

Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu Śląskiego  
w Katowicach

Studia Antiquitatis Christianae,  
Series Nova I I

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**GNOSTYCYZM  
I TEOLOGIA  
IRENEUSZA Z LYONU**

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**Zagadnienia wybrane**

Redakcja  
Ludmiła Lach-Bartlik



Katowice 2010

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## Summary

Gnosis and Gnosticism that grew on its foundation made an enormous impact on the orthodox Christian theology, especially among the Eastern Fathers and Church writers. Up to 1945, the views of the Gnostics were only known indirectly from the writings of Christian polemicists, such as Irenaeus of Lyon, Clement of Alexandria or Origen, while the discoveries of Nag-Hammadi opened an access to the very source. 52 Coptic texts gathered in 13 codices provide an invaluable historical source for the study of gnosis and the Gnostic movement that flourished in the 2<sup>nd</sup>- and 3<sup>rd</sup>-century Egypt.

The discoveries of Nag-Hammadi aroused interest among numerous researchers: Bible scholars, historians and dogmatic theologians, providing an opportunity for a closer study of gnosis. In Poland, a research into gnosis has been carried out by Wincenty Myszor, Professor of Humanities, a Church historian and patrologist, whose interests extend to Gnostic literature, trends from the border of orthodoxy as well as Christian polemical literature. In 1965-1970, Professor Myszor followed specialist studies at the Theological Faculty of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Cracow and then at the Theological Faculty of the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw, where he was awarded a PhD in 1973 on the basis of his dissertation "Gnosticism in the Nag-Hammadi Texts" (*Studia Antiquitatis Christianae* 1/2, 1977, pp. 121-266). In 1983, he earned a post-doctoral degree following his dissertation "Anapausis in Christian Gnostic Theology" (*L'anapausis dans la théologie chrétienne gnostique, Studia Antiquitatis Christianae* 5, 1984, ss. 287). For 32 years he had very close links with the Academy of Catholic Theology. Starting in 1969, he worked as an assistant lecturer at the Department of Patrology at the Theological Faculty, in 1984-1987, he held the post of an associate professor. In 1987, he joined the newly-organized Faculty of History and Social Sciences, and after he was awarded a Professor's degree in 1990, he chaired the Department of the Ancient History of the Church, first as *Professor extraordinarius*, and in 1996-2001, as *Professor ordinarius*. In 2001, he was appointed by Archbishop Damian Zimoń to take care of the preparatory work for the organization of the Theological Faculty at the University of Silesia, where he currently works.

The results of Professor Myszor's persistent research, focusing mainly on the 2<sup>nd</sup>- and 3<sup>rd</sup>-century Gnostic sources and the Coptic texts from the Nag-Hammadi Library, include numerous translations of Gnostic texts, their analyses, commentaries and reviews, published as separate works or in academic periodicals.

The eleventh volume of *Studia Antiquitatis Christianae. Series Nova* contains a selection of Professor Myszor's articles devoted to Gnosticism and the theology of Irenaeus of Lyon. The articles have been published in a number of periodicals within the last 35 years. Even if they only give a fragmentary picture of the Gnostic thought, they offer, nevertheless, an opportunity to look at the movement as a whole. Instead of the chronology of writing and publication of the articles, their substance has been chosen as the selection criterion.

The opening articles provide an introduction to the context in which the Gnostic movement appeared and developed, briefly outlining the Gnostic thought. "In Search of Secret Knowledge" contains an explanation of such terms as "gnosis" or "Gnosticism". While presenting various theories and hypotheses relating to the origins of Gnosticism, its main

threads and ideas, Prof. Myszor describes the three traditions of modern studies on Gnosticism (history of dogma, history of religion and phenomenology of religion). The text is further complemented by a comprehensive article "Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Mandaeism", which takes the form of a synthetic dictionary. "The Nag-Hammadi Coptic Library" presents a historical outline of the Nag-Hammadi discoveries, it also contains information on the studies related to the discovered codices, their history and their brief content. The next two articles point to the significance of the Nag-Hammadi texts for the studies of early Christianity and present the literary genres used by Gnostic authors.

