PAPERS AND MONOGRAPHS OF THE FINNISH INSTITUTE AT ATHENS VOL. XXV

APOLOGISTS AND ATHENS
EARLY CHRISTIANITY MEETS ANCIENT GREEK THINKING

Edited by Gunnar af Hällström

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HELSINKI 2020

ISSN 1237-2684
ISBN 978-952-68500-5-4

Printed in Greece by K. Pletsas - Z. Kardari O.E., Athens.

Cover: The Areopagus seen from the south in 1898. © Deutsches Archäologisches Institut. D-DAI-ATH-Athen-Bauten-0194 (anonymous).

Layout: Vesa Vahtikari

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations of ancient authors and books follow the practice of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (fourth edition); journals are cited according to the abbreviations of *L'Année philologique*. Other abbreviations are given below.

Ancient texts

Ael. Arist. *Pan*.	Aelius Aristides, *Panathenaicus*
Agath. *Doct. Gr.*	Agathangelos, *Doctrine of St. Gregory*
Ambr. *Virg*.	Ambrose, *De virginibus*
Ap. Trad.	*Traditio Apostolica*
Arist. *Apol.*	Aristides, *Apology*
AS	Areopagus Speech
Asc. Is.	*Ascension of Isaiah*
Athenag. *De res*.	Athenagoras of Athens, *De resurrectione*
August. *C. Iul.*	Augustine, *Contra Iulianum*
August. *Cresc*.	Augustine, *Ad Cresconium*
BT	Babylonian Talmud
Clem. *Protr.*	Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*
Clem. *Str.*	Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*
Diogn.	*The Letter to Diognetus*
Dion. Hal. *De ant. or.*	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *De antiquis oratoribus*
Eus. *HE*	Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*
Gal. *De meth. med.*	Galen, *De methodo medendi*
Greg. Nyss. *Deit. fil.*	Gregory of Nyssa, *De deitate filii*
Iren. *Haer.*	Ireneaus, *Adversus haereses*
Jub.	*Book of Jubilees*
Just. *Dial*.	Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*
Just. *1 Apol.*	Justin Martyr, *First Apology*
Just. *2 Apol*.	Justin Martyr, *Second Apology*
Just. *Res*.	Justin Martyr, *De resurrectione*
Keryg. *Petr*.	*Kerygma Petrou*
Lucian, *Nigr*.	Lucian, *Nigrinus*
Meth. Olymp. *Res*.	Methodius of Olympus, *De resurrectione*
Or. *Comm. Joh.*	Origen, *Commentary of John*
Or. *Gen. h.*	Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*
Or. *Princ.*	Origen, *De principiis*
Or. *Hom. in Jer.*	Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah*
Ph. *Post.*	Philo, *De posteritate Caini*
Ph. *Gig.*	Philo, *De gigantibus*
Ph. *Conf. ling.*	Philo, *De confusione linguarum*
Synesius, *Ep.*	Synesius, *Epistulae*
Tert. *Adv. Iud*.	Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos*
Tert. *Adv. Prax*.	Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean*
Tert. *Marc*.	Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*

Tert. *Or*.	Tertullian, *De oratione*
Tert. *Pud*.	Tertullian, *De pudicitia*
T. Naph.	Testament of Naphtali
TJ	Talmud of Jerusalem
2 En.	*Second Book of Enoch*

Modern works

ACW	*Ancient Christian Writers*
ANF	A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, New York 1885
BCNH	*Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi*
BDAG	F.W. Danker, *English-Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3rd ed., Chicago 2001
BDR	F. Blass, A. Debrunner and F. Rehkopf, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, 14th ed., Göttingen 1975
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
CQR	*Church Quarterly Review*
ECCA	*Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity*
JbAC.EB	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum. Ergänzungsband*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
LSJ	H.G. Liddell, R. Scott and H.S. Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford
NEB	*New Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th ed., Chicago 1987
NETS	*A.* Pietersma and B.G. Wright (eds), *New English Translations of the Septuagint*, Oxford 2009
PG	J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Paris
PGL	G.W.H. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford
PL	J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Paris
PMFIA	*Papers and Monographs of the Finnish Institute at Athens*
PTS	*Patristische Texte und Studien*
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*
RE	*Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes*
ST	*Studia Theologica*
TLG	*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae. A Digital Library of Greek Literature* (http://www.tlg.uci.edu/)
ThH	*Théologie Historique*
TRE	*Theologische Realenzyklopädie*
TTZ	*Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift*
TU	*Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*
WUNT	*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*

Preface

In October, 2016, the Finnish Institute at Athens and Åbo Akademi University organized a joint international symposium in Athens, Greece. The title of the event was *The Greek Apologists of the Second Century with Particular Regard to their Connection to Athens*. Such an event, and such a topic, need some clarification.

All through the history of Christianity there have been persons defending their Christian conviction against its opponents. Such persons may be called apologists ('defenders'), but in scholarship, particularly in historical theology, the apologists signify a fairly specific category of advocates for Christianity. In the first half of the twentieth century a number of scholarly works appeared, in practice restricting the use of the term 'apologist' to those defenders of Christianity who wrote their treatises in the second century AD. Though a few of these wrote in Latin (Minucius Felix being the most famous example), it became customary in scholarly circles to speak of the 'Greek apologists'. Ever since the appearance of such works as E.J. Goodspeed, *Die ältesten Apologeten* (1914), A. Casamassa, *Gli apologisti greci* (1944), M. Pellegrino, *Gli apologetici greci* (1947), and J. Geffcken, *Zwei griechische Apologeten* (1907), 'apologists' are understood, first of all, to mean the Greek writers of the second century. The above-mentioned symposium in Athens followed this terminology, restricting itself chronologically to the second century and concentrating on Greek texts.

The Greek apologists acquaint those who read them with the theology, language, and spirituality of second-century Christianity. The era from the emperors Hadrian to Septimius Severus is not covered particularly well by Christian sources. The so-called apostolic fathers, together with the apologists, provide the main bulk of evidence; in addition, there is some information to be gleaned in non-Christian sources such as Pliny the Younger, Tacitus, Marcus Aurelius, Galen the physician, and Celsus the philosopher. These sources are rather late as targets for New Testament scholars, but still rather early for patristic researchers. Simplifying matters somewhat, it can be said that the apologists conveyed the apostolic tradition to the church fathers, and that the church fathers built their interpretation of Christianity on the apologists. There is every reason to devote more than one symposium to the achievement of the second-century apologists. Modern scholarship only rarely discusses the apologists *tous ensemble*. Each apologist is studied individually. The most recent literature on them is to be found in the separate articles in this volume. It should be noted, however, that the monumental works on Aristides and Justin Martyr in the series *Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten* appeared only after the symposium (in 2018 and 2019), and are therefore not commented on in this volume

Why Athens? The cradle of Christianity was Jerusalem, not Athens. In spite of this, a certain prominence was given to Athens during the symposium, underlined by the fact that the event was located in Athens and not elsewhere. The reason for this emphasis on Athens (also reflected in our choice of the cover image to this volume, depicting the Areopagus) is that the Athenian role as the cradle of apologetic theology has gone more or less unnoticed among scholars. Admittedly, biblical scholars have observed that the so-called Areopagus Speech (*Acts* 17:22–31) by apostle Paul in Athens was by far the most apologetic speech in the New Testament. As Sven-Olav Back remarks in his article in this volume, the communication was meant to serve as a template for future Christian speeches, not only to act as a report of a more or less historical sermon. It needs to be

pointed out that apologetic theology was not only born in Athens with Paul, but also that it continued to flourish there through the second century. The famous philosophical schools in the city may have played a part in this state of affairs. Alexandria and Rome were important centres of apologetic theology as well, but it remains a fact that no other place was so often mentioned in the early Christian sources as the home of apologists as Athens. Quadratus, Aristides, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, and Tatian were all mentioned as having some sort of connection to Athens. Origen, the author of the famous apology *Contra Celsum*, spent considerable time in Athens as well, but with him we move forward in time to the first half of the third century. The historicity of these claims is open to review with respect to individual apologists, but even so, a certain Athens-centredness remains. To put it in the terminology of Anders-Christian Jacobsen in his article, the apologists were at least 'cultural Athenians', even in those cases when they were not Athenians in the geographical sense.

Long before the Christian apologies, numerous other writings of a similar kind circulated in ancient Greece. In the courts of Athens, the defendants brought forward their arguments, appealing to the jury in order to show their innocence. The self-defence of Socrates was written down by Plato, and numerous other reports from that trial were composed as well. The Christian apologists, though active centuries later, could not avoid noticing the similarities between the case of Socrates and that of the early Christians. Public hatred was aroused against both because of the supposed threat they formed to society due to their 'atheism' and religious novelties. Socrates became the hero of many Christian apologists, both because of the parallel between the fates of Socrates and Jesus Christ, and because of the similarities in public attitude towards the ancient philosopher and second-century Christians. Thus, Christian apologists, some of them philosophers by education and self-understanding, could regard themselves as the heirs not only of apostle Paul, who debated with Stoics and Epicureans on the Athenian agora, but also of Socrates, fearlessly defending his conviction in front of the Athenian court.

This volume collects the papers given at the symposium, including one prepared but not delivered, i.e. that of Anders-Christian Jacobsen. A few of the papers read during the same symposium have appeared or will appear in print elsewhere. The arrangement of the articles in this volume mainly follows the chronological order of the apologists. It should be admitted, however, that the dates of composition for the apologies are not always securely known. There are also question-marks about the identity of the writers of some early apologetic texts. The opening paper by Karin Blomqvist discusses higher education in the Graeco-Roman world with a particular emphasis on Athens, presenting thereby the *paideia* that united all the apologists. The article by Sven-Olav Back provides a commentary on apostle Paul's speech in front of the Areopagus in the year AD 50 or 51 and the reception of the speech among the second-century apologists. It turns out that the earliest apologies show a considerable similarity with the Areopagus Speech, and that Justin Martyr was the first to actually use it. The date and author of the *Letter to Diognetus*, an apology analysed by Jerker Blomqvist, are not known with certainty in spite of the abundance of research on the topic. Scholars have suggested an early date of composition. The epistle reveals a rich use of Greek rhetoric strategy and practice, a fact which we could translate as meaning that Jerusalem and Athens were not as far apart from each other as Christian authors used to claim. The next three articles take the reader to the middle of the second century and to Justin Martyr (also called Justin *the* Martyr). About Justin's connections to Athens the sources remain silent. Nablus, Ephesus and Rome are

mentioned as cities that he visited or used to live in. The relation between Greek *paideia,* rhetoric in the first place and Christian apologetics is scrutinized in the article of Dimitrios Karadimas. The source of his study, Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, is the only apology primarily addressed to an explicitly Jewish audience in this volume. It is worth bearing in mind that early Christian apologetics learned a lot from Jewish apologetics, though the theme will not be discussed here.

Justin's method of persuasion, closely linked to the originally Aristotelian theory of *staseis*, sheds new light on the much-debated dialogue. In her article, Anni Maria Laato discusses a problem in the relation between Jews and gentiles on the one hand and Christians on the other. The cross of Christ was inconceivable to non-Christians, thus Justin Martyr undertook to explain and defend it by discussing the *tropaion* used on ships and the horn(s) of the unicorn. Next, the article by Nicu Dumitrașcu discusses the anthropology of Justin Martyr. In those days Christian anthropology was in the state of making. The resurrection of the body was a central tenet in Justin's thinking, while free will and responsibility were equally central to his teaching on the nature of the human soul. The next three articles take the reader to the latter half of the second century, to the 'Athenian philosopher' Athenagoras. Whether he was Athenian or not is the central question in Anders-Christian Jacobsen's article. Pablo Argárate studies Athenagoras from a doctrinal point of view. Christians charged with 'atheism' needed to elucidate their position as to the doctrine of God, and this is what Athenagoras did in his innovative Trinitarian analyses. Serafim Seppälä compares the doctrines on angels in Aristides and Athenagoras, offering thereby an insight into the doctrinal development within Christianity during a period of about fifty years. Did the angels take the place of the non-Christian gods after the discussion with Judaism was resolved? The existence of Providence was a universal belief, the article of Gunnar af Hällström argues. There were many similarities between the apologists and the Stoics in this matter, but crucial differences as well. With the concluding article by Aspasia Kaloudi, the threshold between the second and third centuries is reached. Celsus, whose conservative political and religious opinions are discussed first, wrote his attack on Christianity in AD 178, according to a commonly held scholarly dating. The response of Origen of Alexandria to his censure belongs to the first half of the third century. A comparison between the two debaters, who never met in person, reveals, in spite of a common Platonic background, the fundamental difference between them.

Finally, I would like to offer my gratitude to the anonymous peer reviewers, the language consultant, and the staff at the Finnish Institute at Athens – in particular Anna-Sofia Alitalo, Björn Forsén, Vesa Vahtikari and Antti Lampinen – who have dedicated their efforts to editing and formatting the manuscript.

Gunnar af Hällström
Åbo, 15 March 2020

Reading, Learning and Discussing. Being a Student at Athens in the Early Roman Empire

Karin Blomqvist

Since the symposium from which this volume stems was intended to discuss the second-century Christian apologists "with a particular regard to their connection to Athens", I will, firstly, try to sketch an image of this city in the period when the apologists were active and possibly may have known it. The description will focus on the intellectual life of the city and its position as a leading centre for higher education in the Roman Empire. Some of the apologists are reported to have been born or active in Athens, and the texts of others reveal that they are likely to have undergone rhetorical training of a sort that was offered by the schools of Athens.[1]

Secondly, I intend to discuss what may be styled as the relation of the ideal to the real. It is quite clear that Athens enjoyed a glorious reputation in the second century for its educational opportunities and its intellectual life. It is also clear that part of that reputation was not founded on the actual situation of Athens in the Roman Empire. Therefore, it is necessary to trace the origin of that reputation back to the classical period and to follow its continued existence throughout the centuries. Even in the second century AD, it contributed at a fundamental level to the attraction Athens exerted.

Athens: The educational centre

Once upon a time, in one of the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, there was a young man, intelligent and ambitious, who had all his life wished to become a student in the glorious city of Athens. Since he was so popular and beloved in his home town, many fathers were eager to marry off a daughter of theirs to him just to make him stay. But he was persistent and refused to let anything deter him from fulfilling his dreams. For he had heard so much about Athens, this centre of erudition and culture, that he could not imagine a life without it. Thus, he wrote to one of the most famous professors in Athens to introduce himself, and of course he received a warm invitation to the professor's school.

At last, it was time to embark on the journey. Alas, the sea voyage turned out to be a less than pleasant experience, for the stormy weather of the Mediterranean made the young man seasick and miserable all the time. When he was finally able to reach his destination, the harbour of Piraeus, he hoped that now his troubles would be over. But when he stepped ashore, weak and vulnerable, a gang of hooligans rushed up to him and kidnapped him in broad daylight! Ignoring his loud protests, they dragged him away and locked him up in a tiny cell, hardly any bigger than a *pithos*, and kept him prisoner there

[1] The apologists Athenagoras and Aristides are actually reported by ancient sources to have been Athenians. On second-century apologies with a rhetorical flavour, see Karadimas 2003 and the contributions of Karadimas and J. Blomqvist to this volume. On the (alleged?) bishop Quadratus of Athens, who may have been identical with the author of an apology now lost, see J. Blomqvist in this volume.

until he promised to become a student of a different professor than the one he had chosen himself.

This is what happened to Libanius of Antioch, the famous author and teacher of rhetoric in the fourth century (AD 314–393), when he tried his luck in Athens, at least if we are to believe the autobiographical portions of his own speeches. Those texts also provide further insights into certain aspects of Athenian student life that were not so glorious – fights, drinking parties – and some serious studying as well.[2]

Libanius' description of Athenian student life concerns the fourth century, but the situation was not much different in the second century, when the apologists may have visited the city. In the writings of a second-century Roman student, Aulus Gellius, there are hints of similar disorderly behaviour among his contemporaries. If Gellius paints a more favourable image of the Athenian professors and their students than Libanius, the reason is likely to be that he did not leave the city with the disappointment and resentment that Libanius did.[3]

The accounts given by Gellius, Libanius and other writers who visited Athens in these centuries illuminate its position as a leading intellectual centre of the Roman Empire. There were of course other illustrious centres of learning – Rome, Antioch and Alexandria, as well as later Constantinople – but, in the imagination of the inhabitants of the Empire, Athens seems to have held the rank of *the* dominant centre of the ancient world in this regard. This is evident particularly during the second and the fourth centuries AD. These are two relatively quiet periods in Roman history, characterized by economic prosperity and comparatively few internal conflicts, when the conditions for intellectual productivity were especially good. The prosperity of the Empire in general favoured also the quality and diversity of the higher education that was offered in Athens.[4]

By 'higher education', I do not just mean the concrete disciplines that come to mind in this context, i.e. the teaching of the philosophical and rhetorical schools in contrast to the basic school curriculum. Within higher education I include also the broader concept of *paideia*. The meaning of this Greek term, for which Cicero proposed *humanitas* as a Latin equivalent and the German-speaking theorists of the nineteenth century used *Bildung*, has been discussed repeatedly, but it is hard to find a satisfactory definition that covers all aspects of it.[5] In this context, I find it essential to emphasize in particular one of its

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[2] Autobiographical information provided by Libanius will mainly be found in his *Oratio* 1.

[3] Notes on Gellius' experiences in Athens are interspersed in his *Noctes Atticae*; see Holford-Strevens 2003, in particular 83–147.

[4] The following survey of the intellectual activities in Athens is largely based on the results of a major research project that was conducted at Lund University in 2001–2005. The project had the title 'Athens as the Cultural Metropolis of the Roman Empire' (*Athen som det romerska imperiets kulturmetropol*). The project sought to describe the role played by Athens in a process taking place in the first centuries AD, by which the Greek tradition of thought, culture and education was integrated into the cultural complex of the Roman Empire and with the theological superstructure of the then evolving Christianity. The project addressed not only the activities that actually took place in the philosophical and rhetorical schools of Athens, but also the notion of an ideal Athens, characterized by learning, clarity and intellectual acumen, that was coming into being at the same time all over the Empire and which has lived on up to the present day. That period and the events taking place in it were of primary importance for the development of a common European cultural tradition. The results have for the most part been published in a number of articles by the participants of the project, several of them written in Swedish. When relevant, they will be cited in the following. Cf. also the sections on Athens in Watts 2008.

[5] The most important work on *paideia* is still Jaeger 1934–1959. Some of the contributions in Andersen 1999 discuss in particular Christian appropriation of Greek *paideia*. On *paideia* in Athens, see K. Blomqvist 2016.

aspects: *paideia* denotes something that is supposed to lead to a true love of education for its own sake and to a deeper understanding of our human condition and of our human nature. It could, in popular terms, be described as 'getting the big picture' and an ability 'to read between the lines'. It is an ideal impossible to attain to perfection, but because of that also attractive to strive for. *Paideia* in that sense was offered to the Athenian students. The Greek word denotes both the process of forming a young person's character and individuality and the result of that process, manifesting itself in an adult's personality; an individual can undergo *paideia* but also, as a result, possess *paideia*.

Sometimes, especially in older representations, the higher educational institutions in Athens are all subsumed under the collective designation 'the University of Athens'.[6] This term is misleading, however. The institution now known as 'university' is a newcomer in comparison to its ancient counterparts; the oldest universities existing today stem from the Middle Ages and they had from their beginnings the organizational structure that is typical of our universities. Universities in the modern sense of the term are organizations for education and research in a number of specified disciplines, which also create a basis for the organizational units that exist within the university – faculties, departments, centres, etc. Such a diversified and specialized activity never existed in ancient Athens, even if not all schools, teachers and students were active in the same field. Somewhat simplified, there were two main directions of studies that a student could choose between, i.e. rhetoric and philosophy.

Furthermore, a university of today has a central administration with a principal and a board, and the individual disciplines are brought together in units, such as faculties, departments and centres, with their own deans, directors and governing bodies. Compared to this, the educational establishments of ancient Athens appear to have been a mass of independent, private enterprises. It is significant that while modern Greek terms for professor, student and the activity they are engaged in are handed down from ancient Greek (καθηγητής 'professor', μαθητής 'student', σπουδάζω 'to study'),[7] the words for the university itself and its organizational units are either calques (πανεπιστήμιο 'university', a loan translation of Latin *universitas*), ancient words with redefined meanings (τμήμα, τομέας 'faculty', 'department'), or reintroductions of terms that exist as Greek loan-words in other languages of western Europe (σχολή, κέντρο). There was no need for such terms for organizational units in the ancient language, because such units did not exist.

Consequently, in imperial Athens we can discover no such thing as a university; instead, we meet with a rich variety of institutions, different in size, orientation and prestige. At the upper end there were the major, well-established schools, often with more than one teacher who could guide and supervise students on different levels in their studies (and, at times, form a gang to kidnap a new arrival in Piraeus). Since the early second century, there had existed in Athens a formal chair for a professor of rhetoric, appointed and paid for by the emperor. With Marcus Aurelius, the leaders of the four old philosophical schools of Athens – Platonists, Peripatetics, Stoics, Epicureans – were also appointed and salaried by the emperor.[8] These were of course the most prestigious teachers.

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[6] Walden 1909 (esp. 97–108); Westaway 1922.

[7] Καθηγητής, for instance, which now means 'professor', is attested already in Plutarch as a designation of an important teacher (*Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur* 70e).

[8] Watts 2008, 33–34.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, there existed quite a few freelance teachers who constantly had to hustle about trying to recruit students and who depended on short-time student fees for their livelihood. In one of his stories about his salad days in Athens, the Roman Aulus Gellius paints a bleak picture of one of these unfortunate fellows, shabbily dressed and unkempt, lurking in a doorway and trying to recruit some of the young men passing by. Gellius himself, who was one of the privileged students of the enormously rich and famous Herodes Atticus, naturally just expresses his disdain for the poor man.[9]

In the university system of today, teachers are under constant pressure to incessantly change and modernize their methods of teaching, according to the latest trend in vogue. In contrast, the ancient methods of teaching had hardly changed since the first Athenian schools of rhetoric and philosophy were founded in early fourth century BC. With only a little exaggeration, we may speak of a continuity that had subsisted for eight hundred years – and possibly longer too, for the methods are not likely to have changed in any significant way during the centuries that followed, being taken over when higher education under Christian auspices was introduced.

The content of what was taught, on the other hand, was continuously renewed. An illustrative example of this is the Academy, the philosophical school that Plato himself had founded. The Academics themselves claimed throughout the centuries that they faithfully preserved Plato's doctrines, possibly achieving a new and better understanding of what Plato really meant. One can get the impression that their teaching was quite static, even stagnant, and that innovation and development was absent in the school. The actual history of the Academy, however, reveals that it underwent great changes. Even a superficial survey shows that, during the Hellenistic period, the Academy went through a period of radical scepticism, stereotypically characterized as a dogma that claimed that no certain knowledge was attainable. In the early imperial period, the scepticism was replaced by the so-called Middle Platonism, which, inter alia, was characterized by an interest in natural science, testified to by Gellius but up until then largely alien to the Platonic tradition. With Neo-Platonism, when it was eventually introduced into the Academy of Athens, interest was directed almost exclusively toward the transcendental sphere and Plotinus' three-level reality and its mystical quest for an ascent to the highest level.[10]

So, after having chosen your professor (or, as in the case of Libanius, been forced to choose), how did you become a student? At the basic level, studying principally meant that the students attended lectures. We may safely assume that, as a complement to the oral lectures, the teacher used certain simple technical utilities to illustrate his words, for example, white-washed boards for drawing graphs and figures, placards with maps and other illustrations or three-dimensional models. Such pedagogical tools had been in use since Aristotle,[11] and they presumably existed in second-century lecture rooms as well.[12]

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[9] Gell. *NA* 7.10.5.
[10] On the introduction of Neo-Platonism in the Athenian Academy cf. Watts 2008, 89–110.
[11] Arist. *Int*. 22a22–31; *Eth*. *Nic*. 1107a33; *Eth*. *Eud*. 1220b36–1221a12.
[12] The – probably fictitious – Platonist Nigrinus, who had taught in Athens and whom Lucian claims to have visited in Rome after his return there, had in his den a board (πινάκιον) on which geometric figures were drawn and an unsophisticated replica of the solar system in which the trajectories of the heavenly bodies were represented by reeds bent into circles (Lucian *Nigr*. 2).

When the students had advanced to a higher level of their education, they were gradually allowed certain privileges. One of the most important was access to the libraries to pursue independent study.[13] But the truly advanced training came later and was, for obvious reasons, open only to a small number of students, in a select group. Their training consisted in what for lack of a better term could be called seminars, in the form of a discussion on a specified question between the teacher and the group of students, or more likely one of them. Often there was a student who took notes, which is why there are documentations preserved to show what shape these discussions could take. Gellius gives us some glimpses from such discussions, a few writings by Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom are intended to depict the exchange of arguments between teacher and student. Above all, the teaching methods of Epictetus are known to us from Arrian's copious records of his teachings. Generally, the debates seem to have been quite agreeable conversations, even if the modern reader may notice that the discussions did not always move on the highest intellectual levels.

There are of course many anecdotes preserved. It may suffice here to mention that the students enthusiastically engaged in entertaining themselves during their free time with interesting (and perhaps less interesting) discussions, drinking-parties and unfortunately also fights, cheating and outright criminal acts that were punished by the Roman governor in Corinth.

If the educational practices of the Athenian schools occasioned conservatism, what were its effects? There is no self-evident answer to that question. On one hand, one can rightly say that the continuity of teaching, learning and researching entailed a certain conservatism. On the other hand, it meant a continuity that guaranteed the existence of a favourable working environment for both teachers and students, those qualities so essential for a creative atmosphere. And despite the very hierarchical structure of these institutions, we do have examples of kindness and caring from the part of the teachers.

What is even more remarkable, the academic activities appear to have been conducted in Athens under a high degree of intellectual freedom, although of course everyone was subject to the restrictions imposed by Roman absolutism. The established schools were not closed to adherents of new ideas or beliefs. It is simply not true that poverty and precarious conditions are a prerequisite for creative work.[14]

One reservation should be added, however. It is quite possible that meddlesome policymakers wanted to interfere and control research and teaching even more than they actually did, although they were too wise to overly restrict the academic autonomy. This independence should of course not be exaggerated for, as we know, the Roman Empire was in many ways an un-free society. A professor was by definition appointed by the emperor, and there is evidence to show that certain philosophically interested members of imperial families interfered with great enthusiasm in the internal affairs of the schools. One example was the Empress Pompeia Plotina, wife of Trajan and adoptive mother of Hadrian. Being a follower of the Epicurean school, she managed to exert her influence

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[13] The building complex traditionally known as Hadrian's Library actually included a (presumably) public library. Close to the Agora existed a public library donated by a certain Pantaenus in the time of Trajan. See Camp 1998, 187–193; Camp 2001, 202–203. Plutarch (*Coniugalia praecepta* 145b–d) recommends that women should be kept out of libraries.

[14] In her brilliant essay, Woolf (1929) points out that peaceful and financially stable conditions are the ontological prerequisites for any constructive work, academic as well as artistic.

to effect the appointment of a professor.[15] Another example of the power wielded by the emperors was provided by Justinian, who in 529 ordered the closing of the Academy in Athens.[16] The surprising fact is *not* that the people in power wanted to exert influence on the schools, which of course they did. We should rather be surprised that academic freedom was still relatively extensive.

Athens glorified

At this point, let us return to the experiences of Libanius in Athens. His reactions are essential for our understanding of the reputation that Athens enjoyed in the Roman Empire. Despite his angry remarks on the city and its schools, it is obvious that it was exactly the reputation Athens enjoyed that had induced Libanius to abandon his position in Antioch for the chance of a career there. He had been attracted by the glorious radiance of its intellectual life, just like so many other people in the first centuries AD.

The high esteem that Athens enjoyed in these centuries was of course due in a not infinitesimal degree to the existence of educational institutions of high class and on the opportunities for ambitious jobseekers provided by those institutions and by a city that attracted so many visitors. But the high esteem of Athens was a product not only of the institutions that existed in reality, but also of a non-material image of Athens as an ideal setting for higher intellectual activities. That image had been created, or perhaps rather 'invented',[17] by the Athenians themselves. It can at first be attested in texts of the fifth century BC, and in the classical period it was carefully nurtured by Athenian politicians and intellectuals. They were successful, for the image of Athens that they propagated was largely accepted also outside of Athens during the Hellenistic period. Even if some protesting voices were raised, it was again accepted by the Romans and promulgated in the Empire. In fact, still to this day, it lives on as a predominant image of ancient Athens.[18]

In what follows I will focus on the relationship between the reality and the perception of Athens, i.e. the underlying ideas that shaped the image of Athenian superiority in what we might call the intellectual sphere. We will search for an answer to the question why Athens continued to exert such an attraction, even long after she had lost her political and military position of power.

The earliest preserved expression for the superiority of Athens was formulated by Pindar:

> O sparkling, violet-crowned, celebrated in song,
> bulwark of Hellas, famous Athens, divine citadel.[19]

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[15] An inscription in the Epigraphical Museum of Athens (*EM* 10404) attests Plotina's involvement in the appointment of a new school-leader. See K. Blomqvist 1997, 88–89 (with n. 83).
[16] See af Hällström 1994; Watts 2008, 128–138.
[17] Cf. the title of Loraux 1981.
[18] *The Image of Athens throughout the Ages* was the theme of a symposium arranged by the Nordic Plato Society (*Platonselskabet*) in 2001. The contributions to the symposium (published in J. Blomqvist 2003) are in the Scandinavian languages with short summaries in English. My presentation here is largely based on that volume, plus the research of the Athens Project (cf. n. 2 above). Cf. also K. Blomqvist 2008.
[19] Pind. frg. 77: Ὦ ταὶ λιπαραὶ καὶ ἰοστέφανοι καὶ ἀοίδιμοι, / Ἑλλάδος ἔρεισμα, κλειναὶ Ἀθᾶναι, δαιμόνιον πτολίεθρον.

With these words, Pindar described Athens in a hymn composed c. 475 BC, when the city of Athens was close to its floruit in its military and political powers. The magnificent words of the dithyramb reflect the Athenians' high opinion of their own city, an opinion that, without any doubt, they took for granted that everyone else should agree with.

Thus, the notion of the superiority of Athens had been formed early: it is already solidly established in the fifth century BC. Probably it is even older, but it is in the 470s that we find the earliest explicit expression of it.[20] A few years after Pindar's dithyramb, Aeschylus' tragedy *The Persians* was performed. This drama describes the Greek victory over the invading Persians in the naval battle of Salamis in 480, in which Athens played a leading role. The author effectively creates an antithesis between the Athenians and *les autres*, i.e. the barbaric Persians. Athenians are depicted as endowed with the quintessence of all things Hellenic and far superior to their opponents, despite their numerical inferiority. They are brave, intelligent and resolute. They are pious without superstition and self-confident without arrogance. They are cherished by the gods and even by the elements of the universe: earth, air and water. Without possessing any excessive riches, they prevail by using their existing resources in the best possible way.

Above all, in contrast to their opponents, the Athenians are free, politically and intellectually. Despite – or rather because of – not being governed by any autocrat, they manage to defeat the numerically superior enemy fleet. They are also disciplined, moderate and wise in their planning. They are – to use a more poetic phraseology – a people of light and beauty who represent the order of cosmos.

All these features are made to appear, of course, in stark contrast to the oppressed, superstitious and disorderly barbarian hosts and their arrogant king. With overweening pride, the Persians put their trust in their wealth, in their huge army, in their innumerable ships and, above all, in the king's unlimited power. Xerxes could not possibly imagine that his enemies would not tremble before his very name, just like his subjects did.

This thoroughly flattering picture that the Athenians painted of themselves was in contrast not only to their perception of foreigners, but to their description of other Greeks as well. Athenian democracy, freedom of expression and freedom of thought, and not least the city's allegedly privileged relationship with the divine powers, made its inhabitants superior to all other Greeks.

This view was often repeated, with some variations, long after Aeschylus had produced his drama. The other tragedians followed his example. The same ideology was particularly manifest in publicly produced texts of another sort, viz. the official funerary orations for Athenians fallen in the wars. The most well-known of those is Pericles' funerary speech in 431 BC, of which Thucydides renders a free-hand version in his history of the Peloponnesian War.[21] The Athenians are depicted there not primarily as superior to the eastern barbarians, but especially to the Spartans. This is hardly surprising given that Athens, in the second half of the fifth century, was at the height of its power. The tragedies and other festivals were important channels for the marketing of the Athenian self-image.

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[20] In the Homeric poems Athens plays a very modest role; cf. Skafte Jensen 2003.

[21] Thuc. 2.35–46. Other examples of real or fictitious funerary speeches of the fifth and fourth centuries are preserved among the works of Gorgias, Lysias, Demosthenes, Plato and Hyperides. Two of Isocrates' speeches (*Panathenaicus*, *Panegyricus*) are also above all intended to praise the city. Cf. Loraux 1981; Andersen 2003; Akujärvi 2008.

