

Allogène (NH XI,3)

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Allogenes (literally, “of another race,” “foreigner”) is an apocalypse that tells of the ascension into the heavens of one Allogenes, and of the revelations imparted to him by divine beings during this experience. This text belongs to a literary tradition that seems to have developed in the West, probably sometime after 220 CE, as it is unknown to Irenaeus and Hippolytus. Around the year 300, Porphyry—in his *Life of Plotinus*—informs us of Plotinus' denunciations of certain gnostics, who “have produced apocalypses of Zoroaster, Zostrianos, Nicotheos, Allogenes, Messos, and other figures of this sort” (16). Most researchers believe that *Allogenes* and *Zostrianos*, both works found at Nag Hammadi (NH XI,3 and VIII,1) can be identified with these revelations mentioned by Porphyry. *Allogenes* itself belongs to a group of writings, described as “Sethian Platonizing treatises,” that includes the two works mentioned by Porphyry, as well as the *Three Steles of Seth* (NH VII,5) and *Marsanes* (NH X). These four texts show metaphysical and ontological views characteristic of Plotinus and the later Neoplatonic philosophers, as well as certain Middle Platonic sources.

The linguistic peculiarities and numerous difficulties of the Coptic text of *Allogenes* show that it is a translation of a Greek original, whose extremely technical metaphysical vocabulary must have presented an enormous challenge to its Coptic translators. The Greek original was probably composed around 240 CE in the eastern Mediterranean area, perhaps at Alexandria, and would have arrived in Rome towards the middle of the third century, where it was read and refuted in the school of Plotinus. This text is therefore of considerable importance both for the history of Platonism, and for the history of Gnosticism.