

«LERNAEAN HYDRA» AND THE PROBLEM OF THE ORIGIN OF GNOSTICISM

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Despite important discoveries of new documents, mainly the Coptic Gnostic Library, the question of the origin of Gnosticism is still obscure, and the Patristic evidence is valuable in this respect. The *opinio communis* of Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Clement and other early Christian authors of the second and the beginning of the third centuries consists in a remarkable claim that the roots of Gnosis are found in an ancient doctrine of certain *gnosticoi*.

Possibly the name can be traced back to the “gnosis falsely so called” of the early Christian literature, which could, in this respect, be a valuable source for the Gnostic studies.¹ The problem is, however, that the information, which can be discerned from our earliest sources, is too fragmentary and cannot be interpreted without additional material. Besides, the texts which later formed the canon were constantly corrected in accordance with the current doctrinal changes. Therefore they can serve as a good source for the history of Gnosticism, not vice versa.² This makes it impossible to speak of a before-Christian, Christian and post-Christian (or Christianized) gnosis, since we cannot say what should be labeled as the Christian in the beginning of the second century, when the first distinctive Gnostic schools came to stage.

Our understanding of the Gnostic religion depends on those institutional settings in which we are prepared to place it. Accepting the statements of Irenaeus, Justin, Celsus, Hegysippus, Clement and others we can, with a degree of certainty, state that, at least from the first part of the second century, in Rome, Alexandria, Judea and other major centers of education and learning there existed certain informal societies, which propagated various types of teaching with pro-Christian and anti-Judaic stanza.

Moreover they possessed books and even the whole collections of writings, concerned to such metaphysical and ethical questions of primary significance as the origins of the world, the place human beings are supposed to occupy within the structure of the universe, etc. The answers given were shrouded in a complicated myth and presented either in a form of oracles or as collections of sayings, or both.³ Authority of the literature of this sort is based on its anonymity and, most often, on its alleged antiquity. On the contrary, the works by such authors as Basilides or Valentinus did not have and could not pretend to have a similar status. At most they were accepted as skillful commentaries of the revealed oracles, au-

¹ Cf. Rudolph 1995, 34–52, esp. 50–52. A general overview: Robinson 1983, 1–18. Cf. also detailed studies by Koester 1980 and 1990 (where, for the first time, the Gnostic texts are given due attention).

² For a detailed study of this problem consult Ehrman 1993.

³ For the structure and nature of a collection of this sort cf., for instance, Turner 1997.

thoritative in certain circles.⁴ But activity of this sort can only be successful in a well structured and organized social framework.

We don't know how these peoples called themselves, but their opponents quite reasonably labeled them 'gnostics' since their teachings were focused on *gnosis*, a secret knowledge, revealed to an elite, regardless the content of the revelation and the method the elite was chosen.⁵ Among the highest heavenly deities they always placed an intellectual entity, usually Nous or Ennoia; the perfect man, Adamas, was associated with perfect knowledge; Christ came to reveal knowledge⁶; the tree of knowledge also played a central role in the myth⁷, etc. It is quite possible, as Alastair Logan notes,⁸ that among them there was a group, especially adherent to a specific type of myth, finally materialized in the *Apocryphon of John*. This hypothesis would explain the fact that the heresiologists are unanimously talking about certain Gnostics, saying that the rest are derived from them (which is not necessary true). I shall illustrate this matter in more details in the second part of my paper.

Now. Can we, with any degree of certainty, say that Gnostic 'schools' or 'sects' physically existed as identified social institutes? Did certain schools (philosophic or religious) exist in this time, and, if we answer 'Yes', how they were organized, according to which principles functioned, and how the everyday life of these schools looked like?

