

The Discourse on The Eighth and Ninth



Information on The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth

Douglas M. Parrott writes (The Nag Hammadi Library in English, p. 322):—

Evidence that Disc. 8-9 was composed in Egypt is found in references to the city of Diospolis, as well as to hieroglyphic characters and gods with animal faces - all found in the section beginning 61,18. The designation of the mystagogue sa Hermes and Trismegistus also suggests Egypt. A second-century C.E. date for the composition is possible, because of affinities with the thought of the Middle Platonist Albinus.

The reference to "eighth" and "ninth" is to the spheres of the heavens that surround the earth.



The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth Translated by James Brashler, Peter A. Dirkse, and Douglas M. Parrott

MY FATHER, YESTERDAY YOU PROMISED ME that you would bring my mind into the eighth and afterwards you would bring me into the ninth. You said that this is the order of the tradition.

"My son, indeed this is the order. But the promise was according to human nature. For I told you when I initiated the promise, I said, 'If you hold in mind each one of the steps.' After I had received the spirit through the power, I set forth the action for you. Indeed, the understanding dwells in you; in me (it is) as though the power were pregnant. For when I conceived from the fountain that flowed to me, I gave birth."

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"My father, you have spoken every word well to me. But I am amazed at this statement that you have just made. For you said, 'The power that is in me'."

He said, "I gave birth to it (the power), as children are born."

"Then, my father, I have many brothers, if I am to be numbered among the offspring."

"Right, my son! This good thing is numbered by ... **(3 lines missing)**

... and [...] at all times. Therefore, my son, it is necessary for you to recognize your brothers and to honour them rightly and properly, because they come from the same father. For each generation I have called. I have named it, because they were offspring like these sons."

"Then, my father, do they have (a) day?"

"My son, they are spiritual ones. For they exist as forces that grow other souls. Therefore I say that they are immortal."

"Your word is true; it has no refutation from now on. My father, begin the discourse on the eighth and the ninth, and include me also with my brothers."

"Let us pray, my son, to the father of the universe, with your brothers who are my sons, that he may give the spirit of eloquence."

"How do they pray, my father, when joined with the generations? I want to obey, my father."

(2 lines missing) ...

But it is not [...]. Nor is it a [...]. But he is satisfied with her [...] him [...]. And it is right for you to remember the progress that came to you as wisdom in the books, my son. Compare yourself to the early years of life. As children (do), you have posed senseless, unintelligent questions."

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"My father, the progress that has come to me now, and the foreknowledge, according to the books, that has come to me, exceeding the deficiency - these things are foremost in me."

"My son, when you understand the truth of your statement, you will find your brothers, who are my sons, praying with you."

"My father, I understand nothing else except the beauty that came to me in the books."

"This is what you call the beauty of the soul, the edification that came to you in stages. May the understanding come to you, and you will teach."

"I have understood, my father, each one of the books. And especially the ...

(2 lines missing) ...

which is in [...]."

"My son, [...] in praises from those who extolled them."

"My father, from you I will receive the power of the discourse that you will give. As it was told to both (of us), let us pray, my father."

"My son, what is fitting is to pray to God with all our mind and all our heart and our soul, and to ask him that the gift of the eighth extend to us, and that each one receive from him what is his. Your part, then, is to understand; my own is to be able to deliver the discourse from the fountain that flows to me."

"Let us pray, my father: I call upon you, who rules over the kingdom of power, whose word comes as (a) birth of light. And his words are immortal. They are eternal and unchanging. He is the one whose will begets life for the forms in every place. His nature gives form to substance. By him, the souls of the eighth and the angels are moved ... **(2 lines missing)** ... those that exist. His providence extends to everyone [...] begets everyone. He is the one who [...] the aeon among spirits. He created

everything. He who is self-contained cares for everything. He is perfect, the invisible God to whom one speaks in silence - his image is moved when it is directed, and it governs - the one mighty power, who is exalted above majesty, who is better than the honored (ones), Zoxathazo a — Zozazoth.

"Lord, grant us a wisdom from your power that reaches us, so that we may describe to ourselves the vision of the eighth and the ninth. We have already advanced to the seventh, since we are pious and walk in your law. And your will we fulfil always. For we have walked in your way, and we have renounced [...], so that your vision may come. Lord, grant us the truth in the image. Allow us through the spirit to see the form of the image that has no deficiency, and receive the reflection of the pleroma from us through our praise.

"And acknowledge the spirit that is in us. For from you the universe received soul. For from you, the unbegotten one, the begotten one came into being. The birth of the self-begotten one is through you, the birth of all begotten things that exist. Receive from us these spiritual sacrifices, which we send to you with all our heart and our soul and all our strength. Save that which is in us and grant us the immortal wisdom."

