

THE CONCEPT OF OUR GREAT POWER

— Nag Hammadi VI, 4 —

The Perception of Understanding

The Concept of the Great Power

He who will know our great Power will become invisible, and fire will not be able to consume him. But it will purge and destroy all of your possessions. For everyone in whom my form will appear will be saved, from (the age of) seven days up to one hundred and twenty years. (Those) whom I constrained to gather all that is fallen — and the writings of our great Power, in order that he may inscribe your name in our great light — and their thoughts and their works may be ended, that they may be purged, and be scattered and be destroyed, and be gathered in the place which no one in it sees. But you will see me, and you will prepare your dwelling places in our great Power.

Know how what has departed came to be, in order that you may know how to discern what lives to become: of what appearance that aeon is, or what kind it is, or how it will come to be. Why do you not ask what kind you will become, (or) rather how you came to be?

Discern what size the water is, that it is immeasurable (and) incomprehensible, both its beginning and its end. It supports the earth; it blows in the air where the gods and the angels are. But in him who is exalted above all these there is the fear and the light, and in him are my writings revealed. I have given them as a service to the creation of the physical things, for it is not possible for anyone to stand without that One, nor is it possible for the aeon to live without him. It is he who possesses what is in him by discerning (it) in purity.

Then behold the Spirit and know where he is. He gave himself to men that they may receive life from him every day, since he has his life within him; he gives to them all. Then the darkness together with Hades took the fire. And he (the darkness) will release from himself what is mine. His eyes were not able to endure my light. After the spirits and the waters moved, the remainder came into being: the whole aeon of the creation, and their <powers>. The fire came forth from them and the Power came in the midst of the powers. And the powers desired to see my image. And the soul became its replica.

This is the work that came into being. See what it is like, that before it comes into being it does not see, because the aeon of the flesh came to

be in the great bodies. And there were apportioned to them long days in the creation. For when they had polluted themselves and had entered into the flesh, the father of the flesh, the water, avenged himself. For when he had found that Noah was pious (and) worthy — and it is the father of the flesh who holds the angels in subjection. And he (Noah) preached piety for one hundred and twenty years. And no one listened to him. And he made a wooden ark, and whom he had found entered it. And the flood took place.

And thus Noah was saved with his sons. For if indeed the ark had not been meant for man to enter, then the water of the flood would not have come. In this way he intended (and) planned to save the gods and the angels, and the powers, the greatness of all of these, and the <nourishment> and the way of life. And he moves them from the aeon (and) nourishes them in the permanent places. And the judgment of the flesh was unleashed. Only the work of the Power stood up.

Next the psychic aeon. It is a small one, which is mixed with bodies, by begetting in the souls (and) defiling (them). For the first defilement of the creation found strength. And it begot every work: many works of wrath, anger, envy, malice, hatred, slander, contempt and war, lying and evil counsels, sorrows and pleasures, basenesses and defilements, falsehoods and diseases, evil judgments that they decree according to their desires. Yet you are sleeping, dreaming dreams. Wake up and return, taste and eat the true food! Hand out the word and the water of life! Cease from the evil lusts and desires and (the teachings of) the Anomoeans, evil heresies that have no basis.

And the mother of the fire was impotent. She brought the fire upon the soul and the earth, and she burned all <the> dwellings that are in it. And its shepherd perished. Moreover, when she does not find anything else to burn, she will destroy herself. And it will become incorporeal, without body, and it will burn matter, until it has cleansed everything, — and all wickedness. For when it does not find anything else to burn, it will turn against itself until it has destroyed itself.

Then, in this aeon, which is the psychic one, the man will come into being who knows the great Power. He will receive (me) and he will know me. He will drink from the milk of the mother, in fact. He will speak in parables; he will proclaim the aeon that is to come, just as he spoke in the first aeon of the flesh, as Noah. Now concerning his words, which he uttered, he spoke in all of them, in seventy-two tongues. And he opened the gates of the heavens with his words. And he put to shame the ruler of Hades; he raised the dead, and he destroyed his dominion.

Then a great disturbance took place. The archons raised up their wrath against him. They wanted to hand him over to the ruler of Hades. Then they recognized one of his followers. A fire took hold of his soul. He

(Judas?) handed him over, since no one knew him (Jesus?). They acted and seized him. They brought judgment upon themselves. And they delivered him up to the ruler of Hades. And they handed him over to Sasabek for nine bronze coins. He prepared himself to go down and put them to shame. Then the ruler of Hades took him. And he found that the nature of his flesh could not be seized, in order to show it to the archons. But he was saying: "Who is this? What is it? His word has abolished the law of the aeon. He is from the Logos of the power of life." And he was victorious over the command of the archons, and they were not able by their work to rule over him.

