

La Pensée Première à la triple forme (NH XIII, 1)

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Others informations

Texte établi traduit, et présenté par Paul-Hubert Poirier

The *Trimorphic Protennoia* is preserved in a single Coptic manuscript, namely codex XIII of the collection of papyri discovered in Upper Egypt, near to Nag Hammadi, in 1945. The title, copied in Greek (*Prôtennoia trimorphos*), as well as certain other aspects of the work, suggest that it was composed in Greek, but no witness to it in that language survives. In terms of its literary affiliations, the work does not belong to any of the more common genres found at Nag Hammadi, such as didactic treatises, apocalypses, or apocryphal intertestamentary or neotestamentary works. Rather, this is a hybrid work, including hymns and first-person declarations, also incorporating questions, interjections, and narrative developments. As if reflecting the triple nature of its protagonist, the writing is divided into three sections or discourses, each part clearly identified by its own subtitle.

This female, or rather androgynous, protagonist is identified as the “first thought” or the first emanation of the Invisible, that is, the Father, the second of the higher principles. First Thought is to be identified with the power whose emergence from the paternal eon is related in the *Apocryphon of John*, where it is called Pronoia and Barbelo. Even if the presentation of this figure in the *Trimorphic Protennoia* does owe something to the *Apocryphon of John*, it nonetheless also retains a degree of originality through the redactor's combination of two parallel triadic structures—those of Father, Mother and Son, and Sound, Voice, and Speech (or Logos)—in the triple manifestation of First Thought.

This presentation involves a polemical rereading of the prologue of the Gospel of John, as well as the integration of traditional material, which leads one to see it as having been composed in the first half of the third century in a milieu in which the *Apocryphon of John* and other gnostic and non-gnostic works were read, a milieu open to diverse religious and philosophical influences while remaining explicitly Christian. It seems likely that this diverse, Christian milieu was located in the eastern Mediterranean, in the Egyptian Delta or in Syria.

This volume gives a new edition of the Coptic text and a French translation, as well as a detailed introduction and grammatical and lexical indices. It provides readers with a new interpretation of a fascinating and enigmatic text.