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**United in the Image of God: Jesus's Objective, in the Gospel of John, is to
Restore Humanity to Reflecting the Nature of Elohim**

**Unido na imagem de Deus: O Objetivo de Jesus, no Evangelho de John, é
Restabelecer a Humanidade a Refletir a Natureza de Elohim**

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Abstract: The Talmudic understanding of the creation of humanity in Genesis 1-2 is of a first human combining both sexes in the image of the androgynetic Elohim being separated into male and female. In his gospel John the Presbyter reflects this conception by portraying Jesus and Mary, at the former's resurrection, as reuniting male and female and thus restoring humanity to the image and likeness of Elohim.

Keywords: Gospel of John – Jesus and Mary - Genesis

Resumo: O entendimento talmúdico da criação de humanidade em Gênese 1-2 é de uma primeira humana combinação de ambos os sexos na imagem do andrógino Elohim, que está separado em macho e feminino. No evangelho dele o João, o presbítero, reflete esta concepção retratando o Jesus e Maria, na ressurreição da anterior, como reunindo macho e feminino e assim a humanidade restauradora para a imagem e semelhança de Elohim.

Palavras-chave: Evangelho de João – Jesus e Maria – Genesis

In some of the most ancient strata from which emerged the Samaritan and Jewish religions we find the creation story replete with analogies to marriage and the sexual union of male and female.

In the first chapter of Genesis God is a single deity called אֱלֹהִים, Elohim, comprising male and female aspects. The name "Elohim" is a feminine noun, with the plural formed with the masculine plural suffix, *-im*. Elohim speaks with the plural pronoun ("we"), but takes singular forms of verbs (e.g., "goes"). The singular is more common in Aramaic, ܐܠܗܐ, "Alaha", which is cognate to the very rare Hebrew אֱלֹהָהּ ("Eloah"). The word ٱللّٰه, *ALH* (*Eloh*), root of "Allah" in Arabic, appears to mean "Power", as in the wind/breath. Thus the word Elohim carries the sense of a female potency united to a masculine idea, suggesting procreativity, the ability to create an other in its own image.

The first creation story told in Genesis (Genesis 1:1-2:4a) says Elohim created the universe by separating complementary opposites: day from night, above from below, land from sea, and so on, and then populating these separated regions with creatures specific to each: stars and birds to the sky, fish to the sea, crawling and creeping animals to the land. Even the various creatures are made by this process of separating complementary opposites: Elohim divides male from female in each species. But one created thing was different, however: the first human being was made not by dividing complementary opposites, but by retaining the complementary opposites inherent in Elohim's whole singleness, retaining them in a perfect image of Elohim. Elohim is male and female *as one*, which is why Elohim speaks in the plural, saying מֵדָא וּנְמַלְצַב נְתוּמַדְכָּ הִשְׁעֵנָּה ("Let us make humanity in our image and after our likeness"), and creates a creature both male and female united; thus, the first human being is hermaphroditic, androgynous, both male and female as one, like Elohim (Genesis 1:26).

The Talmud, in the *Pirkei Avot*, quotes Rabbi Eliezer as saying, "God sought advice from the Torah before He created the universe." The Zohar (*Parshas Terumah* 161) declares, "The Holy One, Blessed be He, gazed into the Torah, and created the universe." And the Midrash *Beraishis Rabbah* (1:1) says: "God wrote the Torah before He created the worlds, for it was the blueprint of all creation. Before He formed the universe, God consulted with the Torah as an architect refers to his blueprint. God spoke to the Torah and asked him, 'How shall we create the universe, my son?' The Torah itself declared, 'A king builds a palace not according to his own ideas, but according to the guidelines of his blueprint. And the architect depends on parchment and tables on which are drawn the plans for the rooms and entrances.' Thus, the Torah said, 'I am your blueprint and you are my architect.' And so God looked into the Torah and, accordingly, created the worlds."

The first word of Genesis, *בְּרֵאשִׁית* (*bereshith*), is translated well as “When”. But a more literal rendering is “From the head” (in the sense of “starting-point”). Some classical rabbis noted that the word is the same as saying “with Reshith”, with the Firstfruit (God’s spouse, referring to Proverbs 8:22), and since the Torah is often called *רֵאשִׁית*, Reshith (probably because of this verse), they took the beginning of Genesis as saying God created the heavens and the earth with the Torah. Eleazar be-Rabbi Qillir records an old tradition in his poetry in which Reshith, as a woman, refuses to assist God in creating the universe until she is wedded to the right man (who will reveal her to humanity): that man is Moses. Thus Jesus, who the Gospel of John portrays as a new Moses, is married to Mary as an incarnation of the Logos, equivalent to Reshith. The Gospel of John repeatedly compares and associates Jesus with Moses, and portrays Mary as an incarnation of the Word, equivalent to Reshith, especially at the resurrection and in the earlier Aramaic version of 4:27.

In John the Presbyter’s subsequent major work, Revelation 3:18a continues to draw this parallel between God/coworker and Jesus/Mary, by using imagery familiar from Proverbs 8:10 and 19, where God’s *חֵכְמָה* (*hokhma*, “wisdom”), personified as a woman equivalent to the *reshith*. In Proverbs 8:30 this “companion” of God is further described as *אֲמֹנָה* (*amōn*), as the “master worker” who worked alongside God to create the universe. John uses this last term in Revelation 3:14 in reference to Mary, but when his Aramaic original was later rendered into Greek not by John but someone far less qualified to do so than he, it was misunderstood as *אֲמֵנָה* (*amēn*, “truly”), and put down as such into the Greek version. Similarly, the end of the verse originally spoke of “the *רֵאשִׁית* (*reshith*) of the creation of God”, according to Philip Alexander; indeed, the Aramaic actually has *reshith*, *רֵאשִׁית*. This should have gone into the Greek version as *κοινωνος*, but again the less-than-expert translator made a mistake, putting it into the Textus Receptus as the *αρχη* (*archē*), the “beginning” of the creation of God. That nicely implies John 1:1 (*ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος*), but it loses the intended comparison of Mary to God’s coworker in Proverbs 8.

