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THE THUNDER: PERFECT MIND (VI,2)

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The title appears to be double: "The Thunder" is not syntactically related to "Perfect Mind" but is separated by a mark of punctuation (:). It is nowhere referred to in the body of the work (unless one should reconstruct "[perfect] mind" at 18,9).

In content *Thund.* is virtually unique in the Nag Hammadi library and very unusual. It is a revelation discourse by a female figure who is, except possibly for the title, otherwise not specifically identified. The work has no apparent structural divisions but is written throughout in the first person, interweaving and combining three types of statement: self-proclamation in the "I am" style, exhortations to heed the speaker, and reproaches for failures to heed or love, etc. The most distinctive feature is that the self-proclamations are most often antithetical or even paradoxical. The parallelism of form suggests that originally these may have been part of a hymnic structure.

Parallels for this revelatory genre can be adduced from a variety of sources. In *Orig. World* (II,5) 114,7-15, the heavenly Eve utters a hymnic self-proclamation that is very similar to *Thund.* 13,19-14,9, and a trace of the same material, though not in the form of self-proclamation, occurs in a similar context in *Hyp. Arch.* (II,4) 89,14-17. It may be significant that the *Thund.* passage thus paralleled is not repeated in the work, whereas many of the other self-proclamations occur more than once in *Thund.*, sometimes in varying forms. In such other Nag Hammadi works as *Trim. Prot.* (XIII,1) and the longer ending of *Ap. John* (II,1:30,11-31,25), there are examples of the "I style" of proclamation by a revealer figure, but without the antithetical context. There are three interesting parallels to *Thund.*, in content or in style or in both, outside the Nag Hammadi corpus. One is the well-known "Hymn of Christ" in the *Acts of John* 94-96, in which Christ sings of himself in a succession of antitheses and contrasts, without, however, the use of "I am" formulas. The second example is a passage in the Mandaean *Ginza R*, Book VI, the so-called "Book of Dinanukht," which is generally thought to be one of the older sections of the *Ginza*. There the spirit Ewath recites a formula which contains antitheses similar to, but for the most part not identical with, those in *Thund.*: "I am death, I am life. I am darkness, I am light. I am error, I am truth, etc." The third example is a series of passages in ancient Indian literature in which contrasting or contradictory assertions are made of the Deity either in the "I am" form (*Bhagavad-Gita* IX,16-19) or in the second or third person (*Atharva-Veda* X, viii,27-28; *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*

IV,3). These examples include both personal categories ("Thou art woman, Thou art man") and non-personal ones ("Death am I and deathlessness, What is not and that which is").

In terms of the religious traditions represented in the Nag Hammadi collection, *Thund.* is difficult to classify. It contains no distinctively Christian, Jewish, or gnostic allusions and does not seem clearly to presuppose any particular gnostic myth. There are resemblances to the tone and style of the wisdom hymns in the Biblical and intertestamental wisdom literature, and the self-proclamations are similar to the Isis aretology inscriptions. But if the multiple assertions in these works are intended to assert the universality of Isis or of God's wisdom, perhaps the antithetical assertions of *Thund.* are a way of asserting the totally other-worldly transcendence of the revealer.

(George W. MacRae †)

There has been a tendency among scholars to assume that *Thund.* is gnostic, in spite of George MacRae's caution, expressed above. Accordingly it has been proposed that the female figure here is to be understood as a combination of the higher and lower Sophia figures found in gnostic literature. It has also been proposed that the figure is Eve, as she is understood in gnostic writings found in the Nag Hammadi collection (see references above) and mentioned elsewhere.