This question has recently received much attention. John Whittaker suggested that Gnosis could hardly be found in an institutionalized form similar to a philosophic school.⁹ On the contrary Barbara Aland, despite obvious difference between gnosis and philosophy, insisted on analogy between the philosophic schools and the school of Valentinus.¹⁰ On the question of the 'School of Valentinus' we now have a valuable study by Christoph Marksches.¹¹ His diagnosis is the following: firstly, the very fact of existence of the school must remain hypothetic, because of the lack of *reliable* historical evidence; and, secondly, there is a reason to doubt that any Gnostic school ever existed due to a special non-institutional character of Gnosis. I also discussed the problem a few years ago.¹² My diagnosis is closer to this by Ch. Marksches. Indeed, if we closely look at the evidence we will realize almost immediately that all the informants are both suspect and dependent on each other. The story about two different schools, founded by Valentinus, told by Hippolytus and others is certainly an anachronistic attempt to present Gnosticism as an organ-

⁴ The fact is supported by the evidence. Cf., for instance, Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* IV 7, 6–8.

⁵ The latter was actually a matter of hot debate even among the Gnostics, as the *Testimony of Truth* (NH IX, 55, 29) testifies.

⁶ Cf. the *Gospel of Truth* (NH 1, 3, 18, 1–11), Iren., AH I 21, 4; 29, 1–3.

⁷ Cf. the *Apocalypse of Adam* (NH V 5, 64, 6–19).

⁸ Logan 1996, 10.

⁹ In the discussion of the paper by Stead in Layton 1980, 96.

¹⁰ Aland 1977, 34–73.

¹¹ Marksches 1997b, 401–438.

¹² Afonasin [Афонасин] 2003, 112–163.

ized movement. The minor differences in the doctrine would hardly become a basis for the division, although a relative isolation could lead to divergences in the original teaching of Valentinus.¹³ But these differences are not necessarily related to Western and Oriental 'schools'. For instance, Heracleon, the most important follower of Valentinus, whom Hippolytus connects with the Western school, is known exclusively from the polemical works by Clement and Origen, both of Alexandria.¹⁴ Still Hippolytus' wording (Ref. VI 35, 5) as well as a sarcastic expression by Tertullian (Adv. Val. 11, 2: *duae scholae, duae cathedrae*¹⁵) could mean that the followers of Valentinus and other Gnostics established certain institutions, possibly with the purpose of instruction for money (Mark the Magician in Irenaeus). This certainly resembles a school, rather than a 'sect'.¹⁶

In this situation any additional information or a cross-reference concerned the origins of Gnosticism and its possible institutional settings are valuable. In addition to a number of doxographic statements by Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Epiphanius and others, we possess an evidence by Clement of Alexandria, who, they say, also was a head of a 'school'. I doubt the historicity of the latter, but still, it is interesting that, in the contrast with the others, Clement speaks about Gnostic schools very rarely: once a 'school' of Carpocrates is mentioned and several times the followers of Valentinus and Basilides (or 'those around Valentinus', 'those around Basilides', etc.) are accused of misinterpreting the original teaching of their masters.

¹³ Cf. Kaestli, in Layton 1980, 391–403.

¹⁴ To be sure, the most prominent theories 'traveled' quickly in the Ancient world. For contacts between Rome and Alexandria cf., for instance, a story in Cicero, *Academica Priora*, 11 sq., where the reaction of Antiochus on a new book by Philo of Larissa is vividly described. Philo's attempted to prove the idea of essential unity of the Academic tradition, while Antiochus approach was diametrically opposed to this, which made the conflict inevitable (for details cf. Dillon 1996, 53 ff.). Let us imagine that Axionicus, the most jealous follower of Valentinus according to Tertullian (Adv. Val. 4, 3), received a book by Heracleon from Alexandria. His reaction would be quite similar (cf. Hipp. Ref. VI 35, 7).

¹⁵ The editor of the treatise, J.-C. Fredouille (1980/2, 258–259), notes in his commentary ad loc. that Tertullian speaks of the philosophic cathedras, a cathedra of Moses, but never of the cathedras, established by heretics. This could only mean, he believes, that the Valentini-ans organized something similar to the philosophic cathedras, established approximately in this time by the emperor's decree.