The fundamental ideas were hammered in repeatedly. Newly written tragedies were performed every year at the lavish feasts of Dionysus, and the state funerals for Athenians who had died in war during the year also returned with almost frightening regularity.

But now we come to what is the most interesting part. Long after Athens had lost its political and military influence, its inhabitants still managed to maintain their self-perception and, what is more, managed to persuade their Greek neighbours and eventually the rest of the Roman Empire to embrace the same view. Of course, the picture underwent some changes. Thus, for example, the message of the city's military and political superiority became less relevant in the post-classical periods, and the cultural activities, including philosophy and drama festivals, were brought to the foreground. The Peloponnesian War had made an end of all Athenian ambitions in the last part of the fifth century BC. Further, with their defeat in the wars against the Philip of Macedonia and Alexander, the Athenians, with other Greeks, became the subjects of foreign powers, first the Hellenistic kingdoms and, eventually, the Roman Empire. Yet, mythical and historical military enterprises are still elevated in a grand style by Aelius Aristides in his *Panathenaicus* that he was engaged to deliver at the Panathenaic festival (c. AD 150).[22] However, Aristides is eager to point out one creation of the Athenian mind that was, in his time, manifest – audible, in fact – all over the Empire and sometimes even beyond its frontiers, viz. the standard variety of Greek that originated from the classical Attic dialect and had become the language of all speakers of Greek during the Hellenistic period.[23] "Thanks to you the whole world speaks the same language", says Aristides. "You can see chariot-drivers and shepherds and those who gain their living from the sea, all existing peoples of every city and every country holding on to your speech and striving to reach your soil, just as those who cannot swim."[24] There may be some exaggeration here – after all, Aristides had been hired to praise the city of Athens – but basically it is a true statement.

The image of Athens that had been gradually established included the following characteristics, some of which were inherited and others were new or at least modified:

(a) Freedom, ἐλευθερία: This concept, the importance of which cannot be stressed enough, included freedom in all fields – political, cultural and intellectual. In Athens you had the freedom to think – and to say – what you wanted, i.e. παρρησία. This freedom was founded on the prominent Athenian export product that comes next in this list.

(b) Democracy and equality: The personal qualities of the individual, subsumed under the term ἀρετή 'virtue', formed the basis for prestige and influence, not inherited wealth or ancestry. The people were regarded as a collective of autonomous and equal members. Poverty was not considered as an obstacle to civic merit. In fact, there were during the early Roman imperial period philosophers who went far enough to claim that

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[22] Oliver 1968.

[23] On the '(socio)linguistic landscape' in which the early Christian texts were written, see Blomqvist and Blomqvist 2017, 390–396.

[24] Ael. Arist. *Pan.* 325 (p. 294 Dindorf 1964; 180.27–33 Jebb 1722) καὶ δι᾽ὑμῶν ὁμόφωνος μὲν πᾶσα γέγονεν ἡ οἰκουμένη, ἴδοις δ᾽ἂν καὶ τοὺς ἡνιόχους καὶ τοὺς νομέας καὶ τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς θαλάττης ζῶντας καὶ πάντα ὅσα ἔθνη καὶ κατὰ πόλεις καὶ κατὰ χώρας τῆς παρ᾽ὑμῶν φωνῆς ἐχομένους καὶ πειρωμένους τῆς γῆς ἀνθάπτεσθαι, καθάπερ τοὺς νεῖν ἀδυνάτους. My translation is slightly different from Oliver's; cf. J. Blomqvist 2014, 1–2.

it was the poor (οἱ πένητες) of the Empire that had the greatest qualifications for a life in accordance with virtue.[25]

(c) Autochthony, αὐτοχθονία: The Athenians believed that they had sprung from Attic earth and that, unlike most other Greeks, they were in no way immigrants; that notion was established by the myths about the wanderings of the Greek tribes. Therefore, they claimed that they were also favoured by nature and by the elements themselves, which provided them, if not with an abundance, with a sufficient supply of resources. Consequently, they could maintain the concept of having a special role to play among the community of the Greeks. Their claims to be the leading Greek state were founded, among other things, on myths that declared that certain other states, such as those in Ionia, were colonies founded by the Athenians. As late as in the second century AD, there were references to those foundation myths in the decoration of the Olympieion, the huge temple of Zeus in Athens that the emperor Hadrian completed: Pausanias reports that a set of bronze statues in the precinct representing the Ionian cities were called simply "the colony cities" by the Athenians.[26]

(d) Intelligence: This manifested itself as intellectual clarity, stringency, wit and curiosity. The phrase τί καινόν; "what's new?" was often heard in the streets of Athens. This feature is emphasized by the account of Paul's visit to Athens in *Acts*.[27] Its author was obviously familiar with the image that the Athenians had acquired. It was thought characteristic of both Athenians and of foreigners who lived in the city that they spent all of their time talking about and listening to what was new for the day. Intelligence was closely linked with the next item on our list.

(e) Light, φῶς: Clarity characterized both the sky over the city and the minds of the people. Nowhere was the air as clear as in Attica, if we are to believe the tragedians, and nowhere was it so easy to breathe. Heaven's light was reflected in the residents' characters; they were a people of the κόσμος, a universe characterized by order, by clarity and beauty, and intellect (νοῦς). This was the essence of their *paideia* and self-understanding (signifying intelligence, common sense and self-control).

(f) Dialogue: The institutionalized conversation was the premise of dialectic and logic, and the dialogue more or less defined all higher education. It was by means of dialogues and discussions that higher education was conducted, and by these methods the students were led to clearer insights. The dialogue was both a result of and a prerequisite for intellectual freedom and frankness.

That these – imaginary or real – features of Athenian superiority were cherished with great enthusiasm by the Athenians themselves is not surprising. But the same was

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[25] E.g. Dio Chrysostom's seventh oration, on which see K. Blomqvist 1989, 81–85.
[26] Paus. 1.18.6. Cf. Akujärvi 1999, 12–23.
[27] *Acts* 17:16–34. Some other traits characterizing the current image of Athens are present in this passage. The word καινός 'new', implying curiosity, occurs twice, discussions are constantly going on (ἢ λέγειν ἢ ἀκούειν), the audience at the Areopagus court demonstrate their παρρησία, some by mocking (ἐχλεύαζον) Paul, some by expressing their interest.

true of visitors, both from other Greek states and from abroad, from the Hellenistic period onwards. Athenians were considered to be characterized by an openness and a curiosity that made them willing to seek knowledge for its own sake. Training for specific professions, which is the ideal today, was not always a priority of those who found their way to the Athenian schools, although the rhetorical schools often produced administrators and officials. The aim was rather *Bildung*, and this seems to have been particularly attractive to prospective students.

Without its glorious renown, Athens might have been reduced to a shadow of its past superiority in the troublesome last centuries BC, when Rome became the dominant power of the Eastern Mediterranean area. Compare the fate of Corinth: it was razed to the ground by the Romans in 146 BC and, when it was rebuilt a century later, it was no longer a Greek city state but a settlement for Caesar's veteran soldiers, a Roman *colonia* (although it soon regained some of its Greek character). In the wars the Romans fought, Athens repeatedly supported the wrong side, without being severely punished for its mistakes. It is true that the Athenian support for King Mithridates in the first Mithridatic war resulted in the looting of the city by Sulla's troops in 87 BC, but later on, when Athens sided with Pompey against Caesar, with Caesar's murderers Brutus and Cassius against his avengers Mark Antony and Octavian and, finally, with Antony against Octavian, the Athenians were pardoned each and every time. Caesar is just reported to have remarked sarcastically that it was their dead ancestors that saved the Athenians.[28] The glory of Athens was evidently recognized also by the Roman emperors.

In antiquity, Athens was never really overshadowed as a cultural metropolis by any of its competitors, such as Alexandria or Pergamon in the Hellenistic period, nor later by Antioch, Rome or Constantinople. Even in the fourth century AD its fame remained. One of the leading Christian intellectuals of the time, Gregory of Nazianzus, who had studied there in the 340s, could speak of the "really golden Athens",[29] and his phrase was repeated by several later writers.[30] The cities that rivalled Athens should be owed due respect, but it is illustrative of the city's dominant position that it was precisely Athens that was pointed out by Tertullian as the main opponent of Christian culture in his indignant rhetorical question: "What has Jerusalem in common with Athens?"[31]

But how do we know that this idea was more than an oratorical topos? The glory of Athens is enhanced by the grandiose speeches of the panegyrists, discreet in Herodotus and less discreet in Gorgias, Isocrates, Aelius Aristides and other invited or self-appointed guest speakers, but is there anything to show that the idea of a glorious Athens flourished beyond the rhetorical schools and public platforms? That question can be answered in the positive, for we have textual sources that are important in this context.

Firstly, there are comments in texts that are not primarily panegyrics of Athens. These texts do not always belong to those most frequently studied by the classical scholars, and their literary ambitions are not always of the highest sort. Examples of such texts are the travel report of Heraclides, Philostratus' biographies and Aulus Gellius'

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[28] Cass. Dio 42.14.2.
[29] Greg. Naz., *Oratio funebris in laudem Basilii* 14.1 Ἀθήνας τὰς χρυσᾶς ὄντως.
[30] Cf. Rubenson 2010.
[31] Tert. *De praescr. haeret.* 7.9 *Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?* As pointed out, for example, by Hallonsten (2003 and 2005), Tertullian and other Christian teachers of his time were not unconditional enemies to Greek thought and learning. Rather, the early church was Hellenized to a considerable degree.

Noctes Atticae.[32] There are also relevant passages in the letters exchanged between Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus, who were fellow students in Athens and later were elevated to the rank of bishops and, eventually, church fathers.

Secondly, and more significantly in this context, there are critical voices raised against Athens by authors who claimed that the idealized image needed to be modified. In this context, it suffices to mention Plutarch and Libanius. For various reasons, both attacked the image of Athens as the mother of all culture. Plutarch argues, in his attempts to reduce the city's greatness, that the founders of the Athenian philosophical schools were mostly immigrants from other Greek states.[33] But this merely emphasizes just what he wants to refute. Plutarch intended that his remark showed that the Athenians were not more remarkable than other Greeks. Actually, it indicates that Athens offered a unique setting for those who wanted to pursue philosophical studies under conditions favourable for such activities. For without freedom, comparative safety from political interference and an intellectual openness – at least among the Athenian elite – these schools could not have been established, much less have lasted for many centuries.

In his autobiographical speech, Libanius claims that he was terribly disappointed with the reality of Athens (for understandable reasons of course). But behind his remarks there looms an obvious bitterness because he was not allowed to enter the fast career path to which he considered himself entitled. His autobiography would presumably have taken a very different tack if he had received the professorship that he thought he had been promised. The reputation of Athens must have contained enough truth to justify his embittered reaction.

Conclusion

The first three centuries AD – approximately the era of the apologists – spanned the time during which Christianity established itself as one of the leading religions in the Graeco-Roman world. Early Christianity made its appearance in a society that, to a considerable degree, had become Hellenized in the preceding centuries, the Hellenistic era. The early Christians were operating in a largely Hellenized environment, and the early church quite naturally became Hellenized to some extent, too.

One important and conspicuous component of Hellenism was Greek *paideia*. It manifested itself, among other things, in a variety of educational institutions that had existed since long before in the originally Greek-speaking regions of the Roman Empire but which, after Alexander's conquests, had been introduced into those parts of Asia and Africa where the Greek and Macedonian settlers established themselves. The Greek type of education had exerted a tangible influence on Roman schooling as well, and its impact was traceable all over the Empire.

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[32] The otherwise unknown Heraclides (κριτικός or Κρητικός?) travelled in Greece c. 200 BC. Fragments of his report on Athens have been preserved; cf. Pfister 1951. Heraclides praises the festivals and schools of Athens, but points out deficiencies in housing, water supply and town planning. Cf., for example, Philostr. *V S* 2.570.9–574.15 on Alexander, a famous orator from Antioch, who eagerly took the opportunity to perform a speech before an Athenian audience.

[33] Plutarch repeatedly criticizes Athens for other reasons too; see Teodorsson 2003. Cf also Synesius' critical remarks (*Ep*. 54 and 136).

Higher education, i.e. philosophy and advanced rhetoric, was not on offer in every small community of the Empire; the higher-level educational institutions were concentrated in a number of centres, primarily the most important cities – Rome, Athens, Alexandria, Smyrna, Antioch and Caesarea. Among those centres Athens held a prominent position, not only because of the quality and quantity of educational opportunities that were offered there, but also because of the fame that the city had acquired at an earlier time, a fame that was carefully nurtured by its inhabitants throughout antiquity. That fame attracted great numbers both of prominent professors and of promising or hopeful students, thereby enhancing the fame of Athens ever more.

The process that was taking place eventually resulted in the victory of Christianity in matters of religion. But the Greek ideal of *paideia* lived on and remained an integrated element of civilization as it was understood in Christianized Europe and other parts of the world. The ancient city of Athens had played an important role in that process. The apologists, whether they made their acquaintance with Greek *paideia* in Athens or somewhere else, were also part of that very process.

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On the Areopagus Speech and its Reception in Second-Century Apologetics

Sven-Olav Back

Introduction

The Areopagus Speech (AS) in *Acts* 17 was used widely and in different ways by the church fathers.[1] Tertullian alluded to it when trying to discredit Marcion and his 'unknown god',[2] Irenaeus used it against the Gnostics,[3] Origen against Celsus,[4] and Augustine against both Pelagians and Donatists.[5] Gregory of Nyssa remarks against the Eunomians that these people seem very keen on anything 'new', but that they lack the humility to admit, as certain pagans did, that their god is 'unknown' to them; they imagine, indeed, that they have reached the full knowledge of God.[6]

These are but a few examples of the fathers' polemical use of the AS. More can be found in a fine article by M. Fiedrowicz, published some 18 years ago.[7] Fiedrowicz also shows that the fathers did not refer to the speech only for polemical purposes. They could also draw on it, for example, when commenting on the way a bishop should behave,[8] when reflecting on the relationship between the Christian faith and pagan philosophy,[9] or when reflecting on how to teach or preach the faith to pagans.[10] This has to be done carefully, in steps, beginning with the doctrine of the one God, then proceeding to opposing idolatry, and only then proceeding with talk about Christ, exactly as Paul did it in Athens; thus for example, did Ambrose of Milan proceed.[11] In passing, we may note that the fathers paid special attention to Paul's talk about the altar dedicated to the 'unknown god',[12] as well as his quotation of the line (or half a line) from Aratus: τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν.[13]

Fiedrowicz has investigated a vast body of material – from Irenaeus and Clement to the Cappadocians, John Chrysostom and Augustine. My task is more modest: to investigate the (possible) reception of the AS in some apologetic writings of the second century. I will begin with a short overview of the AS. Then I will go on to the *Kerygma*

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[1] Fiedrowicz 2002, 86: "Es scheint kaum eine Kontroverse im kirchlichen Altertum gegeben zu haben, in der die Kontrahenten nicht in irgendeiner Form auf die Areopag-Rede Bezug nahmen, um eigene Positionen zu begründen oder gegnerische Thesen zu widerlegen."
[2] Tert. *Marc*. 1.9.2.
[3] Iren. *Haer*. 3.12.9.
[4] Or. *Cels*. 4.5.
[5] August. *C. Iul*. 4.3.25; *Cresc*. 1.12-15–1.14.17.
[6] Greg. Nyss. *Deit. fil.* 557M.
[7] Fiedrowicz 2002.
[8] Fiedrowicz 2002, 90–91.
[9] Fiedrowicz 2002, 91–93.
[10] Fiedrowicz 2002, 93–102.
[11] *Expositio in Lucam* 6.104–105.
[12] *Acts* 17:23; Fiedrowicz 2002, 93–98.
[13] *Acts* 17:28; Fiedrowicz 2002, 98–99.

Petrou and the *Apology* of Aristides. Lastly, there are some comments on Justin Martyr's *Apologies*. I will end with Justin, and hence not deal with all the second-century apologists.

The Areopagus Speech

In the *Acts of the Apostles*, Luke has Paul deliver three great sermons: in Pisidian Antioch to a Jewish audience (*Acts* 13:16–41), in Miletus to a Christian one (*Acts* 20:18–35) and lastly in Athens to a pagan audience (*Acts* 17:22–31).[14] Commentators have often pointed out that Luke probably did not simply want to show how the apostle *did* preach or used to preach on certain occasions. Rather, this is Luke's view about how a Christian preacher *should* address Jews, Christian leaders and pagans of culture.[15] Hence, if the AS was received, reflected upon and used by later Christians, this was in line with Luke's aims when he penned it.

I will now in broad lines indicate the theme and the disposition of the speech, and then briefly comment on some points that may be either interesting or controversial, or both. But let us first recall the context as described by Luke.[16]

Paul has arrived in Athens from Thessalonica and Berea and is waiting for his companions Silas and Timothy. He is distressed to see the city full of idols. He conducts discussions (διελέγετο, 17:17) with Jews and God-fearers in the synagogue, as well as with people who happen to be in the marketplace (ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ […] πρὸς τοὺς παρατυγχάνοντας, 17:17). Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers question him, wondering what he is trying to say. Others remark that he seems to be advocating foreign gods (ξένων δαιμονίων δοκεῖ καταγγελεὺς εἶναι, 17:18). He is brought to the Areopagus and asked to explain himself. As many commentators have remarked, Luke seems to be describing Paul's Athenian activity in terms harking back to the activity of Socrates, as it was related by Plato and others: Socrates used to discuss (διαλέγεσθαι, Pl. *Ap*. 33B) with people in the marketplace (ἐν ἀγορᾷ, *Ap*. 17D), whomever he happened to run into (ὅτῳ ἂν ἀεὶ ἐντυγχάνω ὑμῶν, *Ap*. 29D), and was accused of introducing new divinities (δαιμόνια καινά, *Ap*. 24B, 26B) into Athens.[17]

What, then, is the theme of the AS? Martin Dibelius described the speech as "eine hellenistische Rede von der wahren Gotteserkenntnis."[18] The thesis that it is totally Stoic in character – for this is what is meant with "hellenistisch" – is controversial, but Dibelius is not wrong in defining the theme: it is about true knowledge of God, γνῶσις θεοῦ. We must add, however, that it is not only about γνῶσις θεοῦ as such, but also about the consequences of this right knowledge, i.e. about how to worship God in the right rather

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[14] Dupont 1984, 382; Marguerat 2015, 161.

[15] Dibelius 1939, 50: "Die Reden antworten auf die Frage: Wie soll man reden? und nicht auf die andere: Wie hat jener Mann damals geredet?"; Dupont 1984, 385–387, 403: "Luc présente le discours à l'Aréopage comme un example et un modèle à imiter" (p. 385).

[16] *Acts* 17:16–22a. For a history of research (until 1981), and a detailed exegesis of the Lukan text, see Gatti 1982.

[17] For a more detailed discussion, involving not only the prelude to the speech (17:16–22a), but also the speech itself, see Sandnes 1993. Jervell remains skeptical regarding the Socratic echoes of *Acts* 17: "Es geht […] um derart allgemeine Dinge, dass man nicht von Parallelen reden möchte" (Jervell 1998, 443 n. 210).

[18] Dibelius 1939, 36.

than in the wrong way.[19] If people are living in error, not knowing God (i.e. in ἄγνοια), their worship will be false; they must through conversion (μετάνοια) move from ἄγνοια to γνῶσις θεοῦ and thus to true εὐσέβεια. As Jacques Dupont puts it, "La question [sc. in the AS] n'est pas de savoir si Dieu existe e ce qu'il est, mais de savoir comment se comporter à son égard."[20]

What about the disposition and the line of thought? The speech has a beginning, a middle part and an end. The beginning and the end correspond to each other. At the beginning, there is an *Anknüpfung* consisting of the reference to the altar dedicated to an 'unknown god', and Paul states: ὃ οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε, τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν.[21] These words do not amount to a positive assessment of Greek religion. Paul does not say that the Athenians worship the true God already; he avoids this by using the neuter (ὅ and τοῦτο) instead of the masculine (ὅν and τοῦτον).[22] "Non seulement il ne dit pas que le vrai Dieu peut être l'objet implicite du culte païen, mais il prend soin d'éviter qu'on lui prête cette pensée."[23] The emphasis is on Paul now bringing an end to the Athenians' ignorance as far as the true God is concerned. For they do worship in ignorance – without knowing it.[24] At the end, there is an allusion to this ἄγνοια on the part of the Athenians and pagans in general. Paul indicates that their ignorance of God is not an innocent matter, but a blameworthy one.[25] God has overlooked it until the present, but now παραγγέλλει πάντας πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν. This is in view of the coming just judgment of the whole world, which will be carried out through 'a man' whom God appointed to this status, πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσιν ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν.[26]

In the middle part of the speech there is, on one hand, a proclamation of the true God, the Lord of heaven and earth.[27] On the other hand, there is criticism of popular Greek piety; this criticism is delivered in the form of three negations regarding God or 'the divine'.[28]

The first negation constitutes a denunciation of temples: God does not live in man-made temples, for having created the cosmos he is the Lord of heaven and earth.[29] The second negation is a denigration of sacrifices, and maybe other types of 'care' for the gods: God needs nothing, for it is he who gives life, breath and everything to everybody.[30] The third negation is a denunciation of images: one should not suppose that 'the divine' is similar to things invented by humans and formed by them out of gold, silver and stone.

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[19] Cf. Norden 1971, 3: "[W]er die wahre γνῶσις brachte [...] garantierte den Gläubigen auch die wahre Gottesverehrung, denn γνῶσις und εὐσέβεια waren in diesen Kreisen eins."
[20] Dupont 1984, 415.
[21] *Acts* 17:22b–23. By 'Paul' here and in what follows, I mean 'Paul as portrayed by Luke'.
[22] Schneider 1982, 238; Dupont 1984, 419. Many manuscripts, especially those of the Byzantine text-type, read ὅν and τοῦτον in *Acts* 17:23; this reading is however secondary. Cf. Fiedrowicz 2002, 93–98 for references to several church fathers' reasoning based on the secondary (Byzantine) reading.
[23] Dupont 1984, 418.
[24] Rowe 2010, 41; Jervell 1999, 445: "[D]iese Verehrung (ist) von Unwissenheit und falschen Vorstellungen bestimmt."
[25] Dupont 1984, 413, 416: "[I]l ne s'agit pas seulement d'une ignorance intellectuelle, mais d'une ignorance religieusement répréhensible, d'une 'méconnaisance' dont on doit se repentir" (p. 413).
[26] *Acts* 17:30–31.
[27] *Acts* 17:24–29.
[28] *Acts* 17:24, 25 and 29.
[29] *Acts* 17:24.
[30] *Acts* 17.25.

The reason for this third negation is that humans are γένος τοῦ θεοῦ – i.e. they are created in the image of God (see below) – and things that are 'below' humans cannot represent 'the divine'.[31]

In addition to these three critical negations, there is a passage about God's twofold intention with his creation of humankind. He created it out of one person, Adam, with two purposes in mind: first, it should populate the whole earth, and second, it should seek God.[32] This seeking of God (ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν) on the part of human beings may be successful. There is no guarantee, but there is a possibility that seekers will find God;[33] this is because he is not far from any of 'us'.[34]

Why can it be said that God is near 'us'? Because ἐν αὐτῷ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν.[35] In other words: because "we are indeed his offspring", τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν.[36] Because 'we' are his offspring, God can be said to be near 'us', and hence 'we' may find him when 'we' seek him.

I will briefly comment on three points that may be of interest.

(a) The speech contains thoughts of both Old Testament/Jewish/Christian and Greek – especially Stoic – provenance. Martin Dibelius emphasized the Stoic element and downplayed the Jewish/Christian one. Bertil Gärtner did the opposite. They were both one-sided.[37] Eduard Norden was closer to the truth when talking about "das jüdisch-christliche Grundmotiv" and "das stoische Begleitmotiv".[38] In reality, it is a matter of both-and,[39] not only in the sense that there are clear instances of both the one and the other – such as the Aratus quotation in 17:28 and the references to *Is*. 42:5 in 17:24–25 – but also in the sense that we can talk about a merging of elements. Dibelius' comment on the phrase about "seeking God" (ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν, 17:27) is a case in point. According to Dibelius, the Old Testament sees the seeking of God as "eine sache des Willens", whereas in the AS it is a typically Greek phenomenon: "eine Sache des Denkens".[40] However, in

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[31] *Acts* 17:29. Regarding the question of the appropriateness of images representing gods, cf. especially Dio Chrystostom's Olympian discourse (*Or*. 12 *Olympicus*), where Dio reflects on and defends the making of images. According to Dio, having images is preferable to not having them. People need them, and the gods do not mind. The kinship (ξυγγένεια) between God and mankind means, in fact, that anthropomorphic images of gods are appropriate in principle. Dio, speaking in sight of Phidias' statue of Zeus at Olympia, argues (*Or*. 12.77–79) that this statue does adequately represent the attributes of Zeus: his sovereignty, his kingship, his fatherhood and so on. For a careful discussion of Dio's *Olympicus* in the context of Greek philosophical debate of images, see Blomqvist 1999.

[32] For the syntax of *Acts* 17:26–27, see Gärtner 1955, 153; Schneider 1982, 240–241; Dupont 1984, 395; Marguerat 2015, 170. With these commentators, I take κατοικεῖν (17:26) and ζητεῖν (17:27) as two parallel infinitives, both expressing the divine intention in ἐποίησεν κτλ. ζητεῖν is not dependent on the participal clause ὁρίσας κτλ., which determines ἐποίησεν κτλ.

[33] The grammatical construction (εἰ + the optative) suggests an expectation: "ob etwa", "ob vielleicht" (*BDR*, 15th ed. § 375). Zerwick 1990, § 403: "an uncertain expectation associated with an effort to attain something."

[34] *Acts* 17:26–7.

[35] In this much discussed line, ἐν should probably be understood in an instrumental sense: we live etc. 'through him'. Thus, for example, Schneider 1982, 241; Marguerat 2015, 171.

[36] *Acts* 17:28.

[37] Dibelius 1939; Gärtner 1955; Jervell states, with an eye on the subsequent scholarly discussion: "Dibelius unterschätzte das alttestamentliche Material in der Rede, während Gärtner…das Stoische beiseiteschob" (Jervell 1998, 444 n. 214). I agree with this assessment.

[38] Norden 1971, 3–30.

[39] Marguerat 2015, 163–164; cf. the discussion in Dupont 1984, 399–403.

[40] Dibelius 1939, 9.

the speech it is probably, or at least presumably, the case of a both-and.[41] How the seeking should be carried out is not explained.[42]

b) When Stoic thoughts are appropriated and used in the speech, this is not a question of importing foreign features and allowing these features to remain the same as they were in their original context.[43] On the contrary, these elements are – when they need to be – changed, modified, remodelled, Christianized, to fit in their new context. The article 'Acculturation' in the *New Encyclopaedia Britannica* may explain this phenomenon. There are, according to the *NEB*, two major types of acculturation, viz. 'incorporation' and 'directed change'. In the latter case, it is a question of dominance: there is a dominant power that forces its subordinates to adapt to its ways. In the former case – the case of 'incorporation' – there is a process of 'selection', of 'free borrowing' and 'modification' of cultural elements:

> The unconquered Navajo Indians, in frequent and varied contact with Spanish colonists in the 18th century, *selected* elements of Spanish culture such as clothing and metalworking techniques that were *integrated into their own culture in their own way*.[44]

In the AS, we see an example of this 'incorporation' type of acculturation: Stoic thoughts are not just taken over as such, but are integrated in such a way that their contents are modified and adapted to their new context.[45] For example, the Aratus quotation does not carry a pantheistic line of thought into the speech, for it is evident that, according to Luke, mankind is God's 'offspring' in the sense that man was created in God's image.[46] This is made clear, among other things, by the genealogy in *Luke* 3, according to which Adam was "the son of God" (*Luke* 3:38), and by the reference to Adam in the speech itself (17:26).

(c) In the speech, Paul uses thoughts appropriated especially from the Stoics in order to attack Greek popular religion. This concerns all the three negations – regarding temples, regarding sacrifices and other types of 'care' for the gods and regarding images.[47] Schneider observes:

> Die dreifache Kritik am heidnischen Gottesdienst, die zugleich Kritik am Gottesbegriff der Heiden ist (VV 24–29), nimmt die griechische Philosophie zum Bundesgenossen der biblischen Kritik am Heidentum. Offenbar geht Lukas davon aus, dass die (stoische) Philosophie zur Zurückweisung des heidnischen Volksglaubens an die Götter dienlich ist.[48]

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[41] Dupont 1984, 420–421; cf. Marguerat 2015, 170–171 (both interpretations are possible). According to Gärtner, to 'seek' God is not a function of the intellect, but rather to "live for His glory, obey and serve and worship Him"; Gärtner 1955, 152–158 (quotation from p. 155).
[42] Marguerat 2015, 171.
[43] Thus the principal error of Dibelius throughout his study (Dibelius 1939) is that he does not discuss the possibility that the Stoic-sounding phrases may have been reinterpreted in the speech.
[44] *NEB* 1, 57; italics added.
[45] For a similar strategy among the apologists, see Fiedrowicz 2000, 243–245.
[46] Dupont 1984, 408, 414. Jervell 1998, 449: "Es wird von einer Gottverwandtschaft gesprochen, das Ganze ist also ursprünglich so gemeint, dass die Menschen in sich etwas Göttliches haben. Lukas aber denkt nur daran, dass wir Menschen von Gott als Abbild Gottes, Gen 1,26f.; Ps 8,6f., geschaffen sind."
[47] For references, see Marguerat 2015, 169 nn. 32 (temples) and 33 (lack of need). On images, see above, n. 26.
[48] Schneider 1982, 242.

The *Kerygma Petrou*

The *Kerygma Petrou* (Κήρυγμα Πέτρου) is often described as a bridge between early Christian missionary preaching (as witnessed by the New Testament) and the apologetic literature of the second century.[49] Perhaps written in Egypt early in the century – for the sake of argument, about AD 110 – and known only in fragments, viz. ten quotations by Clement of Alexandria, the writing contains material which is clearly related to thoughts expressed in texts such as *1 Thess*. 1:9–10, *Rom* 1:18–32 and *Acts* 17. When discussing the AS in his *Agnostos Theos*, Eduard Norden drew attention especially to the *Kerygma Petrou* to show parallels in terms of theme and *topoi* – without, however, assuming any direct literary relationship between the two texts.[50]

It is difficult to be specific about the literary *Gattung* of the *Kerygma Petrou*, and the same goes for the structure of the work. The fragments may, however, perhaps be arranged in the right order.[51] We read, first, that the risen Jesus commands his twelve disciples to preach the Gospel in the whole world, beginning with Israel;[52] he also instructs them about what to preach.[53] Then, we see the disciples consulting the prophetical writings and finding there clear words about Jesus.[54] Lastly, we hear Peter preaching – it is not clear to whom – and thus carrying out the orders of Christ.[55]

It is here, in Peter's addressing his audience, that we – presumably – have the heart and centre of the writing, viz. the contrast between the right way of worshipping God and wrong ways of doing so. The Christians possess the true knowledge of God and worship accordingly,[56] 'in a new way' (καινῶς), 'through Christ' (διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ), 'as a third race' (τρίτῳ γένει), whereas both the Greeks and the Jews are in error and worship accordingly.[57] Real εὐσέβεια (or the true way of σέβεσθαι) presupposes true γνῶσις θεοῦ, but ignorance of and mistaken beliefs about God (ἄγνοια) lead to wrong worship.

The overall theme of this speech – right worship based on true knowledge of God – is obviously similar to the theme of the AS. Let me briefly indicate three or four more points of contact between the two speeches. (a) The reference to the (one) Creator at the beginning of the speeches. Peter says, "Know then that there is one God who made the beginning of all things and has power over their end."[58] (b) The repeated use of the word πᾶς in connection with the description of God: ἀρχὴν πάντων ἐποίησεν…τὰ πάντα ὁρᾷ… τὰ πάντα χωρεῖ…τὰ πάντα ἐποίησεν.[59] (c) The description of God in negative terms is combined with positive statements about him: he is, according to Peter's speech,

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[49] E.g. Pellegrino 1947a, 6; Schneemelcher 1989, 37; Fiedrowicz 2000, 30. Text and commentary: von Dobschütz 1893; German translation together with an introduction: Schneemelcher 1989. Important studies: Paulsen 1977; Malherbe 2014.
[50] Norden 1971, 3–7.
[51] See Paulsen 1977, 4–8. The references to the *Kerygma Petrou* follow Paulsen's system. Hence, '*Keryg. Petr.* 3b' = the second part ('b') of the third fragment. See Schneemelcher 1989, 36 n. 36 for a synopsis of three different reference systems among scholars (von Dobschütz and Paulsen, among others). Schneemelcher, too, adopts Paulsen's system.
[52] *Keryg. Petr*. 3b, 3a.
[53] *Keryg. Petr*. 3b–c.
[54] *Keryg. Petr*. 4.
[55] *Keryg. Petr*. 2a–d.
[56] *Keryg. Petr*. 2a, d.
[57] *Keryg. Petr.* 2b–c.
[58] *Keryg. Petr*. 2a; cf. *Acts* 17:24.
[59] *Keryg. Petr.* 2a; cf. *Acts* 17:24, 25[*bis*], 26[*bis*], 30[*bis*].

