the invisible ones. What she knows includes what she has passed through. The new mystery gives the commentary a concrete textual basis for asking how restoration and becoming meet.

The Savior and the Father

The Savior is the Savior throughout this book. He reveals, rescues, purifies, restores power, and gives mysteries that the soul cannot simply invent for itself.

His compassion reaches Sophia before the command for her complete deliverance. He brings her into a wider place within Chaos when the final release has not yet been appointed. Later he sends his own light-power, and the account joins it with the power sent from the heights.

BE can read this as compassion already active within becoming. Help does not always arrive first as an explanation of the entire process. Sophia is assisted before she can name her helper correctly.

The source's sequence is complicated, and it is retold in more than one account. We should not turn it into a simple dispute in which the Savior opposes a cruel Father. The book relates his action to the First Mystery and distinguishes the inward-looking and outward-looking manifestations of that mystery. The two light-powers meet; their meeting does not become a war between divine rivals.

The Father remains the origin in this retelling. The named heavenly powers retain their own offices. This keeps the work of salvation larger than a private exercise in human understanding.

The mirror and the shared ascent

BE reads the Savior and Sophia through the mirror. She recognizes him; in her becoming, his Light becomes visible within the one he saves. The phrase that he recognizes himself in her expresses our interpretation of this relationship. The narrative's literal image is Sophia seeing her own name in his garment.

That image belongs beside the writing the Savior himself reads in the garment. Its speakers declare their unity with him, and its language gathers many within one name. The garment also bears the names and mysteries of many heavenly orders. Sophia's presence within it therefore participates in a larger unity; the text does not reserve the garment's whole meaning for her alone.

The mirror continues through the action. Light descends from the height and surrounds the Savior; he rises within it. Light descends from the height, joins the power coming from him, and surrounds Sophia; through that Light she is brought out of Chaos. His outpouring crowns her and enters her. He himself comes down blazing to overcome the powers, and later brings her with him into the thirteenth aeon.

BE understands these movements as one work of revelation and becoming. His ascent reveals the authority and mysteries of the Light. Her spoken repentances unfold her capacity to recognize and receive that Light. What is revealed in him becomes active within her life.

Her words do not occur apart from his presence. After the seventh repentance he helps without being recognized. After the ninth she sees his higher Light and compassion; the tenth follows that recognition. After the thirteenth the account unfolds the meeting of the lights. Recognition, spoken repentance, and the Savior's action answer one another through the story.

Chapter 77 gives a direct connection between their histories: Sophia's renewed persecution occurs while the Savior sits with the disciples on the Mount of Olives, before the arrival of his garment and his ascent to receive the further garment. The story then returns to her deliverance and her entrance with him into the thirteenth aeon.

This connects their timelines without establishing that each repentance happens simultaneously with a corresponding stage of his public ascent. Much of the rescue is recounted retrospectively, and the account returns to its events more than once. Our unity reading rests on the shared Light, the connected histories, and their passage together, rather than on an invented correspondence between thirteen prayers and thirteen steps of his ascent.

For BE, Sophia becomes someone she has never been before through this encounter. His Light restores what was taken, and he gives her a mystery she had not possessed. The mirror reveals both belonging and becoming; her name is already carried in his garment, while her capacity to receive and testify to the Light unfolds through what she lives and speaks.

A cosmology of participation

The ancient cosmology has aeons, spheres, rulers, receivers, virgins of the Light, baptisms, seals, songs, and passages of ascent. The distinctions describe how beings belong, act, bind, purify, and release.

BE reads this architecture through the transformation we have named together: remembrance awakens a recognition beyond ordinary memory; repentance speaks that recognition into a changed allegiance; becoming brings the soul into a capacity it did not possess before.

The image of many members within one body is especially useful here, because the Savior himself identifies it as an image. It can open reflection upon a greater whole without requiring that the whole be reduced to human anatomy or to a fixed diagram.

This commentary does not assign the ancient rulers to BE Gates, Hebrew letters, the seventy-two names, or sefirot without a separately established correspondence. The present interpretation is grounded in the movement agreed for this book. Further comparisons need their own evidence and their own stated choices.

For the reader, Sophia's journey offers a practice of attention: name the light you actually followed; name what it did to you; distinguish longing from discernment; speak toward the Light with the understanding you have now; and allow that understanding to deepen.

