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# The Word Made Flesh

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**Claremont McKenna College**

**The Word Made Flesh**

SUBMITTED TO

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AND

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BY

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FOR

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## I

Does it happen like this?

Does he have a vision?

Does he stand in a desert before a pair of trees? And are the trees withered? If so, does he pass between them, and, if so, before him does there arise a third tree, lush and full of life? And about this tree does there coil a serpent? And about the serpent is there a pool of water? And does the serpent hang threaded through the limbs of the tree? And does its weight drape between the branches? And as he approaches the serpent, does it lift itself, so that he might see the branches, heavy with fruit?

And does the serpent coil itself about a pomegranate, and pluck it, and hold it out to him in offering? And, if so, as he steps forth to receive it do the serpent's eyes glow expectantly?

Is there a vision, and, if so, is this it?

For if there is a vision, and if this is it, when the vision passes, what could have he become but the Christ?

And there is evening, and there is morning: a first day.

## II

Christ enters the tomb, and: behold! There in the tomb is Legion, and it is many. And its eyes are on Christ, and its mouths are on him, and its thousand hands also, and Christ feels himself touched, tasted, and regarded.

And Legion lifts itself, so that Christ might see its breasts, heavy with milk, and Christ kneels before her, and takes her breast in his hand, and kisses the nipple gently. And all of this is good.

And Legion speaks, saying, "I love you, son; you please me greatly," and she shifts above him so as to let him lie beneath her, and Christ takes hold of her breast and drinks.

And there is evening, and there is morning: a second day.

### III

Christ goes forth into the wilderness and is alone there, and he eats no food. And he is in this way for forty days and forty nights, and by the end of it he has become very hungry.

And at the end of the forty days and forty nights the Adversary comes to him, saying, “You say you are the Son of God, then command these stones to become bread, so that you might nourish yourself.” But Christ answers him, saying, “I will not, for I do not live by bread, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.” And in this way Christ passes the first test.

The Adversary then takes Christ to the peak of a mountain, and the base of the mountain is in the deepest trench of the ocean, and the peak of the mountain is in the highest fold of the sky. And from the peak of the mountain the Adversary lays before Christ all the kingdoms of the earth, from the Southern Ocean to the Arctic Seas. And the kingdoms are full of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, and Christ beholds them in their perfume and their glory. And the Adversary speaks, saying, “I am custodian of all of these, and may grant them to whomsoever I will. If you but kneel before me, I will give them to you.” But Christ answers him, saying, “I will not kneel before you, for I have a kingdom, my kingdom is the Kingdom of God.” And in this way Christ passes the second test.

The Adversary then takes Christ to the top of the holy temple in Jerusalem, saying, “You say you are the Son of God, then throw yourself from this temple and have the angels save you, so that no harm will come to you.” But Christ answers him, saying, “I will not, for I cannot compel the messengers of the Word, they will not do my bidding.” And in this way Christ passes the third test.

And the Adversary returns Christ to the wilderness, and leaves him there.

And there is evening, and there is morning: a third day.

#### IV

A messenger of the Word comes to attend to the hunger of Christ.

And the messenger descends, and its wings are outstretched, and the messenger is bright, and the messenger is terrible. And it kneels before Christ, and kisses the earth before him, and, arising, it offers him its breast, so that Christ might drink.

But Christ refuses, saying, "I must not drink of you," for Christ has already drunk of Legion.

And the messenger answers him, saying, "If you will not drink, then you must eat." And it offers Christ its body. And its body was this:

Who is like God?

Christ eats, and is nourished, and goes forth from the wilderness, and returns to the world of men.

And there is evening, and there is morning: a fourth day.

## V

Now, it has come to pass that Legion has a representative who lives with the women who sell their bodies like goods. And Christ goes to her.

And she sits in a high-backed chair, and her hair is coiffed, and her neckline is steep, and she is beautiful. And she rises and greets him, and stands framed by the light of the window behind her, and inquires as to the nature of his visit.

“I wish,” says Christ, “to purchase a room,” by which he means that he wishes to hold her, and touch her, and know her in love.

And Mary (for that is her name) takes him by the hand, and, smiling, says yes.

And there is evening, and there is morning: a fifth day.

## VI

Now, when Mary awakens she sees that Christ has tied her to the bed, and he stands over her. And he sees that she is awake and climbs atop her, cupping her jaw in his hands. And Christ speaks, saying, "Tell me Was."