The first chapter of Genesis goes on to describe the creation of the universe by *אֱלֹהִים* (Elohim) – a term for God in which a feminine singular noun is given a masculine plural suffix. Though rare in Hebrew, this singular form is common in Aramaic, and is of course the standard word for God in Arabic, Allah, written in the Qur’an as الله, and in Punjabi, in the Śrī Guru Granth Sahib, as ਅਲਹ. These are feminine words that literally mean “Goddess” (though they are almost never translated that way); they suggest the feminine aspect of God. When given a masculine suffix, as in Elohim, they become the

familiar name of God found in Genesis 1 and elsewhere, the male-and-female-as-one understanding of God who made the first human in the same hermaphroditic image.

Elohim speaks of Godself with plural pronouns (“Let us make... in our own...”), but takes the singular form of the verb. The reason for this is simple: Elohim is male and female *as one*, which is why Elohim says *מֵדָא וְנִמְלִיצַב נְתוּמַדֵּךְ הוֹשִׁיעַן* (“Let us make humanity in our image and after our likeness”), and creates a human individual who is at once both male and female. And therefore, neither man nor woman alone perfectly images God, but rather man and woman together. What is more, only male and female together can imitate Elohim’s ability to create life. This is why there are a number of comments in the Talmud to this effect: “Rabbi Eleazer wrote, ‘Any man who has no wife is no proper man; for it is written, “Male and female created He them and called their name Adam”’” (*Yebamoth* 63). Rabbi Joseph of Hamadan similarly wrote, “The Divine Unity is conceived as the union of the King and the Queen”, adding that the sacred body of the King is meant to be united with that of the Queen; then, “he will be One, as it is written: ‘Hear Israel, *YHWH* is our God, *YHWH* is One’” (*Sefer Tashak*; Rabbi Joseph ends by quoting the Shema, found in Deuteronomy 6:4). Likewise, the *Sheqel ha Qodesh* says: “The secret of the Shema Israel [is that] the Bride returns to her Bridegroom in order that they unite in a real unity.”

Elohim creates in Genesis 1 by separating complements: above from below, light from darkness, sky from earth, land from sea – but then makes the first human in Elohim’s own image, unseparated into complements. Likewise, in the second creation story, in Genesis 2:6 *YHWH* reunites the previously separated dry land and sea: the word *אֶד*, *ed*, usually translated as “mist”, likelier means “floodwaters”, as it does in Akkadian, *edû* [edû]; this line may remember the annual Nile flooding. And in this united earth-and-sea *YHWH* creates the first human from the watered earth (*אֶד* [*mem*] as a word means “water”; add it to *אֶד* {floodwaters} and it is *אֶדָּם* ‘*ādām*). This human is sacred, since unlike the rest of creation its complements are undivided, male and female together.

Note that the traditional translation of Genesis 1:26-27 (“in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them”) is faulty. The word usually translated “man” is *בְּאָדָם* (*hā’ādām*), “the human being”/“humanity”, from a root meaning “red”, referring to blood, which is the essence of life in ancient Hebrew thinking; being the first one, this being needed no name, and “Adam” only became a name when later there were other humans. The words usually translated “him” and “them”, *אֹתוֹ* (‘*ōtōw*) and *אֹתָם* (‘*ōtām*), are spelling variations of the word *אֹת* (*oth*), which is simply an accusative marker in Hebrew, providing a direct object when a verb requires one, but it is inspecific; in English,

yes, it can suggest “him” or “them”, but just as easily “her” or “it” or even “you” (singular or plural); in this case, “it” is appropriate, but the plural “you” is implied, especially in the Talmudic interpretations, for we were all created in this creature that encompasses all humanity: we all exist *in potentia* in this first godly human creature. Moreover, note that the second word, the one usually translated “them”, אָמַר (*’ōtām*), is a *double entendre* that also means “sign” (in the sense of “miracle”): the first human is a miracle: it is not separated complementary opposites, but a single being that integrates its complements in Elohim’s image.

“Rabbi Eliezer said, ‘Any man who has no wife is no proper man; for it is written, “Male and female created He them and called their name Adam”’ (Yebamoth 63). Talmudic *midrashim* (commentaries) on Genesis 1:27 offer several examples. Rabbi Jeremiah ben Eleazar says that the first *adam* was created an *androgynous*, a male-female. *Gen. Rabbah* 8:1, *Ber.* 61a, and *Eruvin* 18a all say that the first *adam* was in the image of Elohim, being both male and female, and thus “double-faced”, and that God later, in Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman’s words, “split him apart”. Some rabbis even found a reference to this “double-faced” first human in Psalm 139:5. While the verse is usually translated “Behind me and before me you [God] have beset me, and laid your hand (on me)”, the first verb צָרַר can mean not only “to beset” but “to create” or even “to fashion” as does an artisan, as it does in Jeremiah 1:5. With the verb taken this way, the rabbis read the psalmist as saying God fashioned him (“laid your hand [on me]”) with a face “behind me and before me”.

Even Paul seems quite aware of this uniting-of-the-sexes-in-the-image-and-likeness-of-God at Galatians 3:28, though he puts on it his usual spin, saying that all human differences are eliminated if we become one with God in the form of Jesus.

