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## Références éditoriales

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that "the present world is female, as a mother bringing forth the souls of her children" and that "the world to come is male, as a father receiving his children" (cf. Hom. 3, 23, 2). Here the words male and female are symbolic and stand for the two eons. Though Clement of Alexandria explains 'female' as 'desire' (ἐπιθυμία), it is clear from the other texts quoted that female has to be taken in its literal sense: it is woman, who by giving birth to children nourishes death. According to EvEg the end of the world will be there when women cease to give birth, and one of the signs from which it will be known that this end is near, is the disappearance of the difference between the sexes (Strom. 3, 91) <sup>22</sup>.

It will be clear that with these texts from EvEg we are far removed from the platonic view of marriage and immortality. For Plato Eros aims at immortality, and the only way for mortal human nature to reach that goal is that of γέννησις and τόκος, "for this is something eternal and immortal." But according to EvEg the (only) way of overcoming death is to abstain from engendering and begetting. Death can only be conquered by stopping the motor which keeps this world going, i.e. the process of γένεσις that irrevocably leads to φθορά and gives fuel to death; γένεσις is not "something immortal"; real immortality lies beyond this process of γένεσις and φθορά (the Encratites anticipate it, although this not explicitly stated in EvEg): that is why there must be put an end to this process. Christian Encratism turns out to be the antipode of the platonic-aristotelian conception.

### 3. Two gnostic texts : the Poimandres and "On the Origin of the World".

There may be some doubt concerning the gnostic character of the Hermetic writings (Corpus Hermeticum); there is no question of a Saviour, and they are only slightly dualistic; they can be best qualified as "gnosticizing" <sup>23</sup>. The first Treatise, from which our text is taken, is called the Poimandres; it probably dates from the second century A.D. The argument runs like this. Man is dual in nature, mortal because of the body, and immortal because of the essential man. He is created male and female (i.e. bisexual) because of his descent from the bisexual Father (15). But then, after a time, the original unity was broken by the will of God. All living creatures, previously bisexual, were parted, as was man; they became on the one hand male, on the other female. He then goes on:

At once God spoke by a holy word: "Increase and multiply, all creatures and creations (cf. Gen. 1, 28), and let him who has a mind recognize himself as immortal, and know that the cause of death is love (τὸν αἰτίον τοῦ θανάτου ἔρωτα), and know all the things that exist (18)" <sup>24</sup>.

Then the process of births begins, and all things are multiplied after their kind (cf. Gen. 1, 12). He who has recognized himself (scil. as immortal) has come into that good which is the best of all; but he who has loved the body, which comes from the deceit of love, remains wandering in the darkness, suffering in his senses the things of death (19). Then the person who receives the revelation from Poimandres, asks: "What great sin have they committed, who are thus ignorant, so that they are deprived of immortality?" And somewhat later he himself replies, that those who are in death deserve to die, because the source of the individual body is that abhorrent darkness, from which the moist nature

22. In log. 71 and 78 of the *Gospel of Philip* we read that before the separation of Eve from Adam death did not exist. Here we touch upon the basic element in the Valentinian interpretation of the primordial fall (original sin). In the Valentinian view, the Eschaton is, in some way or other, conceived as the restoration of the original unity of male and female (See, e.g., *EvThom.* 114 and 22; *Exc. Theod.* 21, 2-3; 67, 2-4 and 68). Though this theme is closely related to our subject, it cannot be pursued here, as we are dealing with the relation between

marriage as procreation and death. It may be sufficient to refer to the important articles by A. ORBE, *Pecado original y matrimonio en la teología del sec. II*, *Greg.* 45 (1964) p. 449-500, and : *El pecado de Eva, signo de división*, *OCPer.* 29 (1963), p. 305-330.

23. So R. M. GRANT, *La Gnose et les origines chrétiennes*, Paris, 1964, p. 118, with QUISPÉL and VAN MOORSEL (« semi-gnostic »).

24. The translation is taken from R. M. GRANT, *Gnosticism, an Anthology*, London, 1964, p. 215.

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