The archons searched after that which had come to pass. They did not know that this is the sign of their dissolution, and (that) it is the change of the aeon. The sun set during the day; that day became dark. The evil spirits were troubled. And after these things he will appear ascending. And the sign of the aeon that is to come will appear. And the aeons will dissolve.

And those who would know these things that were discussed with them, will become blessed. And they will reveal them, and they will become blessed, since they will come to know the truth. For you have found rest in the heavens.

Then many will follow him, and they will labor in their birthplaces. They will go about; they will write down his words according to (their) desire. Behold, these aeons have passed. What size is the water of the aeon that has dissolved? What dimensions do aeons have? How will men prepare themselves, and how will they be established, and how will they become indestructible aeons?

But at first, after his preaching — it is he who proclaims the second aeon, and the first. And the first aeon perished in the course of time. He made the first aeon, going about in it until it perished, while preaching one hundred and twenty years in number. This is the perfect number that is highly exalted. He made the border of the West desolate, and he destroyed the East. Then your seed and those who wish to follow our great Logos and his proclamation — [...]

Then the wrath of the archons burned. They were ashamed of their dissolution. And they fumed and were angry at the life. The cities were <overturned>; the mountains dissolve. The archon came, with the archons of the western regions, to the East, i.e., that place where the Logos appeared at first. Then the earth trembled, and the cities were troubled. Moreover, the birds ate and were filled with their dead. The earth mourned together with the inhabited world; they became desolate.

Then when the times were completed, then wickedness arose mightily even until the final end of the Logos. Then the archon of the western regions arose, and from the East he will perform a work, and he will

instruct men in his wickedness. And he wants to nullify all teaching, the words of true wisdom, while loving the lying wisdom. For he attacked the old, wishing to introduce wickedness and to put on dignity. He was incapable, because the defilement of his garments is great. Then he became angry. He appeared and desired to go up and to pass up to that place.

Then the appointed time came and drew near. And he changed the commands. Then the time came until the child had grown up. When he had come to his maturity, then the archons sent the imitator to that man in order that they might know our great Power. And they were expecting from him that he would perform for them a sign. And he bore great signs. And he reigned over the whole earth and all those who are under heaven. He placed his throne upon the end of the earth, for "I shall make you god of the world". He will perform signs and wonders. Then they will turn from me, and they will go astray.

Then those men who will follow after him will introduce circumcision. And he will pronounce judgment upon those who are from the uncircumcision, who are the (true) people. For in fact he sent many preachers beforehand, who preached on his behalf.

When he has completed the established time of the kingdom of the earth, then the cleansing of the souls will come, since wickedness is stronger than you. All the powers of the sea will tremble and dry up, And the firmament will not pour down dew. The springs will cease. The rivers will not flow down to their springs. And the waters of the springs of the earth will cease. Then the depths will be laid bare and they will open. The stars will grow in size, and the sun will cease.

And I shall withdraw with everyone who will know me. And they will enter into the immeasurable light, (where) there is no one of the flesh nor the wantonness of the first to seize them. They will be unhampered (and) holy, since nothing drags them down. I myself protect them, since they have holy garments, which the fire cannot touch, nor darkness nor wind nor a moment, so as to cause one to shut the eyes.

Then he will come to destroy all of them. And they will be chastised until they become pure. Moreover their period, which was given to them to have power, which was apportioned to them, (is) fourteen hundred and sixty years. When the fire has consumed them all, and when it does not find anything else to burn, then it will perish by its own hand. Then the [...] will be completed [...] the second power [...] the mercy will come [...] through wisdom [...]. Then the firmaments will fall down into the depth. Then the sons of matter will perish; they will not be, henceforth.

Then the souls will appear, who are holy through the light of the Power, who is exalted, above all powers, the immeasurable, the universal one, I and all those who will know me. And they will be in the aeon of beauty of

the aeon of judgment, since they are ready in wisdom, having given glory to him who is in the incomprehensible unity; and they see him because of his will, which is in them. And they all have become as reflections in his light. They all have shone, and they have found rest in his rest.

And he will release the souls that are being punished, and they will come to be in purity. And they will see the saints and cry out to them, "Have mercy on us, O Power who art above all powers!" For [...] and in the tree of iniquity that exists [...] to him their eyes. And they do not seek him because they do not seek us, nor do they believe us, but they acted according to the creation of the archons and its other rulers. But we have acted according to our birth of the flesh, in the creation of the archons, which gives law. We also have come to be in the unchangeable aeon.