

Hermès en Haute-Égypte. Les textes hermétiques de Nag Hammadi et leurs parallèles grecs et latins

Volume

tome I

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Presses de l'Université Laval (Quebec City)

«Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi [section «Textes»]», 3

1978

xx + 172 p.

ISBN: 2-7637-6817-2

The first of two BCNH volumes dedicated to the Hermetic texts of Nag Hammadi *contains* the *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* (NH VI, 6) and the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (NH VI, 7). The sixth tractate of codex VI leads us into the heart of the Hermetic mystery of regeneration. The title of the tractate, appearing at the first line (52,1) has been accidentally torn away. Based upon the subject of the discourse, indicated at 53,23-26, it is possible to restore the *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*, or an equivalent designation.

Essentially, the tractate takes the form of a dialogue between a master and his disciple. The disciple calls his master "my father" and, on several occasions "Hermes" (58,28; 59,11; 63,24) or "Trismegistus" (59,15.24), while the master calls his disciple "my son," without calling him by any other name. Other documents are known to exist, such as the teachings addressed to Tat, in which the name of the disciple does not occur in the dialogue. There is, however, an essential difference. The disciple who appears here is not a novice. Hermes has already explained to him all of his General and Detailed Discourses (63,1-2). All that remains for him is to cover the final stage, which is not simply to know but to commit his entire person. It is an initiation into the divine Eighth and Ninth which enables the regeneration, making him a new human being, directly inspired by the Divine Intellect.

Therefore, it can be understood that there would be no question here of an ordinary teaching. It is not a matter of transmitting knowledge, but an experience or, more precisely, a spiritual attitude-- a profound interior disposition. The foundation of this attitude is the prayer of praises (55,4; 57,10; 59,20 cor.; 60,9.14.18) which elevates the soul and prepares it for silent contemplation. Also, the central part of the discourse consists solely of the prayers interspersed with ecstatic visions and the teachings of the master delivered at the beginning (52,27) as a pedagogy of prayer. In addition, the fact that the spiritual power which accomplishes the regeneration is transmitted by a kiss (57,26) exchanged between the father and the son, a symbol of the free gift of divine love, reveals the originality of a teaching which contains more of the practice of spiritual formation and initiation into mysteries than the theory.

This dialogue is a document of the utmost importance, as much for the study of the sources of certain Gnostic writings from Nag Hammadi, as for clarifying, by means of a living testimony, the internal life of the communities of perfects and spirituals, as well as the spirit of their practices and rites of initiation. It is, in any case, one of the clearest examples in which a Gnostic ceremony is concretely described in all its detail.