

INTRODUCTION

The subject of the conference „Divine Men and Women in the History of Late Hellenism”, held in 2010 at the Jagiellonian University was not without significance for the Cracow byzantinists. About 30 years ago we started our first conference titled quite similarly: *Paganism in the late Roman Empire and in Byzantium*. Its originator was Prof. Maria Dzielska, who some years earlier initiated the foundation of our Byzantine Studies Department. Meantime we arranged regularly other scholarly symposia devoted to later periods of Byzantine history and to Byzantino — Slavic relations in the Middle Ages, but the Late Antiquity remained the main subject of our team’s research, no wonder that studies in history of the late antique religion and philosophy published by Prof. Dzielska and her collaborators’ are the pride of Cracow Byzantinists. Her biographies of Apollonius of Tyana and of Hypatia of Alexandria are read all over the world, the book about the Alexandrian divine woman being translated in about 10 languages. It is now one of the best known Polish scholarly publications in the world. The disciples of Prof. Dzielska follow in the footsteps of her master: Dr. Kamilla Twardowska with her book devoted to the empresses of the 2 half of the V century and Dr. Michał Stachura with his books concerning the attitude of late antique emperors towards the religious and other kind minorities as well as about the language of aggression in the legislation of the Later Empire. I pass over lesser achievements of Prof. Maria Dzielska’s school, but still another field of her scholarly activity deserves to be mentioned as a great contribution to the development of Polish culture: her professional and competent translation of the corpus of Pseudo Dionysius Areopagites writings, a work highly appreciated by Polish specialists. It is Prof. Dzielska’s constant concern to bring to the attention of Polish intellectual elite the relevance of the late antique studies for the contemporary world and to promote the cooperation of Polish specialists in the domain of research with foreign scholars.

We are very thankful to the Authors of this volume for their contribution to the Cracow conference and for their valuable papers they submitted to publication. They enrich and deepen our knowledge about the divine men (and women) phenomenon

in late Antiquity, discuss their characteristic features as well as atypical variants. It has been shown that different typologies of divine men and divine women can be proposed, notwithstanding the fact that they seem to share a common set of positive features. The majority of papers concern the area of Late Hellenism but the influence on the Western Europe — Latin Christianity as well as even the Muslim world are discussed. The relevance of the Warsaw University excavations in Alexandria for a reconstruction of Hypatia's death circumstances (415) shows the importance of interdisciplinary research in the contemporary classical studies. We hope the volume will contribute to the development of study in the Late-Antique religion and culture in the frame of international scholarly cooperation.

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