> the invisible who sees all things; the incomprehensible who comprehends all things; the one who needs nothing, of whom all things stand in need and because of whom they exist [ἀνεπιδεὴς, οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐπιδέεται καὶ δι᾽ὅν ἐστιν; cf. *Acts* 17:25]; the incomprehensible; the perpetual; the imperishable; the uncreated, who made all things by the word of his power, that is, his Son.[60]

(d) This 'negative theology', which was picked up from contemporary Hellenistic philosophy, is used to discredit pagan worship: the objects of worship are visible, created and perishable, whereas God is invisible, uncreated and imperishable.[61] In a similar way, as we have seen, the Paul of the AS aligns himself with Hellenistic philosophy in his criticism of Greek worship.[62]

In spite of the similarities, scholars usually do not assume any direct use of the AS in the *Kerygma Petrou*, and I agree with this assessment.[63] It is probably rather the case that the *Kerygma Petrou* reflects a way of preaching that had developed in the church and that the AS had contributed to that development. At the time of the making of the *Kerygma Petrou*, there was a common 'pool' of themes and expressions that Christian preachers and writers could avail themselves of.[64]

The *Apology* of Aristides

The *Apology* of Aristides from Athens, perhaps originally written in the time of Hadrian (AD 117–138),[65] is similar to the AS and to the *Kerygma Petrou* as far as its topic is concerned: the overarching theme is knowledge of God. "Aristide è veramente un predicatore missionario che vuol portare ai pagani la retta γνῶσις θεοῦ."[66] This right knowledge, in turn, is the basis for a morally sound life and the prerequisite for worship

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[60] *Keryg. Petr.* 2a; cf. the combination of positive and negative statements in *Acts* 17:24–25, 29.
[61] *Keryg. Petr.* 2a–b. Palmer 1983, 238.
[62] Since differences between the two speeches – 'Paul's' and 'Peter's' – are of no importance with regard to the question of a possible use of the former by the latter, we may ignore them in principle here. However, it might be interesting to look briefly at the passage of the *Kerygma Petrou* where Peter seeks to dissuade his audience from worshipping God "as the Greeks" do. Having introduced the one true God, Peter goes on: τοῦτον τὸν θεὸν σέβεσθε, μὴ κατὰ τοὺς Ἕλληνας, ὅτι ἀγνοίᾳ φερόμενοι καὶ μὴ ἐπιστάμενοι τὸν θεόν, ὧν ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν εἰς χρῆσιν, μορφώσαντες ξύλα καὶ λίθους [...] ἀναστάντες σέβονται κτλ. (*Keryg. Petr.* 2b). Does this passage suggest that the Greeks do worship the true God already, but do so in the wrong way? Clement of Alexandria thinks so: according to him, the *Kerygma Petrou* makes the point that the Greeks, or at least the "excellent" (οἱ δοκιμώτατοι) among them "worshipped the same God as we". Clement underlines that Peter did not say, "Do not then worship the God whom the Greeks worship", but instead, "not as the Greeks". This means, Clement argues, that Peter was not talking of another God but just about another way of worshiping this same God (*Str*. VI.5.39:1–5). As Pellegrino points out, this interpretation by Clement seems far too benevolent ("troppo benevola") with regard to the Greeks (Pellegrino 1947a, 21–23). Cf. the remarks on *Acts* 17:23 above.
[63] E.g. von Dobschütz 1893, 70; Paulsen 1977, 10 n. 55, 27–28, 35–36.
[64] In the *Kerygma Petrou* there is "eine Verbindung von Vorstellungen, die auch im *NT* begegnen (z.B. 1Thess 1,9f.; Röm 1,18ff; Apg 17), mit Elementen, die aus der jüdischen Apologetik stammen" (Schneemelcher 1989, 37). Cf. Alexandre 1998.
[65] Thus (with reference to Eusebius, *HE* 4.3.3) Alpigiano 1988, 129–130; Grant 1988, 38–39; Fiedrowicz 2000, 38. These scholars all propose that the *Apology* may later have been presented to Antoninus Pius in a second edition.
[66] Pellegrino 1947b, 12.

of the true God. A false view of God, on the other hand, will lead to immorality and misguided worship. These are the sure beliefs of Aristides.

The disposition of the *Apology* is clear: Aristides starts with a description of the true God, whose existence and attributes can be grasped by way of contemplating the cosmos and its design: God is, among other things, 'without beginning' (ἄναρχος), 'eternal' (ἀΐδιος), 'immortal' (ἀθάνατος) and 'without need' (ἀπροσδεής).[67] "He has no need of sacrifices or libations, but all need him."[68] We observe here similar negative epithets as in the *Kerygma Petrou*, which Aristides may well have been using.[69] Having laid this foundation,[70] Aristides goes on, with great confidence, to examine who among humans possess true knowledge of God and who are in error: ἴδωμεν οὖν τίνες τούτων μετέχουσι τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τίνες τῆς πλάνης.[71] Humankind may be divided into four groups: Barbarians, Greeks, Jews and Christians.[72] Barbarians and Greeks are totally going astray in their religion.[73] Jews are closer to the truth but still in error.[74] The Christians, however, have found the truth and are to be praised for their morality and for their doctrine,[75] which is "the door of light".[76] People living in error should stop slandering the Christians, start speaking the truth and turn to worshiping the true God.[77] All those who do not know God should accept the eternal incorruptible words (i.e. the doctrine of the Christians) and thus avoid the terrible judgment of all humankind which will take place through Jesus, the Messiah.[78]

From the preceding comments, several similarities between the *Apology* of Aristides and the AS can easily be observed: (a) the overall theme of the *Apology* (true vs. false knowledge of God, and the respective consequences) is close to that of Paul's speech; (b) the reference to the coming judgment of all humankind through Jesus;[79] (c) the use of contemporary philosophy – including 'negative theology' – to discredit 'false' religion,[80] especially (d) the idea of the true God as not being in 'need' of anything, such as sacrifices (ἀπροσδεής, *Apol.* 1.4; οὐ χρῄζει θυσίας καὶ σπονδῆς, *Apol.* 1.5; cf. *Acts* 17:25).[81] Here we may add: (e) a criticism of temples and images. The barbarians, "not

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[67] *Apol.* 1.4.
[68] *Apol.* 1.5.
[69] Seeberg 1893, 216–220; Paulsen 1977, 13; Schneemelcher 1989, 35.
[70] For a closer analysis of *Apol.* 1, see Lazzati 1938. According to Lazzati, Aristides is an exponent of a 'philosophical syncretism': he appropriates thoughts not only from Stoicism, but also from Platonism and Aristotelianism (Lazzati 1938, 41–49). He does this in service of his basic Christian convictions: "[I]l nostro apologista non ha…tentato un accomodamento della filosofia christiana alla pagana, ma esponendo verità naturali che gli erano però fornite dalla rivelazione, si è solo servito dei termini già usati nella filosofia pagana così che non è lecito definire stoico o stoico platonico questo primo capitolo" (Lazzati 1938, 50).
[71] *Apol*. 3.1.
[72] *Apol*. 2. The Greek version mentions only three groups: οἱ τῶν παρ᾽ὑμῖν λεγομένων θεῶν προσκυνηταί, Ἰουδαῖοι and Χριστιανοί (2.2). I will not here enter into a discussion of the different textual traditions (Greek, Syriac and Armenian). I have used Alpigiano's edition.
[73] *Apol*. 3–13.
[74] *Apol*. 14.
[75] *Apol*. 15–17.
[76] *Apol*. 17.6.
[77] *Apol*. 17.6.
[78] *Apol*. 17.7.
[79] *Apol*. 17.7; cf. *Acts* 17:31.
[80] Esp. *Apol*. 1; on Paul, see *Acts* 17:31.
[81] In addition to the definition of God as ἀπροσδεής in *Apol.* 1, note also the criticism and insinuations against the Greek gods for being "in need" (ἐπενδεής, *Apol.* 10.2, 5; 11.1).

knowing God, went astray after the elements and began to worship created things rather than their Creator" (μὴ εἰδότες θεὸν ἐπλανήθησαν ὀπίσω τῶν στοιχείων καὶ ἤρξαντο σέβεσθαι τὴν κτίσιν παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα αὐτούς, *Apol.* 3.2). They have also made images which they call gods, they have locked them up in temples, venerate them and guard them, fearing that they might be stolen by robbers.[82]

It seems plausible to say that the *Apology* of Aristides (3.2) makes use of *Romans* 1:25: ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα.[83] Aristides may also have used the *Kerygma Petrou*, as pointed out above. But as far as the similarities between the *Apology* and the AS are concerned, there is no convincing reason to explain them in terms of a direct use by the former of the latter. What we see is, as in the case of the *Kerygma Petrou*, a use by Aristides of common Christian material, including certain terms and themes.

Justin Martyr's *Apologies*

Let us now turn to the *Apologies* of Justin Martyr, viz. The *First Apology* and the *Second Apology*. Justin wrote these works in Rome, presumably sometime between AD 150 and 155.[84] Here we easily find several points of contact with the AS, i.e. in terms of *topoi* and expressions.

In most cases, the similarities can be explained in the same way as in the cases of the *Kerygma Petrou* and the *Apology* of Aristides: Justin picks up thoughts and phrases that were widely used in contemporary Christian preaching and teaching. So – to name a few examples – the Christians "worship the Creator of this world", knowing that "he does not need blood (ἀνενδεὶς αἱμάτων), and libations, and incense";[85] Christians also know that "God provides all things" and "has no need of material services from human beings";[86] it is an insult to the true God to give the appellation 'god' to "things that are corruptible and need to be looked after" (φθαρτὰ καὶ δεόμενα θεραπείας πράγματα, *1 Apol.* 9.3); and the false gods, but not the true God, are formed by human beings and "set up in temples".[87] There is no need to assume that Justin came to think of these matters precisely when reading the AS. It has even been argued that it is uncertain if Justin was acquainted with the *Acts*.[88]

Nevertheless, there seems to be good reason to believe that Justin was in fact familiar with *Acts* 17. I have in mind the passage in *2 Apol.* 10, where Justin portrays Socrates's vigorous struggle against the demons, to the benefit of his compatriots. Within this portrayal, there is an unmistakeable allusion to the AS: "[Socrates] urged them to knowledge, through rational enquiry, of the God who was unknown to them."[89] Here, it seems, we observe the first use of the AS in early Christian literature.[90]

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[82] *Apol.* 3.2; cf. *Acts* 17:24, 29.
[83] Alpigiano 1988, 143.
[84] Skarsaune 1988, 472.
[85] *1 Apol.* 13.1.
[86] *1 Apol.* 10.1.
[87] *1 Apol.* 9.1.
[88] For a discussion, see Gregory 2003, 317–321. Gregory argues that Justin *may* have known *Acts*, but that there is no certain evidence for this. He sees no clear allusion to *Acts* 1:8–10 in *1 Apol.* 50.12 (cf. Luke 24.49) and does not discuss *2 Apol.* 10.6; cf. below.

Justin has a high regard for Socrates. He portrays him as an example, indeed as a champion for the Christian cause ahead of time. This manner of using the figure of Socrates as an *exemplum* was common in the times of both Luke and Justin, both among Graeco-Roman and Christian writers.[91] According to Seneca, for example, Socrates was the ideal Stoic sage. Similarly, Epictetus and Dio Chrysostom depicted Socrates as 'their man'.[92] Justin's Socrates is of course Christianized: on one hand, his δαιμόνιον is never mentioned, nor his instruction regarding a sacrifice to Asclepius;[93] on the other hand, he is an enemy of the demons (viz. the Greek gods); he is accused of atheism and finally put to death on the instigation of the demons. In other words: Socrates fought the same battle as the Christians do, was accused of the same crime as the Christians and was punished in the same way as Christians in Justin's day. Socrates, as depicted by Justin, was also an instrument of the Logos, who unmasked the demons through Socrates and his "true reason".[94]

The two main passages in the *Apologies* depicting Socrates are found in *1 Apol.* 5 and *2 Apol.* 10. The first one reads:

> Since, in ancient times, wicked demons, in apparitions, committed adultery with women and seduced boys and made people see horrifying things, so those who did not rationally evaluate what the demons were doing were stunned with terror. Carried away with fear, they named them gods, not knowing they were wicked demons. And they called each of them by a name which each of the demons had given it. When Socrates attempted with true reason and judicious inquiry to bring these things into the open and to draw people away from the demons, the demons, using people who delight in evil, worked it that he too was killed, on the pretext that he rejected the gods and was irreligious (ὡς ἄθεον καὶ ἀσεβῆ) – alleging that he introduced strange new divinities (λέγοντες καινὰ εἰσφέρειν αὐτὸν δαιμόνια). And likewise they are working to bring about the same thing for us. For these things were brought to light not only among the Greeks by reason, through the words of Socrates, but also among the barbarians by the Logos himself, who acquired physical form and became a human being and was called Jesus Christ.[95]

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[89] *2 Apol.* 10.6.

[90] For scholars arguing (or assuming) that Justin alludes to *Acts* 17 here, see Benz 1950/51, 206–207; Holte 1958, 130; Hyldahl 1966, 278; Fédou 1998, 61; Skarsaune 2001, 148–149. See also Döring 1979, 152. According to Chadwick, Justin's Logos doctrine (as it is articulated in the *Apologies*) indicates that he had "deeply considered" *Romans* 1–2 and *Acts* 17 and his doctrine may be taken as "a commentary" on those New Testament texts (Chadwick 1965, 295).

[91] Döring 1979.

[92] Döring 1979, 18–42 (Seneca on Socrates), 43–79 (Epictetus on Socrates), 80–113 (Dio Chrysostom on Socrates).

[93] Pl. *Phd*. 118A. These points appear in later, more critical assessments of Socrates on the part of Christian writers. For these later views, see for example Fédou 1998, 63–65.

[94] *1 Apol.* 5.3.

[95] *1 Apol.* 5.2–4. I quote the most recent English translation, Minns and Parvis 2009, 91. In this passage as well as in the one I quote below, there are a few minor differences between the editions of Minns and Parvis (2009) and Marcovich (1994). While I prefer the text of Marcovich here and in the following passage, the differences are of no real significance in the context of the present discussion and hence may be ignored. For a discussion of the merits of various editions of the *Apologies* of Justin Martyr, see Back 2014, 26–30. I disagree with Minns and Parvis regarding the interpretation of *1 Apol.* 5.4: οὐ γὰρ μόνον ἐν Ἕλλησι διὰ Σωκράτου ὑπὸ λόγου ἠλέγχθη ταῦτα, where I think there is a reference to Logos working through Socrates: "these things were brought to light not only among the Greeks by Logos through Socrates." For this interpretation, see for example Trakatellis 1976, 112–113.

In the second passage (*2 Apol.* 10) we observe several of the same points being made about Socrates.[96] But in addition to his 'negative' or destructive function as an enemy and unmasker of the demons, there is also a 'positive' element in the portrait,[97] in that Socrates is said to have urged his compatriots to seek the "unknown god". By way of the allusion to Paul's words in *Acts* 17:23, 27, Socrates is now not only Christianized, but also 'Paulinized' and viewed as "der frühergeborene Bruder des Apostels":[98]

> And those born before Christ who attempted by human reason to see into things and to expose them were dragged into court for being irreligious and meddlesome. But Socrates, who was in this regard the most vigorous of them all, was accused of the same things as we are, for they said of him also that he brought in new divinities, and that those whom the city recognized as gods he did not. But he, throwing Homer and the other poets out of the city, taught men to shun wicked demons and those who did what the poets said, and *urged them to knowledge, through rational enquiry, of the God who was unknown to them* (πρὸς θεοῦ δὲ τοῦ ἀγνώστου αὐτοῖς διὰ λόγου ζητήσεως ἐπίγνωσιν προὐτρέπετο), saying, 'the father and creator of all is not easy to find nor is it safe for one who has found him to declare him to all'.[99]

Maybe it was the somewhat Socratic flavour of the prelude to the AS (*Acts* 17:16–22a) which inspired Justin to draw this 'Pauline' picture of Socrates. Be that as it may, let us now look at Justin's reception of the speech.

Acts 17	*2 Apol.* 10.6
ἄγνωστος θεός (17.22) ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν (17.27)	θεὸς ὁ ἄγνωστος αὐτοῖς πρὸς θεοῦ [...] διὰ λόγου ζητήσεως ἐπίγνωσιν προὐτρέπετο ("he urged [people] to knowledge of God through rational enquiry")
cf. also:	
εἰ ἄρα γε [...] εὕροιεν (17.27)	τὸν δὲ πατέρα καὶ δημιουργὸν πάντων οὔθ᾽εὑρεῖν ῥᾴδιον [...] ("The father and creator of all is not easy to find […]")[100]

There is no hint in Justin that the pagan worship may have the "unknown god" as its object in some way. The Greek gods are in fact demons.[101] This is what Socrates found out with the help of "true reason", and he proceeded to draw people away from the

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[96] I agree with Minns and Parvis that the so-called *Second Apology* is "a series of disconnected fragments" (Minns and Parvis 2009, 21–31, quotation from p. 27). The material, however, is authentic and from approximately the same time as the *First Apology*.
[97] Benz 1950/51, 206; Döring 1979, 152: "Sokrates ist hier nicht mehr nur der, der die falschen Götter entlarvt hat, sondern zugleich der, der den Weg gewiesen hat, auf dem der wahre Gott zu finden ist." Döring's final words about (not only seeking but) 'finding' the true God perhaps go too far; cf. below.
[98] The quotation is from Benz 1950/51, 207.
[99] *2 Apol.* 10.4–6. Minns and Parvis 2009, 311, 313. Italics added.
[100] Pl. *Ti.* 28C. On the wording of the rather free quotation, see Andresen 1952/53, 167–168.
[101] On Justin's uncompromising stance on this, see Skarsaune 1996, 591–594; Skarsaune 2001, 140–141.

demons.[102] According to Justin, this was Socrates at his best. In fact, unmasking the gods as demons is the most important task of philosophy.[103]

However, the Justinian Socrates did not only teach his compatriots to shun the demons (the gods), but also urged them to seek the "unknown god" through "rational enquiry", διὰ λόγου ζητήσεως.[104] Interestingly enough, the Justinian Socrates, then, indicated what the Lukan Paul did not, viz. how human beings are to seek God. This is left without comment in *Acts* 17:26–27 (ἐποίησέν τε ἐξ ἑνὸς πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων [...] ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν), but in *2 Apol.* 10.6 the matter is clarified: people can and should use their reason (λόγος) to seek God. We can perhaps say, then, that Justin understands the seeking of God in *Acts* 17:27 in the same way as Professor Dibelius: it is "eine Sache des Denkens".[105]

In the context of the AS, the line from Aratus, τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν (*Acts* 17:28), is a reference to humankind as having been created in the image of God. Furthermore, it is used as a rationale for the point that humans may find God when seeking for him (see above). Maybe Justin, if asked about it, would have explained Paul's thinking in this way: when God created man, he did so through his Logos – Logos was a *Schöpfungsmittler*;[106] therefore, through creation human beings are 'marked' by Logos in the sense that they partake of the Logos by their being endowed with reason; hence, they are born λογικοὶ καὶ θεωρητικοί.[107] As such they can seek God using their reason, διὰ λόγου ζητήσεως.[108]

What about finding God, reaching a knowledge of him (ἐπίγνωσις θεοῦ τοῦ ἀγνώστου, *2 Apol.* 10.6)? In the AS, finding him is a possibility, even if it is no easy matter; the outcome of the seeking is not clear: […] εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὕροιεν.[109] This thought is also articulated by Justin, but by way of the quotation from Pl. *Ti.* 28C: "The father and creator of all is not easy to find […]."[110] In *2 Apol.* 10.2 the difficulty of the enterprise is brought out by the verb πονεῖν: "Whatever philosophers and lawgivers have at any time uttered well or found was achieved by them with hardship (ἐστὶ πονηθέντα αὐτοῖς),[111] (as they were working) according to a share (or participation) in Logos (κατὰ Λόγου μέρος), by invention and contemplation (δι᾽εὑρέσεως καὶ θεωρίας)."[112]

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[102] *1 Apol.* 5.3; *2 Apol.* 10.6.
[103] Skarsaune 1996, 594, 598.
[104] *2 Apol.* 10.6.
[105] Dibelius 1939, 9. Cf. Holte 1958, 130: "It is probable that this 'searching' is understood [sc. by Justin in *2 Apol.* 10.6] more intellectually than in Paul [sc. the Paul of the Areopagus Speech]."
[106] E.g. *1 Apol.* 64.5; *2 Apol.* 5.3. Trakatellis 1976, 22–23; Heid 2001, 836; Skarsaune 1996, 604–607; Skarsaune 2001, 147–148. Minns and Parvis see no explicit evidence of the *Schöpfungsmittlerschaft* of the Logos in Justin (Minns and Parvis 2009, 62–65). They emend the text in *2 Apol.* 5.3, excising the words ὅτε τὴν ἀρχὴν δι᾽αὐτοῦ πάντα ἔκτισε καὶ ἐκόσμησε. The sentence is retained for example by Marcovich (1994, 145).
[107] *1 Apol.* 28.3; cf. *1 Apol.* 46.2, *2 Apol.* 10.8 and especially *2 Apol.* 7.1–3 and 13.3–6.
[108] For Justin's doctrine of the Logos (incl. Logos spermatikos), see esp. Holte 1958; Waszink 1964, 385–390; Skarsaune 1988, 473; Skarsaune 2001, 144–150; Minns and Parvis 2009, 61–66. On the problem how Justin's view of 'natural revelation' through human 'participation' in the divine Logos in the *Apologies* can be held together with the criticism of Platonism in *Dial*. 4–7, see Trakatellis 1976, 129–130; Skarsaune 2001, 150–154 (more briefly in Skarsaune 1996, 608); also Waszink 1964, 385–387.
[109] See above, n. 33.
[110] Holte 1958:130: "[T]he main stress here, as in Paul, is laid on Man's difficulty in finding God."
[111] Until this point I follow the translation of Minns and Parvis 2009, 309. I cannot follow their edition in the rest of *2 Apol.* 10.2.
[112] Text: Marcovich 1994, 151.

In the context of *2 Apol.* 10, drawing on the AS, Justin does not explain in what sense human beings may find God through "rational enquiry", nor does he reveal what exactly was "uttered well" or "found" by philosophers and lawgivers. However, the answer to these questions would seem to be, in the words of Skarsaune:

> With his God-given reason – Justin clarifies: given through Christ, the Logos – man may reach ethical knowledge; he can, or should, see through the illusion of idolatry and begin to seek the unknown God. However, Justin regards all true knowledge beyond this not as a product of *revelatio generalis*, but as a borrowing from *revelatio specialis*.[113]

Summary

While both the *Kerygma Petrou* and the *Apology* of Aristides show considerable similarity with the AS in theme, *topoi*, phrases and vocabulary it is only Justin Martyr who shows knowledge of the speech and has used it in 2 *Apol.* 10, viz. in his depiction of Socrates in the context of his doctrine of the *Logos*.

[113] Skarsaune 2001, 154 (my translation from the Norwegian).

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Apologetics and Rhetoric in the *Ad Diognetum*

Jerker Blomqvist

Preliminaries

The following study looks first to characterize the rhetorical practice of one of the apologists who were active in the second century AD. Then it compares the text he wrote to certain others of the same period to determine what degree of familiarity with and what attitudes to rhetorical education these texts reveal.[1]

The text to be discussed has been known, traditionally, as the *Letter to Diognetus*, *Epistula ad Diognetum, Diognetbrief*, etc. Editions of the Greek text and translations of it often appear in volumes that also include the writings of the apostolic fathers.[2] Actually, *Diogn.* – as I will call the text here for short – is not a letter, for the formal characteristics of an ancient letter are not present and the preface, which we will discuss below, belongs to a different literary genre.

Since *Diogn.* has often been classified among the writings of the apostolic fathers, it may surprise some that it will be treated here in a conference that is devoted to the apologists, the other important group of second-century Christian writers. In fact, the content of *Diogn.* clearly differentiates it from the writings of the apostolic fathers. Those early Christian writers addressed themselves to fellow Christians with the intention of confirming and strengthening their faith. *Diogn.* could rather be described either as a pamphlet in which a Christian author defends and explains his own faith to a non-Christian addressee, or, using Jefford's term, as a 'protreptic discourse'.[3] The text therefore belongs rather with the apologists than with the fathers, and that has been recognized by some recent editors and commentators.[4]

The text has been preserved without any indication of the author's name in the manuscript, and the author cannot be identified with any person known from other sources.[5] The attempts that have been made to do so are not convincing. However, two such efforts deserve to be mentioned, since they have evoked the attention of some scholars.

In the 1940s Paul Andriessen argued that the author of *Diogn.* was identical with the earliest known apologist, Quadratus.[6] Both in the *Ecclesiastical History* and in the *Chronicle*, Eusebius states that a certain Quadratus (Κοδρᾶτος) had written an apology, addressed to the emperor Hadrian and presented it to the emperor when he visited Athens

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[1] I have already discussed these matters in an earlier study (Blomqvist 2014a): some repetitions are unavoidable.
[2] E.g. Lindemann and Paulsen 1992; Wengst 1984; Ehrman 2003.
[3] Jefford 2013, 56.
[4] Cf. Meecham 1949, 1–5; Lona 2001, 27–34; Ehrman 2003; 122, Jefford 2013, 1 (*Diogn.* is "one of the first examples of apologetic literature"), 55–56.
[5] The text is known from a single manuscript that was destroyed by fire in 1870. Since the sixteenth century it had been studied and copied, and reliable collations have been preserved. For that reason, it is mostly possible to reconstruct the readings of the manuscript in detail. Marrou (1965, 5–37) provides a full account of the manuscript and its history; cf. also Lona 2001, 11–17, and Jefford 2013, 5–11.
[6] Andriessen 1947 (a summary of a series of articles published in *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 1946–1947).

in AD 124–125 or 128–129.[7] Andriessen also identified Quadratus the apologist with a Quadratus who, according to Eusebius, was bishop of Athens at the time. With these identifications we would have a name of the author of *Diogn.*, a date for its publication and an example of an apologist who was clearly linked to Athens, even as its bishop. Several scholars were impressed by Andriessen's arguments, and it became customary to include 'the Quadratus fragment' – i.e. the isolated sentence that Eusebius quotes from the Quadratus apology – with editions of *Diogn*.[8]

However, decisive arguments to support Andriessen's identifications are missing, and there are circumstances that speak against them: (a) *Diogn.*, as we have it, is not addressed to Hadrian but explicitly to a person with a different name, (b) the sentence quoted by Eusebius from the Quadratus apology does not appear in *Diogn.* as we have it, and (c) the sentence does not display the stylistic characteristics of *Diogn.* Andriessen tried to counter those objections, but with only limited success.[9]

Another candidate for the authorship was suggested by Hill in 2006, viz. Polycarp of Smyrna.[10] Hill produces arguments that may link *Diogn.* to Asia Minor and also constructs a palaeographic scenario that may explain the lacunas in the manuscript. However, although there is comparably much information on the life of Polycarp preserved, no ancient source testifies to the existence of an apology written by him. The only text by Polycarp that has been preserved is his letter to the Philippians, which is very different from *Diogn.*, both in style and content. Thus, this identification too is short on corroborative evidence, although there are no decisive arguments against it.[11]

The addressee's name was Διόγνητος, as appears from the first sentence of the text. That is all we know for certain about this person. In the opening sentence of the letter, he is characterized with the epithet κράτιστε, which may be the Greek equivalent of a Roman title (*egregius* or *clarissimus*) and indicate an elevated position in the imperial society. On the other hand, κράτιστε seems to have been a conventional form of address in prefaces of this sort.[12]

The date of the composition of the text cannot be determined. Content and style indicate a plausible date between the mid-second and the early third centuries.

The concluding chapters, 11–12, present a particular problem. The manuscript indicated a lacuna in the text after ch. 10. Chs. 11–12 are often thought to deviate so much in content, language and style from the preceding chapters that they possibly belong to a different work or were even written by a different person.[13] However, Marrou vigorously defends the authenticity of the two chapters, and Hill's careful investigation of the problem concludes that the arguments used against the authenticity of chs. 11–12 are not decisive.[14] In my view, the divergences in language and style are not great enough to warrant the deduction that chs. 11–12 were not written by the same person as chs. 1–10.

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[7] Eus. *HE* 4.3.1–2. The Armenian translation shows that Eus. *Chron.* had data on Quadratus *ad annum* 2140. Jerome may have used the same source; cf. *De vir. ill.* 19–20 and *Ep.* 70.4.
[8] Ehrman 2003, 118–119; Jefford 2013, 190–191.
[9] Cf. Meecham 1949, 148–152; Marrou 1965, 256–269; Jefford 2013, 20–22.
[10] Hill 2006.
[11] Cf. Jefford 2013, 22–24.
[12] See *BDAG*, *s.v.* κράτιστος.
[13] Cf., for example, Jefford 2013, 43–51, 109.
[14] Marrou 1965, 219–227; Hill 2006, 106–127.

They could possibly belong to a different treatise by the same author. Here I will use them mostly as a means of comparison for bringing stylistic and linguistic features of chs. 1–10 into higher relief.

The preface

The very opening paragraph of *Diogn.* reveals that its author was acquainted with Greek literary convention:

Ἐπειδὴ ὁρῶ, κράτιστε Διόγνητε,
ὑπερεσπουδακότα σε τὴν θεοσέβειαν τῶν Χριστιανῶν μαθεῖν
καὶ πάνυ σαφῶς καὶ ἐπιμελῶς πυνθανόμενον περὶ αὐτῶν,
τίνι τε Θεῷ πεποιθότες καὶ πῶς θρησκεύοντες αὐτὸν
<τόν> τε κόσμον ὑπερορῶσι πάντες
καὶ θανάτου καταφρονοῦσι,
καὶ οὔτε τοὺς νομιζομένους
ὑπὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων θεοὺς λογίζονται
οὔτε τὴν Ἰουδαίων δεισιδαιμονίαν φυλάσσουσι,
καὶ τίνα τὴν φιλοστοργίαν ἔχουσι πρὸς ἀλλήλους,
καὶ τί δή ποτε καινὸν τοῦτο γένος ἢ ἐπιτήδευμα
εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν βίον νῦν
καὶ οὐ πρότερον,
ἀποδέχομαί γε τῆς προθυμίας σε ταύτης,
καὶ παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ
– τοῦ καὶ τὸ λέγειν καὶ τὸ ἀκούειν ἡμῖν χορηγοῦντος –
αἰτοῦμαι δοθῆναι
ἐμοὶ μὲν εἰπεῖν οὕτως
ὡς μάλιστα ἂν <ἀκούσαντά> σε βελτίω γενέσθαι,
σοί τε οὕτως ἀκοῦσαι
ὡς μὴ λυπηθῆναι τὸν εἰπόντα.[15]

As the typographical arrangement above is intended to show, this long sentence forms a multi-layered syntactical structure. It opens with an ἐπειδή clause with the main verb ὁρῶ and with two participles and their adjuncts (ὑπερεσπουδακότα and πυνθανόμενον) plus a series of interrogative clauses embedded in it. Then follow two coordinated main clauses with the finite verbs ἀποδέχομαι and αἰτοῦμαι, the latter of

[15] *Diogn*. 1.1–2. "Since I see, most excellent Diognetus, | that you are extremely eager to learn about the religion of the Christians | and are making such an exacting and careful inquiry about them, wishing to discover, | which God they obey and how they worship him, | so that they all despise the world | and disdain death, | neither giving credence to those thought | to be gods by the Greeks | nor keeping the superstition of the Jews, | and what deep affection they have for one another | and just why this new kin or way of life | came into being now | and not before, | I welcome this eagerness of yours | and ask God | – who enables us both to speak and to hear – | that I may be allowed to speak in such a way | that you derive special benefit by hearing, | and that you hear in such a way | that the speaker not be put to grief." With some minor modifications I throughout reproduce Jefford's (2013) text and Ehrman's (2003) translation of *Diogn.*

which is construed with a complex nominal phrase (τοῦ θεοῦ [...] χορηγοῦντος) and a compound of no less than five hierarchically diversified infinitives.

