

L'Interprétation de la gnose (NH XI, 1)

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There is an unfortunate tendency to think of gnostic authors as isolated misanthropes, and their works as being brought forth from their disgust with the world and with other humans. The *Interpretation of Gnosis* shows some of the problems with such an understanding of gnosticism: in this important work, we see instead its author's concern to keep a community from being torn apart by what the author sees as jealousy. To heal the community's divisions, the author seeks to persuade his/her reader to take Christ as a model, imitating the forbearance and patience with which Christ endured the contempt and mockery which he faced. The author takes up the Pauline image of the Church as the body of Christ, as well as Greco-Roman rhetoric of reconciliation, in order to convince his/her reader not to give way to divisions that are presented as inspired by evil archons, but rather to be contented with her place in the community. The original reader in question may well have been a woman, to judge by the author's use of feminine imagery in the first half of the text.

Although the use of the word "gnosis" in the title of the *Interpretation of Gnosis* does not in itself prove that this text is gnostic, the discussion of this work in the present volume clearly shows that it was produced by a Valentinian or someone influenced by Valentinianism. The *Interpretation of Gnosis* is one of several gnostic works that are clearly inspired by, and hope to resolve, controversies in their authors' communities. Other such works include the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, in which the author seeks to reassure his/her reader (possibly female as well, and possibly represented in the text by the figure of Norea) that the archons are powerless against her, and the *Gospel of Judas* and the *Testimony of Truth*, both of which join a long tradition of Biblical and extra-Biblical rejection of blood sacrifice, and both of which seek to theologially legitimate their (and their readers') opposition to the exaltation of martyrdom, sacrificially conceived.

This volume was produced collaboratively. Wolf-Peter Funk, researcher at the Université Laval, prepared the critical edition and the index; Louis Painchaud, professor in the Faculté de théologie et de sciences religieuses at the Université Laval, wrote the introduction and created the French translation of the text; and Einar Thomassen, professor at the University of Bergen, wrote the commentary and a chapter in the introduction. All three are members of the Institut d'études anciennes at the Université Laval, and the Groupe de recherche sur le christianisme ancien et l'Antiquité tardive, also at the Université Laval.