If one takes *Thund.* at face value and includes the title in consideration, the female figure who is the speaker throughout is named Thunder (feminine in Greek), a figure who must be understood in terms of the parallel phrase in the title: Perfect Mind. Thunder, in Greek myth, in the Hebrew Bible, and elsewhere, comes forth from the highest god (the Greeks sometimes called Zeus "The Thundering One"). It is the way in which the god makes his presence known on earth. In the tractate, Thunder is allegorized as Perfect Mind, meaning the extension of the divine into the world (1,1-2). The understanding of Perfect Mind appears to owe much to the Stoic notion of cosmic Pneuma, the active, intelligent element in all things, made up of air and fire. It was thought of as spanning all worldly divisions and dichotomies and at some level being responsible for everything that occurs. In its manifestation as reason, it was also able to instruct those who listen about the way to true life. (For Thunder's similar role, see 20,26-27; 21,20-32). The tractate as it stands, is not Stoic, since it speaks of a power above Perfect Mind (1,1). But with its conception of the immanence of the divine in all aspects of the world, neither is it gnostic. It still remains "difficult to classify."

(Douglas M. Parrott)

I was sent forth from ¹ [t
and I have come to th
and I have been found
Look upon me, you (pl.)
and you hearers, hear m
You who are waiting fo
And do not banish me ¹⁰
And do not make your v
Do not be ignorant of
guard! ¹⁵
Do not be ignorant of

For I am the first and the
I ¹ am the honored one a
I am the whore and the h
I am the wife and the ²⁰
I am (the mother) ¹ and
I am the members ¹ of m
I am the barren one ¹
and many are her sons.
I ¹ am she whose wedding
and ²⁵ I have not taken
I am the midwife ¹ and sh
I ¹ am the solace of my la
I ¹ am the bride and the b
and it is my husband w
I am the mother of ¹ my
and the sister of my ¹ h
and he is my offspring
I am the slave of him wh
I am the ruler ¹⁴ of my c
But he is the one who
on a birthday. ¹
And he is my offspring

THE THUNDER: PERFECT MIND

VI 13, 1-21, 32

The Thunder: Perfect Mind ¹

I was sent forth from ¹ [the] power,
 and I have come to those who ¹ reflect upon me,
 and I have been found ⁵ among those who seek after me. ¹

Look upon me, you (pl.) who reflect upon me, ¹
 and you hearers, hear me. ¹

You who are waiting for me, take me ¹ to yourselves.

And do not banish me ¹⁰ from your sight. ¹

And do not make your voice hate ¹ me, nor your hearing. ¹

Do not be ignorant of me anywhere ¹ or any time. Be on your
 guard! ¹⁵

Do not be ignorant of me. ¹

For I am the first and the last.

I ¹ am the honored one and the scorned one. ¹

I am the whore and the holy one. ¹

I am the wife and the ²⁰ virgin.

I am <the mother> ¹ and the daughter.

I am the members ¹ of my mother.

I am the barren one ¹

and many are her sons.

I ¹ am she whose wedding is great,
 and ²⁵ I have not taken a husband.

I am the midwife ¹ and she who does not bear.

I ¹ am the solace of my labor pains.

I ¹ am the bride and the bridegroom, ¹
 and it is my husband who ³⁰ begot me.

I am the mother of ¹ my father

and the sister of my ¹ husband,

and he is my offspring. ¹

I am the slave of him who ¹ prepared me.

I am the ruler ¹⁴ of my offspring.