When the text first became known, the readers immediately noticed that this preface was similar to the preface of Luke's Gospel, which also consists of an ἐπειδή clause and a complex main clause, has a similar content and includes the address κράτιστε. Since its author was obviously a Christian, *Diogn.* was assumed to have been inspired by the preface of *Gospel of Luke*, and it was supposed that the New Testament, in particular the Lukanic writings, had served as a literary and linguistic model for the author. That is hardly true. At least, Luke is not the only model that the author of *Diogn.* may have used for his preface. Luke's prefaces are modelled on prefaces with a similar structure and content in extra-Biblical and pagan texts, especially Greek scientific writings.[16] Some of these contain elements that reappear in *Diogn.* but are absent from Luke's prefaces. According to Luke, it was on his own initiative that he set out to write his account; his addressee Theophilus is not reported (or alleged) to have shown any previous interest. In our text, the opening ἐπειδή clause states that it was Diognetus' interest in the matter that inspired the writer. Prefaces with similar declarations appear in Greek scientific writings from the late fourth century BC onwards; the earliest known example is a medical treatise by Diocles of Carystus, addressed to King Antigonus I Monophthalmos of Macedonia (d. 301 BC), and there are several later examples.[17]

Detailed specifications of the content of the following text were also common in scientific prologues, often in the form of a string of indirect questions, as in the Diognetus preface.[18] That element is absent from Luke's prefaces but appears in the Diocles preface. The address κράτιστε*,* which was thought to link the Diognetus text with Luke, is not uncommon in comparable contexts either.[19]

Thus, the New Testament was certainly not the author's only model. In fact, the only indubitable traces of New Testament influence on the language of *Diogn.* are a few words that are known previously only from the Septuagint or the New Testament, for example,

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[16] Alexander 1993.

[17] Diocles frg. 183a.1: Διοκλῆς Ἀντιγόνῳ βασιλεῖ. Ἐπειδή σοι συμβαίνει μουσικωτάτῳ πάντων βασιλέων γεγονέναι καὶ πλεῖστον χρόνον βεβιωκέναι φιλοσοφίας τε πάσης ἔμπειρον ὄντα τυγχάνειν καὶ τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς πρωταγωνίστην, ὑπολαμβάνων βασιλικήν τε καὶ οἰκείαν εἶναι φιλοσοφίαν τὴν περὶ τῶν ὑγιεινῶν ἀκοήν τε καὶ θεωρίαν γέγραφά σοι, πόθεν αἱ νόσοι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις συνίστανται καὶ τίνων προγενομένων σημείων, καὶ πῶς ἄν τις αὐταῖς βοηθῶν ἐπιτυγχάνοι; "Diocles to King Antigonus. Since you happen to have become the most cultured of all kings and to have lived longest and to be experienced in all intellectual activity and to be a forerunner in the sciences, I thought that the learning and theoretical study of matters related to health would be a royal and appropriate intellectual activity, and therefore I write to you [about the questions] whence diseases in human beings originate and what signs precede them and how one might be successful in treating them." Text and translation: van der Eijk 2000-2001 (slightly modified). Later examples: Apollonius of Citium's Περὶ ἄρθρων (prologue of the first book: participle phrase describing the addressee as φιλιάτρως διακείμενον); Artemidorus, *Onirocriticon* (prologue of the third book: ἐπειδή clause referring to τὸ μεγαλεῖον τῆς σῆς σοφίας of the addressee); Diophantus, *Arithmetica* (prologue: τὴν εὕρεσιν τῶν ἐν τοῖς ἀριθμοῖς προβλημάτων, τιμιώτατέ μοι Διονύσιε, γινώσκων σε σπουδαίως ἔχοντα μαθεῖν); Galen, *De constitutione artis medicae ad Patrophilum* (ἐπεί clause praising Patrophilus for a 'divine' quality, i.e. the striving for learning and προθυμία); Melito of Sardis (proem of his *Eclogae*, quoted by Eus. *HE* 4.26.13: σπουδῇ τῇ πρὸς τὸν λόγον χρώμενος). See Alexander 1993, 46–50, 213–214.

[18] Alexander 1993, 46–50, 213–214.

[19] Cf. the proems of Dion. Hal. *De ant. or.* (ὦ κράτιστε Ἀμμαῖε); Joseph. *Ap.* (κράτιστε ἀνδρῶν Ἐπαφρόδιτε); Galen, *De Meth. Med.* (book 2: Ἱέρων κράτιστε), *Libr. Propr.* (κράτιστε Βάσσε); ps.-Galen, *De theriaca ad Pamphilianum* (κράτιστε Παμφιλιανέ); Nepualius, Περὶ τῶν κατὰ ἀντιπάθειαν καὶ συμπάθειαν (κράτιστε Σέκστε, who is said to exemplify τὸ φιλομαθὲς καὶ εἰς πάντα φιλότιμον).

τεκνογονοῦσιν ‘produce children’ (5.6) and ἀνεξιχνίαστος ‘untraceable’ (9.3), which are rare words in *NT*. There also a few typically Christian words that appear for the first time in *Diogn.*: παντοκτίστης ‘creator of all things’[20] (7.2; later on only in Agathangelus of the fifth century) and προαγαπάω ‘love beforehand’ (10.3; also in Clement of Alexandria and a few later writers). These words are typically Jewish or Christian and not attested before *Diogn.*

Instead, the author’s models are to be traced among extra-Biblical texts. The parallels existing between the prologue of *Diogn.* and the extra-Biblical material indicate that the author was acquainted with the Greek literary tradition and its stylistic conventions. The question is to what extent that acquaintance has influenced his style and language.

Avoidance of hiatus

Avoidance of hiatus can be used of an indication of an author’s ambition to live up to the demands of literary norms in the Hellenized society to which *Diogn.* belonged. There is obviously a relative scarcity of hiatus in the Diognetus text. The author does not pedantically avoid hiatus, but allows it, as many writers do, after common words (for example, the article, καί, ἤ, περί), before ἐν and οὐ and at syntactic junctures. If we disregard those cases and also disregard passages where the elision of a final, short vowel would eliminate a hiatus, we find only about 17 hiatuses in the first ten chapters of *Diogn*.[21]

It is also possible to identify certain strategies that the author used in order to avoid a hiatus. In one passage (6.5 [...] ἀδικουμένη διότι [...] ἀδικούμενος ὅτι [...]) he uses two synonyms for the conjunction ‘that’, obviously preferring διότι when the preceding word ends with a vowel. Other strategies include adding one of the particles γε or μέν (which, however, do not appear at all in chs. 11–12) where they are not necessary, and manipulating the word order.[22]

These observations show that there is a deliberate but incomplete avoidance of hiatus in chs. 1–10, but perhaps not in chs. 11–12. Thus, the author of chs. 1–10 tried to apply a rule of literary Greek, but sometimes failed, which is proof of his ambitions but not of his competence.

Rhythmical clausulae

Another linguistic detail that reveals literary ambitions is the striving for certain rhythmical patterns in the last syllables of the cola. It appears that *Diogn.* favours the same types of rhythmical clausulae that were common in rhetorical prose.[23]

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[20] Cf. Marrou 1965, 66, n. 10.

[21] Hiatus is more common in chs. 11–12 (about 15 cases in this much shorter text), which is another mark of the divergent character of these chapters.

[22] For details, see Blomqvist 2014a, 207.

[23] As observed by Geffcken 1924, 349–350, and 1928, v. For the identification of significant patterns of prose-rhythm, de Groot’s handbook of 1919 is still indispensable. Cf. Päll 2007, 39–42.

An illustrative passage occurs in 5.1–2, where four successive cola end with the combination cretic + trochee (or spondee):[24]

[...] διακεκριμένοι τῶν λοιπῶν εἰσιν ἀνθρώπων.
οὔτε γάρ που πόλεις ἰδίας κατοικοῦσιν,
οὔτε διαλέκτῳ τινὶ παρηλλαγμένῃ χρῶνται,
οὔτε βίον παράσημον ἀσκοῦσιν.[25]

Cretic + trochee was in particular favoured by the writer of *Diogn*. In chs. 5–7, which I have scrutinized in detail, more than 25 per cent of the cola end with cretic + trochee, and that combination was favoured in both Greek and Latin literary prose. Two other favoured combinations were trochee + trochee and cretic + cretic, which make up c. 14 and c. 7 per cent, respectively, of the cola finals in the chapters that I have investigated. Thus, these three favoured clausula types appear in about 50 per cent of the cola. That frequency indicates that these sequences, especially cretic + trochee, were intentionally sought for by the author. Of the remaining c. fifty cola in the three chapters, ten have a final cretic preceded by varying syllable sequences (e.g. 5.4 διαίτῃ καὶ τῷ λοιπῷ βίῳ, 7.7 παραβαλλομένους θηρίοις). Remarkably enough, the hexameter cadence (dactyl + spondee or trochee), which was generally avoided, occurs in eight cases.

Regarding rhythmical clausulae we arrive at approximately the same conclusion as observed for the avoidance of hiatus: the author strived to comply with the conventions of literary prose, but was not entirely successful.

Rhetorical figures

The most conspicuous stylistic feature of the Diognetus text is the frequency with which easily recognizable figures of speech recur in the text. They exemplify a whole spectrum of devices, most of which are associated, in particular, with the so-called Asianic style of prose writing.

These devices are often skilfully used when the author wants to bring home some important point in his message. The rhetorical figure of polyptoton serves that purpose in this passage, where word elements referring to power (δυνα-) and righteousness (δικαι-), respectively, recur three times each: ἀ**δύνα**τον εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ τῇ **δυνά**μει τοῦ Θεοῦ **δυνα**τοὶ γενηθῶμεν [...] ἵνα ἀνομία μὲν πολλῶν ἐν **δικαί**ῳ ἑνὶ κρυβῇ, **δικαι**οσύνη δὲ ἑνὸς πολλοὺς ἀνόμους **δικαι**ώσῃ.[26]

The author is particularly fond of pairing words or phrases with antithetical content, e.g. in 9.2, where the contrast between the saviour and the humans he saved is enhanced by a series of antitheses. The cola are of equal length, 9–10 syllables, and they

[24] Since the last syllable of the line always counted as long in Greek metrics, spondees and trochees were interchangeable in that position.
[25] "[For in terms of their country, language or customs the Christians are no] different from other people; | they nowhere inhabit cities of their own; | nor do they use a strange dialect | or live a life out of the ordinary."
[26] *Diogn*. 9.1–5 "[...] when we are unable to enter the kingdom of God we should be enabled by God's ability [...] that the lawlessness of many should be hidden by the one who was righteous, and the righteousness of one should make righteous the many who were lawless."

all end with the same syllable; in rhetorical terms, they exemplify not only antitheses but also, on the formal level, isocola with homoeoteleuton:

τὸν ἅγιον ὑπὲρ <τῶν> ἀνόμων,
τὸν ἄκακον ὑπὲρ τῶν κακῶν,
τὸν δίκαιον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδίκων,
τὸν ἄφθαρτον ὑπὲρ τῶν φθαρτῶν,
τὸν ἀθάνατον ὑπὲρ τῶν θνητῶν.[27]

The antithetical content of paired phrases and sentences can be enhanced by word-play, i.e. the same word recurs with slightly different meanings in the two successive constituents. The two clearest examples are 5.7 **τ**ράπεζαν κοινὴν παρατίθενται, ἀλλ᾽οὐ κοινήν[28] and 6.4 Χριστιανοὶ γινώσκονται μένοντες ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἀόρατος δὲ αὐτῶν ἡ θεοσέβεια μένει.[29] The repetitions, in another passage, of πατρίς (5.5) and σαρκί/σάρκα (5.8) have a similar function.

The commentators have noticed a great variety of other rhetorical devices: strings of exclamations, rhetorical questions, anaphora, chiasmus.[30] Their abundance makes it impossible to conclude anything but that the author had undergone a formal education that included rhetorical training. An analysis of the sentence structure confirms this conclusion and brings to light more artistic qualities of the text.

Sentence structure

The sentence that serves as the preface of *Diogn.* has already been quoted and partly analysed. Syntactically it is one unified sentence, and a long sentence at that (113 words). It is carefully structured with a number of diversified elements: participle phrases, subordinate clauses, infinitives and main clauses. It comes close to a structure that could

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[27] "[Christ became a ransom for mankind] the holy one for the lawless, | the innocent one for the wicked, | the righteous one for the unrighteous, | the imperishable one for the perishable, | the immortal one for the mortal."
[28] "[the Christians] provide a common table but not ordinary food." κοινήν was the reading of the *codex unicus*. Most recent editors prefer Maran's conjecture κοίτην (in his edition of 1752), which gives the meaning "they provide a common table, not a [common] bed." Maran thought that the antithesis between common table and common bed was intended as a defence against allegations of promiscuity, directed against the Christians. However, the sentence appears in a passage which is not primarily a defence of Christians against particular pagan accusations but which points out a series of paradoxical features of the Christians' own situation in the Roman society. The author has exploited the double meaning of κοινός for a wordplay that highlights one of those paradoxes. By "common table" *Diogn.* here refers to the Eucharist, and also Justin Martyr (*Apology* 66.2) denies that the food and drink served at the Eucharist meal could be classified as something κοινόν: οὐ γὰρ ὡς κοινὸν ἄρτον οὐδὲ κοινὸν πόμα ταῦτα λαμβάνομεν "we do not take this as an ordinary bread or as an ordinary drink." In early Christian literature the adjective κοινός was used about "impure" food and drink (cf. *BDAG*, *s.v.* κοινός 2b), so the readers of *Diogn.* would easily understand its intended meaning here. Cf. Otto 1852, 106; Riggi 1987, 524; Blomqvist and Blomqvist 2017, 412, n. 73.
[29] "Christians are known as residing in the world, but their worship remains invisible." The ms. had μένοντες, but the editors generally print μὲν ὄντες, accepting what Jefford 2013, 176 calls "the adjusted reading of Estienne against the exemplar and Haus". But that 'adjustment' obscures the subtlety of the text. Riggi 1987, 524 and Lona 2001, 178 prefer the ms. reading with its movement between two meanings of the verb μένω.
[30] See Geffcken 1928, 21–22, 24–25; Meecham 1949, 13–15; Marrou 1965, 126–127; Lona 2001, 38–39; Blomqvist 2014a, 209.

be described as a *period*, i.e. a sentence that consists of several hierarchically structured constituents, that forms a syntactically unified whole, and that – ideally – becomes syntactically complete only when the last constituent is in position.

Such sentences are not common in *Diogn*.; the preface diverges stylistically from the main text, as prefaces sometimes do. Elsewhere the author strongly favours short sentences or cola, preferably those with antithetical or even paradoxical content. This is an illustrative example:

πατρίδας οἰκοῦσιν ἰδίας,
ἀλλ᾽ὡς πάροικοι.
μετέχουσι πάντων ὡς πολῖται,
καὶ πάνθ᾽ὑπομένουσιν ὡς ξένοι.
πᾶσα ξένη πατρίς ἐστιν αὐτῶν,
καὶ πᾶσα πατρὶς ξένη.
γαμοῦσιν ὡς πάντες, τεκνογονοῦσιν,
ἀλλ᾽οὐ ῥίπτουσι τὰ γεννώμενα.
τράπεζαν κοινὴν παρατίθενται,
ἀλλ᾽οὐ κοινήν.
ἐν σαρκὶ τυγχάνουσιν,
ἀλλ᾽οὐ κατὰ σάρκα ζῶσιν.
ἐπὶ γῆς διατρίβουσιν,
ἀλλ᾽ἐν οὐρανῷ πολιτεύονται.
πείθονται τοῖς ὡρισμένοις νόμοις,
καὶ τοῖς ἰδίοις βίοις νικῶσι τοὺς νόμους.[31]

The passage describes the situation of the Christians in the Roman society in a series of short sentences, linked together in antithetical pairs. Eight of those pairs are quoted here; actually the list continues with nine more items. The pairs form antitheses, linked with ἀλλά, or paradoxes, linked with καί.

Thus, short sentences are favoured, and even if a sentence starts with a fairly complex and regular syntactical structure, it normally dissolves into something else, as is exemplified by the long sentence at 9.6. This sentence starts with two participle phrases coordinated by the corresponding particles μέν and δέ: ἐλέγξας οὖν ἐν μὲν τῷ πρόσθεν χρόνῳ τὸ ἀδύνατον τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεως εἰς τὸ τυχεῖν ζωῆς,[32] and νῦν δὲ τὸν σωτῆρα δείξας δυνατὸν σῴζειν καὶ τὰ ἀδύνατα.[33] Then follows the main verb ἐβουλήθη with an infinitive phrase as its adjunct: ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων ἐβουλήθη πιστεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ χρηστότητι αὐτοῦ.[34] With that, the sentence becomes complete syntactically. But the author does not

[31] *Diogn.* 5.5–10 "They live in their own countries, but as expatriates; | they take part in everything as citizens and endure everything as aliens; | every foreign country is their homeland and every homeland is foreign; | they marry like everyone and have children, but they do not throw away their offspring; | they provide a common table but not common food; | they exist in the flesh but do not live according to flesh; | they spend their lives on earth but are citizens in heaven; | they are obedient to the established laws but surpass the laws with their own ways of life."
[32] "Since he clearly demonstrated in the former time that we could not possibly, by our very nature, obtain life [...]."
[33] "[...] and since he now revealed the saviour who has the power to save even what is powerless [...]."
[34] "[...] for both reasons he wanted us to believe in his kindness."

leave it there but, after the phrase with the main verb, he adds – asyndetically – another infinitive phrase, αὐτὸν ἡγεῖσθαι τροφέα,[35] and the last word of that phrase is expanded into a list of no less than eleven divine epithets: πατέρα, διδάσκαλον, σύμβουλον, ἰατρόν, νοῦν, φῶς, τιμήν, δόξαν, ἰσχύν, ζωήν.[36] Then, the sentence ends with one more infinitive phrase, also attached asyndetically, περὶ ἐνδύσεως καὶ τροφῆς μὴ μεριμνᾶν,[37] and it takes some milliseconds for the reader to realize that the only main verb that infinitive could be construed with is the now distant ἐβουλήθη.

Thus, the author is fond of constructing long strings of short sentences, phrases or even individual words. That does not normally count as a sign of literary skill or linguistic competence. However, even these straightforward and mostly rather monotonous enumerations are not devoid of artistry. The individual items significantly often appear in groups of three, so the author is likely to have deliberately tried to achieve a certain amount of symmetry. In some sentences he creates variation by rounding off an enumeration with a syntactically divergent, longer unit, such as the concluding infinitive phrase περὶ ἐνδύσεως καὶ τροφῆς μὴ μεριμνᾶν in the passage we just discussed. In 7.2 there is an artistic arrangement of short cola; four groups with three members each have been combined into an elaborate structure:

ᾧ πάντα διατέτακται
καὶ διώρισται
καὶ ὑποτέτακται,
οὐρανοὶ καὶ τὰ ἐν οὐρανοῖς,
γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ,
θάλασσα καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ,
πῦρ,
ἀήρ,
ἄβυσσος,
τὰ ἐν ὕψεσι,
τὰ ἐν βάθεσι,
τὰ ἐν τῷ μεταξύ.[38]

To sum up: the author has literary and stylistic ambitions, he has undergone some sort of rhetorical training, his style is characterized by a loose sentence structure, sequences of short cola often artistically arranged, and a wealth of rhetorical devices.

Models and parallels

Diogn. is certainly different, in these respects, both from the New Testament and from most other Christian writings of the first two centuries. The apostolic fathers offered

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[35] "[...] to consider him our nurse [...]."
[36] "[...] father, teacher, counsellor, physician, mind, light, honour, glory, strength, life [...]."
[37] "[...] to have no concern over what to wear or eat."
[38] "[Christ] by whom all things are set in order | and arranged | and subjected, | the heavens and the things in the heavens, | the earth and the things in the earth, | the sea and the things in the sea, | fire, | air, | abyss, | creatures in the heights, | creatures in the depth, | creatures in between."

nothing like it, and among the apologists the commentators before the mid-twentieth century found no obvious parallels either.

When searching for stylistic parallels of *Diogn.*, earlier commentators often suggested a specific writer of the early third century: Clement of Alexandria.[39] Just like *Diogn.*, Clement's writings reveal the rhetorical schooling of their author. However, Clement is much different from *Diogn.* stylistically.[40] The sentence structures consisting of short cola, more or less artistically arranged, that dominate in *Diogn.*, do not appear with such frequency in Clement. His sentence construction is more varied, and periods are not a rarity in his texts. He is well acquainted with the usual rhetorical figures, but also in that field he is more varied than *Diogn.* and uses such devices with greater moderation.

Clement was also influenced, not only stylistically but also as regards grammatical and lexical details, by the Atticist movement, which *Diogn.* is not. The Atticists strived to reintroduce a number of lexical and morphological elements that belonged to the Attic dialect of the classical period but which had vanished from the standardized variety of Attic that became the common language of the Greek-speaking world in the Hellenistic period.[41] Clement's prose abounds in duals and optatives, but such Atticist niceties are next to absent from *Diogn.*, and other typical characteristics of Atticism do not appear there either. Except for some potential optatives (2.3 [*bis*], 2.4, 2.10 [*bis*], 3.3, 3.4, 7.3, 8.3), the features that were the 'principal markers' of Atticist usage are absent from *Diogn.*[42] On the contrary, *Diogn.* exemplifies a number of those non-Attic features that the second-century Atticist lexicographer Phrynichus denounced as incorrect. These include the lexical-morphological items καθάρας (2.1, for καθήρας), γενηθῶμεν, γεν[ν]ηθείς(?) (9.1, 11.2, with a passive aorist instead of medium γενώμεθα etc.), πάντοτε (11.4, for ἑκάστοτε or διὰ παντός) and τυγχάνουσιν (2.1, 5.8, 10.7, for τυγχάνουσιν ὄντες),[43] and, if we can trust the manuscript in these matters, *Diogn.* always prefers a non-Attic phonology in words like θάλασσα (16 instances), γίνομαι/γινώσκω (6 times) and σήμερον (11.5; for τήμερον). For Attic ἔστω, *Diogn.* has the Hellenistic innovation ἤτω (12.7).[44] Clement, on the other hand, uses the aorist ἐκάθηρα and the imperative ἔστω, writes ἐγενόμην and διὰ παντός or ἑκάστοτε, varies between σσ and ττ, as between γιν and γιγν, and allows ἤτω, σήμερον and πάντοτε only in quotations.[45] Clement at least knew the Atticist rules and mostly respected them. Thus, although both writers had rhetorical education, the author of *Diogn.* does not belong to the same literary and rhetorical tradition as Clement.

It was only in 1960, when the *Papyrus Bodmer XIII* was published, that really relevant material for comparison with *Diogn.* became available.[46] The papyrus contains a sermon for the celebration of Easter, delivered by the bishop Melito of Sardis about AD 200. The same dominant, conspicuous rhetorical devices are manifest in this text, just as

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[39] Geffcken 1924, 350; Geffcken 1928, v, 13; Meecham 1949, 62–64.
[40] On differences in style and grammar between Clement and the second-century apologists, cf. Wifstrand 1962, 63–64, and Fabricius 1967, 195.
[41] On Atticism and other varieties of Greek in the relevant period, see Blomqvist 2014b.
[42] See Horrocks 2010, 138, for a list of these 'principal markers'.
[43] Cf. Phrynichus, *Eclogae* 15 (καθᾶραι/καθῆραι), 74 (πάντοτε), 79 (ἐγενόμην/ἐγενήθην), 242 (τυγχνάνεις ὤν).
[44] On ἔστω/ἤτω, see *BDR* § 98.
[45] These details of Clement's usage have been documented by searches in the *TLG* database.
[46] Testuz 1960. Bonner's reconstruction of the sermon contained only small portions of the text (Bonner 1940). Cf. Perler 1966, 11–15; Hall 1979, xvii–xxii.

in *Diogn.* The sentence structure is dominated by short units, pairs or strings of isocola, homoeoteleuton and antitheses are plentiful, and rhetorical figures embellish the text. Series of exclamations and rhetorical questions occur, anaphora abounds. The general character of the style can be illustrated by sentences such as these:

οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀμνὸς ὁ φονευόμενος·
οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀμνὸς ὁ ἄφωνος·
οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τεχθεὶς ἐκ Μαρίας τῆς καλῆς ἀμνάδος·
οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐξ ἀγέλης λημφθείς,
καὶ εἰς σφαγὴν συρείς,
καὶ ἑσπέρας τυθείς,
καὶ νύκτωρ ταφείς,
ὁ ἐπὶ ξύλου μὴ συντριβείς,
εἰς γῆν μὴ λυθείς,
ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστάς,
καὶ ἀναστήσας τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐκ τῆς κάτω ταφῆς.[47]

This style, with its short cola with antithetical content, of equal length and with assonances, belongs to a Greek rhetorical tradition that is often termed Asianism, an expression that seems to have been coined as a deprecatory label for a stylistic school that was much the opposite of Atticism.[48]

The Asianic style originates from the experiments of the earliest known Greek rhetoricians, Gorgias of Leontini and his immediate followers in the fifth century BC.[49] It enjoyed a vogue in the Hellenistic period when it dominated oratory, but its stylistic ideals were condemned by the Atticist movement and gradually went out of fashion. Still, in the second century AD there were Greek writers whose style was clearly influenced by Asianism. They included Maximus of Tyre and Polemo of Laodicea and there are traces of it in the declamations of Lucian and in a couple of orations wrongly attributed to Dio Chrysostom in the manuscript tradition (nos. 37 [probably by Favorinus] and 64 [possibly by Herodes Atticus]).

The adaptation of a Greek, i.e. non-Christian and non-Jewish, rhetorical tradition by second- and third-century Christians illustrates an important fact: the early Christian writers were mostly not strangers to pagan education. The early text that we have discussed here was obviously written by a Christian who had been trained in a Greek rhetorical school. The same applies to his probable contemporary Melito, to his near contemporary Clement of Alexandria, and even more to the writers of the successive centuries. Greek rhetoric was appropriated as a tool by Christian writers, preachers and teachers for their own purposes.

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[47] *Diogn*. 71.494–504. "He is the lamb being slain. | He is the lamb that is speechless. | He is the one born from Mary, the lovely ewe-lamb. | He is the one taken from the flock, | dragged to slaughter, | killed in the evening, | buried at night; | who was not broken on the tree, | who did not dissolve in the earth, | who rose up from the dead, | and who raised up mankind from the grave below" (text and translation: Hall 1979 [modified]).
[48] The style is recognizable also in the preserved fragments of Melito's other writings, in particular frg. 8b–12.
[49] For a characterization of Asianism, cf. Norden 1915-18, 131–149, 263–270. On Melito's style, see Wifstrand 1948.

Rhetoric: denounced and appropriated

In the early Christian texts it is not difficult to find passages in which the writers distance themselves from the schooling and education of the type that was offered to the elite of the contemporary society. In *First Corinthians* (chs. 2–4), for example, Paul makes it quite clear that he shares this negative view on non-Christian education. He makes a distinction between the wisdom – σοφία – of this world and the wisdom of God, which he claims to be preaching and teaching himself. As regards Paul's view of rhetoric in particular, this utterance seems to be revealing: ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις (*1 Cor.* 2:4).[50]

There are textual problems in this sentence.[51] The version quoted here is a reconstruction based on the majority of the majuscule manuscripts and largely confirmed by the church fathers. It must have been current at an early date, probably in the second century, even if it was not identical with Paul's original text. The sentence contains one word that is particularly relevant in the context of rhetoric, viz. πειθοῖς 'persuasive' (unanimously preserved by all relevant text witnesses including the Chester Beatty papyrus [p. 46]). Etymologically this word is linked with the substantive πειθώ 'persuasion' and the verb πείθω 'persuade', which are technical terms that denote the objective of rhetoric. The word indicates that Paul explicitly refers to contemporary rhetorical practices, and in this passage he clearly distances himself from such practices,[52] as he does elsewhere.[53] Paul displays a "scorn of rhetoric"[54] and, although theories and concepts that belong to the study of rhetoric have proved useful for the analysis of form and content in his letters, he cannot be proved to have undergone a formal training in rhetoric.[55] His style is much different from that of trained Christian writers such as Tatian or Clement; a number rhetorical devices have been identified in the letters but they are not a dominant and distinctive characteristic of the text, as they are in *Diogn.* and in Melito's sermon. Paul and the other New Testament writers had of course visited schools where they had been taught to read and write Greek but, with the possible exception of Luke, there is no decisive evidence to show that they had enjoyed higher education that included a rhetorical training.

The situation changes in the second century. Christian writers still criticize rhetoric and distance themselves from pagan learning, but the very form and content of their criticism often reveals that they are themselves familiar with the teachings of the disciplines they criticize. Tatian, for example, in a rhetorical question, denounces the Atticist style of oratory and much of Greek learning, including the persuasive powers (πιθανότητες) of syllogisms: τί δ᾽ἂν ὠφελήσειε λέξις Ἀττικὴ καὶ φιλοσόφων σωρεία καὶ

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[50] "My word and my message were not by persuasive words of human wisdom" (text according to the majuscules [some of which omit ἀνθρωπίνης (and p46 omits λόγοις)]; my own translation).
[51] Analyses of the problems are to be found in the current commentaries on the text. Cf. also *BDAG*, *s.v.* πειθός.
[52] For other suggested interpretations of the passage, see Porter 1997, 536–537.
[53] Cf. *Galatians* 5.8 ἡ πεισμονὴ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος "the persuasion [that draws you away from the truth] is not from the one who calls you", with another word for 'persuasion', πεισμονή, which is also derived from πείθω. Both πειθός and πεισμονή are extremely rare words, but their meaning is quite clear; cf. *BDAG*, *s.v.* πειθός.
[54] To use Siegert's phrase (Siegert 1997, 428).
[55] See Porter 1997, 534–537.

συλλογισμῶν πιθανότητες καὶ μέτρα γῆς καὶ ἄστρων θέσεις καὶ ἡλίου δρόμοι.[56] But, as Karadimas and others have shown, with his *Oratio ad Graecos* Tatian has chosen to reveal himself as a competent rhetorician.[57] The sentence quoted here even contradicts itself for, although it denounces Atticist style, it contains a linguistic feature that is characteristic of Atticizing Greek, viz. a verb in the optative mode: ὀφελήσειε. It is a potential optative, with the particle ἄν, in a rhetorical question. This is a usage of classical Attic that the Atticists strived to reintroduce, and Tatian has adopted it. In the non-Atticist Greek of the day, rhetorical questions of this sort (*wh*-questions) were normally construed with subjunctives or future indicatives.[58]

Tatian's *Oratio* reveals, just like *Diogn.*, that its author had undergone rhetorical training, but Tatian had also, just like Clement, adopted some of the teachings of the Atticists, which *Diogn.* had not.

Thus, the early Christian writers criticize rhetoric or Greek education in general, but at least some of them turn out to have a not inconsiderable degree of competence in the field they criticize. It should be observed that rhetoric was used by the Christians not only in texts that were addressed to pagan audiences, who could be assumed to have been educated in the traditional schools, but, as Melito's Easter sermon demonstrates, rhetoric was also used when the audience consisted solely or predominantly of fellow Christians. This ambivalent attitude to rhetoric is typical of the second-century Christian writers.

An ambivalence of that sort is not a Christian prerogative but it is paralleled by attitudes to rhetoric among the pagan intellectuals of the time. Rhetoric and philosophy were often seen as adversaries and as rivals for the same human souls. Plato's dialogue *Gorgias* illustrates that this animosity is of an early date. It continued throughout the Hellenistic period, with, in particular, Epicurean philosophers attacking rhetoric. In the second century AD, the discussion was still lively and manifests itself, as Karadimas has shown, in the writings of the rhetorician Aelius Aristides and the philosopher Sextus Empiricus.[59] In a recent book, Lauwers has shown how the Greek philosophers act in the same way as Tatian and other Christian writers: they criticize rhetoric, but their own texts demonstrate that they had undergone rhetorical training – they employ their competence to criticize rhetoric.[60] Lauwers concentrates on Maximus of Tyre, but he also investigates no less than twelve other intellectuals of the second century (Flavius Philostratus, Dio Chrysostom, Plutarch, Epictetus, Favorinus, Arrian, Aelius Aristides, Marcus Aurelius, Lucian of Samosata, Apuleius, Galen and Sextus Empiricus), many of whom, if to a varying extent, exemplify the same ambivalent attitude to rhetoric.

The case of Marcus Aurelius is illustrative. In a letter, written in AD 146 or 147, to his teacher of Latin eloquence, M. Cornelius Fronto, Marcus declares his dissatisfaction

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[56] *Oratio* 27.3 "What good could come from an Attic style, from philosophers' sophistries, the probability of syllogisms, the dimensions of Earth, the positions of stars, or the itineraries of the sun?" (text and translation: Whittaker 1982 [modified]).
[57] Kinzig 1997, 642–643; Karadimas 2003; Maràs 2010.
[58] *BDR* § 366:1, 385:1, 496:2. There are several examples in the New Testament (but Luke could use ἄν + optative), and cf. *Diogn.* 7.6, 10.3 and also 4.5, where *Diogn.* adds the particle ἄν to the future (there is no reason to emend ἠγήσεται into ἠγήσαιτο, as Jefford does, for the addition of ἄν to the future is not without parallels; see Otto 1852, 103; Ræder 1953; *BDR* § 380:3).
[59] Karadimas 1996.
[60] Lauwers 2015.

with rhetoric and announces his intention to return to the philosophical studies of his youth.[61] During his reign – from 161 onwards – Marcus was of course expected to display his mastery of conventional oratory on regular occasions when performing his imperial duties, but it is significant that also in his private contemplations (Τὰ εἰς ἑαυτόν, *'To himself'*), which were presumably written during the last two decades of his life and are imbued with his philosophical worldview, there are obvious examples of rhetorical strategies and devices.[62] Just like the Christian writers of the second century, Marcus uses rhetoric as an instrument for conveying his message.

