

Les « deux Livres de Iéou » (MS Bruce 96). Les Livres du grand discours mystérique – Le Livre des connaissances du Dieu invisible – Fragment sur le passage de l'âme.

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How are we to attain to the glory of the light, where we will be able to find peace and sing the glory of the transcendent God? With their diagrams and mysteriously-named celestial powers, the fascinating and frequently puzzling *Books of Jeu* show us how to get there, revealing the obstacles and pitfalls along the way as well as divulging the passwords and seals that are needed to overcome the path's guardians. This volume will be welcomed by anyone who is concerned with the early period of Christianity, as it presents for the first time in any modern language a translation of these enigmatic and unique works, which will be of interest to specialists and non-specialists alike. Set in the context of a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples, the *Books of Jeu* reveal to their readers the structures of the heavenly spheres and supply those readers with all that they will need to know (seals, secret figures, formulas to recite) and to receive (initiation to the mysteries and baptism) in order to gain access to these spheres. The revelations that Jesus transmits are accompanied in the manuscript by many diagrams and designs, which show the celestial worlds and the seals that the ascending soul must use.

The “two *Books of Jeu*” are tremendously important for our understanding of gnostic diversity, and yet they are among the least known and least studied gnostic works, a situation which the current volume will help to rectify. It contains a completely new critical edition of the Coptic text of the “two *Books of Jeu*,” the first since 1892, made from negatives preserved on glass plates and a collated version of the original codex, preserved at the Bodleian library at Oxford. The critical edition is accompanied by a French translation of the text, the first since 1891, which makes the text accessible and comprehensible to the modern reader, and also by philological and textual notes which explain the Coptic text and support the translation. The edition, translation and notes are preceded by an introduction, which gives a new and up to date view of these texts. The introduction presents the modern history of the manuscript, going back to its acquisition in 1769 by the Scottish explorer and geographer James Bruce (hence the description of the codex as “the Bruce codex”), as well as information about the current state of the manuscript. The introduction also includes the first papyrological and codicological analysis of the manuscript: this analysis has permitted not only a new ordering of the preserved text, but also the identification of three distinct works, coming from at least three different manuscripts, making up what had previously been considered to be one work in two parts. Finally, there is a chapter dedicated to an in-depth description and analysis of the content of these texts, giving the reader a new understanding of them.

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