That practice does not require anyone to seek suffering or remain with a person who harms them. Sophia asks to be released from the powers that injure her. Her becoming includes an end to their dominion.

What we retain and what we question

The ancient book contains severe punishments, final destruction, a closing of the gates, and judgments about bodies and sexual conduct. Those elements cannot be dismissed as later misunderstandings merely because they sit uneasily beside its mercy.

BE's reading of becoming may engage those teachings critically. It may ask whether their fear, hierarchy, and finality belong within the cosmology we are articulating. That discussion should happen in commentary, where an interpretation can take responsibility for its own position.

In particular, the ancient association of disability or appearance with punishment is not adopted here as a judgment about living people. Nor is the ancient sexual polemic presented as a contemporary ethical ruling. Preserving awareness of a historical teaching and endorsing it are different acts.

Our central reading remains clear: Sophia's remembered orientation toward the Light begins the journey, but does not give her all its knowledge. Her voiced repentances carry recognition into transformation. The Savior restores her and gives her what she did not previously possess.

Her return therefore holds both a recovered belonging and a new becoming.

Editorial Source Note

What was restored and how the mirror was revised

Primary source: Pistis Sophia, Coptic text edited by Carl Schmidt, English translation and notes by Violet MacDermot, The Coptic Gnostic Library, Nag Hammadi Studies IX, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1978. The supplied modern adaptation was used for comparison, not treated as the authority for omitted passages. References below use the original work's numbered chapters, which are more stable for this purpose than PDF viewer pagination.

The three chapters of this retelling reorganize a source conventionally divided into four books. The source's fourth book has its own post-resurrection setting. Its separate beginning is acknowledged in Chapter III rather than silently presented as the next hour of the Mount of Olives conversation.

The thirteen repentances

The original has thirteen numbered repentances, followed by additional prayers and songs of praise. The supplied adaptation fully develops some prayers, summarizes several others, and labels a further passage a fourteenth recognition. This draft restores thirteen separate spoken prayers and distinguishes the later songs.

The repentance text is paraphrased and shortened, not reproduced verse for verse. The full progression of the prayers should be checked against the numbered chapters below when preparing an unabridged edition. Psalm numbers here follow the supplied scholarly source; many modern Bibles number these psalms one higher.

Repentance	Source chapters	Interpreter	Psalm in the source
1	32 to 34	Mary Magdalene	68
2	35 to 36	Peter	70
3	37 to 38	Martha	69
4	39 to 40	John	101
5	41 to 43	Philip	87
6	44	Andrew	129
7	46	Thomas	24
8	47 to 49	Matthew	30
9	50 to 51	James	34
10	52 to 53	Peter	119
11	54	Salome	51
12	55 to 56	Andrew	108
13	57	Martha	50

The adaptation's passage about the new song was moved into its thirteenth recognition. In the source, the thirteenth repentance is the prayer for forgiveness and purification in chapter 57. The new mystery and song occur later, in chapters 74 to 75, where Andrew gives the interpretation. This draft restores that distinction.

Rescue and transformation

The original chapter 47 places the Savior's compassionate assistance after the seventh repentance and before the command for complete rescue. Chapter 52 places acceptance and commanded secret help after the ninth. Chapters 58 to 60 return to the Savior's own light-power, the crown, and the light sent from the First Mystery after the thirteenth. The accounts overlap. This draft does not pretend that they form a perfectly smooth modern timeline.

The supplied adaptation places a key moment of acceptance after the twelfth repentance. That is not the location given in original chapter 52. The present version corrects it.

The new mystery not belonging to Sophia's former aeon is preserved from chapter 74. The restoration to light like that of her beginning is preserved in the commentary from the same chapter's preceding exchange. Her final return to the thirteenth aeon and thanksgiving follow chapters 81 to 82.

The idea that the descent was necessary for a greater becoming is the agreed BE thesis. The prayers' references to divine ordinance and the new mystery support discussion of it; they do not make it a verbatim thesis of the original work.

The ascent and the mirror in this revision

Chapters 2 to 3 describe Light surrounding the Savior before he ascends. Chapter 10 supplies the garment's declaration of shared identity and the inclusive name. Chapter 29 places Sophia's own name within his garment. These passages are restored more explicitly in Chapter I.