Conclusion

The divide separating rhetoricians, on one hand, from Christian preachers or Stoic thinkers, on the other, was not impermeable. Marcus explicitly marks his distance from rhetoric, but exploits its advantages for expressing his innermost thoughts, and so too do Tatian and other writers, both Christians and pagans. Whether the author of *Diogn.* ever condemned the Hellenized education system of his time, with its emphasis on rhetorical training, must remain unknown. The text here in his hand (that coincidence has preserved) testifies to the fact that, when defending his faith, he chose to make use of the teachings offered by the existing schooling system. In that respect he acts in no wise differently from his contemporaries, irrespective of their religious or philosophical beliefs.

[61] Fronto, *Ep. ad M. Caesarem et invicem* 4.13. On Marcus' "second conversion to philosophy" see van den Hout 1999, viii–ix, and his commentary on *Ep.* 4.13 in the same work.
[62] On Marcus Aurelius in particular, cf. Karadimas 2005 (with a detailed analysis of several chapters of book 2 of the *Meditations*); Lozza 2012; Lauwers 2015 81–92.

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Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* Revisited: Philosophy, Rhetoric and the Defence of the Christian Faith

Dimitrios Karadimas

Introduction

Justin wrote his *Dialogue with Trypho* (Πρὸς Τρύφωνα Ἰουδαῖον διάλογος, henceforth *Dialogue*) in the middle of the second century AD (after his *First Apology,* sometime between AD 155 and 165).[1] The *Dialogue* reports a discussion that took place probably at Ephesus between Justin and the Jew Trypho.[2] Some of Trypho's friends are also attending the discussion, but very rarely get actively involved in it, merely uttering a few words. It is a rather long discussion of 142 chapters.

The reader of the *Dialogue* notices, from the very first lines, that Justin adopts a Platonic medium (the dialogue form) in order to convey his message. Further along, as the reading progresses, the Platonic influence becomes clearer: the reader understands that a chance encounter has set the stage for the discussion, and that an old man, reminding us of Socrates, is engaged in a serious exchange of philosophical views in a question-and-answer manner.[3] All students of the *Dialogue* agree, however, that this picture (of a work that follows the Platonic form and method in order to discuss theological subjects) vanishes after the first eight chapters, i.e. after the prologue. It seems that the first chapters (1–8) recount Justin's search and attainment of truth, while the rest (9–142) are dedicated to the explanation of the truth that Justin has found. This latter section presents the major divergence of the *Dialogue* from the true Platonic dialogues: in the latter Socrates leads his interlocutor to the truth, while Justin, in his dialogue, knows the truth and tries to explain it.[4] In this way the *Dialogue* becomes a tool for apologetic.

The influence of Platonism on the development of Christianity is much discussed and well-documented. This situation is also true for the Platonic or Middle-Platonic influence upon Justin's conception of Christianity. The *Dialogue* is indeed a subject of modern debate as well. The enquiries raised in the course of this discussion do not question the existence of Platonic influence, but rather are concerned about its extent and the role it plays in the formation of Justin's world view, when compared to influences from the Bible.[5] This paper does not pursue this side of the matter. Rather, it seeks to show how rhetorical elements are incorporated into the body of this work, which has got a clearly

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[1] See Allert 2002, 32-34.

[2] The details of the discussion are most probably fictitious, but the broad outline may bear some relation to fact. Very little is known about Justin's main opponent, Trypho. From the *Dialogue*, we understand that he was a Jewish refugee who fled from Palestine to Ephesus (probably during the uprising - the war ended ca. 135 - against the Roman power). See Barnard 1964, 395-406, cf. 395-396. For the view that the *xystos* is located at Ephesus, see Eus. *HE* 4.18.6. Caesarea has also been proposed as the meeting-place in other publications. See Bagatti 1979, 319-331; Hamman 1995, 231-239.

[3] See Allert 2002, 135-136.

[4] Allert 2002, 135-136.

[5] See e.g. Gaston 2009, 573-580; Copan and Craig 2004, 131-134. See also Osborn 1973; Nahm 1992, 129-151.

Platonic form and which exhibits characteristics of such a Platonic model. I shall maintain that the discussion after the prologue follows a thread that is illuminated by rhetorical prescriptions and especially by the *stasis* theory in rhetoric, and that Justin, most probably consciously, exploited the advantages offered by judicial rhetoric in order to construct a persuasive apology in the frame of a Platonic dialogue. Tackling this side of the matter is most necessary, since the modern reader usually wonders, together with Chadwick, whether there is any coherent thread in the *Dialogue's* arguments at all. Chadwick wrote: "As a writer he [Justin] lacks the organizing power to arrange his material with desirable clarity. Were he writing today, he would be one of those scholars who place one line of text at the head of the page and cover the rest with lumpy footnotes."[6]

We will tease out the rhetorical elements that conceal themselves under the dialogue form of the work. Of them, those linked to the *stasis* theory are probably the most important. What, then, is the *stasis* theory?[7] The word *stasis* (plural *staseis*) literally means *standing still* or a *stopping point*. In ancient political life it also meant *faction, discord*. In rhetoric, a *stasis* is an issue that may be contested or a question that needs to be resolved before the argument can proceed. The ancient rhetorical theory of invention, whose systematic development started with Aristotle's topos-based approach in his *Rhetoric*, achieved its full-scale development in the hands of Hermogenes, the second-century AD rhetorician, in his work *On Staseis*. Aristotle had made the distinction between cases in which the question at issue was one of fact (one asks whether something had actually been done by someone) and those in which the question was one of law (one asks whether the action is legal or illegal),[8] and he had realized the importance of defining the question at issue for the development of the trial. He did not proceed, however, to construct a theory that could cover all the various possibilities, nor did he employ the term *stasis*.[9] The first who did so in detail was Hermagoras, in the second century BC: he discerned four types of *stasis* and laid the foundations for a more detailed discussion that resulted in Hermogenes' very systematic exposition some three centuries later.[10]

The *stasis* model was basically meant as a theory of argumentation for judicial oratory, but it could be (and was) useful to all kinds of oratory. The four principal *staseis*, from which secondary *staseis* result, are those of *conjecture* (στοχασμός), *definition* (ὅρος), *quality* (ποιότης) and *objection* (μετάληψις). The first, the *stasis* of conjecture, arises when the accused denies that he had committed the crime. Then, both parties have to present their case and "those presenting the better answer to the question will succeed in breaking the stasiastic impasse in their favour."[11] This is also true for the other *staseis*. If the accused admits the act, but he tries to redefine it, then the *stasis* of definition arises. Let us consider, for example, that someone admits that he killed the victim, but maintains that it was in self-defence. Then the act must be defined before we proceed further. If the accused accepts both the action and its definition but has recourse to various mitigating circumstances and argues that the victim deserved death or his death is beneficial for the community, and so on, then we have the *stasis* of quality. There is always, however,

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[6] Chadwick 1965, 276, 281.
[7] For *stasis* theory, see Russell 1983, 40-73; Kennedy 1983, 73-86; Montefusco 1986; Heath 1994, 114-129.
[8] Arist. *Rh*. 1358b.
[9] See Kennedy 1994, 97.
[10] Matthes 1958, 58-204; Nadeau 1959, 52-71.
[11] Nadeau 1959, 55.

the possibility that the accused will not rely on any of the preceding *staseis*. He might protest that there should be no formal action concerning this act or against him, since, for example, he has been granted immunity or he is a citizen of another city, etc. This stance represents the *stasis* of objection, a *stasis* that is brought forward on mainly legal/juristic arguments. From these principal *staseis* other secondary ones result, which, taken together, form the fourteen *staseis* in Hermogenes' system. We will encounter some of them in the following discussion and they will be explained in their proper places.

The viewpoint underpinning the analysis to follow is that Justin organized his *Dialogue with Trypho* following rhetorical strategies and, to some extent, the precepts of *stasis* theory, which was obviously familiar to him. The rhetorical theory that furnished judicial oratory with the necessary tools for creating persuasive and compelling apologies/defences could also help him defend his faith. The dialogue form was not incompatible with this plan, since for the rhetoricians at least the process of asking the right questions in the right order (always keeping an eye open for a chance of persuasion) was offered by *stasis* theory.

Employing *stasis* theory

Justin's aim was to persuade his audience (Trypho and his followers in the first place), as well as his readers. This is not just a plausible supposition, but a conclusion which emerges, as one reads the *Dialogue*. I counted more than 25 cases in which the verb πείθειν, 'to persuade', is used in its various forms,[12] so illustrating the ongoing effort to make Trypho change his views and adopt Justin's positions. This effort relies much on the procedure of ἀποδεικνύειν, a verb which is also repeatedly used. Trypho demands it as well, when he says ἀπόδειξον, i.e. prove it, show it by argument.[13]

It is characteristic of the apologetic nature of the work that Justin chooses to start the discussion with (and so base it on) the accusations made against Christians. The first step is to clarify the contributing factors and pinpoint the accusation.[14] Is it really an issue of fact? Are Christians generally accused of having adopted customs and a way of life that are condemned by every sensible human being? Or, as Justin expresses it in his address to Trypho, do the Jews condemn Christians only for believing in such doctrines and holding opinions which are considered false by the Jews? Is it, in other words, an issue of fact, or an issue of definition and opinion, which in this case equates with not observing a specific law? The arguments would be of a different kind in the first case. Trypho makes clear that he does not accept the accusations the multitude brings forward against the Christians (for example, that they eat human flesh, that after the feast they engage in lewd acts, etc.).[15] This accordingly means that the accusations are centred upon different views held by the two parties and concern the observance of a specific law, which is in this case the law of God. Thus, Christians are accused of not observing festivals, Sabbaths and circumcision. This accusation has its wider theological implications: Christians disobey

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[12] See for example 1.4, 11.1, 29.2, 32.5, 34.1, 38.1 and 44.1.
[13] E.g. *Dial*. 36.1.
[14] *Dial.* 10.1–2.
[15] For the accusations against Christians see, for example, Just. *1 Apol.* 26; Athenagoras *Leg. pro Christ.* 3, Tert. *Apol.* 7; Tatianus *Ad Gr.* 32-35. See also Karadimas 2003, 15-19.

God's commandments and their behaviour is very close to that of the gentiles; thus, Christians do not believe in the true God.[16]

Justin replies to this series of implications by affirming that they believe in the same God as the Jews, and to the basic accusation by employing a well-known judicial argument: "Now, law placed against law has abrogated that which is before it, and a covenant which comes after in like manner has put an end to the previous one."[17] The argument works in judicial oratory since it has been generally agreed that a new law comes in, as an improved version, and displaces an older one. But can it be adduced as an argument in matters of religion? And to what extent is it true? Justin is conscious of the problem and proceeds to two additional points: the new law has been given by the same God who had given the old one, and after that "there shall be no law, no commandment, no precept." The well-established view that a new law abrogates the old one has a strong persuasive force and this is exploited by Justin. In this connection Justin does not fail to mention that the new law concerns all people now and not only the Jews.[18] In order to establish more firmly the authority of the new law, Justin argues that the old law had already predicted the advent of the new one.[19]

The next step for Justin is to give a more detailed answer to the basic accusation that Christians do not observe the law.[20] This is much easier now, since he can exploit the method of legal interpretation, and more specifically the kind of the *legal stasis* found in Hermogenes under the name περὶ ῥητοῦ καὶ διανοίας. This is an interpretation of the law based on the play between the wording of the law and the intention of the lawgiver. At the same time this stance allows Justin to make a counterattack on the Jews: you do not interpret the old law correctly, you do not understand it, and finally, you do not respect it. The argument runs as follows: the ordinances of the old law were intended to lead the Jewish people to righteousness and free their souls from wickedness, but they interpreted them in the wrong way and understood them in a *carnal sense*.[21] Thus, their symbolic significance was lost. Consequently, the observing of fasting, circumcision, etc., does not have any meaning at all.

Though the counterattack mentioned above falls within the scope of this argument, there follows a yet harsher one on the Jews later on.[22] Justin asks Trypho and his people to apologise for the crimes they have committed themselves, instead of playing the role of accusers. Their crimes are: they crucified the Saviour, they have not repented and they slander the Christians. This strategy, according to which the denial of guilt is followed by a direct attack against the accuser, is certainly an old rhetorical weapon, and seems to

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[16] *Dial*. 10.3–4.
[17] *Dial*. 11.2. Translations from the *Dialogue* basically follow the *ANF* 1. Some modifications, however, have been introduced, when this was required for reasons of emphasis or greater clarity. In the effort of attaining greater clarity of meaning in the translation, the work by Falls (Falls and Halton 2003) was of great assistance.
[18] *Dial.* 11.4.
[19] *Dial*. 12.1.
[20] *Dial*. 12–16.
[21] See e.g. 14.2: "For what is the use of that baptism which cleanses the flesh and body alone? Baptize the soul from wrath and from covetousness, from envy, and from hatred; and, lo! The body is pure. For this is the symbolic significance of unleavened bread, that you do not commit the old deeds of wicked leaven. But you have understood all things in a carnal sense, and you suppose it to be piety if you do such things, while your souls are filled with deceit, and, in short, with every kind of wickedness."
[22] *Dial*. 17–18.

be a further development or a part of a more general eristic strategy, employed by orators and philosophers alike. I mean here the eristic strategy that seeks to turn the speaker's words back upon himself, to turn the argument of the opponent against the opponent himself, which process is described in some detail by Plutarch in his *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* (810E–811A).[23] This part of Justin's discussion closes with a rhetorical question:

> For if we patiently endure all things contrived against us by wicked men and demons, so that even amid cruelties unutterable, death and torments, we pray for mercy to those who inflict such things upon us, and do not wish to give the least retort to any of them, exactly as the new Lawgiver commanded us, then, how is it, Trypho, that we would not observe those rites which do not harm us – I speak of fleshly circumcision, and Sabbaths, and feasts?[24]

The rhetorical question includes Justin's final answer, which is based, to employ Aristotelian terms, on the general *topos* of the greater and lesser degree. When we can successfully observe much more difficult and dangerous things, it is not a problem for us to observe your rites! Trypho, however, is not allowed to employ the same kind of argument or similar strategies against Justin. He is severely criticized when (much later in the discussion; see 64.1) he tries to do so and expresses objections to Justin's words thus:

> Let Him be recognised as Lord and Christ and God, as the Scriptures declare, by you of the gentiles, who have from His name been all called Christians; but we who are servants of God that made this same Christ, do not require to confess or worship Him.[25]

Trypho tries to make an argument based on the rhetorical *topos* of the greater and the lesser degree: if something is true for the major thing, then it is also true for the minor that is included in it. We worship the Father, this includes everything, and thus we do not need to worship the Son! Trypho endeavours to apply logical principles in a subject which does not necessarily admit it. Justin's reply makes clear that he does not regard the remark seriously. He attributes it to Trypho's quarrelsomeness and light-mindedness (Trypho is φιλέριστος καὶ κενός). He also points out that Trypho is not prepared to understand what is said and only tries to find any sort of response. This description and the use of the word φιλέριστος (= φίλερις) indicate that Justin has it in mind to reproach Trypho with following strategies of *eristic*. The purpose of the eristic argument was to win the dispute by any means. Thus, eristic can use various techniques in order to achieve its aim: to succeed in debate or to give the impression of succeeding.[26] In our case it is true that Trypho applies an argument that is irrelevant (if we accept that Son is God, and that there is no gradation in divinity), but Justin's first reaction also follows eristic precepts, since he replies not with a refutation of the argument, but with an equally irrelevant *argumentum ad hominem*.

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[23] See also Roscam 2009, 83-85.
[24] *Dial*. 18.3.
[25] *Dial*. 64.1.
[26] See, for example, Pl. *Tht.* 167E, *Euthyd.* 272A-B; Arist. *Soph. el.* 165a-166a; see also Kerferd 1981, 62-63. As Kerferd points out, "Fallacies of any kind, verbal ambiguities, long and irrelevant monologues may all on occasion succeed in reducing an opponent to silence and so be appropriate tools for eristic."

To come back to Justin's allegation that it is very easy for the Christians to observe the Jewish customs, Trypho presents a reply that in some way transfers the discussion from the sphere of law to that of facts: "It is this about which we are at a loss, and with reason, because, while you endure such things, you do not observe all the other customs which we are now discussing."[27] This also transfers the arguments from the *legal* to the *logical stasis* (both of them constitute sub-divisions of the general *stasis of quality* mentioned above), according to Hermogenes' system. Justin is now obliged to adapt his answer to the needs of the issue and explain why this happens. Thus, he introduces the notion of *necessity*. In Hermogenes' classification the necessary (ἀναγκαῖον) constitutes a part of the *practical* issue (πρακτική) which belongs to the logical *stasis*. Justin argues that the commandments regarding circumcision (19), fasting (20), Sabbaths (21), sacrifices and libations (22) were necessary for the Jews in order that they not forsake God and distance themselves from Him, but they are not necessary for the Christians. In order to give more authority to his arguments he employs again passages from the Old Testament and legal interpretation.

To this problem posed by Trypho there follows another answer further along: all the customs under discussion were introduced at a certain point (or points) in Jewish history for a certain reason (or reasons). There was no need of circumcision before Abraham, or of the observance of Sabbaths, of feasts and sacrifices, before Moses. This means that there is no inherent relation between these habits, on the one hand, and righteousness, on the other; they may, thus, be abolished at another point in history. This and other similar arguments give a philosophical colour to chapter 23. This special colour has also a transitional function, since it allows Justin to continue his explanations in theological terms and focus on the Scriptures again. In this way he comes back to the discussion of law. He writes, for example, about circumcision: "the blood of that circumcision is obsolete, and we trust in the blood of salvation; there is now another covenant, and another law has gone forth from Zion." For a short while this atmosphere prevails (24–26), and we find Trypho asking for a clearer explanation of some points.[28] When, however, Justin maintains that there is no salvation for the Jews except through Christ, Trypho bursts out and accuses him of selecting and quoting whatever he wishes from the prophetic writings: there are, for example, many passages which call the Jewish people to observe Sabbaths.[29] This gives the opportunity to Justin to explain that these passages (he admits their existence) do not refute what has been said: it has been explained that they existed for a certain purpose and that the lawgiver wished to achieve a certain purpose through them.[30] The selective presentation of evidence was a usual strategy of the accused and the accusers and Justin wants to make clear that this is not the case here.

At this point Trypho raises another objection:

> that answer which pleases most–namely, that so it seemed good to Him […] does not satisfy me. For this is ever the shift to which those, who are unable to answer the question, have their recourse.[31]

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[27] *Dial*. 19.1.
[28] See *Dial*. 25.6. "What is this you say, that none of us shall inherit anything on the holy mountain of God?"
[29] *Dial.* 26.
[30] *Dial.* 27.
[31] *Dial.* 28.

The lawgiver is God here. Trypho questions Justin's right to interpret the law by referring to the will of the lawgiver and not to the law itself, and regards such behaviour as a sign of a lack of effective arguments. Casting doubt on the opponent's legal argumentation in this way is a usual rhetorical strategy. On the other hand, the recourse to the will of a higher authority is also employed in philosophy (see e.g. Philo, *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* 11, ἔδοξεν τῷ νομοθέτῃ διπλὴν εἶναι τὴν οὐσίαν τῆς ψυχῆς), as well as in rhetoric, when classical orators discussing matters of law refer back to Solon, the great lawgiver. Justin, however, feels that he has adequately proved his positions so far (ἀπό τε τῶν γραφῶν καὶ τῶν πραγμάτων, 'from the law and from the facts', as he says), and that he can now speak in an axiomatic way. His reply in this case starts with an appeal to the feelings of the audience, as it includes covered threats invoking fear, and concludes with the mentioning of Christ's power in the Second Coming.[32] It is characteristic that in this connection he also feels the need to point out that these words of his can persuade everybody, because they are not work of art, but the words of God:

> I think that while I mention this, I would persuade even those who are possessed of scanty intelligence. For these words have neither been prepared by me, nor embellished by the art of man; but David sung them, Isaiah preached them, Zechariah proclaimed them, and Moses wrote them.[33]

Justin has brought the discussion, step by step, to this point on purpose, and secured for himself the right to be the mouthpiece of God. At the same time he introduces a new and important dimension, probably necessary in this situation, not only because he addresses a distrustful Jew, but also because this is a central point in the new Christian rhetoric: persuasion comes not from proofs human wisdom adduces, but from the grace of God. It is achieved through the *kerygma* that conveys the divine words. Justin follows the line of thought which was explicitly introduced by Paul, in the first and second chapters of the *First Epistle to the Corinthians*.[34] When, however, one encounters this polarity in a preacher's thought (human art vs. God's grace), one is entitled to ask whether this is a genuine belief or a rhetorical strategy that tries to exploit to the *maximum* the persuasive force of authority. Augustine who approached the subject theoretically in his *De doctrina Christiana* makes the question legitimate, when he recognizes that persuasion does not come only from God, but that it rather results from a combination of both knowledge and skill in speaking, on the one hand, and divine guidance, on the other.[35] But we will come back to this matter later.

The subject of the discussion has remained basically unchanged from the very beginning. The description of the Second Coming, however, gives rise to a controversy that also involves changing the subject. Trypho says:

> These and such like Scriptures, sir, compel us to wait for Him who, as Son of man, receives from the ancient of days the everlasting kingdom. But this so-called Christ of yours was dishonourable and inglorious, so much so that the last curse contained in the law of God fell on him, for he was crucified.[36]

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[32] *Dial*. 28–31.
[33] *Dial*. 29.2.
[34] See esp. *Dial.* 2.4–5; see also Kennedy 1983, 180-183.
[35] See esp. *Dial.* 4.32; see also Kennedy 1999, 177-181.
[36] *Dial.* 32.1.

Trypho interprets crucifixion according to the old law and implicitly blames Justin of using the method of *forcible definition* (βίαιος ὅρος), in Hermogenes' terms, since he presents an arbitrary interpretation of the law and identifies the Messiah of the Scriptures with Christ, despite the major difficulty of his crucifixion. Justin promises to bring forward other passages from the Scriptures which show that the expected Messiah is Christ and that the Jews misinterpret them. This is what he tries to do in the following chapters (32.2–34).

A concluding remark by Justin (that gentiles who came to know the God Jesus, the crucified one, do not worship idols, something that Solomon committed under a woman's influence) which bears epideictic traces of praise for Christians,[37] gives Trypho the opportunity to blame them: "many of those who say that they confess Jesus, and are called Christians, eat meats offered to idols."[38] This reproach by Trypho leads to a short digression on this subject.[39] In his answer Justin makes a distinction that is also employed by orators and philosophers of the period alike. Aristides, for example, makes the distinction between real, genuine orators and those who just pretend to be so, while Plutarch says the same about philosophers and here Justin about the Christians. As well as genuine Christians, there exist false ones.

The subject, however, whose discussion started in ch. 32, has not come to an end yet. Trypho repeats and slightly changes his question.[40] If we suppose that everything is as Justin says, then he has proven that Christ should suffer in his initial Coming, be glorious in the Second, judge all people, and reign in peace for ever; but he has to prove still that all that has been spoken about refers specifically to this person: Jesus. Hermogenes would say that there is a dispute here about a person, which is to be examined and become the basis for argumentation. He explains in his work that determinate proper names, such as Demosthenes or Pericles, provide the best basis for argument (as opposed to broader generalized terms, such as farmers), because they can be seen from various aspects. Demosthenes, for example, was father, orator, politician, soldier, etc.[41] The *stasis* is obviously that of definition. Can it be proved that all the prescriptions of the Old Testament are implemented in this man? Unfortunately for Justin this case can only be argued on the basis of the Scriptures and the advantages Hermogenes finds with the determinate proper names practically do not exist here. If this discussion really took place, I think that this question was the most difficult Trypho asked. This becomes obvious from Justin's answer:

> I shall come to these proofs which you seek in the fitting place; but now you will permit me first to recount the prophecies, which I wish to do in order to prove that Christ is called both God and Lord of hosts, and of Jacob, in parable by the Holy Spirit.

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[37] See *Dial*. 34.8: "Nay, also, I venture to repeat what is written in the book of Kings as committed by him, how through a woman's influence he worshipped the idols of Sidon, which those of the gentiles who know God, the Maker of all things through Jesus the crucified, do not venture to do, but abide every torture and vengeance even to the extremity of death, rather than worship idols, or eat meat offered to idols."
[38] *Dial.* 35.1.
[39] *Dial.* 35.
[40] *Dial.* 36.1.
[41] Hermogenes, *On Issues* 29-30.

Indeed, Justin provides such evidence, but this does not give an answer to Trypho's question.[42] It is exactly these arguments by Justin which provoke the heated reply of Trypho:

> Sir, it were good for us if we obeyed our teachers, who laid down a law that we should have no intercourse with any of you Christians, and that we should not have even any communication with you on these questions. For you utter many blasphemies, in that you seek to persuade us that this crucified man was with Moses and Aaron, and spoke to them in the pillar of the cloud; then that he became man, was crucified, and ascended up to heaven, and comes again to earth, and ought to be worshipped.[43]

Trypho is not obviously persuaded and probably not able to bring counterarguments from the Scriptures: so he reacts in this way, abandoning the *legal stasis* and adopting the *logical* one – something he did earlier. Justin understands that the problem arises from the fact that these things sound paradoxical to the Jews, but he calls on them to believe and announces that more paradoxical words will follow. And he returns to new passages of the old law. It seems that the message Justin tries to pass on is that seemingly paradoxical things, things that transcend human logic, can express the divine truth. Trypho, however, is not persuaded and interrupts him to say: "I wish you knew that you are beside yourself saying these things."[44] Justin, on Trypho's insistence, restricts himself to the *logical stasis* and has recourse to what could be a kind of *metastasis*, transference,[45] in Hermogenean terms. The Jews, he says, do not believe because they are afraid of their archons. It is beneficial in a judicial sense not to believe.

Trypho does not try to give an answer to this remark of Justin and asks again the same question he had already posed in ch. 36 (it was actually asked first in ch. 32), pointing out that he has not yet received an answer: "Now, then, render us the proof that this man who you say was crucified and ascended into heaven is the Christ of God. For you have sufficiently proved by means of the Scriptures previously quoted by you, that it is declared in the Scriptures that Christ must suffer, and come again with glory, and receive the eternal kingdom over all the nations, every kingdom being made subject to Him: now show us that this man is He."[46] Trypho has been patient enough, but he makes clear at this point that the arguments used so far by Justin have not proved what he wants to know. In other words, the *legal stasis* (the discussion based on the Scriptures) cannot overcome its internal limitations. This question now needs arguments of a different kind to be brought to bear. Trypho seems to ask for additional evidence, probably of a logical or historical nature, which means that he tries to transfer the basis of argumentation from the pure *legal stasis* to the *logical* one as well. Justin, however, cannot offer satisfactory proofs of this kind, since much of the rest is mainly a matter of faith. This is the reason why he does not hesitate, in a very rhetorical manner, for a second time to postpone the answer for a more fitting occasion:

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[42] *Dial.* 36.2–37.
[43] *Dial.* 38.1.
[44] *Dial.* 39.3.
[45] Μετάστασις, transference; the blame for some wrong is transferred to a third party (other than the defendant or the victim) that is capable of being held to account.
[46] *Dial.* 39.7.

> It has been already proved, sirs, to those who have ears, even from the facts which have been conceded by you; but that you may not think me at a loss, and unable to give proof of what you ask, as I promised, I shall do so at a fitting place. At present, I resume the consideration of the subject which I was discussing.

Trypho has correctly described the situation. To a non-believer it has not been proven that anything written in the Scriptures about the Messiah pertains to Jesus Christ. Justin, however, interprets it as a lack of willingness to understand and even maintains that Trypho and his friends not only heard such arguments, but also have already accepted some of them. He agrees finally to bring forward additional arguments, but postpones it for later and he returns to the Mosaic Law to continue, as he says, the previous discussion.

He explains how some of the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law were symbols of things which pertain to Christ. He speaks, for example, of the mystery of the lamb (which God enjoined to be sacrificed at the Passover) as a type of Christ, of the offering of fine flour (a symbol for the bread of the Eucharist), of the twelve bells being attached to the robe of high priest (a symbol for the twelve apostles).[47] This part of the exploration ends as follows:

> And in short, sirs, by enumerating all the other precepts of Moses I can demonstrate that they were types, and symbols, and declarations of those things which would happen to Christ, of those who were foreknown as those who would believe in Him, and of those things which would also be done by Christ Himself. But since what I have now enumerated appears to me to be sufficient, I revert again to the order of the discourse.

What does Justin actually mean? Is the evidence sufficient to prove that the predictions of the Scriptures find their fulfilment in Jesus Christ? It is true that he gave a symbolic meaning to some prescriptions of the old law, and through them he could connect the law with facts related to Jesus. This kind of argumentation is closer to what Trypho demands. But to prevent it from being contested still demands on the part of the opponent, if not an actual acceptance of the same convictions, at least much good will. Justin knows this and what he does in response is to employ a rhetorical stratagem. By postponing the direct reply to the crucial question and by piling up arguments that are only partially germane, Justin gives the impression that much yet has to be said about this subject (which is true in any case), and that the points proving the issue are or will be among others to come. In this way, however, he conceals that this is his weak point. This is a version of a well-known stratagem of the forensic rhetoric which Quintilian calls *Homerica dispositio*.[48] Its name comes from the fact that it resembles Nestor's tactics of placing the weaker warriors in the middle of the battle array, so that their weakness will not be appreciated by the enemy. In the same way Justin tries to create the impression that the evidence that connects old prophecies with Jesus is compelling gradually. His purpose behind the remark that he "revert[s] again to the order of the discourse" is not clear: it probably belongs to the same strategy – that the importance of the matter does not lie with this argumentation, but with what will follow.

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[47] *Dial.* 40–42.
[48] Quint. *Inst*. V 12.14.

Immediately afterwards, Justin points out that the law has an end in Christ who was born of the Virgin and that the Jews cannot obtain salvation, despite the hopes they express among themselves.[49] Salvation can be obtained only through Christ.[50] Jews cannot be saved only because they are descendants of Abraham. They have, according to Justin, to understand things clearly and make a distinction between the real purpose of the law (its ethical end) and its ritual requirements (which are the means to the end). In this connection, the mention of understanding (ἐπίγνωσις), as well as of the notions of piety and practice of justice (θεοσέβεια καὶ δικαιοπραξία) which follow help Justin to point out that the Mosaic Law has a deeper significance that concerns everybody and not only the Jews. This could be what Justin regards as the real point of the discourse, provided that, as mentioned above, this expression is not simply a rhetorical stratagem. After that, the Jews are called to accept Christ in an authoritative tone of revelation.

A little later, Trypho interrupts Justin's speech. There follows this dialogue:

> And Trypho said, 'If I seem to interrupt these matters, which you say must be investigated, yet the question which I mean to put is urgent. Suffer me first.' And I replied, 'Ask whatever you please, as it occurs to you; and I shall endeavour, after questions and answers, to resume and complete the discourse.' Then he said, 'Tell me, then, shall those who lived according to the law given by Moses, live in the same manner with Jacob, Enoch, and Noah, in the resurrection of the dead, or not?'[51]

The atmosphere is now relaxed. Trypho interrupts very politely to ask an *urgent* question. The reader expects him to repeat the still unanswered crucial question. Justin very promptly replies that he is ready to receive and answer any question and that there is no problem with this. The question Trypho finally poses is a surprise. At this point of the dialogue Trypho gives the impression that he has been persuaded by Justin's arguments concerning Jesus Christ's relation to the Scriptures. The yet unanswered question seems not to be a problem now. Moreover, Trypho's new question gives rise to a discussion of a different kind. It is as if Trypho has come close to accepting Justin's theological convictions and he wishes to know whether people who observed the Mosaic Law in the past or follow it now will be saved. There follows a discussion on this subject in the next three chapters (45–47). I think that this digression is not a chance one and serves Justin's plan to delay yet further the answer to the basic question.

At the same time, the distinction made earlier is fully exploited now and it is clearly stated that those who observed the Mosaic Law before Christ would be saved because they did what is good, pious and just (καλά, εὐσεβῆ καὶ δίκαια), i.e. because they did what is universally, naturally and eternally good, pleasing to God and just. The importance of Justin's distinction between the ritual and the ethical requirements of the Mosaic Law has already been stressed.[52] I will only add here that this division is practically the one

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[49] *Dial.* 43.
[50] *Dial*. 44.
[51] *Dial.* 45.
[52] See Wendel 2011, 141. She writes that in this way Justin "deploys Greek concepts and terminology to depict the fidelity of Christ-believers to the Mosaic code as an exemplary embodiment of Greek Ideals." See also Wendel 2011 n. 22 on Justin frequently using such terms to appeal to Graeco-Roman sensibilities. If this is true, it is a clear indication that Justin did not intend to persuade Jews only through the *Dialogue*.

distinguishing between the word of the law and the intent of the lawgiver. The intent of the lawgiver is to guide people to what is universally just and pious, and this is done through certain prescriptions addressed specifically to Jews. In this way a qualitative differentiation is pointed out between the piety of Christian believers and that of Jews.