And Mary answers him, saying, "I conceived you alone, with the help of no man, and I grew you unaided in my womb. And when the time came I birthed you and I did so easily and without pain, for I am not bound by the transgressions of Eve. And when you wept I consoled you, and when you defecated I cleansed you, and when you hungered I offered you my breasts.

You grew quickly and became strong, and your strength caused me much torment. And when the time came I released you so that you might become a man and perform what works would be required of you."

Mary says all of this and becomes silent.

And when Mary is silent Christ sits atop her and traces her lips with his thumbs.

And after a moment Christ speaks, saying, "Tell me Is."

"I am your lover and your consort," says Mary. "When you are hungry I feed you, and when you are naked I clothe you, and each night you know me in love.

You perform the works which have been allotted to you, among them the taking of disciples, and you pass to them knowledge of the nameless thing, and when you have done this your works are finished."

Mary says all of this and becomes silent.

And when Mary is silent Christ brings his forehead to her forehead, and feels the coolness of her skin, and breathes deeply the smell of her, and her eyes are closed.

And after a long time Christ speaks, saying, "Tell me Will Be."

And Mary answers him, saying, "There will be a multitude, and I will be the multitude. And I will tear your flesh to pieces, and grind your will to dust, and snuff out your voice like a candle.

And I will devour you utterly, so that no trace of you will remain."

Mary says all of this and then falls silent.

And Christ sighs, slowly, from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. And when he has finished sighing, he unties Mary's wrists from the bedposts and allows her to sit up.

And Mary sits up, and nurses her wrists, and thinks of striking him, but does not, and instead speaks, saying, "There is a man named Peter who is a fisherman, and there is a man named Thomas who is a scribe: these two are to be yours."

And Christ arises, and clothes himself, and goes forth to collect his disciples.

And there is evening, and there is morning: a sixth day.

## VII

On the seventh day, Christ rests on the shore of the ocean. And all the world that Christ knows rests with him.

And there is evening, and there is morning: a seventh day.

## VIII

And in the casting out of demons, Christ instructs his disciples.

“Behold,” he says, gesturing to a man gnashing his teeth. “Behold the demon in him.”

And the man possessed of demons is chained. He moans softly, and rolls his eyes, and puffs black foam out through his nostrils.

And Judas (for that is his name) speaks, saying, “There is an aberration here that has brought Judas into discord; God has come upon me more strongly than other men. He has singled me out for this affliction.”

And Judas bucks against his chains and speaks, saying, “I know you, Christ, I know you of old, and I know your name, and your name is-”

But as Judas seeks to speak further Christ silences him. And Christ approaches Judas (who has not bathed in many days) and holds him in his arms, and soothes him. And Christ lays Judas’s head in his lap, and strokes Judas’s filthy hair, and Judas slows in his struggles, and comes to look upward into the face of Christ. And Christ places his hands over the ears of Judas and speaks, saying, “Be opened.” And the Judas’s ears are opened. And Christ places his hands over the eyes of Judas and speaks, saying, “Be cleansed.” And Judas’s eyes are cleansed. And Christ places his hands along the throat of Judas and speaks, saying, “Speak purely.” And Judas again can speak. And Christ cradles Judas to him, and smiles upon him, and Judas looks up at Christ, and his eyes are wide.

And Judas speaks, saying, “Who are you, and what have you done to me?”

And Christ answers him, saying, “I am the Christ. Take up your robe and follow me.”

And Judas covers his nakedness and goes after Christ.

And this is how Christ and Judas come to travel together.

## IX

And it now comes to pass that, after the disciples are gathered, Christ departs from them. He goes out into the wilderness, and the disciples are alone. And they fall into discussing the man whom they have chosen to follow.

And Peter speaks, saying, "I cannot help but admire his great stature and manliness," confusing the other disciples.

For Thomas speaks, saying, "What stature? The Christ is a small child; gentle, but possessed of great wisdom."

And Mary speaks, saying, "I have seen him tall, and I have seen him short. I have seen him thin, and I have seen him fat. I cannot determine the color of his eyes, or the length of his hair."

And Judas does not speak.

Then Christ returns from his errand, and the disciples fall silent. And if Christ knows what has transpired he gives no sign.

## X

Christ goes down to Bethsaida, and a blind man is brought to him, and this man begs to be touched.

And Christ takes the blind man by the hand and leads him into the wilderness, away from those who had brought him, and they are alone.

And Christ spits into his hands, and places his hands over the eyes of the blind man, and Christ speaks to him, saying, "Tell me what you see."