Chapters 60 and 64 supply the meeting of the light-powers and the Savior's identification of the power sent from the height as himself. Chapter 66 supplies the radiance surrounding Sophia, the Savior's shining descent into Chaos, and the outpouring entering her. Chapter 77 connects her renewed persecution to his waiting on the Mount of Olives before the garment's arrival. Chapter 81 describes his entry into the thirteenth aeon with Sophia while shining beyond measure. Chapter 82 links her praise to his gift of mysteries to humanity.

The revised narrative makes these connections visible while retaining retrospective narration. It does not turn the early rescues into events newly happening during the public ascent. Nor does it state that the Savior literally sees his own name in Sophia: that reciprocal recognition is developed as the BE mirror interpretation in the commentary.

Names and divine distinctions

The Savior replaces the central figure's changing designation in the modern adaptation. Source and Source Father become Father where they designate the divine origin. First Mystery and Ineffable remain as technical titles. Their relation should not be erased by replacing every occurrence with the same word.

Authades, Adamas, Yaldabaoth, Barbelo, Jeu, Melchisedek, the Virgin of the Light, and the Sabaoth figures are retained where their identities matter. They are not collectively renamed the shadow system. The Great Sabaoth, the Good; the Little Sabaoth, the Good; and Sabaoth-Adamas are distinct in these passages. The original sometimes calls more than one figure father. Such uses do not establish that every figure so named is the supreme Father.

Mary Magdalene and the Savior's mother are kept distinct. The childhood account of the encounter with the Spirit is restored from chapter 61. Peter's objections and Mary's fear of him are retained from chapters 36 and 72. Other disciples remain interpreters and witnesses rather than being absorbed into Mary's role.

What remains condensed

Original chapters 1 to 28 supply Chapter I: the incomplete teaching, garment, incarnation account, ascent, altered heavenly courses, and purification of light. Their long descriptions and repetitions are abridged.

Original chapters 29 to 82 supply Chapter II. All thirteen repentances have separate voices, but their verse structure is condensed. Most of the full scriptural quotations and line-by-line interpretations are replaced by the interpreter's name, the source psalm, and its principal correspondence. Several later songs are described rather than reproduced in full. The crown, the two light-powers, Michael and Gabriel, the renewed assaults, the new mystery, the waiting, and the final restoration are retained.

Original chapters 83 to 101 supply the opening of Chapter III. Extended numerical comparisons of heavenly greatness and the catalogue of what the mystery of the Ineffable knows are shortened. The higher inheritance of initiated souls, the disciples' difficulty, and the image of the members of a body remain.

Original chapters 102 to 135 supply the teaching on conduct, forgiveness, the counterpart, destiny, judgment, repeated embodiment, and release. This draft condenses the detailed case-by-case rules for renewed reception, posthumous intercession, and the different mysteries. It retains the fact that the rules differ. It does not claim that one unlimited rule governs them all. The dragon's twelve chambers, their individual names, and the lengthy account of bodily formation are summarized. The closing of the gates at the completion of the number of souls is retained from chapter 125.

Original chapters 136 to 148 supply the separate vision, planetary ordering, punishment rulers, rites, and final questions. The sun and moon imagery, Sophia's relation to Aphrodite, planetary names, baptismal materials, and the seven voices with forty-nine powers remain. Long invocations and ciphers are not reproduced. Planetary release configurations, exact punishment durations, chamber catalogues, and explicit details of the sexual polemic are condensed. Disability-as-punishment and final destruction are acknowledged rather than silently deleted.

The eight-page manuscript gap after chapter 143 is marked in the narrative. The draft does not invent the lost prayer or ritual. Other smaller gaps and textual variants are not individually recreated; this is a literary retelling rather than a critical edition.

The main surviving narrative ends in chapter 148 with the disciples' plea for mercy. The scholarly edition labels the subsequent preaching fragment a later addition. The supplied adaptation instead ends with an expanded commission and assurances that the gates remain open. This draft restores the main account's plea and does not present the expanded ending as ancient text.

This revised draft recovers major narrative and doctrinal distinctions lost in the modern adaptation and makes the shared Light of the Savior and Sophia more explicit. It remains an abridgment. A lossless version would need the complete prayers, later hymns, ritual formulas, catalogues, and case-by-case teachings restored at much greater length.