Later, in the second creation story (Genesis 2:4bff.), *YHWH* pulls that first hermaphroditic human apart into two, a man and a woman, no longer united in Elohim’s image, no longer sacred, now just separated opposites like all the rest of creation, more specifically another animal just like all other dually sexed species. *YHWH* draws forth womankind, in the person of Eve, from the side of the prototypical hermaphrodite, leaving him male, and now with a name, Adam. Adam’s name means “red earth/clay”, but the name “Eve” is a variation of the name of God found in this second story: in Hebrew it is חַוְוָה (“Chavvah”), the infinitive form of the verb “to become”. This verb in the future tense is אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (I Shall Be What I Shall Be); when conjugated in the causative form and imperfect state it is הוּוֹה (*YHWH*), which is the other most sacred name for God, which refers to the Wind/Breath/Spirit. It is appropriate that “the mother of all living”, as Adam

referred to his wife (Genesis 3:20), be named with the Sacred Breath that is God's name. In removing Eve *YHWH* takes the very essence of life out of the male; a man (the Talmud thus assures us) has no life and can create no life except when he is united with a woman. Indeed, in Aramaic her name is *ܠܗܘܐ* (*hawa*), "to show", that is to say she shows God's nature.

The serpent truthfully tells the woman, Eve, that if she and Adam eat the forbidden fruit they will "be like *ܥܠܡܝܢ*, Elohim, knowing what is beautiful/pleasant and what is disagreeable." And it is disagreeable to be separated into two people aching for unity again, and far more pleasant to be one, and so the woman and her husband eat the fruit. Several Talmudic rabbis say that the first, composite human, and Adam and Eve after the division, were perfectly aware of the differences between good and evil before eating the fruit, and naturally preferred the good and eschewed the evil, but that the fruit brought these complementary opposites back together in their thoughts and desires, such that they could choose either as they wished. Thus *YHWH's* statement to them that they would enjoy becoming parents but there would be pain associated with childbirth, and they would be able to eat the produce of the earth, but it would be at the cost of toil: after eating the fruit, *YHWH* says, good and evil will now inevitably be mixed together for humanity. Most of all, male and female will yearn for each other, but ultimately be unable to become fully one again. (The parables in Matthew 13:24-30 and Mark 4:3-9 pick up on this midrash.) The justice, then, is inherent in the division into two, into separate male and female persons – in other words, now humanity, in being not a unitary composite of complements but complements divided from each other, was "fallen" from being in the image and likeness of God, now as mundane as the other separated complements, such as light and dark, above and below, and sea and dry land, and any ordinary male or female creature living in this creation of separated natures. And therefore neither man nor woman alone perfectly images God, nor alone can create new life as God can. Athanasius concludes that "Humanity was in danger of disappearing" ever since this fall, which Father Stephen Freeman thus illuminates: "Refusing communion with the only truly existing God, we began to fall back towards the nothing from which we were created. Either we are sustained by grace and flourish, or we increasingly cease to exist."

A number of scholars have opined that the Hebrew story of the first woman coming from the side of the first man to be his consort was a deliberate inversion by the Hebrews, a rare patriarchal society in the Mesopotamian region, of the far more common story of the first woman giving birth to the first man and then taking him as her consort, found among such matriarchal Goddess-centered cultures as Sumeria and Babylonia. This may

be true to an extent, the Hebrew story may have been influenced in its telling by the earlier stories, but such a theory ultimately fails because of the unique nature of the Genesis account: it does not have the reverse of the staggered creation of the sexes just described, such that the first male somehow “gives birth” to the first female, but rather Genesis has the hermaphroditic first human, made in the image of God, torn asunder by God to create the first male and the first female. Ultimately, the Mesopotamian creation stories, and both the first and second creation stories in Genesis agree on one point: male and female were created *at the same time*.

Thus not only do we see a connection between the name Elohim and the woman, but also *YHWH* and the woman. Nor is that all. Harriet Lutzky and John J. Parsons, apparently independently, make a similar point about “El Shaddai”, a common term for God in the Tanakh, which modern translators usually render as “the Almighty”, following the lead of the scholars who created the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Tanakh), who believed that it was derived from *shadad*, which means “to vanquish” or “to destroy”. Lutzky and Parsons point out that the blessing Jacob gives in Genesis 49:25 includes both masculine and feminine imagery, the latter being the “blessings of the breasts and of the womb” (שְׂדֵי וְרֵחַם בְּרַכְתָּ), a phrase that suggests “El Shaddai” may come from שָׁד (shad; “breast” in the sense of mammary gland), with the plural being שְׂדִים (shadaim; “breasts”), as an indication of God’s all-sufficiency and ability to nourish, to care for, all creation. No doubt earlier Christian Bible scholars were not even capable of conceiving of this female image as the root of a name for God!

In Genesis 2:21 God takes a צִלְעַת from the unnamed and hermaphroditic first human, splitting it into male and female. Only in Genesis 2 is this word, *tselah*, traditionally translated as “rib”, and I say incorrectly so. Scott F. Gordon and Ziony Zevit (*American Journal of Medical Ethics*, Vol. 101, July 2001) suggest that the צִלְעַת (*tselah*) in Genesis 2:21 is mistranslated as “rib”, and that it means there the baculum, the penis bone present in the male of every other mammal species except the wooly monkey and spider monkey (which would have been unknown to ancient Israelites), and that Genesis may also mean to explain the raphé, the “scarline” along the lower side of the penis and scrotum, as from when God “closed over” the wound in Genesis 2:21. This might additionally help us understand the sexual overtones in the entire passage, into which “rib” clearly does not fit.

Indeed, these ancient writers were farmers and hunters; they cut apart animals almost every day, and were equally familiar with human anatomy as well. They knew perfectly well that male and female mammals, including humans, have the same number of ribs, and they were well familiar with the bacula of cattle, sheep, and game animals, and so

they inevitably wondered why among all the species they knew the human was the only mammal lacking the baculum.