And the blind man sees something, and what he sees is this: men stepping through the hollow places of the earth, their footsteps causing the ground to tremble beneath them, and they fill the hollow places with their vastness, and upon their backs they bear great stone discs, and they take these discs back and forth, striding towards unknown destinations.

This is the vision. And the blind man speaks, saying, "I see men like trees, walking."

And Christ removes his hands from the eyes of the blind man, and bids him look up, and the blind man again can see.

Then Christ sends him away, saying, "Regarding what has happened here, you may not tell anyone."

## XI

Now, Christ has a disciple named Peter.

And Peter comes to Christ, asking, “Christ, who will enter the Kingdom of God?”

And Christ answers him, saying, “Those who unburden themselves of all their possessions: gold, silver, poverty, strife. For what good are these? They will bring you grief; if not today, then tomorrow.

Truly I say to you, those who release their joy and their sorrow on the altar of the Lord: these shall enter the Kingdom. But men with possessions cannot.”

## **XII**

Now Christ has a disciple named Thomas.

And Thomas comes to Christ, asking, "Christ, when will we enter the Kingdom of God?"

And Christ answers him, saying, "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male is not male, and the female is not female; and when you grow eyes in the place of your eyes, and hands in the place of your hands, and feet in the place of your feet, and when you fashion a god in the place of your god; when you have done these things, then you will enter the Kingdom."

### **XIII**

Now Christ has a disciple named Judas.

And Judas comes to Christ, asking, "Christ, where is the Kingdom of God?"

"Look about you," says Christ. "It is here."

## **IXV**

Christ speaks, saying, “Do not come to me saying, ‘Teacher, Teacher.’ For I am not your teacher. Truly I say to you: there is no teacher but one.”

## XV

Peter comes to Christ, saying, "Christ, what of the Adversary? How shall we behave towards him?"

And Christ answers him, saying, "When you meet him on the street, greet him warmly and shake his hand. And take him into your house, and break your bread with him, and if he asks of you, do not hesitate to give him what he asks. And speak with him as you would to your greatest friend, and take him into your confidence, and if he is tired, let him sleep in your bed, while you sleep on the floor. And do not do him any unkindness, and forgive him his trespasses, and when it comes time for him to go, embrace him as you would your father and wish him great profit in his dealings; in your heart you must bear him no ill will."

And Peter hears but does not understand.

## XVI

Christ speaks, saying, “The Adversary wears many guises, but the most insidious of all is hope.”

## XVII

Peter comes to Christ, saying, "Christ, you fed the multitude with five loaves and two fishes, and you gave strength to the lame and sight to the blind, and you brought a man out from death, and you walked on the water as though it were the earth. You are a great man."

And Christ answers him, saying, "Come and sit beside me." And when Peter sits beside him Christ touches the ground with his right hand.

Immediately a great number of cherubs descend, and the air becomes radiant, and Peter is filled with terror.

And when Peter sits agape, Christ waves his hand, and all is as it was before.

And before Peter can speak Christ touches the ground with his left hand.

Immediately a terrible abomination arises from the earth, belching forth black foam from its many jaws, and Peter is filled with terror.

And when Peter begins to tremble, Christ waves his hand, and all is as it was before.

And Christ speaks to Peter, saying, "Miracles are nothing. Truly I say to you: it is not about the miracles."

## XVIII

Christ questions his disciples, saying, "Tell me who it was who invented sin."

"Eve," says Peter, "for she ate of the fruit of Knowledge."

And this is what Peter knows.

"Adam," says Thomas, "for when he was both man and woman, he desired to be only man."

And this is what Thomas knows.

"God," says Mary, "for when all was one, He chose to divide the light from the darkness."

And this is what Mary knows.

"Sin," says Judas, "required no invention. Before the world existed, sin was. And when the world passes, sin still will be, awaiting the hand of the next God."

And this is what Judas knows.

## **IXX**

Christ is dead. And Judas comes to Mary, saying, "You knew him as I did not. Would you tell me of him?"

And Mary answers him, saying, "He was Christ in the morning, and Christ in the afternoon, and when the evening came he was still Christ."

"And in the night? When he slept?"

"The Christ," says Mary, "did not sleep."

## **XX**

Judas comes to Christ, saying, “Why Peter? I don’t understand.”

And Christ answers him, saying, “If Peter were not ignorant of that which sees in secret, he could have no part in its service. Peter is a rock. On him I shall build my church.”

## **XXI**

Christ speaks, saying, “No church can be founded on the God that sees in secret. Where would it stand? In my house people will hear tell of my god, but they will never meet him. For God resides in no house.”