¹⁶ Markschie (1997b, 438) acutely notes: «Whether the Valentinian writings from Nag Hammadi are a popular philosophical variant of Valentianism or rather a documentation of its development away from its philosophical origins needs to be investigated in its own right. If all this is correct, one must say that the highly gifted teachers Valentinus and Ptolemaeus simply did not have the right students, that is – at least in the sense of professional philosophy – not sufficiently educated students. And no one, unfortunately, is entirely immune from this misery».

Well, since the roots of later “philosophical” Gnosis are expected to be found in an ancient doctrine of certain *gnosticoi*, it is appropriate to assemble the relevant passages ¹⁷:

- (1) ...Qui enim est primus ab ea quae dicitur gnostica haeresis antiquas in suum characterem doctrinas transferens Valentinus (ἀπὸ τῆς λεγομένης γνωστικῆς αἵρέσεως τὰς ἀρχὰς εἰς ἴδιον χαρακτῆρα διδασκαλείου μεθαρμόσας Οὐαλεντίνος)... – ...Valentinus transferred the older doctrines from what is called the Gnostic sect and adapted them for his own school... (Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. I 11,1; ap. Epiphanius, Panarion XXXI, 32, 2).
- (2) ...necessarium arbitrati sumus prius referre fontem et radicem eorum, uti sublimissimum ipsorum Bythum cognoscens, intellegas arborem de qua defluerunt tales fructus. – ...we have considered it necessary first of all to make known their source and root, so that when you know their most sublime Abyss you may know the tree from which such fruits have flowed forth (Iren. I 22, 2).
- (3) Super hos autem ex his qui praedicti sunt Simoniani multitudo Gnosticorum [Barbelo] exsurrexit, et velut a terra fungi manifestati sunt. – Beyond these peoples, a multitude of Gnostics [Barbelo] has arisen out of the Simonians already mentioned, just as mushrooms come up from the earth (Iren. I 29, 1).
- (4) Tales quidem secundum eos sententiae sunt, a quibus velut Lernaea hydra, multiplex capitibus fera [de] Valentini schola generata est – Such are doctrines of these peoples, from which, like the Lernean hydra, a beast with multiple heads, is generated the school of Valentinus (Iren. I 30, 15).¹⁸
- (5) A talibus matribus et partibus et proavis eos qui a Valentino sint, sicut ipsae sententiae et regulae ostendunt eos... – From such mothers and fathers and grandparents have come Valentinus and his disciples, and their own doctrines and systems show them to be... (Iren. I 31, 3, the last section of the first book).
- (6) Ad expugnandam conversus veritatem et cuiusdam veteris opinionis semen nactus *colubro suo* ¹⁹ viam delineavit. – Having taken up arms against the truth, he conceived the seed of an ancient doctrine and outlined in bold strokes a trajectory for this serpent (Tertullian, Adversus Valentinianos 4, 2).

Working upon a translation of the *Stromateis* by Clement of Alexandria into Russian I came across a passage which seemed to confirm and further our evidence for rela-

¹⁷ Text: Rousseau–Doutreleau 1979; ET by R. Grant, slightly adopted.

¹⁸ The text could be reconstructed thus: τὸ πολυκεφαλαῖον θηρίον τῆς τοῦ Οὐαλεντινοῦ σχολῆς. Cf. Logan 1996, 7, note. 39. A more ‘elaborated’ translation by Lundström and comments on the passage cf. Quispel 1996a, 2. If we preserve “de” of the manuscript, the meaning of the text will slightly change: “...from whom the many headed serpent, just like the Lernean hydra, was generated that arose from the school of Valentinus”. I will not enter in the details here. The article by Quispel and further remarks on this by Marksches 1997a, 180 f. sufficiently discuss the matter.