There are possible problems with this hypothesis, including most obviously that the Hebrew says *אֶחָד מִצְלָעָיו*, usually rendered as “one of his ribs”, which would make no sense if the reading is “one of its bacula”, since the First Human would have had only the one baculum. The critical word, *אֶחָד*, can be slippery in meaning – it often means “one”, but it can also mean “only” (“took only its baculum” or “took its only baculum”) or “altogether” (“took altogether its baculum”). Interestingly, the Targum and Peshitta have “took one from his side”; the direct object is not named; the Textus Receptus, therefore, may combine two traditions, one of which had “baculum” and the other of which had “one”. Another question is how and why the meaning of *צִלְעַת* here only, in Genesis 2:21, came to be taken as “rib” rather than “baculum”. I suspect this was partly because ribs are curved (*צִלְעַת* comes from an ancient root, *אָכַךְ*, meaning “to curve”), and perhaps even to “explain” why women have breasts on their ribcages. As noted, the word’s root means “to curve” and, while ribs too are curved, the baculum in this mythic first undivided human would have curved around the penis as it does in other male mammals, an open tubular receptacle enclosing the penis, as if the penis were within its own vagina.

I agree with Gordon’s and Zevit’s proposal, but I do not think they go far enough.

There are several alternatives offered in the Talmud for what body part is fashioned into Eve. Relevant to this hypothesis is the one in *Bereshith Rabbah* 18:2, Rabbi Joshua of Siknin’s third-century midrash that Elohim created Eve *אלא ממקום שהוא צנוע באדם אפי' בשעה שאדם עומד ערום אותו המקום מכוסה* (“from the concealed part in the person, for even when it [the person] stands naked that part is covered”).

Note that in this midrash I render *צנוע* as “concealed”; it is usually translated “modest”, but that is imposing a later prudery on the text; its root *טמן* means “to hide/conceal”: if one stands naked, as was the First Human, then by definition nothing is modestly hidden. And when a person stands naked, neither the ribs nor the thigh nor any other traditional candidate for the *tseleh* is covered, except only the penis: it hides in the foreskin if it is uncircumcised, and in both the foreskin and the baculum if this is the First Human yet unseparated into male and female.

Note also that the word *צנוע* is related to *צָנָה* (“shield” or “protective covering”) and *צִנּוֹךְ* (“gutter” or “tube”), both of which could well apply to the baculum. Also, I translate *באדם* as “in the person”, not “in a man”, as is traditional: *אדם* (*adam*) means “the human being” or “humanity”, and here refers to the not-yet-divided First Human; being the first and only one of its kind, this being needed no name, and “Adam” only became a name when later there

was another human. Finally, *אוֹתוֹ*, traditionally translated “he” here, is actually an untranslatable accusative marker in Hebrew, providing a direct object when a verb requires one, but it is inspecific: it can suggest “him” or “them” in English, but just as easily “her” or “it” or even “you” (singular or plural); in this case, “it” is correct because it refers to a hermaphrodite, the First Human.

The meanings *tseleh* carries elsewhere in the Tanakh include “leaf”, which may help us understand why Adam and Eve cover themselves with leaves in Genesis 3:7; the word there (*אֵלֶּף*, *aleh*), is related to *תִּלְעָה* (*tseleh*): they may be trying to hide their pubes with new bacula. *Tseleh* also can occasionally mean “carrying beam”, which again may suggest the baculum carrying the penis. Now and then it is used to refer to something that protrudes from the side, and in later times it became associated with side-chapels in temples; something that protrudes from the side of the male human body would be the penis, especially erect. The word also sometimes has the meaning of “chamber”, and the baculum is in species that have it an enclosing chamber for the penis. Finally, the author surely meant this word *תִּלְעָה* (*tseleh*) to invoke the near-homonym *תִּלְמָה* (*tselem*, “image”) found in Genesis 1:26-27, where the first human is made male-and-female-as-one in the image (*תְּבִלְתָּם*) of Elohim.

This midrash not only can help clarify the first part of Adam’s exclamation in Genesis 2:23, “This is at last bone of my bone...”, but also the second part, “...flesh of my flesh”, since *בָּשָׂר* (“flesh”) is frequently in the Tanakh a euphemism for “penis” or “foreskin”. This may be to say that, just as Adam was created in the image of Elohim, Eve was created from that very same image, from the penis-baculum. The story further tells us that Eve and Adam are literally one flesh: both are part of the First Human. Hence, spouses, together, especially in those sacred moments when at orgasm they are out of their “little I” (*atman*) and into the Great I AM (*Brahman*), are the very image of Elohim. As the Qur’an says, “Be blankets for each other.” We complete each other. Further, this story, if I am correctly midrashing it, may point to a subsequently lost ancient Israelite rationale for circumcision, requiring a man’s foreskin be cut off as a substitution/representation for the baculum, as a sign of being part of the covenant.

The phallus-like serpent tells Eve (Genesis 3:5) that eating the fruit of the tree in the center of the garden would make them “like Elohim” or “like gods” (depending on how it is rendered); in Genesis 3:22 Elohim complains that by eating the fruit the man “has become like one of us”, *i.e.*, like the masculine aspect of Elohim, and presumably Eve has become like the feminine aspect of Elohim – and that the couple *know* they are like the two halves of Elohim’s united nature! – but we their human descendants did not have the “knowledge

of good and evil” of our divided nature until, and we shall see, Jesus not only explained it but demonstrated it by becoming one with Mary.

In terms of my midrash, this myth suggests that when a couple makes love, the penis is once again restored to its natural place inside its baculum, and thus is restored the image of Elohim, God conceived of as male-and-female-as-one (the noun is feminine, but in this name it takes a male plural suffix). This would help explain why the Talmud places so much emphasis on the married state.

