



The Biblical Studies program of ELTE

cordially invites you to the guest lecture of

David Jorgensen

Junior Fellow, CEU, Institute of Advanced Studies

Early Readers of the Gospel of Matthew: Ptolemy the “Gnostic” and his *Epistle to Flora*

1088 Budapest, Múzeum krt. 4/F 218

Friday, April 28, 2017, 10:00 – 11:30

One of the most interesting instances of early Christian exegesis of the Gospel of Matthew is found in a text written by an important “heretic” of the second century: the *Epistle to Flora* by Ptolemy the “Gnostic.” In this didactic letter, the Christian teacher Ptolemy combines some ideas taken from the Apostle Paul with extensive exegesis of various passages from the Gospel of Matthew, and argues for a sophisticated explanation of the origins of the Law (Torah) of Moses: not all of this Law is, in fact, divinely inspired, and the part that is “divine” derives from the lower, creator god – the “demiurge” (*demiurgos*) – rather than the higher, ungenerated Father of All. Although this didactic letter was apparently written to an actual student of Ptolemy’s named Flora, like many other such letters from antiquity it was nonetheless also distributed to a broader audience, and was perhaps even originally written with publication in mind.

This lecture will demonstrate how close study of this text illuminates numerous aspects of late antiquity as well as raises numerous questions in those areas, including: the early reception of apostolic texts such as the letters of Paul and the Gospel of Matthew; early attempts to reconcile Paul’s and Matthew’s conflicting attitudes towards the Jewish Law; early debates about orthodoxy and heresy (including “Gnostics,” “Valentinians,” and “Marcionites”); the so-called “Parting of the Ways” between Christianity and Judaism; the influence of Greco-Roman philosophy and rhetoric in the shaping of early Christianity; and gender and power relations in ancient Rome.

David Jorgensen, an historian of ancient Christianity and Judaism, is a Junior Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study at Central European University. His dissertation (2014, Princeton University) won the Society of Biblical Literature – De Gruyter Prize for Biblical Studies and Reception History, and was published in revised form as *Treasure Hidden in a Field: Early Christian Reception of the Gospel of Matthew* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).