But he is the one who [begot me] ¹ before the time
 on a birthday. ¹

And he is my offspring [in] ¹ (due) time,

and my power ⁵ is from him.
 I am the staff ¹ of his power in his youth,
 [and] ¹ he is the rod of my ¹ old age.
 And whatever he wills ¹ happens to me.
 I am the silence ¹⁰ that is incomprehensible
 and the idea ¹ whose remembrance is frequent. ¹
 I am the voice whose sound is ¹ manifold
 and the word whose appearance ¹ is multiple.
 I am the utterance of ¹⁵ my name.
 Why, you who hate me, ¹ do you love me
 and ¹ hate those who love me? ¹
 You who deny me, confess ¹ me,
 and you who confess ²⁰ me, deny me.
 You who tell ¹ the truth about me, lie about me,
 and you ¹ who have lied about me, tell the truth about me. ¹
 You who know me, be ignorant ¹ of me,
 and those who have not ²⁵ known me, let them know me. ¹
 For I am knowledge and ¹ ignorance.
 I am ¹ shame and boldness. ¹
 I am shameless; I am ³⁰ ashamed.
 I am strength and ¹ I am fear.
 I am ¹ war and peace.
 Give heed ¹ to me.
 I am the one who is disgraced ¹ and the great one.
 Give heed to my **15** poverty and my wealth. ¹
 Do not be arrogant to me when I am ¹ cast out upon the earth,
 [and] ¹ you will find me in [those ⁵ that] are to come.
 And do not look ¹ [upon] me on the dung-heap
 nor go ¹ and leave me cast out, ¹
 and you will find me in ¹ the kingdoms.
 And do not look ¹⁰ upon me when I am cast out among those who ¹
 are disgraced and in the least ¹ places,
 nor laugh at me. ¹
 And do not cast me out among those who ¹ are slain in violence. ¹⁵
 But I, I am compassionate ¹ and I am cruel.
 Be on your guard! ¹
 Do not hate my obedience ¹
 and do not love my self-control. ¹

In my weakness, do not
 and do ¹ not be afraid
 For why do you despise
 and ¹ curse my pride? ²⁵
 But I am she who exists
 and strength ¹ in tremb
 I am she who is ¹ weak,
 and I am well in a ¹ ple
 I am ³⁰ senseless and I
 Why have you hated me
 For I shall be ¹ silent amo
 and I shall appear and
 Why then have you hated
 Because I am a barbari
 For I am the wisdom ¹ [o
 and the knowledge of [o
 I am the judgment of [the
 [I] ¹ am the one whose im
 and the one who has no
 I am the one who has bee
 and who has been love
 I am the one whom they
 and you have ¹ called D
 I am the one whom ¹ they
 and you have called La
 I am the one whom you h
 and I am the one whom
 I am the one whom you h
 and you have gathered
 I am the one before whom
 and you have been ¹ sha
 I am she who does not ke
 and I am she whose fest
 I, I am godless,
 and ²⁵ I am the one who
 I am the one whom you h
 and you have scorned m
 I am ¹ unlearned,
 and they learn from ¹ m

In my weakness, do not ²⁰ forsake me,
 and do ¹ not be afraid of my power. ¹
 For why do you despise ¹ my fear
 and ¹ curse my pride? ²⁵
 But I am she who exists in ¹ all fears
 and strength ¹ in trembling.
 I am she who is ¹ weak,
 and I am well in a ¹ pleasant place.
 I am ³⁰ senseless and I am wise. ¹

Why have you hated me ¹ in your counsels?
 For I shall be ¹ silent among those who are silent, ¹
 and I shall appear and speak. **16**
 Why then have you hated me, you Greeks? ¹
 Because I am a barbarian among [the] ¹ barbarians?
 For I am the wisdom ¹ [of the] Greeks
 and the knowledge of [the] ⁵ barbarians.
 I am the judgment of [the] ¹ Greeks and of the barbarians.
 [I] ¹ am the one whose image is great in Egypt ¹
 and the one who has no image among the ¹ barbarians.
 I am the one who has been hated ¹⁰ everywhere
 and who has been loved ¹ everywhere.
 I am the one whom they call ¹ Life,
 and you have ¹ called Death.
 I am the one whom ¹ they call Law, ¹⁵
 and you have called Lawlessness. ¹
 I am the one whom you have pursued, ¹
 and I am the one whom you have seized. ¹
 I am the one whom you have scattered, ¹
 and you have gathered me together. ²⁰
 I am the one before whom you have ¹ been ashamed,
 and you have been ¹ shameless to me.
 I am she who does not keep festival, ¹
 and I am she whose festivals are many. ¹
 I, I am godless,
 and ²⁵ I am the one whose God is great. ¹
 I am the one whom you have reflected upon, ¹
 and you have scorned me.
 I am ¹ unlearned,
 and they learn from ¹ me.