In short, the two related Genesis accounts, as seen through Talmudic eyes, tell us that since the act of coitus can result in the creation of new life, in the form of a child, in doing so (at least properly, in the covenant of marriage), man and woman are in the image and likeness of Elohim, *YHWH*, El Shaddai, who is given to us in Genesis as Creator, Father-Mother to all life, and the man and woman, when they are truly one (including physically, during coitus), are in the image and likeness of Elohim also creating life.

The early Gnostic traditions understood the serpent in Genesis 3 not as Satan or a Satanic ambassador, but quite the opposite, as an emissary from God. Note that Eve’s name is similar to נחש, which is Aramaic for “snake”, and the famous phrase in Genesis 3:1, וְהַנָּחָשׁ (wəḥannāḥāš; “Now the serpent...”), in which נָחָשׁ (nāḥāš), the word for “serpent”, combines with הַ (ha), the word for “the”, to create in the very middle of this word a variant form of her name, “Hannah”. This supports this ancient contention that the serpent was good. So too does the fact that throughout the Mesopotamian cultures the serpent was anciently universally understood as both good and wise, which is why to this day the *caduceus*, two snakes intertwining in a double helix reminiscent of DNA, are the symbol of the medical profession.

The tree in question is the Tree of Life, which is the same as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Truth, since to know wisdom is to know the *Λογος*, and to know the *Λογος* is to gain entry to the *Æon*. This Tree is the Torah, says the Gospel of Philip, logion 100, of which Jesus is the fruit. The Tree also appears in Revelation 2:7 and 22:1-2, and is imaged as a menorah in 1:12,20 and 2:1, with seven lamps (the fruits), held up as in Horace by the branches of the menorah.

YHWH tells the primordial couple that if they eat the forbidden fruit they will die. The serpent tells them that if they eat it they will their eyes will be opened, and they will “be like אֱלֹהִים, Elohim, knowing what is beautiful/pleasant and what is disagreeable.” Both are correct. For it is disagreeable to be separated into two people aching for unity again, and far more pleasant to be one, and so the woman and her husband eat the fruit. Several Talmudic rabbis say that the first, composite human, and Adam and Eve after the

division, were perfectly aware of the differences between good and evil before eating the fruit, and naturally preferred the good and eschewed the evil, but that the fruit brought these complementary opposites back together in their thoughts and desires, such that they could choose either as they wished. Thus *YHWH*'s statement to them that they would enjoy becoming parents but there would be pain associated with childbirth, and they would be able to eat the produce of the earth, but it would be at the cost of toil: after eating the fruit, *YHWH* says, good and evil will now inevitably be mixed together for humanity. Most of all, male and female will yearn for each other, but ultimately be unable to become fully one again. (The parables in Matthew 13:24-30 and Mark 4:3-9 pick up on this midrash.) The justice, then, is inherent in the division into two, into separate male and female persons – in other words, now humanity, in being not a unitary composite of complements but complements divided from each other, was “fallen” from being in the image and likeness of God, now as mundane as the other separated complements, such as light and dark, above and below, and sea and dry land, and any ordinary male or female creature living in this creation of separated natures. And therefore neither man nor woman alone perfectly images God, nor alone can create new life as God can. Athanasius concludes that “Humanity was in danger of disappearing” ever since this fall, which Father Stephen Freeman thus illuminates: “Refusing communion with the only truly existing God, we began to fall back towards the nothing from which we were created. Either we are sustained by grace and flourish, or we increasingly cease to exist.”

Curiously, the Persian Diatessaron has Jesus say in John 15:1 not “I am the true vine”, but *من درخت میوه راستی* (*man derakhte mīveye rāstī*). This has been put into English as “I am the tree of the fruit of truth” (Craig D. Allert) and, adhering a bit more closely to the word-for-word meaning, as “I am the fruit-tree of truth” (Robert Murray, from the Italian of Giuseppe Messina). However, a careful rendering of the Persian yields this translation: “I am the tree that bears the fruit of truth”. The mention of fruit in this version of 15:1 leads to the conclusion that Jesus was speaking of himself in these same terms: that one who partakes of the fruit of the Tree will die (*תָּמֹת*, *tāmūt*) (Genesis 2:17) and will become like Elohim (*כְּאֱלֹהִים*, *kêlōhîm*) (Genesis 3:5). John, in mediating Jesus’s teachings, appears to be reading these verses as saying the individual male and female will die in order to become reborn as a united being, like Elohim.

So, in Genesis 3:7, when the primordial couple eat the fruit they become aware of their nakedness, and they yearn for each other, and they are afraid of this intense desire within themselves, and so they make clothing to subdue and control their desires. For a man and a woman naked together is indeed the likeness of the Creator!

Thus in the earliest Christian texts there is an emphasis on union of wife and husband in nakedness, clothed in light. The Gospel of Philip says in logia 85 and 112:

νε.νταη. ηιω.ου μ.π.τελειον ν.ουοειν μα.ρ.ου.ναυ ερο.ου ν 2ι ν.δυναμιχ αυω
μα.υ.σ εμαητε μμο.ου ουα δε να. ηιω.φ μ.π.ουοειν ημ π.μυχτψριον ημ π.ηωτρ
ου μονον π.ρωμε ν.τελειοχ χε.να.σ εμαητε αν μμο.φ αλλα χε.να.σ ναυ ερο.φ αν
ε.υ.σαν.ναυ γαρ ερο.φ χε.να.εμαητε μμο.φ ν.κε.ρψτε μν ουα να.σ'πο να.φ ν.τεει.,αριχ
ει.μψ ε.φ.ηιω.φ μ.π.τελειον ν.ουοειν αυω ν.φ.σώπε ηιω.φ ν.τελειον ν.ουοειν ται
ν.;ε τε φ.ηιω.φ φ.να.βωκ εβολ ηι π.κοχμοχ παει πε π.τελειο σψρε μ.π.νυμών

Those to whom it has been given to be clothed in the perfect light can never be seen by the powers (of this world), nor are they able to grasp them. For such a person it shall be given to be clothed with the light in the mystery/ceremony of the union.