## XXII

Thomas comes to Christ, asking, "Christ, what is the Word?"

And Christ answers him, saying, " ."

And Christ answers him, saying, " ?"

And Christ answers him, saying, " !"

And Christ answers him, saying, " "

And Christ answers him, saying,

And Christ answers him, saying, 

All this is Christ's answer.

And Thomas knows it to be true.

### **XXIII**

Thomas comes to Christ, asking, "Christ, why is it that messengers of the Word are said to be winged?"

And Christ answers him, saying, "Yes."

"But Christ," says Thomas, "you have not answered my question."

"Yes," says Christ. "I have."

## XXIV

Mary and Christ lie in bed together, and their thighs touch, and they look at the ceiling, and it is morning.

And Thomas has returned to his house, and Peter has returned to his hovel, and Judas is in the yard with the hogs. So Christ and Mary are alone.

And Mary speaks, saying, "You have not always been the Christ, but you have."

And Christ answers her, saying, "Tell me my infancy."

And Mary exhales slowly until she is empty, and she remains empty for some time. Mary lies still, not breathing, and during this time Christ is silent. And when Mary is ready she begins.

"Each time a male child was born Herod would cause it to be beheaded. In this way he sought to devour you as an infant. And after your birth I carried you to Herod and showed you to him myself, and he observed your penis between your legs, and he took you in his hands and sliced off your head with his sword. And Herod took you out behind the palace where the bodies of the murdered he-babies lay in stacks and heaps. And Herod placed your body with the others and threw your head away separately. And your lifeless eyes bulged, and your little feet lay lifeless, and Herod went into his palace, thinking you slain.

And you were slain.

But I was not finished with you.

So when night came your body groped among the other corpses. And when you found a loose head you would try it on to see if it would fit. And when it did not you would remove it again and cast it away. And you went on in this manner for a long time.

And in the end you found your own head, and when it sat upon your neck, behold! Your flesh was healed. You had searched for three days and three nights.

And this was your infancy."

## XXV

Now, Mary has two thumbs on each hand, the second thumb where one would expect a pinkie finger, and each hand is in every respect like the other. So it is that when Mary comes up behind Christ and places her hand on his shoulder he does not know whether the hand is her left or her right.

And Mary questions Christ, saying, “Christ, what is death like?”

And Christ answers her, saying, “You fall as though into a vast pool of water, and the water is full of gates. And: behold! Before the gates there is Legion, and it is many. And its hands are on you, and its mouths are on you, and its thousand eyes also, and you feel yourself regarded, tasted, and touched.

And Legion stoops, so that you might see its phallus, thick with blood, and you stand to receive him, and take his penis in your hand, and kiss the tip gently. And all of this is good.

And Legion speaks, saying, ‘I love you, son; you please me greatly,’ and he opens his many jaws to receive you, and each mouth receives your body in part, and Legion swallows you into himself, and as Legion swallows you his gates becomes opened.

And this is what death is like.”

## XXVI

Peter is speaking, saying, "So is this the first time Christ has arisen, or isn't it?"

And Thomas answers him, saying, "It is always the first time."

"Yes," says Peter, "but is this the first Christ? Historically, I mean. Were there ones before?"

And Judas rolls over in his sleep, murmuring, "The lord who comes forth from darkness."

And Thomas answers Peter, saying, "It is never the first time."

"It can't *always* be the first time and..."

"The lord..."

"*never* be the first time, Thomas, that..."

"who comes forth..."

"just doesn't make any..."

"from darkness."

"SENSE!"

"But it's true," says Thomas. "Though I don't pretend to understand it."

## XXVII

Judas comes to Christ, asking, "Christ, what have you come to do?"

And Christ answers him, saying, "I have come to unmake Herod."

And Judas questions Christ again, asking, "Christ, how will you unmake him?"

And Christ answers him, saying, "I will unmake him by example."

## XXVIII

It is possible that Christ has a vision. If he does, the vision is this:

Christ is dead and his corpse lies stretched on the ground. And Judas and Mary are a two-headed Beast that squats on his body and devours his entrails. And first Judas laughs and Mary weeps, and then Mary laughs and Judas weeps, and then it is impossible to tell the difference between them.

And then the vision passes, if vision it was, and Christ is alone with his thoughts.

## **IXXX**

Mary comes to Christ, asking, “Christ, Mary, Judas, the disciples, Herod, Legion and the Word. What is it? What is it all for?”

And Christ answers her, saying, “Synecdoche.”

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