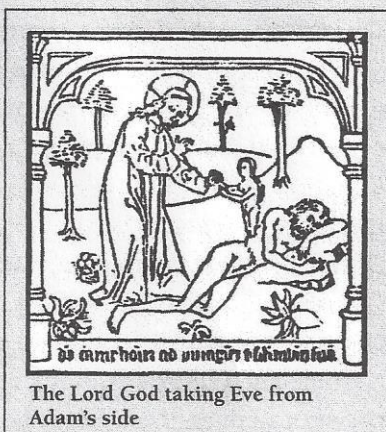


## "IT IS NOT GOOD FOR THE MAN TO BE ALONE"

If that was how the Gnostics rearranged Genesis 1, inserting a "not" into every "God saw it was good," just imagine how they read Genesis 2 and the story of the creation of Eve. For them, the chapter starts quite positively: the man is alone. There is only one. That must be good. But then, horribly, and just as the physical realm was ex-



The Lord God taking Eve from Adam's side

creted from the spiritual, Eve comes out of Adam. Now there are two. And just as the existence of two realms (spiritual and physical) is bad, so the existence of two sexes is bad. More specifically, the existence of women is bad. Thus the final verse in the *Gnostic Gospel of Thomas* reads: "Simon Peter said to them, 'Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.' Jesus said, 'I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.'"<sup>a</sup>

That verse does not come across as jarring or awkward at the end of the *Gospel of Thomas*; it is the natural child of Gnostic thought. The existence of two realms, two sexes, of the physical and the feminine, is a tragedy. But such must be the case with a lonely and solitary supreme being. Intolerant of the existence of anything else, it is only natural that he should prefer to hide both the physical and the feminine away, or use them if he can only for his own self-gratification. And so for women at least, Gnostic salvation would mean gender-bending. Dan Brown's insinuation that the Gnostics were the tolerant protofeminists sounds very hollow indeed.

And those chauvinist Christians? Believing that God is not lonely, it made perfect sense to say that it is not good to have men alone. As God is not alone, so a human in his image should not be alone. They therefore upheld creation and the physical, femininity, relationship and marriage all as being intrinsically good, created reflections of a God who is not lonely.

Without the Trinity, it is hard to see how such things could be ultimately affirmed. (Of course, one could simply argue that men and women are equal because they are both human, but that is an entirely loveless affirmation, and gives no grounds for seeing those things as absolute goods to be reveled in.) The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:3 that as the head of Christ is God, so the head of a wife is her husband. But if the Son is less God than his Father, is a wife less human than her husband? Without belief in God the Father and the Son, one in the Spirit, why should a husband not treat his wife as a lesser being? Yet if a husband's headship of his wife is somehow akin to the Father's headship of the Son, then what a loving relationship must ensue! The Father's very identity is about giving life, love and being to his Son, doing all out of love for him.

Belief in the Trinity works precisely *against* chauvinism and *for* delight in harmonious relationships.

And that told historically as Christianity first spread through the ancient Greco-Roman world. Studies have shown that in that world it was quite extraordinarily rare for even large families ever to have more than one daughter. How is that possible across countries and centuries? Quite simply because abortion and female infanticide were widely practiced so as to relieve families of the burden of a gender considered largely superfluous. No surprise, then, that Christianity should have been so especially attractive to women, who made up so many of the early converts: Christianity decried those life-threatening ancient abortion procedures; it refused to ignore the infidelity of husbands as paganism did; in Christianity, widows would be and were supported by the church; they were even welcomed as “fellow-workers” in the gospel (Rom 16:3). In Christianity, women were valued.

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<sup>a</sup>*The Gospel of Thomas*, Logion 114, in J. M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 139; see also Logion 22.