Not only will they be unable to grasp the perfected one, but they will not even be able to see him. For if they could see him, they would grasp him. In no other way can one be begotten of him (God) in this grace; only if he is clothed in the perfect light, and the perfect light is around him. Robed in this manner, he shall go forth out of the cosmos. This is the perfected son of the bridal chamber.

Philip makes the same point in logion 86, building on the notion that humanity is meant to eat the fruit of the Tree, to attain all wisdom, to die to individual self and become Elohim, male-and-female-as-one:

νε.μπε.τ. χηιμε πωρ, ε.οουτ νε.χ.να.μου αν πε μν.οουτ πεφ.πωρ, υτα.φ.σωπε υ.αρ,η
μ.π.μου δια τουτο α.πε.,ρχ ει'εκααχ π.πωρ υτα.σωπε'ιν σορπ ε.φ.να.χηη.φ ερατ.φ
πααιν υ.φ.ηοτρ.ου μ.π.χναυ αυω νε.ν ταη.μου ημ π.πωρ ε.φ.να. να.υ υ.νου.ωνη
ν.φ.ηοτρ.ου σαρε.τ.χηιμε δε ηωτρ α.πεχ.ηαι ηραι ημ π.παχτοχ νε.ντα.ηωτρ δε ημ
π.παχτοχ ου.κε τι χε.να.πωρ δια τουτο α.ευηα. πωρ α.αδαμ'ε υτα.χ.ηωτρ ερο.φ αν ημ
π.παχτοχ

If the female had not been separated from the male, she would not be dying along with the male. Their separation brought this about; it became the origin of death. For this the Christ came, so that he could rectify again to himself the separation which had existed since the beginning by his

mating together the two. As for those who have died by the separation he shall give back to them their own lives by his mating them together. Thus it is that the female mates with her husband in the bridal chamber. Those who have mated in the bridal chamber can no longer be separated. Thus it is that Eve was separated from Adam, because she did not mate with him in the bridal chamber.

This view is found also in the Gospel of Thomas, particularly in the last logion in the book (114), which, unfortunately, is widely misunderstood:

πῆε.χιμων.πετροχ να.υ 'ε μαρε.μαριηαμ ει εβολ ν.ηψτ.ν 'ε ν.χηιομε μπισα αν
μ.π.ωνη
πῆε.ιχ 'ε ειχ.ηψψτε ανο.κ̃ "να.χωκ̃ μ.μο.χ 'ε.κααχ ε.ει.να.α.χ ν.ηοουτ̃ σινα
χ.να.σω.πε ηω.ωχ ν.ου.πνα ε.φ.ονη εφ.εινε μ.μω.τν ν.ηοουτ̃ 'ε χ.ηιμε.νιμ̃ εχ.να.α.χ
ν.ηοουτ̃ χ.να.βωκ̃ ηηουν ε.τ.μντερο.ν.μ.πψυε

Simon the Rock said this to them: "Let Mariam [Mary] go away from us, for women are not worthy of the [Æonian] life."

Jesus said this: "Look, I will draw her into myself so I may make her male, so she may also be a living spirit resembling you males: for any woman who makes herself male will enter the Realm of Heaven."

Viewing it with modern sensibilities, scholars often dismiss this logion as an example of first-century misogyny, insisting Jesus couldn't possibly have said the Æon, the Realm of Heaven, was an all-male bastion! But Jesus is actually referring to the Hebrew myth of the creation of male and female. In the first creation story Elohim (God understood as comprising male and female aspects wholly united) creates by separating complementary opposites: day from night, above from below, land from sea, and the many living creatures male from female; but, last, Elohim creates the single hermaphroditic human in Elohim's own image, hence unlike the rest of creation undivided, male-and-female as one. In the second story, viewed in the Talmud (not as it is by scholars today as a totally different story that disconforms with the first) as entirely a harmonious complement and continuation of the first, this unique creation, with its complementary opposites of masculine and feminine aspects undivided in exactly the nature of Elohim, is now divided into two, male and female: it is now no longer in the divine image, but common, like everything else: day divided from night,

land from sea, sky from earth, and woman from man. Only in uniting these opposites again, said the rabbis, only when man and woman come together, can we once more be in the image and likeness of Elohim.

This interpretation of logion 114 is supported by logion 22, in which Jesus says in part, “When you make the two one ... when you make the male and the female a single one, such that the male is not male nor the female ... then you shall enter into [the Realm of Heaven].” Likewise he says in logion 75, “There are many standing at the door, but the united/whole/single ones (are) the ones who will go in to the bridal chamber.” Speaking to his mother-in-law Salome in logion 61, Jesus says that of two who share a bed (who are married) one shall live and the other die, implying the crucifixion and also Mary becoming one with him, and adds: “If one is whole, one will be filled with light; however, if one is divided (into separate male and female), one will be filled with darkness”.

We also find the exact same theology in the Naassene Document, as quoted by Hippolytus (*Adversus Hæreses* [*Against Heresies*], 5:1); it compares the First Man (the *Protanthropos*), Adam, the fundamental being who was at first hermaphroditic but then separated into two gendered individuals, to the son of humanity, Jesus, who is restored as hermaphroditic. And he quotes (12:1) a Naassene hymn that refers to Jesus and Mary thus: “From you the Father, and through you the Mother, the two immortal names, the progenitors of the Æon.”

And in the Gospel of Philip, for instance in logion 76:

ϣ.6000 νερε.ευβα”δϣ ἄδᾱμ νε μν μου σοοπ υτα.ρε.Χ.πωρ”ερῶ.3 α.π.μου σωπε πα λιν
ε.3.σα.βωκ ε6ῶν ϣ.3. σιτ.3 ερο.3 μου να.σωπε

In the days (when) Eve was within Adam, death did not exist. (When) she was separated from him, death came into being. If again she goes into (him), and he takes her into himself, death shall not exist.