I am the one whom you have ³⁰ despised,
 and you ¹ reflect upon me.
 I am the one ¹ whom you have hidden from,
 and you ¹ appear to me.
 But whenever ¹ you hide yourselves, ³⁵
 I myself will appear. 17
 For [whenever] you ¹ [appear],
 I myself ¹ [will hide] from you.
 Those who have [...] ¹ to it [...] ⁵ senselessly [...]. ¹

Take me [...] ¹ understanding] from grief, ¹
 and take me ¹ to yourselves from understanding ¹⁰ [and] grief.
 And take ¹ me to yourselves from places ¹ that are ugly and in ruin, ¹
 and rob from those ¹ which are good even though in ugliness. ¹⁵
 Out of shame, take me ¹ to yourselves shamelessly; ¹
 and out of shamelessness ¹ and shame, upbraid my members ¹
 in yourselves.
 And ²⁰ come forward to me, ¹ you who know me
 and you who ¹ know my members,
 and ¹ establish the great ones among the small ¹ first creatures.
 Come ²⁵ forward to childhood, ¹
 and do not despise it ¹ because it is small and it is little. ¹
 And do not turn away ¹ greatnesses in some parts from ³⁰ the
 smallnesses,
 for ¹ the smallnesses are known ¹ from the greatnesses.

Why ¹ do you curse me ¹ and honor me? ³⁵
 You have wounded and you have ¹ had mercy.
 Do not separate me from the first 18 ones whom you have [known].
 [And] ¹ do not cast anyone [out nor] ¹ turn anyone away
 [...] ¹ turn you away and [...] ⁵ know] him not.
 [...]. ¹
 What is mine [...]. ¹
 I know the [first ones] and ¹ those after them [know] me. ¹

But I am the mind of [...] ¹⁰ and the rest of [...]. ¹
 I am the knowledge of my inquiry,
 and ¹ the finding of those who seek after me,
 and ¹ the command of those who ask of me, ¹
 and the power of the powers in my knowledge ¹⁵
 of the angels, who have been ¹ sent at my word,

and of gods ¹ in th
 and of spirits of ev
 and of women ²⁰
 I am the one who ¹ is h
 and who is despised
 I ¹ am peace,
 and war ²⁵ has come
 And I ¹ am an alien and
 I am the substance and

Those who are ¹ without
 and those who are in m
 Those who are close to
 and those who are far
 known ³⁵ me.
 On the day when I am c
 [you] are far away ¹
 [and] on the day when
 [I am ¹ close] to you

[I am ⁵ ...] within.
 [I am ¹ ...] of the natur
 I am ¹ [...] of the creati
 [...] request of the souls
 [I am] control and the un
 I am the union and ¹ the
 I am the abiding ¹ and I
 I ¹ am the one below,
 and they come ¹ up to
 I am the judgment ¹⁵ and
 I, I ¹ am sinless,
 and the root ¹ of sin de
 I am lust in (outward) ap
 and interior self-contro
 I ¹ am the hearing which
 and the speech which c
 I am a mute ¹ who does n
 and great ²⁵ is my mult