Later, however, Trypho brings back the question about Jesus, but changed in some respects:

> And Trypho said, 'We have heard what you think of these matters. Resume the discourse where you left off, and bring it to an end. For some of it appears to me to be paradoxical, and wholly incapable of proof. For when you say that this Christ existed as God before the ages, then that He submitted to be born and become man, yet that He is not man of man, this appears to me to be not merely paradoxical, but also foolish.' […] [To this Justin replies as follows:] 'Now assuredly, Trypho, the proof that this man is the Christ of God does not fail, if I will be unable to prove that He existed formerly as Son of the Maker of all things, being God, and was born a man by the Virgin. But since I have certainly proved that this man is the Christ of God, whoever He be, even if I do not prove that He pre-existed, and submitted to be born a man of like passions with us, having a body, according to the Father's will; in this last matter alone is it just to say that I have erred, and not to deny that He is the Christ, though it should appear that He was born man of men, and it is proved that He has become Christ by election'.[53]

Stressing the paradoxical side of Justin's convictions, Trypho seems to imply that he accepts *only* for the sake of the discussion that this Jesus is the Christ of God. Justin, on the other side, seizes the opportunity and points out that this has already been proved and is not affected by the answer that will be given to the present question. But both of them know that this has not been proved, and this becomes clear further along. The question gives rise to the discussion of whether Jesus Christ is son of man or son of God.[54] There, Trypho does not fail to notice that the Jews expect Christ to be a man who, when he comes, will be anointed by Elijah. This did not happen with Jesus, so this man is not the Christ. This is a characteristic point which shows that Justin (the writer, not the person of the dialogue) did not want to leave this question unanswered, and that he tried in every possible way to do so, although the nature of the problem did not allow him to be fully successful. What he does here is to depict Trypho, whose questions earlier tried to take away the discussion from the Scriptures, as bringing it back to them. Trypho questions that Jesus is Christ on the basis of the Scriptures. This moves again the discussion onto what we have called *legal stasis*, and now the question can more easily be argued for and answered. Elijah will come, as it is written, but before the Second Coming. Moreover, the spirit of God that was in Elijah was also in John, the precursor of God.[55]

Now Trypho admits that Justin is an able debater, ready to answer any question addressed to him.[56] It is implied that the question that kept coming again and again to the fore has been answered. The new version of his question, which follows immediately, is a genuinely theological one and keeps the discussion in the field of the Scriptures:

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[53] *Dial.* 48–49.
[54] *Dial.* 48–49.
[55] *Dial.* 49–51.
[56] *Dial*. 50.

> Answer me then, first, how you can show that there is another God besides the Maker of all things; and then you will show further that He submitted to be born of the Virgin.

These two questions will mainly occupy the discussion in the following chapters until chapter 86. The former extends from 51 to 62, and the latter from 63 to 86. The discussion is now based on the Scriptures and their interpretation. Trypho's remarks and questions are devised now by Justin, the writer, to bring forward those possible objections or reservations of an opponent who does not reject out-of-hand what he thinks is not proven, but he rather wants to have clear and well-documented evidence for the subject in question.

Some critical remarks and theoretical points

Very early Trypho protests: "All the words of the prophecy you repeat, sir, are ambiguous, and have no force in proving what you wish to prove."[57] The ambiguity of a word or phrase was exploited by speakers in various ways from very ancient times. The oracle at Delphi is a well-known example. As a device it is not exclusively linked to rhetoric, but it is included in the lists of rhetoricians as ἀμφιβολία, and it is also found in Hermogenes under this name as a *stasis*. It is certain that in the period under discussion the students encountered ἀμφιβολία, in their rhetorical studies, as a rhetorical device. It usually appears when both sides appeal to the content of the same law, but each of them reads this content in a different way in order to support its own case. In our situation, Trypho confines himself to pointing out the ambiguity, and he does not try to exploit it in favour of his own convictions. Justin's reply treats two points (prophecies which pertain clearly to Jesus and came true, as well as the absence of any new prophet after Christ) as facts, and tries to overcome the difficulty in this way.[58] In this case, he means, there is no ambiguity allowing of different interpretations. They are clear facts. Later, Trypho makes a similar remark again.[59] He asks Justin to be careful, in continuing his discussion of the Scriptures, not to use a metaphorical language that impedes clear understanding. This use of language, for example, allows the reputed gods of nations, who are only idols of demons, to be mentioned as gods! Justin is conscious of the problems metaphorical language can create in such discussions and he promises to bring forward Scriptural quotations which have a clear meaning and need no explanation, but only a hearing (i.e. there is no room for ambiguity and misunderstanding). Justin is obviously conscious that a problem of ambiguity appears not only when each party interprets a passage in its own way on purpose, but also when a certain phrase or expression is inherently ambiguous.

Another point worth noting is to be found in the second of the two parts mentioned above (namely, 64–86). Trypho expresses the view that, according to the Scriptures (a passage from Isaiah), God does not lend His glory to another (and by this he is pointing at Jesus). Justin makes a heated rejoinder in 65.2:

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[57] *Dial.* 51.
[58] The last prophet, according to Rabbinic tradition, was Malachi (fifth century BC). Justin does not take him into consideration.
[59] *Dial.* 55.

> If you spoke these words, Trypho, and then kept silence in simplicity and with no ill intent, neither repeating what goes before nor adding what comes after, you must be forgiven; but if you have done so, because you imagined that you could throw doubt on the passage, in order that I might say the Scriptures contradicted each other, you have erred. But I shall not venture to suppose or to say such a thing; and if a Scripture which appears to be of such a kind be brought forward, and if there be a pretext for saying that it is contrary to some other, since I am entirely convinced that no Scripture contradicts another, I shall admit rather that I do not understand what is recorded, and shall strive to persuade those who imagine that the Scriptures are contradictory, to be rather of the same opinion as myself. With what intent, then, you have brought forward the difficulty, God knows.

Justin says that such arguments that rest on the fragmentary presentation of relevant information are results either of simplicity or of ill intent, and he seems to believe that the latter is true of Trypho. Trypho is implicitly accused of having concealed parts of the passage and changed its meaning, so that he may mislead Justin. But this exchange gives also Justin the opportunity to declare that he is absolutely persuaded that there are no contradictions in the passage, and that if something seems to be so, then the problem is that the reader cannot fully and correctly understand it. He tries to prove, then, that this specific passage of Isaiah has a quite different meaning from that brought forward by Trypho.

Justin's discussion with Trypho necessarily focuses on the Mosaic Law and its interpretation. It is the law of God, but still it has to be explained, interpreted and understood. When things are differently understood and different interpretations are adopted, then the one party has to persuade the other and win it over. Among the methods employed by rhetoric in discussions of this kind were the three we met above: word of law vs. intention of the lawgiver, fragmentary or selective quotations and the exploitation of an existing ambiguity or the creating of one. It is Sextus Empiricus' work *Against the Rhetors* (early third century AD) which makes it clear that these three methods were the most usual and important ones. He maintains that rhetoric is harmful to the laws of the cities and his characteristic examples of harmful rhetorical practices are those under discussion.[60] The fact that we encounter them, or discussions about them, in the *Dialogue* is a clear proof of Justin's awareness of the existence, function and efficiency of those rhetorical practices.

As the discussion proceeds and Justin tries to prove, based on the Scriptures, that the son of God existed from the very ancient of times, and explains that he had already appeared to Abraham or to Moses, the following dialogue takes place:

> Then I continued, 'I propose to quote to you Scriptures, *not that I am anxious to make merely an artful display of words; for I possess no such faculty, but God's grace alone has been granted to me*

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[60] Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Rhetors* 34–38; see, for example, 36 and 38: "And that rhetoric is against the laws is already plain from the statements they make in their mal-artful arts. For at one time they advise us to attend to the ordinance and words of the lawgiver as being clear and needing no explanation, at another time they turn round and advise us to follow neither the ordinance nor the words but the intention; […] And sometimes they bid us cut out bits as we read the laws, and construct a different sense from what remains. Often, too, they make distinctions in ambiguous phrases and support the signification which suits themselves; and they do thousands of other things which tend to the upsetting of laws." For a detailed discussion, see Karadimas 1996, 75–85.

> *to the understanding of His Scriptures*, of which grace I exhort all to become partakers freely and bounteously, in order that they may not, through want of it, incur condemnation in the judgment which God the Maker of all things shall hold through my Lord Jesus Christ.' And Trypho said, 'What you do is worthy of the worship of God; *but you appear to me to feign ignorance when you say that you do not possess a store of artful words*.' I again replied, '*Be it so, since you think so; yet I am persuaded that I speak the truth*. But give me your attention, that I may now rather adduce the remaining proofs.'[61]

In my opinion, Justin admits here that he possesses the art of making a good display with words, the art of rhetoric in effect, (notice how he agrees with Trypho's remark; ἐπεί σοι δοκεῖ ταῦτα οὕτως ἔχειν, ἐχέτω, as if he says: what you see cannot but be true), but that its power is as nothing compared to the grace of God. It is the latter which gives him the power to speak and explain the Scriptures. Justin also points out that the important thing is to speak the truth, and in this case being persuaded of the truth and having the ability to present it comes from God. This is important for both the participants in the dialogue-based discussion and any future readers. It is implied that the traditional rhetorical art is not enough anymore to convey the message of God and persuade by its own means. The transmission of the new divine message has the need of divine interference, of the grace granted by God himself. Thus, Justin paves the way for the new Christian rhetoric not only in practice, but also in theory with these implications.

Towards the end of this part Trypho again accuses Justin of contriving interpretations of the Scriptures which are even blasphemous (79.1):

> On this, Trypho, who was somewhat angry, but respected the Scriptures, as was manifest from his countenance, said to me, 'The utterances of God are holy, but your expositions are mere contrivances, as is plain from what has been explained by you; nay, even blasphemies, for you assert that angels sinned and revolted from God.' And I, wishing to get him to listen to me, answered in milder tones, thus: 'I admire, sir, this piety of yours […].'[62]

Justin admits the limits of his method of persuasion. What is the word of God for someone may be a blasphemous one for another. In such cases the speaker has to be patient and understanding, while the traditional rhetorical practice of flattering the audience can play a mitigating role. The last case in which Trypho raises objections against Justin's words is in the next chapter (80.1), when he questions his sincerity and honesty.[63] Justin's reply is again a moderate one, delivered in low tones.

A turning point in the *Dialogue* is in chapter 87. Trypho declares at this point that he asks now questions because he wishes to learn more and does not want to create problems to Justin's exposition:

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[61] *Dial.* 58.1. Italics added.
[62] *Dial.* 79.1.
[63] "And Trypho to this replied, 'I remarked to you sir, that you are very anxious to be safe in all respects, since you cling to the Scriptures. But tell me, do you really admit that this place, Jerusalem, shall be rebuilt; and do you expect your people to be gathered together, and made joyful with Christ and the patriarchs, and the prophets, both the men of our nation, and other proselytes who joined them before your Christ came? or have you given way, and admitted this in order to have the appearance of worsting us in the controversies?' Then I answered, 'I am not so miserable a fellow, Trypho, as to say one thing and think another. I admitted to you formerly, that I and many others are of this opinion, and [believe] that such events will take place, as you assuredly are aware […].'"

> Do not now suppose that I am endeavouring, by asking what I do ask, to overturn the statements you have made; but I wish to receive information respecting those very points about which I now inquire.

This admittance does not mean that Trypho has been persuaded. There are points he cannot understand, such as, for example, that about the shameful crucifixion of Christ, given that the law says that whoever is crucified is accursed. But now he is ready to listen to Justin's exposition with a good will. When Trypho later asks a question that has already been answered, Justin mentions three possible reasons for this behaviour (ignorance, a desire to quarrel and request for repetition of the argument), but prefers to assume the last one (i.e. that Trypho tries by his question to urge Justin to exhibit the same proofs for the sake of the audience).[64] Trypho also agrees with this explanation. In this way Trypho appears to be practically Justin's collaborator in the effort to convey his message efficiently and persuasively.

Various subjects are discussed in the rest of the dialogue (the question just mentioned about crucifixion, that Christ took upon himself the curse for our sake, the resurrection that was also foretold, the offerings of the bread and the cup, and other subjects already expanded in the previous chapters), but it is now obvious that Trypho does not raise objections anymore and, as the dialogue proceeds, the already long answers by Justin become real monologues; Trypho is almost pushed into the background.

Conclusions

The previous exposition has sought to introduce new perspectives on the *Dialogue*, looking at it from a rhetorical point of view. The fact that Justin tries to defend aspects of the Christian faith and persuade Trypho and his friends of its truth makes this a legitimate approach. When the discussion closes, however, Trypho and his companions do not seem to have been persuaded and, certainly, they do not seem ready to accept Christianity.[65] Despite that, all of them confess that they have derived great pleasure from this long discussion, that they have heard more than they expected, and that this was a study of the Scriptures profitable to them. On the other hand, when Justin asks them to hearken to the word of Christ and not to their teachers, he does not receive any negative responses: he closes the *Dialogue* by wishing them to be of the same opinion as he is himself and accept that Jesus is the Christ of God. Although the reader does not encounter any conversion to Christianity at the end, the closing chapter of the *Dialogue* engenders a very positive atmosphere, which seems to imply that Trypho's negative view of Christianity did not remain intact, and that Justin managed to lead him and his friends into a better understanding of the Christian faith and its relation to the Mosaic Law. This is only the first step in the long course towards conversion. In other words, persuasion managed to cover only a part of the long distance Justin wished to cover.

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[64] *Dial.* 123.7–8.
[65] *Dial.* 142.

Some conclusions to be drawn from the previous discussion are:

1. Justin uses the form of a Platonic dialogue, but behind this, the way the discussion is conducted follows more the conventions of a rhetorical (and to some extent, of a judicial) investigation than of a philosophical one.

2. The arrangement of the material conforms more to rhetorical precepts of how to adduce persuasion and less on precepts of an arrangement by subject. Thus, we can discern four major parts, after the prologue. (a) 9–31. The main subject is the accusations of Jews against Christianity and the discussion is conducted basically according to the principles of *stasis* theory. (b) 32–49. Justin tries to prove that what is written in the Scripture refers specifically to Jesus. The version of the *Homerica dispositio* employed here is worth noting (delaying the answer and placing it in the midst of other arguments). (c) 50–86. The main subject here is Justin's effort to prove that there is another God besides the Maker of all things, and that he submitted to be born of the Virgin. Trypho's objections are basically methodological in this part and concern various strategies of misleading the opponent (ambiguity, metaphorical language, piecemeal information, etc.). (d) The last part is also the longest (87–142). Justin has so far managed to persuade Trypho and his friends at least to listen carefully and be interested in a deeper understanding of the new law of Christianity. He can now explain some other points to his audience, adduce some additional evidence from the Scriptures and present the word of God in the form of the new divinely-inspired rhetoric.

3. From the point of view of the 'degree' of the persuasion adduced, we can discern three major components, which correspond to three different grades of persuasion. There is a progress from an inferior degree of persuasion to a higher one. As was already implied above (see under 2), this first section comprises the chapters 9–50. Trypho has a certain view about the Christians and their faith, he is not open to Justin's arguments, tries to bring forward counterarguments and asks crucial questions which pose some difficulties to Justin. In the second part (51–86) Trypho is no longer as aggressive and hard-nosed as before: he seems to have accepted that the discussion will be continued on the basis of the Scriptures, and his reservations mainly concern the way Justin quotes or interprets them. He is rather motivated by his respect of Scripture than by his original negative view of Christianity. In the third part (87–141), Justin seems to have ascended to a higher point of persuasion, step by step. Trypho is depicted as almost having had all his reservations overcome. He is now ready to listen and understand, and submits his questions for that purpose. Justin has achieved a degree of persuasion, the highest possible in the circumstances, which allows him to make an exposition and present his interpretations to open ears.

4. As to the question whether the *Dialogue* was intended for the Jews only or for Jews and gentiles alike: here, I am afraid, we are none the wiser. The Jews or the gentiles who read the *Dialogue* are supposed to have received a Greek *paideia*, so the dialogue form as well as the rhetorical conventions and strategies used would be familiar to both sets of people. The fact that the greater part of the discussion is based on the Scriptures points to the Jews, but the approach could probably work even with the gentiles. It is worth noting that much of Justin's effort is to show that Old and New Law constitute one

body, and not only is there no special place for the Jews, according to the new Law, but they even have placed themselves outside the Old one by constantly misinterpreting it.

To discuss works like this one from a purely rhetorical point of view means that, by definition, one does not consider the philosophical or theological aspects of these works, which are – absolutely and definitely – the more essential ones. I think, however, that especially in a period of transition as this period of the second century AD was, the conflict of ideas and convictions and their mutual influence are better illuminated if we try to read these works under the light of the wider cultural environment in which they were written.

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The Trophy and the Unicorn – Two Images of the Cross of Christ in Justin Martyr's Texts, with Special Regard to Reception History

Anni Maria Laato

Introduction

In the second century, one of the most important tasks of Christian theologians was to define the Christian identity – on the one hand in relation to the Jews, on the other hand to the religions and culture of the Roman Empire. The apologists used several strategies in dealing with this task. In some cases, they chose to pinpoint similarities between the two groups in question, but often they concentrated on differences, wishing to prove the superiority of Christianity.

One central theme in both discussions – with the gentiles and the Jews – was the cross of Christ.[1] The cross recurred so often in the early Christian teaching and practices that even outsiders had noticed it. Therefore, in apologetic literature, there are several passages where the Christians defend themselves against the accusation of worshipping the cross.[2] In addition to the texts, there is also visual material making mockery of the alleged worship of the cross, e.g. the famous Alexamenos graffito in the Palatine museum (about AD 200).[3]

The Christian theologians answered the accusations of worship in two ways: by correcting the claim that the Christians worshipped the cross, but also by counterattack. In discussing this theme with the Jews, they set out to show that the cross was nothing wrong or new, but in fact prophesied already in the Old Testament; and in discussing with the gentiles, they could say that the cross is nothing strange or shameful, for the gentiles themselves have crosses everywhere, even in their symbols of victory. In Justin's texts, we find both strategies. For Justin, the Old Testament prophecies and figures are central in his dealing with the matter of the cross; in his *First Apology*, we find him trying to make Christian teaching and practices understandable for the pagans by drawing attention to images of the cross in his contemporary milieu and in common artefacts.

The purpose of my paper is to look more closely at two images of the cross that are found in Christian literature for the first time in Justin, and have been influential in later literature and art: the *tropaion* of a ship, as he terms it, and a unicorn with its horns.[4] I shall seek the possible backgrounds of these images, discuss their purpose in Justin's argumentation, and have a look at their later reception history. To appreciate symbols used by Justin in a broader context, I shall also discuss the images of cross and crucifixion in Early Christian

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[1] A standard work for the Cross and Crucifixion in early Christianity and the ancient world is Hengel 1977.
[2] Tert. *Apol.* 16.1; 12; *Marc.* 3.22; Min. Fel. *Oct.* 29.6; Or. *Cels.* 2.47.
[3] The graffito is located in the Palatine Antiquarium, Rome. Solin and Itkonen-Kaila 1966, no. 246.
[4] One explanation offered to the puzzling idea that a unicorn has two horns, is that when they are looked at sideways, the two horns may look like one.

art. An earlier commonly held view that the cross and the crucifixion appear in public Christian art only in the fifth century has been lately challenged. The unicorn as a symbol for Christ appears probably for the first time in a fifth-century mosaic in San Giovanni in Fonte, Ravenna, and becomes popular in the Middle Ages.[5]

The idea with types (lat. *typus*) and symbols

Both the *tropaion* and the unicorn belong to the rather large group of images or categories for the cross of Christ in Justin's texts.[6] Before looking more closely at these specific images, we shall shortly discuss why Justin felt the need to make use of such symbols and prefigurations. By the term 'symbol' is here meant any kind of image that has been used to represent the cross. Use of symbols in art was common in antiquity, but presenting types or prefigurations found in the Old Testament is a specifically Christian technique in art and literature.[7]

Justin wrote about the cross of Christ with three audiences in mind: Jews, pagans and Christians. In discussions with the Jews, he aimed to explain how a suffering Messiah dying on a shameful cross can at the same time be victorious. For this purpose, he needed interpretive models from an authoritative source, namely the Old Testament. In doing this, he had New Testament examples to follow as, for example, in *Acts* 7 Stephen gives Joseph and Moses as examples of God's chosen men who had to suffer at the hands of their own people, but who eventually led them to salvation. Justin presents both of these persons as types of Christ both suffering and victorious.[8] In order to persuade his audience to accept his method, he claims that even the Jews admit that typological and allegorical interpretation is a legitimate way to read the Scriptures:

> You know that what the prophets said and did, they veiled by parables and types, as you admitted to us; so that it was not easy for all to understand the most [of what they said], since they concealed the truth by these means, that those who are eager to find out and learn it might do so with much labour.[9]

In his mentioning of several types of and prophesies concerning the cross, Justin is dealing not only with Christology, but also with ecclesiology, in particular the universal character of the church. For him, it is Christ on the cross who calls the nations to him and rejects those Jews who do not believe in him. Among the many Old Testament texts as proof that Justin presents for the summoning of the nations and thereby the formation of the church, there are two kinds: texts containing prophecies he says have been fulfilled (such as *Mal*. 1:10–12 in *Dial.* 41.2–3, 117.5 and *Ps*. 72:17 in *Dial.* 121.3), and texts that were interpreted as being types of New Testament events and persons.

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[5] Murray and Murray 1996, 551.
[6] Others include the brazen serpent (*Num*. 21:6–9) and Moses' upraised arms in the battle against Amalek (*Ex.* 17:11–12). These two examples occur together already in the *Epistle of Barnabas* 12 (without a connection to the blessing of Joseph), and in Justin several times (*Dial*. 90; 111–112; 131). See Skarsaune 1987, 215–217; 393–394; 398.
[7] Jensen 2015, 3.
[8] Later, Tertullian, too, presents both of them as types of suffering on the cross (*Marc.* 3.18).
[9] *Dial.* 90.2.

In discussions with the gentiles, the Old Testament images and proof-texts were not that important. What they could prove was the ancientness of Christianity – in the *First Apology* 44.8 Justin claims that Moses is in fact older than all the Greek authors, and that they have learned their wisdom from him. More importantly, Justin introduces examples from the contemporary life of his audience, intending to show that the cross is not shameful, but in fact glorious.

The third group of addressees, Christians, were probably those who actually mainly read Justin's texts. For them, the arguments Justin presents against or for Jews and pagans were to function as models they could employ when discussing with these others.

Tropaion and a mast with a crossbar as a symbol for the cross

In his *First Apology* 54.1, Justin claims that the gentiles have fabricated several myths in imitation of the truth in order to mislead humanity. He adds a little later that no one, however, has tried this with the crucifixion, which is the "greatest symbol of the power and authority of Christ" (*1 Apol*. 55.1–2). He then lists some everyday things that are in the form of a cross, like tools, the human body with outstretched arms and a human face with a nose through which people breathe, to show that nothing in this world can be connected with anything else, without involving the form of a cross. Among these cross-shaped necessary things is what he terms 'a trophy' of a ship, without which it is impossible to cross the seas. He writes:

> For the sea is not traversed except that 'trophy' which is called a sail (τρόπαιον, ὃ καλεῖται ἱστίον) remains safe in the ship.[10]

A few lines down he adds that even the symbols his addressees carry in their processions – banners and trophies – have the form of a cross, and these, too, prove the power of this sign.[11]

It is not immediately clear what Justin means by the term 'trophy'. A *tropaion* originally has nothing to do with a ship, but denotes a memorial set up after a victory and, especially, one that has forced the enemy to flee the field. It was a stump of a tree where the arms of the enemy could be displayed. It did not have to be in the place where the victory had been won, but usually was found in the city where it could be honoured.[12] This kind of *tropaion* did indeed somewhat look like a mast with a crossbar (known in nautical terminology as the yard), and a cross, too. Later, *tropaion* meant any emblem of victory.

At first it seems that Justin indeed likens the cross to a mast with a crossbar, which has the form of a cross, but then he adds that this *tropaion* is called *istion*, a sail. It has been suggested that there is a mistake in the text here,[13] but Hugo Rahner thinks that the difficulty in interpretation arises from the fact Justin has compressed many concepts into a short (too short) formulation.[14] He argues that even if Justin does not mention the word

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[10] *1 Apol*. 55.3.
[11] *1 Apol.* 55.6.
[12] Neumann 1979, 986–987.
[13] Dölger suggests that instead of a 'sail', it should be 'mast'. Dölger 1918, 137.
[14] Rahner 1964, 378.

'mast', he must have had it in mind too (this is important for later texts where the mast itself is identified with the cross). Nor does Justin explain that the victorious ship denotes the church (which later Hippolytus and others do). Rahner thinks that Justin envisages the trophy as the sail hung up on a mast, as a mark of a victory; and the mast and crossbar which give the trophy the form of a cross are implied. Rejners agrees with him and, in order to make this thought clearer, translates *istion* as "mast and a yard".[15] There is no evidence that in antiquity the masts of a ship were called 'trophies', and therefore McDonald concludes that the metaphor of mast-trophy is a Christian innovation.[16]

As noted, a few lines lower down Justin mentions those 'banners and trophies' which signify authority and power and which the people carry in processions.[17] His idea is, therefore, to argue that the cross, which for the gentiles seems to indicate humiliation, in fact and already in their own world shows the contrary: authority and power. Jean-Marc Prieur notes that several of the other everyday objects where Justin chooses to see the form of the cross also in their ways symbolize power, abilities and victory.[18]

Old Testament background

Where did Justin get this idea from? My suggestion is that he does not only call upon contemporary nautical imagery and military trophies in his intention to stress the magnificence of the cross, but that he also has the Old Testament background in mind. In his writings, he is heavily dependent on the Old Testament, and presents an impressive list of Old Testament types and prophecies of the cross. Therefore, it is perhaps to be expected that even behind the figure of the trophy lurks some Old Testament reference: such could be found in the Ark of Noah, banners and standards and his version of *Ps*. 96:10.

Justin's nautical references are otherwise often connected to the texts about the Ark of Noah as presented in *Genesis* 6–9, *Isaiah* 54:8–9 and *1 Peter* 3:20–21.[19] In particular, in *Dial.* 138.1–2 he explains that in *Is*. 54:8–9 "I saved you (Jerusalem) in the flood of Noah" is a reference to Christ and the people who obey him. As Noah and his family were saved from the waters by wood, so has Christ "regenerated another nation (the Christians) through water, and faith, and wood." Christ has become a ruler of this nation, and the "wood is the mystery of the cross." With these Ark of Noah passages Justin lays the foundation for later interpretations of a wooden ship with a wooden mast as an image of the church, ruled by Christ on the cross. Other passages about Noah often refer to him being a father of all nations, and being saved as uncircumcised.[20] Justin ends his interpretation of *Is*. 54:8–9 by returning to discuss the concept of Jerusalem. For him it is clear that by Jerusalem God did not have in mind the actual place, but the Christians. He adds that God has prepared for them a resting-place in Jerusalem, which he explains as follows: "I mean, that by water, faith, and wood, those who are afore-prepared, and who

[15] Rejners 1965, 190.
[16] McDonald 1994, 280.
[17] Rahner 1964, 378–379.
[18] Prieur 2006, xxiii.
[19] See for example *Dial.* 19.4.
[20] *Dial.* 19.4, 92.2, 119.4.

repent of the sins which they have committed, shall escape from the impending judgment of God."[21] It can be concluded that Justin uses Noah-related texts to motivate the salvation of the uncircumcised, that is, the nations. For the depiction of Noah in early Christian art, see below in this article.

Another possible background influencing Justin's idea of a trophy is the image of the raising of banners and standards, which is a frequently occurring figure in the Old Testament, and often connected to theme of calling on the nations (e.g. *Is*. 49:22). In *Dial.* 26.3 Justin quotes one of these passages, *Is*. 62:10–63.6, where the raising of a banner is closely connected to restoration of Zion and the summoning of the nations:

> Lift up a standard (*sysseismon*) for the people; for, lo, the Lord has made it heard unto the end of the earth. Say to the daughters of Zion, Behold, your Saviour has come; having His reward, and His work before His face: and He shall call it a holy nation, redeemed by the Lord. And you shall be called a city sought out, and not forsaken.[22]

Justin tells that the nations who believe in Christ and repent of their sins are saved together with the righteous of the Old Testament, even if they are uncircumcised.

Yet another source for Justin's idea of cross as a symbol for victory and rule is his reading of *Ps*. 96:10. He quotes this verse in *Dial.* 73.1–3 with an early Christian interpretation, according to which the Lord reigns 'from a tree', and claims that the Jews have censured these words from their Scripture.[23] In this passage, Justin again combines the tree with the idea of dominion over the nations. This interpretation became popular in the West through Old Latin translations.[24]

It seems plausible, even if it cannot be proven, that behind Justin's short sentence about a ship with a sign of victory as a symbol for the cross, there are Old Testament interpretive traditions. The trophy expresses the idea of the Cross of Christ as a victory. It is used to make the cross of Christ fathomable and acceptable for both Jews and pagans.

Reception history

The reception history of this short passage in Justin is impressive. The idea of the cross as a trophy spread and made its way even into medieval hymns and art. This passage has also been regarded as a first witness, or starting-point, for a significant tradition, where the tasks, different parts, personnel and even the building-material of a ship have been given symbolical, ecclesiological interpretations.[25]

It is apparent that Tertullian and Minucius Felix have used Justin's idea of a *tropaion* and amplified it.[26] Both authors use the same words used by Justin (but in Latin):

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[21] *Dial.* 138.8.
[22] *Dial*. 26.1.
[23] See Skarsaune 1987, 35–42; 443.
[24] These words are attested in one Septuagint manuscript and in later Latin traditions, e.g. Tert. *Marc.* 3.19.1; *Adv. Iud.* 10.11; Ps.-Cypr. *De montibus* 9. See also Julian 1892, 1220.
[25] Rahner 1964, 306–313; 375–385.
[26] Tert. *Apol.* 16.2; *Ad nat.* 1.12.14; Min. Fel. *Oct*. 29.6–8. Lindblom 1925, 106–107 noted that Justin, Tertullian and Minucius Felix use the banners and trophies of the Roman army as symbols of the cross of Christ. See also Schubert 2014, 553–557.

tropaeum and *vexillum* (sail).[27] Both use this image to the same purpose as Justin: to argue against the gentiles that not only do the Christians not worship a cross, but the gentiles themselves have trophies, flags and banners that, in fact, are in the form of a cross. Both claim that wooden crosses are parts of pagan images of Gods and that pagans may worship them.[28] Minucius Felix writes:

> For your very standards, as well as your banners; and flags of your camp, what else are they but crosses gilded and adorned? Your victorious trophies not only imitate the appearance of a simple cross, but also that of a man affixed to it. We assuredly see the sign of a cross, naturally, in the ship when it is carried along with swelling sails, when it glides forward with expanded oars; and when the military yoke is lifted up, it is the sign of a cross; and when a man adores God with a pure mind, with hands outstretched. Thus the sign of the cross either is sustained by a natural reason, or your own religion is formed with respect to it.[29]

In *Adversus Marcionem* 4.20.5, Tertullian develops this image further. The cross is a *tropaeum*, a sign of victory, no longer understood as a visual symbol of a cross: "For with the last enemy Death did He fight, and through the trophy of the cross He triumphed."[30]

Minucius Felix and Tertullian do not yet develop the later and very popular idea of a ship as a figure for the church. In another context, though, Tertullian shows that he is aware of this idea, as he admits that the boat of the apostles (*Matth*. 8:23) in one sense can be seen a figure of the church, as he writes:

> But that little ship did present a figure of the Church, in that she is disquieted 'in the sea,' that is, in the world, 'by the waves,' that is, by persecutions and temptations; the Lord, through patience, sleeping as it were, until, roused in their last extremities by the prayers of the saints, He checks the world, and restores tranquillity to His own.[31]

Tertullian's ship-references are, however, mostly about real ships or the shipwreck of faith (*1 Tim*. 1:19, *Pud*. 13.12). Once, in *Adversus Marcionem* 3.18, Tertullian presents a list of Old Testament types for Christ's suffering on the cross. He names Isaac and Joseph, as explained above, and in explaining how Joseph prefigures Christ, he quotes *Deut*. 33:17 in a Latin version which mentions the horn(s) of a unicorn (*cornua unicornis*). This passage shall be discussed below. Here we only note that as a type of the cross Tertullian likens the tip of a mast (*antenna*) to the horns of a unicorn.