The second creation story concludes with *YHWH* showing how these separated male and female parts can be reunited again: as husband and wife (Genesis 2:24). This enables humanity, if it chooses, to recover the image and likeness of God, male-and-female-as-one (Genesis 1:27), in true loving marriage, man-and-woman-as-married. Thus Jesus’s emphasis in chapter 17 on unity is anticipated here, and the wedding here and the hierogamy (spiritual wedding) in chapter 20 are to show he is one with his wife in unity and commitment, jointly with her a sacred being that

reflects God's nature – and the teaching is that so we too must be, and will be, if we heed his voice and adhere to the *Λογος*. For the very nature of God is love (I John 4:8) – none more so than the love of husband and wife.

Hence it was spiritually essential for Jesus to have a wife at the beginning on his ministry. In my restoration of the original version of the Gospel of John I identify the "Woman at the well" as Mary, called "Mary Magdalene" in other gospels, and I refer the reader thereto (*The Gospel of John Restored and Translated*. Paso Ancho: Volcán Barú, 2013-16). Very briefly, As many have noted, John 4:43 originally had to lead in to 2:1, placing the meeting in chapter 4 before the wedding. This meeting forms an obvious inclusio with 20:1-17. In both places Jesus is romantically alone with a woman, discussing spirituality, and in a garden setting, for Jacob's Spring would have often overflowed, making a fertile oasis, its own garden of flowers and greenery nourished by the waters pouring up and out of the spring. The word *πηγη* refers not to a well but a spring that actually bubbled up with water, even a fountain (which is the word's meaning in Mark 5:29). Moreover, there is no question that a Jewish reader, in the first century and still today, would expect romance or courtship to take place in such a situation, for it echoes two stories that would have been (and still are) familiar and beloved to every Jew in the world: the stories of how Jacob similarly at midday met Rachel ("beautiful in form and face"; Genesis 29:17) at a well, perhaps this very well which John points out to us as Jacob's well; and of how Jacob's parents became engaged at a well, in which Rebekah (who was "extremely beautiful in appearance"; Genesis 24:16) was asked for some water to drink just as this woman is asked here; and how in Exodus 2:19, Moses is meeting and romancing his wife-to-be Zipporah.

Likewise, I identify the bride and groom in 2:1-11 as Mary and Jesus. First, note that Jesus's primal miracle takes place at this wedding, which is part of the inclusio with John 20. Verse 2:1 ends with the phrase *η μητηρ του ιησου εκει*, "Jesus's mother was there": not that she came there, not that she was invited there, but that she *was* there: moreover, that she was *presiding* there! If she was there without needing to get there, then this clearly tells us that this was Mary's home. Paraphrased into modern English, the exact sense of the phrase is "at the home of Jesus's mother", or even "hosted by Jesus's mother". It is always assumed that "They have no wine" is Jesus's mother's demand that he see to the provision of sufficient wine for all the wedding guests. However, this is not what the text actually signifies. The Greek verb *υστερεω* (*hystereō*) in the first phrase literally means to lack something the person

desires because the source that should satisfy this desire has run out of it. In this context it is usually translated as “run short”, to say that the wedding celebrants as a whole have run out of wine. Yet the verb is actually in the aorist genitive third person singular, *υστερησαντος* (*hysterēsantos*), which tells us that the running short of wine is not the party as a whole, but the woman herself, as an individual. Therefore, by “They have no wine” she indicates to Jesus that, after finding her cup empty and desiring more wine to drink, she has looked and seen that there is no more wine to be had on the premises, which reduces to zero her chances of satisfying her desire for more wine. This is not the statement of his mother, host of the celebration, but his bride; she is simply complaining: “I want more wine but there isn’t any!” the reader shares with the servants the *γνωσις* (*gnōsis*, hidden knowledge) that makes the “punch line” work, that Jesus, the bridegroom, didn’t keep back the better quality wine for some reason, but created it miraculously from water. He is joking, of course, since he and all of the wedding guests would have been very aware of the considerable hither and thither of the servants toting smaller water pots to fill these six immovably huge water pots with water; he and everyone could see that something unusual was occurring. The “punch line” needs to be set up, that Jesus is the bridegroom who is jokingly accused by the master of ceremonies of holding back the good wine until late in the feast – that is what makes this story funny, if Jesus himself, who performs the miracle, is the bridegroom accused of holding back the good wine!

At the close of the gospel we find a similar hierogamy. Here is how I restore the original of 20:16-17 in Greek and Aramaic:

λεγει αυτη ιησους <μαρι>
στραφεισα εκεινη
λεγει αυτω <μαρι>
και προσεδραμεν αψασθαι αυτου

Jesus says to her, “Mary!”
She turns around.
She says to him, <“Mary!”>
And she runs to fasten herself to / to
kindle him.

ܠܝܓܝ ܐܘܬܝ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܡܪܝ
ܡܬܬܠܬܬܝܢܐ
<ܠܝܓܝ> ܠܐܝܬܝܗ ܕܡܪܝ
ܡܠ ܥܕܝܗܐ ܡܬܠܐ ܠܦܥܝܐ ܕܡܬܝܐ

Then Jesus says to her, “Mary!”
And she understands him.
And she replies to him, <»Mary!“>
And she runs to be joined together to
him, to offer herself to him.

The Syriac Aramaic word ܡܪܝ (mary) is one of many doubles entendres featured prominently in the gospel; it means “master” or “husband”, and also is a familiar form of Mary’s name. Throughout chapter 20 Mary speaks of or to Jesus as *mary* except here, and I believe that here, in the gospel monograph she did here too but that this was changed by some later editor or copyist because it looked like a mistake.