¹⁹ Kroymann (1906). MS: semini nactus colubroso; Fredouille (1980): semen nactus, Colorbaso. Correction proposed: ‘...et cuiusdam veteris opinionis semen nactus, *Colorbaso* viam delineavit’, is unnecessary. Cf. Quispel 1996a, 3, who rightly suggests the origin of the image: ‘...denique quid Cretae taurus Lernaeaque pestis / hydra venenatis posset vallata *colubris*?’ (Lucretius, De rerum natura V 26–27). I reproduce his translation of the phrase.

tion of Valentinus and the *gnosticoi*. Of course, the passage is well known, but, surprisingly enough, it was not treated in this context. The text reads as follows (Strom. III 29, 1–2 St):

(7) Ἐρρῦη δὲ αὐτοῖς τὸ δόγμα ἔκ τινος ἀποκρύφου, καὶ δὴ παραθήσομαι τὴν λέξιν τὴν τῆς τούτων ἀσελγείας μητέρα· καὶ εἴτε αὐτοὶ τῆς βίβλου συγγραφεῖς (ὄρα τὴν ἀπόνοιαν, εἰ καὶ θεοῦ διαψεύδονται δι' ἀκрасίαν), εἴτε ἄλλοις περιτυχόντες τὸ καλὸν τοῦτο ἐνόησαν δόγμα διεστραμμένως ἀκηκοότες· ἔχει δὲ οὕτως τὰ τῆς λέξεως· «ἐν ἦν τὰ πάντα· ἐπεὶ δὲ ἔδοξεν αὐτοῦ τῆ ἐνόητι μὴ εἶναι μόνη, ἐξῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἐπίπνοια, καὶ ἐκοινωνήσεν αὐτῇ καὶ ἐποίησεν τὸν ἀγαπητόν· ἐκ δὲ τούτου ἐξῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἐπίπνοια, ἣ κοινωνήσας ἐποίησεν δυνάμεις μῆτε ὄραθῆναι μῆτε ἀκουσθῆναι δυναμένας» ἕως «ἐπ' ὀνόματος ἰδίου ἐκάστην.»

The passage can be rendered in English thus ²⁰:

Their doctrine flows [or is derived] from an apocryphal [treatise], and I will quote verbatim an appropriate passage, the womb [that conceived] their impropriety. [I know not] whether the authors of the book themselves are responsible for all this (in this case behold their madness [senselessness] if in their licentiousness they falsely impugn God!), or whether they encountered some others and, having heard a well conceived doctrine, created a distortion of it, but the text runs as following: “[In the beginning] all things were One. Since for the Unity it is appropriate not to remain alone, it emanated a Breath. Having intercourse with this it produced the Beloved, who, in its turn, also emanated a Breath. Having copulated with this it produced Powers, invisible and inaudible” (and so on) down to “each by her own name”.

We have no idea who are these Gnostics, but it is important that in the next sentence they are compared with the followers of Valentinus (III 29, 3) ²¹:

...εἰ γὰρ καὶ οὗτοι καθάπερ οἱ ἀπὸ Οὐαλεντίνου πνευματικὰς ἐτίθεντο κοινωνίας, ἴσως τις αὐτῶν τὴν ὑπόληψιν ἐπεδέξατ' <ἄν>. – If they, like the *followers of Valentinus*, consider sexual intercourse as spiritual (union), their opinion can be accepted [or “understood” by means of this explanation, because in effect Clement does not accept this view]”.

Then Clement juxtaposes them with *the followers of Prodicus* (οἱ ἀπὸ Προδίκου) “who falsely claim the name of Gnostics for themselves, calling themselves the real sons of the primal God”, describes the ethical habits they adopt and mentions their usage of obscene language,²² which is reminiscent of Cainites of Irenaeus or Epiphanius (Adv. Haer. 31, 2; Pan. XXXVIII 2–5).²³ A bit earlier (25, 5) Clement also mentions the followers of Nicolas, and then refers to a doctrine, similar to this of a Gnostic Severus (34, 1), and a doctrine of certain Ἀντιτάκτας. We don't know if the Alexandrian intellectual relied here on an earlier “syntagma” (a summary of

²⁰ Ferguson's ET was consulted.