The first elaborated description of the church-as-ship is found in Hippolytus' *De Antichristo* 59 (written ca AD 200). He likens the ship to the church, traveling on the sea of the world. This ship carries a *tropeum*, which he interprets as the cross of the Lord. The topsails are identified as the prophets, martyrs and apostles:

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[27] In *Cor*. 11, Tertullian claims that a Christian soldier cannot carry a military banner (*vexillum*) that is in conflict with Christ.
[28] Min. Fel. *Oct*. 29.6: *Cruces ligneas ut deorum vestrorum partes forsitan adoratis,* cf. Tert. *Apol.* 12.3.
[29] Min. Fel. *Oct.* 29.
[30] *Cum ultimo hoste, morte, proeliaturus (Dominus) per tropaeum crucis triumphavit*. See Rejners 1965, 193.
[31] Tert. *De bapt.* 12.12.

> The sea is the world, in which the church is set, like a ship tossed in the deep, but not destroyed; for she has with her the skilled pilot, Christ. And she bears in her midst also the trophy which is erected over death; for she carries with her the cross of the Lord.

Hippolytus' direct dependence on Justin cannot be proven with certainty, but it is possible. He uses the word *tropaion*, 'trophy', for the cross, but by this time it could already have become a common usage. What is noteworthy is that Hippolytus, and after him several other writers, combines the mast/cross metaphor (without any mention of a trophy) with Homer's story of Odysseus binding himself in a mast to resist the Sirens.[32] He admonishes his readers to act like Odysseus: they should bind themselves to the Cross of Christ (he actually uses the word 'wood') and not listen to the heretics.

Later, the idea of a mast or a trophy as a symbol of the cross became very popular and was developed in many ways. Ambrose tells that the ship of the church voyages well in this world when driven by sails full of the cross of the Lord (*pleno Dominicae crucis velo*),[33] and Paulinus of Nola speaks about the saving faith that "we enjoy in the power of the banner of cross of God Christ" (*Christi dei vexillo crucis*).[34] Venantius Fortunatus (d. 609) used the image of a ship with a mast several times in his hymns. *Antenna crucis* (the cross as mast) is mentioned in the context of the soul's navigating to anchor in the port of eternal life: "Christ, I hope that you steer our souls through these waves by the tree and direct the sail with the cross-mast."[35] He can also use this imagery without any connection to a nautical context, as in his famous hymn *Vexilla regis*, written for the feast of the True Cross on the 19th of November 569.[36] In this hymn, the regal banner of the cross is celebrated, the *patibulum* (crossbar) is mentioned and the above-mentioned construal *regnavit a ligno deus* is used, too.[37]

The 'church as a ship' tradition without any specific mention of a *tropaion*/*tropaeum* developed quickly.[38] It was used to describe the spiritual journey of the church or a Christian to heaven, but also to deal with questions of hierarchy and discipline in the church. Not only the mast and sail, but all parts and even building-material of a ship acquired allegorical interpretations.

Horn(s) of a unicorn as a symbol of the cross

We have already mentioned another image of the cross, which Justin uses, namely the horn (or horns) of a unicorn. He is the first Christian author to present this image, and his purpose is to show the Jews that the crucifixion of the Messiah is predicted in the

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[32] *Haer*. 7.1; Cf. Clement of Alexandria *Protreptikos* 12.18.1–4; Ambrose *Expositio in Lucam* 4.2, Paulinus of Nola *Ep.* 30. McDonald has shown that the apocryphal *Acts of Andrew*, written at the end of the second century or beginning of the third, joins this tradition and combines it with Greek mythology (McDonald 1994, esp. 257–262).
[33] *Virg*. 18.119.
[34] *Ep*. 16. 8.
[35] *PL* 88.276.
[36] Julian 1892, 1220; Rahner 1964, 344.
[37] For the history of this hymn, see Julian 1892, 1219–1220.
[38] For the Ark/Ship as an image of the church, see Stuhlfauth 1942, 131–132; Peterson 1950; Goldammer 1950; Rahner 1964, 239–564; Ferguson 2016, 17–19.

Scripture, and to point to the address to the nations and the rejection of the unbelieving Jews. The idea of a unicorn as a symbol for Christ is based on a Septuagint version of the blessing of Joseph (*Deut*. 33:13–17), where instead of a young bull with horns (as in the Hebrew text), one speaks about a unicorn (*monokerootos*) and its horns (*kerata*). With these horns the unicorn "shall he push the nations from one end of the earth to another."[39] Justin quotes this verse in *Dial.* 91.1–3, where he says that this prefiguration and prophecy is being fulfilled in his own time as "some out of all the nations, pricked in their hearts, have turned from vain idols and demons to serve God" and at the same time, those who do not believe are pushed away.

Tertullian has taken his view on the unicorn from Justin. Like Justin, he, in *Marc*. 3.18.3–4 presents Joseph as a type of Christ. He quotes the same Old Testament passage as his predecessor and gives a similar interpretation, with some additions. According to him, Christ is "to some as severe as a Judge, to others gentle as a Saviour" like a unicorn with horns, or like a bull, but not like a minotaur. With his horns, which symbolize the extremities of his cross, Christ "pushes nations through faith, bearing them away from earth to heaven; and will then push them through judgment, casting them down from heaven to earth."[40]

In *Adversus Iudaeos* 10.7, Tertullian connects both images we have discussed in this paper, the mast of a ship and the horns of a unicorn:

> But Christ was therein signified: 'bull,' by reason of each of his two characters - to some fierce, as Judge; to others gentle, as Saviour; whose 'horns' were to be the extremities of the cross. For even in a ship's yard (*antemna navis*) - which is part of a cross - this is the name by which the extremities are called; while the central pole of the mast is a 'unicorn' (*unicornis autem medio stipite palus*). By this power, in fact, of the cross, and in this manner horned, he does now, on the one hand, 'toss' universal nations through faith, wafting them away from earth to heaven; and will one day, on the other, 'toss' them through judgment, casting them down from heaven to earth.

It seems plausible that it is not only a visual likeness of the horns with a cross that inspired Justin to connect the horns of a unicorn with Christ's power and authority to divide the peoples to those who are saved and those who are not. In the Old Testament and in Near Eastern culture, the horn-motif has over the centuries symbolized power and strength, and it is easy to believe that this has influenced Justin.[41]

Justin and Tertullian, however, connect the horns of a unicorn with Christ on a cross in another way too: when speaking of his humiliation and suffering. In *Dial.* 98.5

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[39] Rejners 1965, 99–100.

[40] *Ioseph et ipse Christum figuraturus (nec hoc solo, ne demorer cursum, quod persecutionem a fratribus passus est ob dei gratiam, sicut et Christus a Iudaeis carnaliter fratribus) cum benedicitur a patre etiam in haec verba, Tauri decor eius, cornua unicornis cornua eius, in eis nationes ventilabit pariter ad summum usque terrae: non utique rhinoceros destinabatur unicornis nec minotaurus bicornis, sed Christus in illo significabatur, taurus ob utramque dispositionem, aliis ferus ut iudex, aliis mansuetus ut salvator, cuius cornua essent crucis extima. Nam et in antenna, quae crucis pars est, extremitates cornua vocantur; unicornis autem medius stipitis palus. Hac denique virtute crucis et hoc naore cornutus universas gentes et nunc ventilat per fidem, auferens a terra in caelum, et tunc per iudicium ventilabit, deiciens de caelo in terram.*

[41] Rejners notes (1965, 98–99) that the main source for Justin's usage of this image is the Old Testament, but that even the visual similarity in form between horns and cross, as well as widespread symbolism of the horns as a sign of physical strength have played their part.

and 105.2, Justin quotes *Ps*. 21(22):22 to show that the prayer of Christ on the cross did "save me from the horns of a unicorn" fulfilled the prophecy uttered in the Psalm. Tertullian, in *Marc.* 19.1, explains Christ's prayer on the cross: "Save me from the lion's mouth" that is, the jaws of death, "and my humiliation from the horns of the unicorns", in other words, from the extremities of the cross. In these passages, the horns of unicorns stand for the power of evil.

Yet another text connects the trophy-motive with the unicorn-motive: shortly before above-quoted words, Tertullian quotes the Christian interpolation to *Ps*. 96 *Dominus regnavit a ligno*, discussed above. Christ on the cross is both victorious and suffering. Rejners notes that 'unicorn' was never a common name for the cross of Christ in early Christian literature.[42] It is, however, found, for example in Hippolytus (*Benedictiones Moysis*), Cyprian (*Test* 2.7) and Basil, commenting on Psalm 92:10. Basil connects the image of Christ as a unicorn in its power and glory, as he writes:

> On the whole, since it is possible to find the word 'horn' used by Scripture in many places instead of 'glory', as the saying 'He will exalt the horn of his people' [*Ps*. 148:14] and 'His horn shall be exalted in glory' [*Ps*. 112:9] or also, since the 'horn' is frequently used instead of 'power', as the saying 'My protector and the horn of my salvation', Christ is the power of God; therefore, he is called the Unicorn on the ground that he has one horn, that is, one common power with the Father.[43]

Basil's text supports the interpretation that already Justin had the power and glory of Christ in mind as he presented the unicorn as a symbol for Christ. Therefore, both the *tropaion* and the unicorn have the same function in Justin: to emphasize the glory and victory of Christ.

The unicorn is naturally known even in Jewish tradition. Günther Stemberger has noted one peculiar interpretation in the Babylonian Talmud: when discussing what kind of animal Adam sacrificed in the Paradise, one proposal is that it was a unicorn. He quotes a discussion on *Ps*. 69:32: "For said R. Judah: The ox that the first man offered was a unicorn, as it is said: 'And it shall please the Lord better than an ox whose horns extend beyond its hooves'."[44] Thus, the animal Adam killed was not a real animal.

The cross and crucifixion in Early Christian art

It is worthwhile here to shortly discuss the cross and crucifixion in early Christian art, because images from the third to fifth centuries recall similar topics and ideas as found in Justin's texts, namely the discovery of the cross hidden in everyday phenomena and also prophesied in Old Testament types.[45]

It has long been discussed why the cross and the crucifix appear rather late in public Christian art compared to other themes, such as the miracles of Jesus.[46] It has been

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[42] Rejners 1965, 106.
[43] *Hom. in Ps.*13.5.
[44] *b. Šabb*. 28b. Stemberger 2017, 230–231.
[45] For the discussion on the cross in early Christian art, see Jensen 2017.
[46] In private art there are a few earlier examples, see Sheckler and Leith 2009, 4–7.

claimed that before Constantine there are no Christian images of a cross.[47] Distinctively Christian art in general indeed first enters the world at the beginning of the third century.[48] The first surviving public image of the crucifixion is on the wooden panel doors of Santa Sabina in Rome from the fifth century, and even there the cross itself is only vaguely visible.[49] As an explanation for this absence of images, the embarrassment the shameful cross could produce in ancient contexts has been put forward, as well as a reluctance to produce non-symbolic images of God.[50]

Recently, this view has been challenged as too narrow. Bruce Longenecker has collected evidence which shows that already before Constantine there actually are painted or sculpted crosses, even if not many.[51] Paul Finney notes that the early Christians were well aware of the use of symbols in pre-Christian art, and it was natural for them to continue this praxis.[52] Therefore, one should not just look for direct images, but symbols too. Robin Jensen adds that in its earliest stage, Christian art typically used symbols, and these did not radically differ from non-Christian images.[53] Jensen points out that there also are crypto-crosses, that is, crosses hidden within other images, such as anchors and masts.[54] Many scholars argue that in the catacombs and sarcophagi the omnipresent *orant*-figure hints at the cross – this idea even has a textual basis.[55] It is easy to understand that if even outsiders interpreted this prayer-position as a symbol of a cross, it would well explain why the apologists sought to counter criticism of Christians worshipping the cross. Therefore, one should see crosses only in direct presentations, but also in symbols, types and gestures. This idea is fully in line with Justin's examples of the *tropaion* and the unicorn.[56]

By the third century, recognizable Biblical themes had become customary in Christian art. As noted above, one of the possible sources for Justin's idea of a trophy in a ship is the story of Noah's Ark, which in early Christian art was among the first images that became popular in catacomb art and sarcophagi.[57] Noah is almost always presented alone, in the *orant*-position and in a box with an open lid.[58] The image is clearly intended

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[47] For this claim, see Jensen 2000, 130–131; Longenecker 2015, 2–5; 8–9.
[48] Finney 1994, 99–115 points out that the first Christians often used existing images and gave them new interpretations, thus it is not always easy to decide when a particular piece of art is Christian or pre-Christian.
[49] Sheckler and Leith 2009.
[50] Jensen 2000, 133–137 and Longenecker 2015, 5–8 have collected arguments presented in favor of this claim - in order to challenge them in their books.
[51] Longenecker 2015, 76–87.
[52] Finney 1994, 53.
[53] Jensen 2012, 69; Jensen 2015, 13.
[54] Finney 1994, 111; Jensen 2000, 137–140.
[55] Jensen 2000, 36; Scheckler and Leith 2009, 2.16. Tertullian points out this meaning in *Or*. 14–15 – in the latter chapter he mentions the three praying friends of Daniel, an image often occurring in art in connection with Noah, another reference to Christ (Jensen 2000, 80).
[56] The connection between Justin's examples of images of the cross and Christian art is pointed out by Longenecker 2015, 85 and Schekler and Leith 2009, 11.
[57] Jensen 2012, 18–20; 2015, 13–14.
[58] Jensen 2012, 18. An explanation for this way of presenting Noah has often been sought in how the story of Deukalion and Pyrrha is presented in pre-Christian art, Jensen 2012, 18. However, in Apamea, Asia Minor, similar images are found on Jewish coins from the time of Septimius Severus onwards. The reason for that imagery could be the same pagan story, but another explanation is also possible: a connection to the Ark of Covenant.

to be a type. Both in Justin and in this earliest art, the Ark is to be understood in context of baptismal imaginary. Just as eight persons were saved from flood in the Ark, so the baptism saves the Christians.[59] As shown above, Justin, Tertullian and Minucius Felix thought that the mast with its crossbar symbolized the cross, and from Tertullian and Hippolytus onwards, the ship (later even Ark) is interpreted as the church. Origen was the first who elaborated the idea of Noah as Christ, the architect and builder of the church.[60]

Robin Jensen thinks that the reason that the Christians chose to present the cross through symbols and types was primarily the typological exegesis.[61] In many ways, the Christian artists and writers continued traditions from pagan antiquity, but a typological presentation is new, and marks a distinctively Christian approach to the visual arts.[62] In this article, I have suggested that what others did in painting and sculpting, Justin does in literature. He both seeks connections to his contemporary culture and gives new interpretations to older images.

Conclusions

In Justin's theology, the cross of Christ is the central concept for the Christian identity. In this article, we have dealt with two images, new in Christian usage, which Justin employs to teach about the cross and its functions. He writes with several audiences in mind and uses several strategies in his argumentation.

Against the mockery of the pagans that the Christians worship a humble cross, Justin claims that the cross in fact is a sign of power and authority, a pivotal point dividing the believing from the unbelieving. Additionally, by giving examples from their common and contemporary milieu, he seeks to demonstrate that the pagans honour crosses, without really knowing it. For or against the Jews, Justin argues that the cross of Christ is prefigured in many ways in the Old Testament. Several of these passages deal with the summoning of the nations and the rejecting of unbelieving Jews.

As Justin is the first surviving witness for both these images, his texts invite the reader to look for both their possible background and for their reception history. I suggest that Old Testament, and more broadly Near Eastern imagery, forms the source for both these figures. Justin then, in a creative way, combined earlier motives with his contemporary imagery. There can also be found a degree of parallelism with the presentation of the cross in early Christian art: the cross could be presented not only directly, but also through various symbols. The typologies of the cross and other references to the passages in the Old Testament concerning wood proved to be inspirational, and went on in several ways to influence later Christian literature and art.

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[59] This Noah explanation in *1 Peter* belonged to early Christian catechetical teaching. Jensen 2012, 206; Jensen 2015, 19.

[60] Or. *Gen. h.* 2.3–4. It is very interesting is to compare two images in the Museo Nazionale Romano Terme di Diocleziano. One is of Noah in his box, and below him, some strange items are depicted. Similar images, are found in a funerary inscription of an architect – and they can be identified as his tools. Could the artist who made this Noah-image have chosen these items on purpose so as to mark him/Christ out as an architect?

[61] Jensen 2015, 3.

[62] Jensen 2015, 24.

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Reconsidering Anthropology: A Note on Soul and Body in the Thinking of Justin Martyr

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Justin, considered one of the most important Greek apologists of the second century, if not the most important, was at first drawn to several philosophical systems of the pagan world. He attended the Stoic, the Peripatetic and the Pythagorean schools,[1] but none of them satisfied him.[2] Only when he came into contact with Christianity did he feel that he had found what he sought and declared that it was the only true philosophy.[3] Henceforth, he was fully engaged in studying and developing the new doctrine. He managed to prove the superiority of Christianity over the major Hellenistic philosophies that had influenced the development of the culture and civilization of the 'known world' up to that point.[4] Using their terminology and thinking, he put together a viable Christian doctrine in accordance with the understanding of that time.

He was totally dedicated to the truth of the confession of faith and became one of the most important Christian missionaries, preaching the word of God, albeit dressed as a philosopher. He travelled as an itinerant teacher, promoting the moral values of the gospel of Christ. Composing fundamental works for the times in which he lived, he founded a catechetical school, but came into conflict with the pagan philosophers and the authorities of the state and eventually died as a martyr for Christian truth and freedom. His name was soon recognized by his contemporaries and he gained followers. His ideas continue to interest historians and researchers to this day.

The intention of this short essay is to make a few comments on his anthropology, more specifically on his theory about human beings and their destiny on the road to salvation. His teaching, although strongly influenced by philosophy, especially the Platonic, lies to a large measure within Pauline parameters and, with all its deficiencies, opened up the field for a deeper analysis.[5]

Man is a rational being, composed of body and soul, between which there is a constant flow of energy, which we call life; all contained in a body and mind that operates in near perfect harmony with an amazing accuracy. Justin talked about the materiality of the body, about its composition and evolution, starting from a seed that gives forth fruit and which, spreading in all directions, turns itself into an ever-growing source of life. Concerning the soul, he said that it has a kind of 'physicality': this remark clearly demonstrates his uncertain grasp of some concepts in his Christian understanding, still being dominated, as he was, by the influence of his philosophical training prior to his

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[1] Droge 1987, 303.
[2] Osborn 1973, 67–68.
[3] Skarsaune 1976, 55, 56, 58, 61, 65, 71, 73.
[4] Droge 1987, 305. Actually, the entire work was designed to show the superiority of Christianity. Although Justin recognizes that "the philosophy is a divine gift sent down to men", Christianity is "the only safe and profitable philosophy", Droge 1987, 316.
[5] For details about the influence of Plato over Justin's anthropology in his pre-Christian period, see especially Edwards 1991, 17–34.

conversion to Christianity.[6] In fact the oscillating nature of his thought is predominant throughout his anthropological work.

Before reviewing briefly Justin's conception of the body and the soul, one important clarification must be made. Despite some equivocal expressions, he never embraced the trichotomist theory, but was a believer in the dichotomous constitution of the human being. There is some uncertainty in his speech and terminology, but this may simply be because he had not enough time to 'weigh' the philosophical formulations of his time, and to adopt one or the other conclusively.

The body

The current Christian teaching about the human body and its importance in the process of the spiritual perfection of man is well known. It does not exist separate from the soul, because, "it possesses within itself, from the beginning, the particular working of the soul, an operation *stamped upon the body* with the entire complexity of the soul's rational activities and its forms of sensibility."[7] It differs from all other material creatures existing in the world due to the presence of the soul in it. God created the body directly from the dust, where it will return after death. Such teaching about the body was nothing as clear during the time of Justin.

The Christian world was still under the immense influence of the Pythagorean and Platonic philosophies, which claimed the exclusive immortality of the soul and the final corruptibility of the body. In the idealistic philosophies, the body was not held in high regard because it was considered merely a kind of prison for the soul. The body was regarded as a simple element for the physical support of the man, so having but a secondary character, auxiliary and temporary.[8] Justin opposed this view. He saw the body as a sanctuary for the soul, as something of inestimable value. And even if his interpretations are sometimes quite tentative, no one can deny his genius in analysing and selecting the doctrinal elements to develop an *acceptable* anthropology. Moreover, he was faced with a delicate situation in which he had to present his arguments in two different ways, depending on whether he was in dialogue or confrontation. Of course, here we are referring specifically to *Christians*, but we will also mention briefly *the pagans*.

Justin invoked in his support the novelty of the message brought by Christ, which assigned the human body high esteem by the care he showed for it, through the miraculous healing he performed and especially through the resurrection. Christ had changed the accepted idea of the body, by the promise that he will transform it from being corrupt into being imperishable.[9] Resurrection is the climax of this appreciation of the body. Moreover, the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the flesh becomes the main argument in his theological speech on the value of the body for human salvation.

The Christian concept declares that at the Second Coming of the Saviour believers will rise again with the bodies that they had when they lived on earth. This moment will be the culmination of all the miracles that Christ carried out during his earthly work.

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[6] Dumitrașcu and Voicu 2004, 42.
[7] Stăniloae 2000, 66.
[8] Dumitrașcu 1994, 72.
[9] Just. *Res*. 10. 298–299.

The feeding of multitudes with a few loaves and fish, the healing of lepers, the blind, deaf, lame and paralytics, the casting out of evil spirits from people and not least through bringing back people from the dead, all lead to this.[10]

This was a totally different concept from that of the philosophical and gnostic currents of the time. They claimed that the body was unworthy of resurrection and heavenly life because of its despicable substance, dust, and the violence used by it against its prisoner the soul, forcing them to sin together.[11] Justin justified his position with two arguments that support each other.

The first refers to the biblical text, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness":[12] this shows very clearly that it is *the carnal man* being invoked when it is linked to another passage according to which God "formed man of the dust of the ground."[13] The second argument depends on the internal logic of a comparison as follows: if the painter loves his own achievement, it is impossible for God, who is the creator of the whole universe, not to love every part of his creation, and especially the complete man, body and soul, the most perfect of his creatures.[14]

Justin said that heretics, referring either to all Jewish sects or just to one of them (or even to some Jews influenced by Philo's philosophy), state that "the human frame was the workmanship of angels."[15]

Justin refers again here to the image of the painter and his care for the state of his works, in seeking to strengthen his previous statements in favour of the human body. Specifically, he says that if painters want their images to last, in order to be glorified through them, they do not hesitate to restore them when they have deteriorated. Then how could God not take care of his work? How could someone think that God, after creating man, would take care only of the soul, and not also of the body? Would he have worked in vain? Impossible! Clearly, God, who is the Supreme Reason and the Absolute Love, includes the body in the resurrection, not only the soul. The gospel of salvation is addressed to just this point too.[16]

As we have already noted, Justin built all his argument on the reality of Christ's resurrection. But he often had to face a contrary opinion of this wonderful act, unique, unrepeatable and with universal value as it is: some believed that the resurrection of Christ, if it happened, was just a spiritual matter. Therefore, he was forced to try to explain the inconsistency of such a theory. If the resurrection of Christ was strictly spiritual, then logically, he ought to appear in a two-dimensional form, the body on side and the soul on the other. But we know from his appearances post-resurrection that this did not happen. Justin clearly stated that The Lord Christ had resurrected with his body, as is written in the Holy Scripture.

In order not to leave any real doubt regarding his presence after the resurrection, he said to his disciples: "Why are you troubled? Why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is Myself. Handle Me and see for a spirit has not

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[10] Dumitrașcu 1994, 72.
[11] Coman 1968, 381.
[12] *Gen*. 1:26.
[13] *Gen*. 2:7.
[14] Just. *Res.* 7.297.
[15] Just. *Dial*. 62.228.
[16] Just. *Res.* 8.297.

flesh and bones as you see I have. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet."[17] In confrontations with those who said that God would save only the soul, which is part of the divine being, and not the body, which is of another nature, the answer of Justin was very clear. He said that between the two elements (body and soul) there is a perfect unity. Therefore, salvation is for both of them and not just for one. Each person carries in his body the inner essence of the soul that lives in him. In other words, the spirit of each person exists in every fibre of the body.[18] Consequently, the body alone cannot be accused of sin, but neither does it constitute a prison for the spirit and thereby forces the latter to sin, because the soul is the starting point of all decisions and actions of man.[19]

Justin emphasized once again the value of the body, when he recommended to Christians to live a sober lifestyle and to abstain from sin, if they really wanted to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

When Justin addressed pagans, who had doubts about the state of the body and especially about the absolute power of God, he changed his working methods and arguments. He said that "[i]f the idols of Homer can do all, with more reason God can resurrect the body."[20] Almost all philosophers, despite all their differences, speak of this idea of rebirth or re-composition of the body. One of their mutual ideas is that everything is made from matter, which after its disappearance may reappear through its own immortal force, by some force which is located within the matter or through the power of a deity. He cites an *alloy* that has several elements, such as gold, silver and copper that someone wants to break down and recombine to suit his own purposes.[21]

Consequently, whether he addressed Christians or pagans, Justin was convinced that the human body should be cherished and honoured because it is truly the sanctuary of his soul. Although some infelicity of expression, or even conceptual ambiguity, can be seen in many passages, the general line of his anthropology is correct. Body and soul are interdependent, and they support each other in all activities carried out by man. Even if his pronouncements came rather in the form of questions put by him to his interlocutors or to himself, he has the merit of trying to expound something (as far as it was possible then) from the mystery that is a human being. It is a kind of dialogue with himself, which is meant to show on the one hand the manner of intellectual working and analysis of the author, whilst on the other hand it presents a solution that may be sufficient for the contemporary level of thinking about Christian anthropology.[22]

He asks and answers: "For what is man but the reasonable animal composed of body and soul? Is the soul by itself man? No; but the soul of man. Would the body be called man? No; but it is called the body of man. If then, neither of these is by itself man, but that which is made up of the two together is called man, and God has called man to life and resurrection, He has called not a part, but the whole, which is the soul and the body."[23]

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[17] *Luke* 24:38-40.
[18] Just. *Res.* 8.297–298.
[19] Coman 1968, 385.
[20] Just. *Res*. 5.296.
[21] Just. *Res*. 6.296.
[22] Dumitrașcu 1994, 74.
[23] Just. *Res*. 8.297–298.

The soul

The concept that Justin held about the soul is perhaps the most controversial anthropological issue present in his writings. This is understandable if we consider that almost all the great thinkers of antiquity (like Plato and Aristotle) have dedicated works to it: Justin came into contact with many of these in his lifetime. It seems that he even wrote something (mentioned by Eusebius of Caesarea) in which he presented their various opinions and where he promised that he would present his own thinking (of course quite different) in a separate work.[24] Unfortunately both of these oeuvres are lost.

From the Christian point of view, the soul is a real substance, living and immaterial which comes from God through creation and not an emanation from the divine being. Through the soul, man is in permanent contact with God and the spiritual world. It transcends the body and cannot be identified with the palpable and special rationality of the body. It is a conscious subjective rationality, but beyond all rationality and the passive sensitivity of nature. Nor does it cease to exist when the body dies. It is the created image of the Eternal Conscious Spirit.[25] Two periods can be identified in the intellectual life of Justin, each one of them presenting interesting aspects regarding his doctrine about the soul.

Before the conversion to Christianity

The first period is the one preceding Justin's conversion to Christianity, when, as is known, he was under the influence of the Platonic philosophy.[26] Justin had the good sense to understand, in time, the weakness of this system of thinking and to gradually free himself from its power and illusion. However, here, we are reviewing the beginning of his attempts at comprehension.

Justin observed the existence of some philosophers who did not even consider the question of whether there were one or more gods, and who were uninterested in why people display faith. It appears that they cared only to contemplate the universe.[27] On the other hand, he recalls others who, although they argued that the human soul is immortal and has substance, believed that it could not receive any punishment, because what is not flesh cannot suffer.[28]

In the discussion with Trypho, a Jew, although apparently he wanted to distance his position somewhat from the Platonic philosophy regarding the soul, Justin cannot abandon it completely. Despite this, there is between them a very clear difference of position. For example, Justin says that we are spiritually related to God through possessing a soul, because it is of a divine and immortal nature. Through this relationship we can know him, comprehend him with our mind and gain happiness.[29]

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[24] Coman 1968, 382.
[25] Stăniloae 2000, 65–67.
[26] Dumitrașcu 1994, 75; see also Droge 1987, 304–306; Young 1989, 162.
[27] Just. *Dial*. 1.194.
[28] Rămureanu 1958, 403.
[29] Rămureanu 1958, 403.

We must admit the ambiguity of such thinking. Justin had not yet realized the trenchant difference between the rational human being and irrational creatures in saying that the souls of all animals are alike to the soul of man. He considered all the souls only in terms of their spiritual aspect. But after Justin had accepted Christianity, when being asked if "all creatures such as horses and donkeys can see God", he responded that they cannot see him, as was the case too with the majority of people.[30] This vision is reserved only to those who "live in righteousness and are cleansed by righteousness and by all other virtues."[31] Justin stated, like Plato, that the soul is of a divine and immortal nature, and that man can think and know God through reason as it lives in the flesh. However, the true knowledge will be acquired only after it will be "opened from the flesh" (having left the body).[32] In the same context he also mentions the pre-existence of souls, although in a less explicit manner, when he says that they were created as 'special products' before bodies, and not for any particular body.[33]

Regarding the immortality of the soul,[34] and faced with the contrary argument of his partner in dialogue (according to which, if the world was created and has a limit to its existence, then so it is with the soul: if it was created, it cannot exist by itself or if "the soul is born, then it is not immortal by nature"), Justin supported his position, based on our spiritual kinship with God, by employing the moralistic position taken later in the 18th century by Immanuel Kant.[35] According to Kant, *the* immortality of the soul resides in a note of the will of God, who postulates a noumenal world, where the moral law will prevail, the right balance will be struck between deed and reward, between good and evil.[36] Trypho extended his reasoning to souls, following the Platonic line: he said that if all souls died "for the wicked it would really be a profit."[37] But he believed rather that the places where they go after bodily death are different, according to the deeds done in their lives.

It is possible, extrapolating from some of the above, to say that the torments of the wicked will eventually have a limit, which leads on to another theory developed later by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, brother of Basil the Great. This is the concept of *apocatastasis*. But Justin supported, elsewhere in his work, the eternity of the torments of hell. The wicked will be punished in the same bodies that they had together with their souls and will be punished for ever, and not only a period of a thousand years, as Plato held.[38]

In the answer that he gives to Trypho on the immortality of the soul appears an idea that somehow foreshadows his future Christian beliefs. Specifically, he says that the soul *is* not immortal by its nature because what is created cannot be eternal, but *becomes* immortal by the will of God. The church's teaching posits the idea that the soul does not rely for its immortality on its natural indestructibility, as a simple substance, but on *the*

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[30] Just. *Dial*. 4.196–197.
[31] Just. *Dial*. 4.196–197.
[32] Osborn 1973, 69; see also Rămureanu 1958, 404.
[33] Rămureanu 1958, 404.
[34] For the nature of the soul in Justin's thinking, see Grant 1956, 246–247.
[35] Rămureanu 1958, 405.
[36] Rămureanu 1958, 405.
[37] Just. *Dial*. 4.197.
[38] Just. *1 Apol*. 8.165.

indestructibility of its relationship with God, sustained by his will. Trypho is not satisfied with this argument. More specifically, Justin says in *Dialogue* 6 that:

> The soul assuredly *is* or *has* life. If, then, it is life, it would cause something else, and not itself, to live, even as motion would move something else than itself. Now, that the soul lives, no one would deny. But if it lives, it lives not as being life, but as the partaker of life; but that which partakes of anything, is different from that of which it does partake. Now the soul partakes of life, since God wills it to live. Thus, then, it will not even partake [of life] when God does not will it to live. For to live is not its attribute, as it is God's; but as a man does not live always, and the soul is not for ever conjoined with the body, since, whenever this harmony must be broken up, the soul leaves the body, and the man exists no longer; even so, whenever the soul must cease to exist, *the spirit of life* is removed from it, and there is no more soul, but it goes back to the place from whence it was taken.[39]

His concept seems quite complex, difficult to understand and hard to follow with any amount of clarity. This vivified spirit (the spirit of life) is, perhaps, that divine influx (life) that the soul has from God; when it separated from him, it will fall into nothingness. I do not think we can suspect Justin of *trichotomism,* because his anthropological formulations are often in flux, leaving room for speculation. For example, he says that the body is the house of the soul and the soul is *the* gate of the spirit and so will learn all who have a clear conscience and a strong faith in God.[40] These expressions do not belong to him, but are part of a more elaborate concept of Platonic and Stoic origin, found in almost identical form in apostle Paul and later in Irenaeus of Lyon and Tatian the Assyrian. He, however, is the author of some texts that speak exclusively about the body and soul, when discussing the resurrection and the final judgment. We do not have enough evidence to declare him a convinced dichotomist, though the appearances, at least, are moving towards such. After all, Justin is the product of his era, where different philosophical Christian or non-Christian currents were in hot competition. The transference of the revealed truths into everyday life was carried out with some difficulty.