John 20:5-6 say Jesus’s burial wrappings are inside the tomb, so, unless he shopped for a new suit, he is in this scene naked. A first-century Jew would know that Mary too was naked, that once alone she would have seen to קריעה (*keriah*), a Jewish ritual still today, albeit in much diluted form, in which at the time one tore one’s robes apart and tossed them away. The examples of Jacob (Genesis 37:34) and David (II Samuel 1:11) made it incumbent upon the faithful to rend their clothes entirely apart until they stood naked; Joel 2:13 urges such an expression of grief to be real, to rend the heart in twain, and not just the garments.

Several Greek manuscripts, most importantly the reliable Greek Codex Sinaiticus (01C2a) and the Codex Koridethi (Θ), have the critical phrase at the end of this verse, *και προσεδραμεν αψασθαι αυτου*. Codex Cassellanus, an early Latin translation of the Syriac Diatessaron, which may antedate even the Old Syriac gospels, has a similar phrase, *et occurit ut tangeret eum* (“and ran to meet in order to take hold of him”), found also in Munich Clm. 23 346, Reims A35, Leipzig Codd. lat. 192 and 193, and Berlin Phillipps 1707, and which is found in an array of Irish Latin manuscripts (e.g., Vulgate Durmachensis) and later texts in Dutch. The Codex Syriac Sinaiticus, about as old as the Syriac Diatessaron, has “And she runs to be joined together to (him), to give/sacrifice herself to (him)”, more specifically suggesting a reuniting of this new Adam and Eve. Some version of this phrase must be extremely early in its origin; unlike Baarda, I do not believe it is an interpolation, as the theological atmosphere soon after this gospel’s first publication would not have fostered adding even a hint of such a very physical reunion between Jesus and Mary and all of its implications – far likelier the sentence is original, but was piously weeded out of all textual versions later than these early ones.

I concur with Gersdorf and Lepsius that the original did not have a *μη* (“not”, as in the traditional translation “Do not touch me”), and thus that Jesus did not forbid Mary’s embrace, but invited it. The verb in the Codex Sinaiticus describing Mary’s action toward Jesus, *αψασθαι* (*apasthai*), can mean “to fasten” or “to kindle”

(including sexually), and in I Corinthians 7:1, for example, as in Plato, Aristotle, and Euripides, it refers to coitus. The verb in the Syriac Sinaiticus, ܠܩܒ (lqb), “to join together”, implying “to wrap” or “to swathe”, related to the words for “to glue”, “to adhere”, suggests a complete union. It is used to refer to coitus in the Targum of Ruth 3:8; also at Genesis 2:24, where it says a man must “join together” with his wife and “become one flesh” – the very point of the erotic “joining together” of Jesus and Mary here!

The verb ܩܪܒ (qrb) often means to “draw near” or “touch”, at times in a sexual sense, as in the Aramaic versions of Genesis 20:3 and Matthew 1:18. Neither rendering, however, is logical just after “join together”, a much more intense action than mere touching. Likeliest is another meaning ܩܪܒ frequently has in the Tanakh: “give/offer” or “be given/offered”; i.e., as a sacrifice, the logic being that an offering draws God and the one who gives it closer together; it carries the original sense of the English word “atonement” as reconciliation: the forgiveness of wrongdoing of those who have been separated and their reuniting. The Passover lamb is a sacrifice (קָרְבָּן, qorban, from the same root) in this sense. Jesus has been through this year offered to God as קָרְבָּן, an offering, the Passover lamb. The Aramaic/Hebrew word comes from a root meaning to draw close to someone or something; thus, the Passover lamb was to draw the faithful closer to God. Contextually, the verb suggests Mary is turning away from her former priestess role of sacrifices and sacred sexuality, her “five husbands”; she is offering herself wholly to God and to this Messiah Jesus as a spiritual and sacred-sexual sacrifice, thus to be one with him, restoring the image of Elohim. What is more, in the Presbyter’s last major work, *The Songs of the Perfect One*, the Aramaic again describes this resurrection encounter in highly erotic language.

In the *Songs of the Perfect One*, the final masterwork John was to compose, Mary sings at the resurrection about hanging herself on Jesus’s naked body and feeling his desire; at the same time the image suggests the way he hung on the cross:

ܕܡܝܢ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ
ܕܡܝܢ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ

[With his body he clothes me and with mine] I clothe [him],
Such that my member is with and among them (our bodies); I hang myself on it
(his member); he is kindled with love/desire for me.

The analyses in *The Gospel of John* demonstrate that the gospel begins and closes with a sacred hierogamy between Jesus and Mary. Thus Jesus “dies” in the Jordan at the beginning and then is united with Mary at Cana, and hangs like “strange fruit” on the Tree and then is united with Mary at the resurrection, and both are naked in that last scene as a close reading of the text reveals. The gospel’s writer (and Jesus through him) is telling us that love and marriage are part of the *Λογος*, the most significant part, since Jesus restores by that means humanity, from its severing into separate male and female, into the perfect image of God.

Thus, the eschatological image pictured here of a return to the nakedness of the garden of Eden is not just perfect equality, without the uniforms that divide and stratify human beings. It is not even just perfect unity. It is perfect union (John 17:22,21,23). It means that this time, unlike Adam and Eve, we shall stand naked and not be ashamed (Gospel of Thomas 37) or afraid (I John 4:18). We shall rather be “clothed with the sun” (Revelation 12:1), garbed in the love that is the very nature of God (I John 4:16b). Joined as one, Jesus-and-Mary are no longer Blake’s “ratio”, scattered fragments of the whole: the baculum-made-woman again sheathes the male, restoring the First Human, complete and perfect: they are the Platonic *ἰδέα*, the image and likeness of Elohim. As such, this Human is not static, not quite yet (John 20:17) at the destination, the *Æon*, but still following God’s *Λογος*.