²¹ In his article “The Original Doctrine of Valentinus the Gnostic” Gilles Quispel (1996b, 334) emphasizes importance of this phrase and interpret it in some details.

²² ...τοιαῦτα καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ Προδίκου ψευδωνύμως γνωστικούς σφᾶς αὐτοὺς ἀναγορεύοντες δογματίζουσιν, υἱοὺς μὲν φύσει τοῦ πρώτου θεοῦ λέγοντες αὐτούς.

²³ G. Quispel refers to this place in his article in Layton 1980.

Gnostic doctrines) or was lucky to possess an independent source of information. At any rate, it is interesting that in the context of his discussion of Gnostic prayer in VII 41, 3, referring to the 'heresy of those around Prodicus', Clement charges them with the same false claim of gnosis for themselves again:

Ἐνταῦθα γενόμενος ὑπεμνήσθη τῶν περὶ τοῦ μὴ δεῖν εὐχεσθαι πρὸς τινῶν ἑτεροδόξων, τουτέστιν τῶν ἀμφὶ τὴν Προδικὸν αἵρεσιν, παρεισαγομένων δογμάτων. ἵνα οὖν μηδὲ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ αὐτῶν τῇ ἀθέῳ σοφία ὡς ξένη ὀγκύλλωνται αἰρέσει, μαθέτωσαν προειληφθαι μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν Κυρηναϊκῶν λεγομένων φιλοσόφων· ἀντιρρήσεως δ' ὅμως τεύξεται κατὰ καιρὸν ἢ τῶν ψευδωνύμων τούτων ἀνόσιος γνώσις...

What strikes us is that in the beginning of the third book (Strom. III 1, 1) Valentinus and his followers are credited with *absolutely* the same view about the nature of marriage as the Gnostics in 29, 3 (quoted above):

Οἱ μὲν οὖν ἀμφὶ τὸν Οὐαλεντίνον ἄνωθεν ἐκ τῶν θείων προβολῶν τὰς συζυγίας καταγαγόντες εὐαρεστοῦνται γάμῳ, οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ Βασιλείδου «πυθομένων» φασὶ «τῶν ἀποστόλων μὴ ποτε ἄμεινόν ἐστι τὸ μὴ γαμεῖν» ἀποκρίνασθαι λέγουσι τὸν κύριον· «οὐ πάντες χωροῦσι τὸν λόγον τοῦτον· εἰσὶ γὰρ εὐνοῦχοι, οἱ μὲν ἐκ γενετῆς, οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἀνάγκης». – While Valentinus and his followers derive couples from the divine emanations above and for this reason take a delight in marriage, the followers of Basilides..., etc.

It is true, however, that the expressions, which Clement uses in these two cases are different (οἱ ἀπὸ X, not οἱ ἀμφὶ X). But is this important? Does he mean to say something specific? To my mind – hardly; for absolutely in the same way the school (or heresy) of Prodicus in a similar context is variously referred to as τῶν ἀμφὶ τὴν Προδικὸν αἵρεσιν and οἱ ἀπὸ Προδικίου. So should we suppose that in the first case Clement is speaking about Prodicus and his close associates only, while in the second case about his followers, but not Prodicus himself? I do not think so. Probably the question, whether somebody belongs to the circle of his and other similar geometrical associations are inappropriate in the case of idiomatic expressions like the above, because they have already lost their original meaning and (collectively) designate a 'school' in quite a vague sense of the word.²⁴

To clarify the matter let us look at a number of other relevant cases: Strom. II, 36,1: οἱ ἀμφὶ τὸν Βασιλείδην; Strom. II 52, 1: οἱ δὲ ἀμφὶ τὸν Σίμωνα τῷ Ἐστώτι; Prot. 26, 4: οἱ ἀμφὶ τὴν σκηνηὴν ποιηταί; Strom. II 54, 5: οὐ μόνον οἱ ἀπὸ Πλάτωνος, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς; Strom. VI 59, 4: οἱ ἀπὸ φιλοσοφίας διὰ τῆς τοῦ κυρίου διδασκαλίας...