The articles that follow bring a more detailed reflection on some aspects of Gnostic thought. Gnostic theology, systematically described by Prof. Myszor, is represented by the following treatises: Christology and soteriology ("Christology of the Gnostics. Fundamental Problems" and "Oikonomia in the Gnostic Tractatus Tripartitus of the Nag-Hammadi Codex I"), hamartiology – the teaching on sin and the principles of moral life ("Gnostic Motivation for Asceticism and the Fight Against Evil", "The Teaching on Sin in Gnostic Texts" and "Gnostics' Attitude to Prayer"), protology – Gnostic cosmogony, explaining the dualistic approach to reality, confronted with the biblical texts from Genesis relating to the origin of the world ("The Creator of the World and Satan in Gnostic Writings", "Phoenix' in the Gnostic Treatise 'On the Origin of the World'", "Biblical Prehistory in the Nag-Hammadi Texts"), ecclesiology ("Ecclesia' and 'The Church' According to the 2<sup>nd</sup>- and 3<sup>rd</sup>-Century Gnostics") and sacramentology, or more precisely, the teaching on the Eucharist ("The Eucharist in Docetism and Gnosticism").

The volume also contains an interesting article of Christological nature, "Jesus in the Gospel of Judas", providing a commentary to the Polish translation of the apocryphal gospel ("The Gospel of Judas", *Studia Antiquitatis Christianae*. Series Nova 3, Katowice 2006).

There is a reference to the history of the Gospel of John, where scholars pointed to its links with the Judaist tradition, Qumran literature or Gnosticism, as the gospel was widely quoted and followed by the disciples of Valentinus the Gnostic ("The Gospel of John and Nag-Hammadi Texts").

The volume has been compiled of articles that have been published before and, in principle, do not contain translations of Gnostic texts into Polish, but focus on providing a description and commentary. As an exception, Origen's "Commentary on the Gospel of John" quotes "The Fragments" of Heracleon, a Valentinian Gnostic, the first commentator or editor of the fourth canonical gospel. The relevant article is a result of cooperation between Prof. Myszor (introduction and commentary) and Stanisław Kalinkowski (translation from Greek). Translation of parts of "Adversus Haereses" Book V by Irenaeus of Lyon (AH V, 30,4-36,3) devoted to millenarianism has also been published in this volume.

Gnostic authors often employed symbols, metaphors and similes to present their beliefs. Therefore, the editors have decided to include an article devoted to the use of symbol in Gnostic texts. "Symbolism of the Pearl in Gnostic and Manichaean Writings" has been chosen as the pearl is one of the most frequent and thus the most typical symbols among Gnostic writers. The first part of the volume is concluded by the article "St Paul as a Teacher of the Gnostics?", examining the influence of Paul's letters on the Gnostic thought.

The second part of the volume, devoted to the theology of St Irenaeus of Lyon, begins with two articles dealing with the impact of gnosis and Gnosticism on the development of

Christian theology. Irenaeus' polemics against such aspects of Gnostic teaching as ontological dualism, the perception of gnosis as revelation, the origin of the material world as a result of a fall in the divine world, or putting into question the reality of Christ's suffering, is outlined in "Gnosticism as a Stimulating Factor in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Development of Theology". "Unity and Schism" presents Irenaeus' differentiation and classification of the destructive, heretical gnosis responsible for schisms in the Christian world versus the real gnosis that is of uniting nature. Polemical motifs are also found in the article "Irenaeus of Lyon on the Eucharist". Texts on the meaning of Christ's cross as the tree of life and an instrument of salvation ("Symbolism of the Cross According to St Irenaeus"), are of symbolical nature, bringing together the theology of creation and of salvation. "A Thousand Years of Christ's Reign on Earth. Millenarianism According to Irenaeus of Lyon" and "Irenaeus of Lyon on the Renewal and Salvation of the World" deal with the second coming of Christ perceived as a prelude to the end times and eternity. Ecclesiological reflection on the authority of the Roman Church seeks to answer the question whether that authority is based on power or comes from keeping and transmitting the teaching of the Apostles.

The articles have been supplemented with the latest bibliography related to the study of Gnosticism. It underlines the topicality of Prof. Myszor's work and an unfading interest in the Nag-Hammadi Gnosticism, leading to the publication of growing numbers of works.

An attempt was made to keep the original Greek and Coptic fonts in the text, occasionally transliteration was used (in the case of Greek fonts). Key words, the most frequent terms have been transcribed in Polish. The titles of the Nag-Hammadi texts and the acronyms, which take different forms in various publications, have been harmonized according to the standards applied in academic periodicals and *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*. In their Polish version, the titles and acronyms appeared in "The Nag-Hammadi Library, Codices II and III", *Studia Antiquitatis Christianae*. Series Nova 7, Katowice 2008. An exception was made for foreign literature, where the titles were quoted in their original versions.