"Let us embrace each other affectionately, my son. Rejoice over this! For already from them the power, which is light, is coming to us. For I see! I see indescribable depths. How shall I tell you, my son? [...] from the [...] the places. How shall I describe the universe? I am Mind, and I see another Mind, the one that moves the soul! I see the one that moves me from pure forgetfulness. You give me power! I see myself! I want to speak! Fear restrains me. I have found the beginning of the power that is above all powers, the one that has no beginning. I see a fountain bubbling with life. I have said, my son, that I am Mind. I have seen! Language is not able to reveal this. For the entire eighth, my son, and the souls that are in it, and the angels, sing a hymn in silence. And I, Mind, understand."

"What is the way to sing a hymn through it (silence)?"

"Have you become such that you cannot be spoken to?"

"I am silent, my father. I want to sing a hymn to you while I am silent."

"Then sing it, for I am Mind."

"I understand Mind, Hermes, who cannot be interpreted, because he keeps within himself. And I rejoice, my father, because I see you smiling. And the universe rejoices.

Therefore, there is no creature that will lack your life. For you are the lord of the citizens in every place. Your providence protects. I call you 'father', 'aeon of the aeons', 'great divine spirit'. And by a spirit he gives rain upon everyone. What do you say to me, my father, Hermes?"

"Concerning these things, I do not say anything, my son. For it is right before God that we keep silent about what is hidden."

"Trismegistus, let not my soul be deprived of the great divine vision. For everything is possible for you as master of the universe."

"Return to <praising>, my son, and sing while you are silent. Ask what you want in silence."

What he had finished praising, he shouted, "Father Trismegistus! What shall I say? We have received this light. And I myself see this same vision in you. And I see the eighth, and the souls that are in it, and the angels singing a hymn to the ninth and its powers. And I see him who has the power of them all, creating those <that are> in the spirit."

"It is advantageous from now on, that we keep silence in a reverent posture. Do not speak about the vision from now on. It is proper to sing a hymn to the father until the day to quit (the) body."

"What you sing, my father, I too want to sing."

"I am singing a hymn within myself. While you rest yourself, be active in praise. For you have found what you seek."

"But is it proper, my father, that I praise because I am filled in my heart?"

"What is proper is your praise that you will sing to God, so that it might be written in this imperishable book."

"I will offer up the praise in my heart, as I pray to the end of the universe and the beginning of the beginning, to the object of man's quest, the immortal discovery, the begetter of light and truth, the sower of reason, the love of immortal life. No hidden word will be able to speak about you, Lord. Therefore, my mind wants to sing a hymn to you daily. I am the instrument of your spirit; Mind is your plectrum. And your counsel plucks me. I see myself! I have received power from you. For your love has reached us."

"Right, my son."

"Grace! After these things, I give thanks by singing a hymn to you. For I have received life from you, when you made me wise. I praise you. I call your name that is hidden within me: You are the one who exists with the spirit. I sing a hymn to you reverently."

"My son, write this book for the temple at Diospolis in hieroglyphic characters, entitling it 'The Eighth Reveals the Ninth.'"

"I will do it, my <father>, as you command now."

"My <son>, write the language of the book on steles of turquoise. My son, it is proper to write this book on steles of turquoise, in hieroglyphic characters. For Mind himself has become overseer of these."

Therefore, I command that this teaching be carved on stone, and that you place it in my sanctuary. Eight guardians guard it with [...] of the Sun. The males on the right are frog-faced, and the females on the left are cat-faced. And put a square milk-stone at the base of the turquoise tablets, and write the name on the azure stone tablet in hieroglyphic characters. My son, you will do this when I am in Virgo, and the sun is in the first half of the day, and fifteen degrees have passed by me."

"My father, everything that you say I will do eagerly."

"And write an oath in the book, lest those who read the book bring the language into abuse, and not (use it) to oppose the acts of fate. Rather, they should submit to the law of God, without having transgressed at all, but in purity asking God for wisdom and knowledge. And he who will not be begotten at the start by God comes to be by the general and guiding discourses. He will not be able to read the things written in this book, although his conscience is pure within him, since he does not do anything shameful, nor does he consent to it. Rather, by stages he advances and enters into the way of immortality. And thus he enters into the understanding of the eighth that reveals the ninth."

"So shall I do it, my father."

"This is the oath: I make him who will read this holy book swear by heaven and earth, and fire and water, and seven rulers of substance, and the creating spirit in them, and the <unbegotten> God, and the self-begotten one, and him who has been begotten, that he will guard the things that Hermes has said. And those who keep the oath, God will be reconciled with them and everyone whom we have named. But wrath will come to each one of those who violate the oath. This is the perfect one who is, my son."



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