Two first cases are concerned with the schools of Basilides and Simon the Magician respectively and the expression is quite usual, although, generally speaking (as a simple calculation of occurrences shows), for some reasons Clement prefers the *apo*-construction to these with *amphi*-. The third case is about the 'school' of scenic poets.²⁵ The fourth and the fifth instances illustrate his use of the *apo*-construction.

²⁴ Glucker (1978) discusses the usage of these and similar expressions in details.

²⁵ Whatever it means; Clement speaks of Homer in this way, and calls Euripides the scenic philosopher, which is a usual title, to be sure.

In both of these cases he mentions philosophical schools. While references to Platonic and Stoic schools, taken in a doxographical context, are typical, the latter case is quite unusual: the adherents of philosophy (the “school of philosophy”) are contrasted with the teaching (not school!) of Christ, despite the fact that the term διδασκαλία quite often designates a ‘school’, even in the physical sense of this word. It is said here that, having deserted philosophy (i.e. a philosophical school) for Lord’s teaching (i.e. following him or metaphorically becoming his student) one will reach the real philosophy.

My final example concerns instances where Valentinus and Basilides are mentioned by name, not accompanied by any references to their followers. In Strom. III 102, 1 it is said: ...ναὶ μὴν καὶ Οὐαλεντίνω τὸ σῶμα τὸ ψυχικόν...; and, in Strom. V 2,5–3,4: ...ὡς Βασιλείδης οἶεται... ὡς Οὐαλεντίνος βούλεται, τινὸς καὶ φύσει πιστοῦ καὶ ἐκλεκτοῦ ὄντος, ὡς Βασιλείδης νομίζει...

Shall we attribute these statements directly to Basilides and Valentinus or rather collectively to them and their schools? The context suggests the latter.

These observations seem to confirm that speaking about a ‘school’ Clement usually means adherence to certain tradition or even a style of thought (for instance philosophical tradition as contrasted with the Christian). Therefore, speaking of a school of Valentinus he does not necessarily mean that Valentinus did not share this view (if he meant this he would most probably have stated this directly). On the other hand, speaking about ‘Valentinus’ or ‘Basilides’ he quite often means the Valentinian or Basilidian teachings in general. The only exception to this rule are of course the exact quotes from Valentinus, Basilides, Isidorus and other Gnostics. In these cases he acknowledges the source carefully and we have no reasons to doubt his information.

Now let us return to the original issue. In my initial quote (Strom. III 29) it is said that the later (philosophizing and Christian) Gnostics derive their doctrine from certain *gnostikoi*. And although Clement does not say explicitly that this is also true in case of the Valentinians, he *does refer* to Valentinus and his school immediately afterwards, presumably, considering this comparison relevant. If my assumption that Clement’s usage here is somewhat generalizing is correct²⁶, this evidence works in favor of the similar statements by Irenaeus and Tertullian. The way in which he puts it (‘...the womb that conceived’, etc.) is also suggestive.²⁷ But the textual evidences are never conclusive. After all, the whole polemics between the Gnostics and the Orthodox Christians arose from their attempts to reinterpret a number of scriptural “key-passages”. And we know how far this has ultimately lead them. Apparently, the considerations of historical probability and intellectual plausibility must be given a priority.

²⁶ Cf., for instance, his statement in Strom. I 37, 6.

²⁷ Well known and much discussed passages in question are Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. 30, 15 and Tertullian, Adv. Val. 4, 2 (quoted above). Cf. a detailed discussion of the problem in Quispel 1996a, with subsequent criticism by Marksches 1997a.