Hear ¹ me in gentleness, a
 I am she who cries out, ¹

and of gods ¹ in their seasons by my counsel, ¹
 and of spirits of every man who ¹ exists with me,
 and of women ²⁰ who dwell within me.
 I am the one who ¹ is honored, and who is praised, ¹
 and who is despised ¹ scornfully.
 I ¹ am peace,
 and war ²⁵ has come because of me.
 And I ¹ am an alien and a citizen. ¹
 I am the substance and the one who ¹ has no substance.
 Those who are ¹ without association with me are ignorant ³⁰ of me,
 and those who are in my ¹ substance are the ones who know me. ¹
 Those who are close to me have been ignorant ¹ of me,
 and those who are far ¹ away from me are the ones who have
 known ³⁵ me.
 On the day when I am close to **19** [you],
 [you] are far away ¹ [from me],
 [and] on the day when I ¹ [am far away] from you,
 [I am ¹ close] to you.
 [I am ⁵ . . .] within.
 [I am ¹ . . .] of the natures.
 I am ¹ [. . .] of the creation of the [spirits]. ¹
 [. . .] request of the souls. ¹
 [I am] control and the uncontrollable. ¹⁰
 I am the union and ¹ the dissolution.
 I am the abiding ¹ and I am the dissolution.
 I ¹ am the one below,
 and they come ¹ up to me.
 I am the judgment ¹⁵ and the acquittal.
 I, I ¹ am sinless,
 and the root ¹ of sin derives from me. ¹
 I am lust in (outward) appearance, ¹
 and interior self-control ²⁰ exists within me.
 I ¹ am the hearing which is attainable to ¹ everyone
 and the speech which cannot be ¹ grasped.
 I am a mute ¹ who does not speak,
 and great ²⁵ is my multitude of words.
 Hear ¹ me in gentleness, and ¹ learn of me in roughness. ¹
 I am she who cries out, ¹

and I am cast ³⁰ forth upon the face of the earth. ¹
 I prepare the bread and ¹ my mind within.
 I am the ¹ knowledge of my name.
 I am the one ¹ who cries out,
 and I listen. **20**
 I appear and [...] ¹ walk in [...] ¹ seal of my [...]. ⁵
 I am [...] ¹ the defense [...]. ¹
 I am the one who is called ¹ Truth,
 and iniquity [...]. ¹
 You honor me [...] ¹⁰ and you whisper against [me].
 You [who] ¹ are vanquished,
 judge them (who vanquish you) ¹ before they give judgment
 against you, ¹
 because the judge and partiality ¹ exist in you.
 If you are condemned ¹⁵ by this one, who will ¹ acquit you?
 Or if you are acquitted ¹ by him, who will be able to ¹ detain
 you?
 For what is ¹ inside of you is what is outside of you, ²⁰
 and the one who fashions you on the outside ¹
 is the one who shaped ¹ the inside of you.
 And what ¹ you see outside of you, ¹
 you see inside of you; ²⁵
 it is visible and it is your garment. ¹
 Hear me, you hearers, ¹
 and learn of my words, ¹ you who know me.
 I am ¹ the hearing that is attainable to everything; ³⁰
 I am the speech that cannot ¹ be grasped.
 I am ¹ the name of the sound
 and the sound ¹ of the name.
 I am the sign ¹ of the letter
 and the designation ³⁵ of the division.
 And I [...].
 [...] **21**⁴ light [...].
 [...] ⁶ hearers [...] ¹ to you
 [...] ¹ the great power.
 And [...] ¹ will not move the name. ¹⁰
 [...] to the one who created me. ¹
 And I will speak his name. ¹

Look then at his word
 and all ¹ the writing
 Give ¹ heed then, you
 and ¹⁵ you also, the
 and you spirits who
 For I am the one who
 and I have no one ¹
 For many ¹ are the pl
 numerous sins, ¹
 and incontinen
 and disgraceful pass
 and fleeting pleasur
 which (men) emb
 and ¹ go up to their
 And they will find ³⁰ r
 and they will ¹ live,
 and they will not di

Look then at his words
and all ¹ the writings which have been completed.
Give ¹ heed then, you hearers
and ¹⁵ you also, the angels ¹ and those who have been sent, ¹
and you spirits who have arisen from ¹ the dead.
For I am the one who ¹ alone exists,
and I have no one ²⁰ who will judge me.

For many ¹ are the pleasant forms which ¹ exist in
numerous sins, ¹
and incontinencies, ¹
and disgraceful passions, ²⁵
and fleeting pleasures, ¹
which (men) embrace ¹ until they become sober
and ¹ go up to their resting-place. ¹
And they will find ³⁰ me there,
and they will ¹ live,
and they will not die ¹ again.