Which preliminary conclusions can be drawn on the basis of these observations? Despite many doubts risen by eminent scholars, our evidence seems to support the view that at least some Gnostic communities functioned as philosophic schools rather than religious sects. Carpocrates, Basilides, Valentinus and others despised Jewish religion and ritual and tried to rethink the basic Gnostic ideas in terms of popular Platonism and Pythagoreanism. They willingly vested the most theoretical Jewish and Christian books (the *Book of Wisdom* and the *Gospel of John*, first of all) in Platonic dresses. At the same time it is clear that Gnosis as a social phenomenon cannot be described in terms of numerous ‘sects’, constantly disputed with the Christians and each other, as the heresiologists wanted us to believe. Much rather, the differences between various teachers of Gnosis and their ‘schools’ should be appreciated as steps towards creation of a new type of world attitude. The tracts found in the Coptic Gnostic Library are good witnesses to this process. No wonder therefore that these texts stay in unsolvable contradiction with the classification found in the heresiologists. Shall we classify the *Paraphrase of Shem* as a ‘Sethian’ work and the *Gospel of Truth* as a ‘Valentinian’ treatise, because the former is probably mentioned by Hippolytus while the latter could be identified with an *euangelium veritatis*, which, according to Irenaeus, the Valentinians used? How shall we explain numerous features of these treatises, not found in the standard ‘Valentinian’ or ‘Sethian’ schemas? Shall we rule them out as hypothetical differences between Gnostic ‘schools’, explain away as ‘secondary Christianization’, ‘Sethization’, and ‘Valentinization’, or appeal to notorious syncretism of the Hellenistic mind?²⁸ Shouldn’t we better admit that our (and the heresiologists’) categories are not adequate for comprehending such a phenomenon as Gnosticism in all its instable complexity? Tertulian has rightly said that the Gnostics admit no uniformity and constantly change dress (Adv. Val. 4, 3). It is quite possible that our authors did not see any contradiction where we are ready to find one, judging on the basis of our categorical scheme.

[Bibliographical references cf. below at pp. 147–148]

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²⁸ This controversial matter is discussed, for instance, in Böhlig–Wisse 1975, 9–54 (“Die griechische Schule und die Bibliothek von Nag Hammadi”) and Böhlig 1989.

Но в целом – да, традиционный взгляд на гностицизм именно такой. И такое впечатление создаётся, конечно, когда вы читаете тексты. Просто, повторяю: гностики слишком разнообразны, чтобы всех под это определение подогнать.

Месяц С. В.: Тогда почему мы говорим «гностики»?

Каменских А. А.: Всё же этот принцип мироотрицания выступал своего рода маркером для гностиков. Вспомним хотя бы подзаголовок трактата Плотина «Против гностиков» (Эн. II.9) — «Против утверждающих, что мир зол и творец его зол».

Афонасин Е. В.: Просто он на таких напоролся. Впрочем, если обратиться к некоторым современным авторам (например, Sinnige 1999, вместе с рецензией Quispel 2000), то сам Плотин тоже окажется гностиком.

Каменских А. А.: Ну да, можно вспомнить и Ганса Йонаса, который утверждал, что неоплатонизм – это философски рафинированный гностицизм.

Мордвинов Д. А. (Омск): Если энциклопедию на слове «Гностицизм» открыть, прежде всего, Вы узнаете, что гностики – это некие абсолютные дуалисты.

Афонасин Е. В.: Если Вы мою статью в энциклопедии откроете, то увидите совсем другое!

Мордвинов Д. А.: Я всё ждал, когда же слово «дуализм», «дуальность» прозвучит. Наконец, прозвучало, но только в негативном контексте. На самом деле, именно дуализм мог бы служить критерием гностицизма.

Месяц С. В.: Средние платоники – тоже дуалисты.

Афонасин Е. В.: А один из важнейших гностических текстов, «Апокриф Иоанна», монистичен. В 1996 г. Диллон произносил речь в Оксфорде на семинаре Майкла Фреде о философском монизме, говоря именно о монизме большинства гностических систем (см. Frede–Athanasias 1999).

Примечание редактора: См. статью Дж. Диллона о монизме и дуализме в платонизме до Плотина в этом номере (с. 11–20).

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