After conversion

After converting to Christianity, Justin reinforced his position on the doctrine of the soul, breaking free of the influences that had marked him before.[41] The place of Platonic and Middle-Platonic philosophy is taken by the words of the Holy Scripture, which became his main source of inspiration and argument.[42] If until now the soul was considered as part of God and received salvation by its very nature, from now on its immortality became a divine gift through which it will escape death, because it will pass into another existential plane, to another life, where it will reap either punishment or reward, depending on the

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[39] Just. *Dial*. 6.198; see the comment on this in Osborn 1973, 69–70.
[40] Just. *Res*. 10.298.
[41] For details concerning the context, reason and significance of his conversion to Christianity, see the excellent work of Skarsaune 1976, 53–73.
[42] For the large influence of the Platonic and Middle Platonic philosophy on Justin's thinking, see Droge 1987, 305–319 and esp. Young 1989, 161–165.

nature of the deeds committed on earth. This gift will have to be gained laboriously by the whole human being, body and soul, through a life in conformity with the moral principles of the Christian God. In this period of his life, Justin dealt with two major themes, namely the freedom of the soul and the situation after its separation from the body.

The freedom and destiny of the soul

Man is gifted by God with freedom. He may choose one way or another as his conscience dictates. If it were not so, then the whole teaching of the Christian faith, based on love, would have no point because a man would not be able to accept or reject it freely, but would be held in a permanent constraint that would impose upon him a certain direction from which he could never depart.

Freedom allows for the sovereignty of a man, master of his decisions. His full authority lies in reason, free will and love.[43] Justin supported unreservedly the freedom of man and clearly opposed the Stoic teaching concerning destiny, when he stated "men do what they do, or suffer what they suffer, but each man by free choice acts rightly or sins."[44] The fact that those who reject the word of God will be punished with the eternal fire demonstrates that the Christian doctrine is one not based on fear or terror, but on justice. Because if these sanctions did not exist, then God as we know him would not exist, and, if there were a God who did not care about people, then the concept of good and evil would not exist.[45] In other words, man has by his nature the power to know good and also evil. He is fully responsible for all his activities, all his thoughts and all his actions. The centre of all this lies undoubtedly in the soul. It is the command core of all decisions and actions of every man. God gave autonomy to people as He gave autonomy to the angels. God allowed humans and angels to choose the way they want to go. Each is capable of growing in virtue or descending into vice. Besides, no one could claim merit for himself, if he did not have the possibility to fall. In other words, no one can aspire to the Kingdom of Heaven unless he earns this reward through a long exercise of will and action, resisting manfully any temptation, any inducement, which is put by demons in front of him.

The idea of destiny is repudiated by Justin. He builds his argument against destiny by focusing on the singular value of everyone's responsibility for his or her actions. If everything was under the power of destiny, free will would not exist and people would be innocent of all their mistakes. But free will, or the freedom of choice on how to act, exists. It is the origin of both good and bad deeds. The whole history of humanity has been determined by free will. Justin makes a clear distinction between free will (with its direct implications on a human's life) and *foreknowledge* of God, when he says:

> But if the word of God foretells that some angels and men shall be certainly punished, it did so because he foreknew that they would be unchangeably wicked, and not because God had created them so.[46]

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[43] Coman 1970, 359.
[44] Just. *2 Apol*. 7.190.
[45] Just. *2 Apol*. 8.191.
[46] Just. *Dial.* 141.270.

He stressed his understanding of this distinction when he related a series of hypothetical questions, such as: Why did God not kill Herod much earlier to stop the slaughter of the innocents? Why did he not make the serpent in Paradise disappear before it tempted Eve and caused him to utter the famous sentence, "I will make you and the woman hate each other; her offspring and yours will always be enemies"?[47] Could not he have created lots of people at once? The answer is to be found within the same mental and philosophical approach, where freedom is not mutually exclusive with foreknowledge. Justin pronounced that God knew that it was good to do as he did when he made angels and people free and defined the time for them to use that freedom. Also, because of his foreknowledge, God made both universal and partial judgments, keeping further freedom within parameters.[48] Thus, we could say that destiny is the inevitability of reward or punishment to those who choose good or evil.

Life of souls after death

Starting from the Bible text in 1 *Samuel* 28.7, when king Saul employed a witch to invoke the soul of the prophet Samuel, Justin set out to prove that souls live and are conscious after death. Using the pronouncements of oracles and the authority of philosophers like Empedocles, Pythagoras, Plato and Socrates and of epic myths such as Odysseus' descent into Hades, Justin acknowledged that the ancients had also demonstrated this as true.[49] In support of this truth he also used the magical practices harnessed by the senders of dreams together with their assistants, of necromancers and of diviners using the bodies of unborn children and of invokers of human souls, all of which customs were practised during the time of the Roman emperors.[50] Moreover, he claimed that many from the pagan world believed that the souls of the dead are transformed into demons, which then oppress people. If the pagan world believed so strongly in their gods, who are merely idols, assigned to them all power, the more must we believe that our God can resurrect bodies by restoring the souls to the material state they had left long before.[51]

He thus proved to be a visionary in Christian theology, because he affirmed and developed a proper eschatological doctrine that would be further developed in the following centuries. The resurrection of the bodies, together with their restored souls, will be followed immediately by the universal judgment.[52] From death to the time of universal judgment, the souls who committed good would remain in a better place, and the souls of the unrighteous in a worse one. But Justin talked also about a particular judgment.[53] Regarding the end of the world, it will proceed as follows: the eternal fire will descend from above and produce the dissolution of all, as had happened before with the Flood that "left no one but him only with his family who is by us called Noah, and by you Deucalion, from whom such vast numbers have sprung, some of them evil and others good."[54]

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[47] *Gen.* 3:15.
[48] Just. *Dial*. 102.250.
[49] Just. *Dial*. 105.251–252.
[50] Just. *1 Apol*. 18, 168.
[51] Coman 1984, 303.
[52] Rămureanu 1958, 412.
[53] Rămureanu 1958, 413.
[54] Just. *2 Apol*. 7, 190; see the comments of Barnard 1965, 96–97.

Continuing on the purely Christian line of thought, Justin asserts that judgment will be given by Christ, who will come in glory from heaven together with all his angels, and, after the resurrection of the bodies, all who were ever the righteous, who followed his word, will be dressed in incorruptibility; and the others, the unrighteous, will go to the eternal fire to be tormented forever together with the wicked demons. This teaching was regarded with great suspicion by the pagans. Therefore, in order to make his concept about the resurrection more convincing, he used an example that targeted and built upon the concrete experience of people. He said that if man had no body, he would not have believed it possible for a small germ of human seed to produce bones, nerves and muscles in the form that we see. This is an observation that could not be questioned. Even so, if from this little beginning could be born a human being, and no one doubts this process, we should admit that the bodies of people, opened and scattered on the ground, like seeds, can at a proper time, by the commandment of God rise and "put on immortality."[55]

The certainty of the resurrection for Justin was so strong that he said: "But, we refuse to sacrifice to those to whom we were of old accustomed to sacrifice, undergo extreme penalties and rejoice in death, believing that God will raise us up by his Christ, and will make us incorruptible, undisturbed and immortal."[56] He urged the pagans to embrace the teaching of Christ in order to become the possessors of immortality.[57]

However, he was influenced by the powerful millenarian beliefs and tendencies, which were characteristic of most of the doctrines encountered during the primary period of Christianity. The Resurrection of the dead will certainly happen, because nothing is impossible to God, but will occur in in two stages. In other words, he spoke of two resurrections. The *first* resurrection will occur at the Parousia of Jesus Christ (The Second Coming*),* when only the righteous will rise, with whom he will set up a kingdom that will last 1000 years.[58] Then will be the *second* resurrection, at the same time as the universal judgment, after which each will go to the eternal life (salvation) or, conversely, to eternal punishment (condemnation), according to the deeds of each man in his earthly lifetime.[59] This millenarian belief, characteristic also of some modern Christian groups, falls into his general anthropological way of thinking, with its positive or negative aspects, but enhanced by how he highlights man's responsibility for his condition after his bodily death.

Conclusions

Justin never developed a full idea and definition of anthropology: the study of humanity, both physically and culturally. But he has the merit of having founded a version which, although rudimentary and unsystematic, served as the starting point for the development of a coherent and systematic concept in the following centuries. He had the acumen and

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[55] 1 *Cor*. 15:53; Just. *1 Apol*. 19.169.
[56] Just. *Dial*. 46.218.
[57] Just. *Dial*. 57.225.
[58] Justin's strong belief in the *Parousia*, and "the millennium or 1000-year reign of the Saints in Jerusalem inaugurated by a resurrection of the righteous" is largely discussed in Barnard 1965, 86–98.
[59] See Coman 1968, 392.

aptitude to build on such ideas existing in the Hellenistic culture that he knew very well from his own studies, in clarifying and elucidating such thought in the New Testament. The influences of the philosophies of the time, especially the Platonic, are visible during his pre-Christian period and it can be said that he displays a certain inclination towards a *trichotomic* doctrine (body, soul and spirit),[60] but this is unsupported by any very convincing evidence. Later, after his conversion, he seemed to have clarified his ideas on man and on his *dichotomic* constitution (body and soul).

Regarding the body, Justin believed that it should be given a special honour by virtue of the prominence given to it by Jesus Christ, through the numerous healings performed during his earthly activities, culminating in his own bodily resurrection.

Regarding the soul, there are significant differences between his pre-Christian period and that after his conversion. Before his conversion Justin supported the Platonic idea, according to which the soul is immortal by the will of God, but also that the soul can know God through reason only when it will 'unravel' itself from the body. At this stage he supported the pre-existence of souls and their transmigration after death into other human bodies and even animals.

After his conversion to Christianity, he broke with these kinds of ideas about the soul. He tried to develop a doctrine to respond more effectively to the new challenges of the Christian world, one that was looking not only for its place in society, but also searching for its own system of thinking and expression, in order to give itself a unique identity. Consequently, Justin totally changed his outlook on the pre-existence of souls, later saying they are made 'close' together with bodies, without explaining more clearly what that meant. He also agreed that the soul can see God, not through its own power and abilities, but only by being adorned with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.[61]

Moreover, Justin strongly supported human freedom and opposed the idea of predestination. Free will governs the world. Man is responsible for all his actions. In other words, freedom automatically involves responsibility. This concept finds its perfect fulfilment in his doctrine regarding the resurrection of the dead, which addresses man in his entirety, body and soul. Both the souls of the righteous and of the wicked shall dwell in the interim period between death and the Universal Judgment in different places, according to the deeds of each in his earthly life. And the resurrected will take back the souls that left them at the time of bodily death to restore the human beings as they were formerly,[62] as did the saviour, Jesus Christ.[63]

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[60] Cf. Just. *Res*. 10.298.
[61] Dumitrașcu 1994, 82.
[62] Barnard 1965, 92.
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What has Athenagoras to do with Athens? A Geography of Athenagoras' Life and Thought

Anders-Christian Jacobsen

As the title of my article indicates, I will present some observations about Athenagoras' possible relations with Athens. It also signals that I intend to address this question at two levels: firstly, I will ask and try to answer the question at a concrete personal and geographical level. Did Athenagoras live in Athens? This level I call the 'Geography of Athenagoras' life'. Secondly, I will ask and answer the question at a theological and philosophical level: to what degree did Athenagoras know and reflect on Greek religion and philosophy? I call this level the 'Geography of Athenagoras' thinking'.

A geography of Athenagoras' life

Our historical knowledge of Athenagoras is very limited, because almost no biographical information about him from ancient sources exists. Methodius refers to Athenagoras and to *Legatio* 24.2 in his treatise *De resurrectione* at 1.37.1, but any other references to Athenagoras are more or less absent. Eusebius does not even mention him. Therefore, when working with the geography of Athenagoras' life and thought, only a few hints, and those unclear, in the manuscripts and in his own work are at our disposal.

Geographical indications in the manuscripts

The oldest manuscript containing his treatise *Legatio pro Christianis – Codex Parisinus Graecus 451*, dating from 914 – introduces its author as Athenagoras, an "Athenian, Philosopher, and Christian."[1] As we saw above, the *Legatio* was known to Methodius, and the treatise was at that time connected with the name Athenagoras, but the *Codex* adds more information. We can thus assume that the information given by the *Codex Parisinus Graecus 451* about the title of the treatise and the name of its author is correct, but what about the information that Athenagoras was an Athenian, a philosopher and a Christian? One possible and not far-fetched conclusion is that the *Codex Parisinus Graecus 451* has that piece of information from the same reliable source as the information about Athenagoras' name and the title of his treatise. If we accept this as a point of departure, we can conclude already at this stage that Athenagoras was indeed an Athenian. We could also, more hesitantly, ask if the information that Athenagoras was an Athenian could be an invention of Arethas, the bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia who included Athenagoras'

[1] Scholars agree that Athenagoras is the author of the *Legatio pro Christianis,* but there is no consensus about the authorship of the treatise *De resurrectione*, which the manuscript tradition also ascribes to Athenagoras. I do not consider Athenagoras to be the author of *De resurrectione.* For this reason, I do not include it in this article; see Jacobsen 2014, 83, and, in more detail, my article 'Athenagoras', in *Brill Handbook of Early Christianity* (forthcoming in 2020). See also the recently published book by Kiel 2016, which discusses this question.

treatise in the *Codex Parisinus Graecus 451*. Such reluctance is appropriate, partly because of the limited amount of available information about Athenagoras and partly because a later manuscript, the *Codex Bodleianus Baroccianus* from the fourteenth century, quotes from the historian Philip of Side that Athenagoras was the first leader of the catechetical school in Alexandria.[2] This is the only source we have that claims that he, at some point, lived in Egypt. However, Philip of Side is also often an unreliable source.[3] We must, therefore, ask if there is anything else than the short remark in the *Codex Parisinus Graecus 451* that connects Athenagoras with Athens.

Geographical information drawn from Athenagoras' name

If we assume that Arethas had no other information than Methodius, i.e. the title of the treatise and the name of Athenagoras, how would he then have got the idea that Athenagoras was an Athenian? One suggestion (perhaps rather speculative) is that Arethas took Athenagoras' name to contain in itself valid geographical information by being a composite of Ἀθήν- (from Ἀθῆναι or Ἀθήνη) and ἀγορά or ἀγοράομαι.[4] Thus, the name would indicate that the author of the *Legatio* was a person who spoke at the agora of Athens. If this line of thought is correct, the additional information given in the *Codex Parisinus Graecus 451*, compared to what we know from Methodius, would not be historical data drawn upon by Arethas from sources unknown to us, but the conclusions that Arethas had reached by reading Athenagoras' treatise and by analysing the meaning of his name. In my opinion, this idea is supported by the geographical hints that we find in the treatise itself. I will argue for this below.

Geographical indications in Athenagoras' *Legatio*

Athenagoras mentions both many geographical locations and people connected to specific geographical places in his text, but he never directly connects any of these locations with himself. Already in *Legatio* ch. 1 we find a list of people defined by their geographical positioning, namely the citizens of Ilium, the Lacedaemonians, the people from Tenedos, the Athenians (twice) and the Egyptians. These people belonging to specific geographic locations honour different gods: the citizens of Ilium call Hector a god and think that Helen is Adrasteia, the Lacedaemonians honour Agamemnon as Zeus, the men from Tenedos worship Tennes, the Athenians sacrifice to Erechtheus as Poseidon and the Egyptians take cats, crocodiles, serpents and other animals to be gods. Athenagoras uses these geographical places and their gods to demonstrate that all people have their own gods, whom they are free to celebrate as they please. Athenagoras does not define himself as belonging to one of these groups or geographical places. Rather, he belongs to another group of people – the Christians who do not belong to a specific geographical place and are the only ones not allowed to celebrate their god in freedom.

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[2] *Codex Bodleianus Baroccianus* 142, col. 216.
[3] Rankin 2009, 5–6.
[4] The first element could equally well refer to the goddess Athena, but it is quite reasonable to imagine that Arethas would interpret it as Athens.

It is probably Athenagoras' intention in this paragraph to distinguish Christians from non-Christians, not by their belonging (or not) to a particular geographical place, but by their freedom to honour (or not) the god of their own choice. Accordingly, this paragraph does not reveal anything about Athenagoras' geographical belonging. This is also the case in a number of other passages where he includes geographical specifications (for example chs. 4, 14, 17). However, we can get a little further. In *Legatio* chs. 1 and 22, Athenagoras mentions Egypt and Egyptian deities but only in passing. This reveals that he was relatively unfamiliar with Egypt. Thus, in the *Legatio*, we do not find support for Philip of Side's claim that Athenagoras was head of the catechetical school in Alexandria. Moreover, looking closer at the geographical places mentioned in ch. 1 and in other similar passages in the *Legatio*, it becomes clear that Athenagoras most often, but not exclusively, uses geographic locations in Hellas (ancient Greece). This indicates that Athenagoras was mostly familiar with these places and the deities and cults connected to these. Nonetheless, it does not prove that Athenagoras lived in Athens or somewhere else in Hellas – he could simply have taken his examples from contemporary literature, such as commentaries on Homer or handbooks on the Homeric gods.

The addressees of the *Legatio* – another geographical clue?

Another way to approach the question about Athenagoras' geographical assignment is by focusing on the addressees of the *Legatio*.[5] Athenagoras addresses his treatise to the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. If he intended to submit his treatise to the emperors in person, this would most likely have taken place when they visited Athens in 176. The first question is, then, whether this address is only a formality or whether Athenagoras intended to meet the emperors and submit his treatise to them. In the title in the *Codex Parisinus 451*, the work is described as a *presbeia* (Latin: *legatio*), which means a prayer or request. Under the Roman administration, there was an institutionalized practice by which one was permitted to submit requests, both major and minor, to the emperor. A major case and fundamental request was called a *presbeia*/*legatio*. These could be conveyed either orally or in writing to the emperor. Athenagoras may have had the opportunity to meet the emperors personally, as Marcus Aurelius and Commodus travelled to Greece and further east in September 176, stopping off at Athens where they were initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries.[6] However, there is an intense debate among scholars as to whether Athenagoras' *Legatio* is a genuine example of a petition and whether it was actually presented to the emperors.[7] Many scholars do believe this to be the case. W.R. Schoedel supports this view in an article from 1989.[8] He finds parallels between Athenagoras' *Legatio* and Philo's *Legatio ad Gaium* and other Jewish petitions, which Josephus recounts (*Antiquitates* 14.301–305).[9] On this basis, Schoedel concludes that Athenagoras' *Legatio* combines two literary genres – petition and apology. Although

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[5] Concerning the question about the addressees of the *Legatio*, see Jacobsen 2014.
[6] T.D. Barnes proposes this theory. See Barnes 1975, 114.
[7] Much of this debate is based on F. Millar's book, *The Emperor in the Roman World 31 BC – AD 337*, published in 1977. Millar discusses Athenagoras' *Legatio* on 564–565.
[8] Schoedel 1989, 55–78.
[9] Cf. Schoedel 1989, 61–69.

the *Legatio* is not 'pure' petition in terms of its genre, Schoedel sees no reason why the work or speech would not have been presented to the emperors.[10] Nevertheless, it is also possible that Athenagoras structured his text in the form of a petition without ever presenting the work to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. P.L. Buck, among others, supports this view in a 1996 article in which he attempts to refute Schoedel's argument point by point.[11] It is difficult to discern which of these two views is correct.

I am personally inclined to believe that the *Legatio*'s frequent and very explicit supplications to the emperors make it unlikely that Athenagoras had never any intention of presenting his demands to them, either in oral or written form. If it is true that Athenagoras addressed his *Legatio* to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus and presented it to them in Athens in 176, we have a strong indication that he had close relations to Athens, perhaps even resided there in 176. The evidence is, however, not very strong, as it is based on a number of assumptions that cannot be proved. Thus, there are left but a few and very weak indications that Athenagoras was an Athenian, in the geographical sense that he was either born in or lived in Athens.

A geography of Athenagoras' thinking

As I suggested above, we should also look at the geographical clues in Athenagoras' thinking: to what extent was Athenagoras' thinking related to Athenian or broader Greek philosophical and cultural traditions? This question is difficult to answer because, in Athenagoras' time, at least the eastern parts of the Roman Empire were Hellenized and had been so for a long time. This means that wherever you lived in the eastern part of the Roman Empire in the second century AD, you would have access to more or less the same Greek philosophical, religious and, in the broadest sense, cultural traditions. However, in the following section, I will try to tease out any clues in Athenagoras' thinking that connect him in a more specific way to Athens.

Athenagoras and Greek philosophy

The *Legatio* shows signs of the author's relatively high level of education and reveals his knowledge of classical philosophy, especially the Middle Platonic tradition. Thus, the manuscript's (*Codex Parisinus Graecus 451)* remark that Athenagoras was a philosopher is probably based on the scribe's assessment of the philosophical content of his work, which does indeed indicate that Athenagoras had a philosophical training. Scholarly assessment of his philosophical ability ranges from the view that he was simply familiar with a few philosophical compendia to the view that he followed a systematic curriculum and had independent philosophical thought. L. W. Barnard believes that Athenagoras is very familiar with the philosophical tradition – especially Middle Platonism – and that he is able to exploit his philosophical skills in his apologetic project. In the article 'The Philosophical and Biblical Background of Athenagoras', Barnard thus states:

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[10] See Schoedel 1989, 70–78. Schoedel's view is shared by Barnes 1975, 111; cf. Grant 1988, 100.
[11] Buck 1996, 209–226.

> The earliest tradition concerning Athenagoras […] states that he was a philosopher who, at some stage in his career, had embraced Christianity. It is then no surprise that he adapted current philosophical ideas, in particular those of Plato as understood by contemporary philosophers, to serve the aims of Christian apologetic. This he accomplished in a subtle and convincing manner which did not compromise his integrity as a Christian thinker.[12]

I agree and believe that Athenagoras had first-hand knowledge of (at least parts of) Plato's philosophy and that he was well grounded in the Middle Platonic tradition of his age.[13] This view is based on my overall impression of the way he applies Platonic philosophy in the *Legatio*. I would particularly like to highlight the role Plato's *Timaeus* plays in Athenagoras' argument. In *Legatio* 4.2, where he introduces his argument for monotheism, Athenagoras refers to the Christian belief in an uncreated creator who stands above everything created. This uncreated creator created everything by his Word – Logos – which proceeds from him. This is a reference to early Christian theology of creation by Logos. It is remarkable that we find this theology so clearly expressed by Athenagoras. However, what is most important here is that Athenagoras supports this with the remark "it is not that which exists which comes into being, but that which does not exist", which is a direct reference to *Timaeus* 27. It is obvious that Athenagoras here uses the reference to *Timaeus* to underscore some very crucial elements in Christian theology. Athenagoras also refers to the same passage in *Timaeus* in *Legatio* 15.1–4 and 19.2. In itself, this does not prove that Athenagoras had a deep knowledge of Platonic philosophy. However, if we take a closer look at the passage in Athenagoras' *Legatio*, it is apparent that this is not an isolated quote from *Timaeus*. A little earlier in the same paragraph (*Legatio* 4.1), Athenagoras also writes with a clear reference to *Timaeus* 27: "[W]ould it make sense to have us banished because we have a doctrine which distinguishes God and matter and their respective substances?" In this sentence, Athenagoras follows the argument in *Timaeus* very closely by claiming that Christians distinguish between the Creator and that which is created.

In his philosophical argument in favour of monotheism in *Legatio* chs. 5 and 6, Athenagoras quotes from *Timaeus* again – this time from ch. 28. Although Athenagoras explicitly states in the latter case that he is using a philosophical compendium, his widespread use of *Timaeus* demonstrates, in my opinion, that he had first-hand knowledge of this work. His use of *Timaeus* also reveals that he is well immersed in the Middle Platonic tradition, in which *Timaeus* had great significance.[14] However, this does not rule out the possibility that Athenagoras, like his contemporaries, also made widespread use of philosophical compendia and handbooks. The familiarity of many Christian authors with quotations from the philosophers is based on such collections. What is unusual about Athenagoras is that he explicitly states that this is so. In *Legatio* 6.2, where he quotes Plato, Athenagoras makes the following comment:

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[12] Barnard 1972, 3. Concerning Athenagoras' relation to the Platonic milieu in Athens, see further Rankin 2009, 6–10.

[13] Throughout the first section of his article, Barnard 1972 convincingly argues that Athenagoras' philosophical background is Middle Platonism. Similarly, Malherbe 1969 demonstrates that Athenagoras' *Legatio* has the same three-part structure as the Middle Platonic philosopher Albinus' work *Didaskalikos*, which is the best preserved Middle Platonic philosophical handbook.

[14] See Malherbe 1969, 6–12, regarding Athenagoras' use of *Timaeus*.

> Plato and Aristotle – and note that it is not as one who intends to give an exact account of the doctrines of the philosophers that I run through what they say concerning God; for I know that you are as much superior to all men in an exact understanding of the whole range of learning, as you exceed them in the wisdom and power of your rule, and that you can boast of having accomplished in every branch of learning what not even those who have specialized in one can lay claim to; but since it is impossible to show without mentioning names that we are not alone in insisting on the oneness of God, we have turned to the Opinions (δόξας) – so then Plato says […].

The "opinions" that Athenagoras is referring to are philosophical compendia – doxographies. This is also the case in *Legatio* 23.4 where he refers to Thales' understanding of the divine by pointing not to Thales' writings themselves, but to such doxographies: "Thales, as those who know his doctrines well record […]." Athenagoras was thus well aware that his readers – be they emperors or other addressees – would know that he had not consulted all the mentioned philosophers' original works. This is why he makes this explanatory comment. This common practice of using philosophical compendia makes it more difficult for modern readers to get an accurate impression of how familiar a given author was with classical philosophy.[15]

Later on in the *Legatio*, Athenagoras makes another reference to Plato. In ch. 23, a long quote from *Timaeus* 40d–e is found in a passage where Athenagoras discusses the nature of images of deities. Athenagoras intends to demonstrate that material images cannot be divine, which he finds to be a difficult task. However, as he points out, Plato also struggled to explain the nature of demons to ordinary people. Athenagoras then recounts Plato's theory of the status of God versus the lower-ranking demons followed by the long passage from *Timaeus* 40d–e, where Plato describes his difficulties with explaining the nature of demons.[16] Hence, in this passage, we find another example of Athenagoras' intensive use of *Timaeus*, which supports the view that Athenagoras had personally read and was indeed quite familiar with *Timaeus*.

Athenagoras also mentions other philosophers. In *Legatio* 6.3–4, he briefly refers to Aristotle and his followers and to the Stoics when describing their opinions about the divine. According to Athenagoras, Aristotle claims the divine to be a god composed of soul and body. The body is the ethereal space, the planets and the fixed stars. The soul of this deity is the reason, which decides the orderly motions of the body. For this reason, Athenagoras counts Aristotle and his followers among the supporters of the idea of monotheism. The Stoics think that all elements of matter are permeated by seminal principles, which decide their nature and motion. The divine is the fire that embraces all these seminal principles. This leads Athenagoras to the conclusion that also the Stoics are monotheistic. These references to the thoughts of Aristotle and the Stoics about the divine are, however, so brief that they do not provide any basis for claiming that Athenagoras had a direct knowledge of their philosophies. Rather, his references to these branches of Greek philosophy probably rely on the compendia that he used as references in the

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[15] With regard to Athenagoras' use of philosophical compendia versus the original works of Plato and other classical philosophers, Barnard says: "The above examples will have shown that Athenagoras drew on collections of texts from classical writers and philosophers, which were used as source material in the Hellenistic schools of philosophy. However, it is also possible that he used the works of the classical authors directly", (Barnard 1972, 6).

[16] *Legatio* 23.5–10.

beginning of the paragraph. This also seems to be the case when he refers to Aristotle and the Stoics elsewhere in the *Legatio* (16, 19, 22).

It is difficult to reach a safe conclusion about the extent of Athenagoras' knowledge of Greek philosophy. It is evident that he has at least a basic knowledge of Aristotelian and Stoic philosophy. This knowledge might stem, at least partly, from philosophical compendia. But as argued above he seems to have a quite deep knowledge of Platonism, and even if his general knowledge is basic and derived from secondary sources, he uses Greek philosophy very actively in his arguments. This is most obvious when he argues for the claim that only one god exists. In this case, he uses Greek philosophers as allies who can support his own point of view, even if he also makes critical remarks against them. This demonstrates that Athenagoras has much to do with Athens. At this point in time, Athens was literally the Greek centre of philosophy,[17] and Athenagoras might well have received his philosophical education here; but even if we do not accept Athens as his geographical location it was indeed the cultural epicentre of Hellas, and as such it was certainly an 'Athenian' mannerism to engage in and use the philosophical tradition and way of thinking as actively as Athenagoras does.

Athenagoras and Greek poetry and religion

The *Legatio* also reveals that Athenagoras was familiar with Greek literature and poetry, and the mythology expressed therein.[18] This is evident, for example, in the way he refers to Greek literature and mythology in connection with his argument for monotheism. In *Legatio* 17, Athenagoras claims that the Greek pantheon had been only recently invented by Orpheus, Homer and Hesiod. He supports this claim by a reference to Herodotus (2.53), who stated that Hesiod and Homer lived only 400 years before himself and that they created the Greek pantheon. Athenagoras uses the – at the time powerful – argument of tradition and age: the older is the better.[19] Employing this approach, he can argue that a pantheon constructed in historical times is not a solid basis for worshipping many gods. Similarly, images and statues of the Greek gods are of recent date, which according to Athenagoras can be proved by the fact that the invention of these kinds of handcrafts is also of recent date.[20] Further, Athenagoras' acquaintance with Greek mythology as represented by the Greek poets can be deduced from the references and quotes he provides in *Legatio* 18 and 21. Most of the quotes are from Homer, but Euripides and Aeschylus are also mentioned. This familiarity with Greek literature, poetry and mythology is undoubtedly a result of the normal schooling and education processes Athenagoras had undergone, since literature and poetry were taught in the schools. Familiarity with the classical literature was, therefore, an inevitable experience for people who, like Athenagoras, had undergone contemporary schooling.[21] Such acquaintance with Greek mythology could be obtained anywhere in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, and as such, it does not reveal anything about Athenagoras' concrete geographical relations with Athens. However, it indirectly

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[17] See e.g. Dillon 1996, 184-192.
[18] *Legatio* chs. 17–22.
[19] For this, see Pilhofer 1990.
[20] *Leg. pro Christ.* 17.
[21] Concerning the schooling and educational system at Athenagoras' time, see Sandnes 2009.

supports the conclusion that Athenagoras in his thinking is an Athenian, in his drawing upon traditions that are so deeply immersed in and connected with the cultural sphere of Athens.

What has Athenagoras to do with Athens? A geography of Athenagoras' life and thought

As has been shown above, we can reasonably argue that Athenagoras was familiar with, well trained in and firmly grounded in Athenian traditions. Consequently, there is some basis for assuming that he lived in Athens when he studied philosophy and when he wrote and delivered his *Legatio* to the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. But the evidence is far from conclusive, and Athenagoras' geographical relations to Athens remain uncertain. The geography of his thoughts, on the other hand, is indeed related to Athens. This can be concluded from his deep familiarity with Greek culture and philosophy. He has an excellent knowledge of Greek religion and mythology as they are presented in the Homeric traditions. He is strongly critical of these traditions, and he knows how to use them in his apology for Christianity by comparing the immorality and irrationality of the Greek gods with the claimed morality and rationality of Christian belief, worship and life. Similarly, Athenagoras has an extensive knowledge of Greek philosophy – in some cases from philosophical compendia and handbooks, but undoubtedly also, as in the case of Plato, from having read and studied (some of) Plato's treatises, especially *Timaeus*. Athenagoras also uses his knowledge of Greek philosophy in his apology for Christianity. This is most apparent when he creates an alliance with Greek philosophy arguing for monotheism. What distinguishes Athenagoras from other early Christian theologians is not his knowledge of Greek philosophy. Rather, it is his very active use of Greek philosophy as well as religious poetry and mythology – cultural traditions that were often perceived as Athenian not because they necessarily originated here, but because Athens was the cultural epicentre of Hellas. That shows that even if Athenagoras was not Athenian in the geographical sense, he was certainly a cultural Athenian.

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The Doctrine of God in Athenagoras' *Legatio*

Pablo Argárate

> We say that there is God and the Son, his Word, and the Holy Spirit, united in power (ἑνούμενα μέν κατὰ δύναμιν) yet distinguished in rank (διαιρούμενα δὲ κατὰ τάξιν).[1]

Athenagoras remained almost totally neglected in antiquity. He was largely ignored by his contemporaries and even by later church historians such as Eusebius and Jerome, Photius and even the *Suda*. He is mentioned only by Methodius of Olympus who quotes a passage from him and by Philip of Side who provides us with a confused description of his life.[2] The survival of the *Legatio pro Christianis* (Πρεσβεία περὶ χριστιανῶν)[3] is thanks to an archbishop of Caesarea, Arethas, who in 914 charged his main scribe Baanes to make a copy of the *Legatio*, together with the *Treatise on the Resurrection* (Περὶ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν).[4] This single manuscript (*Parisinus gr*. 451 =A) became the basis for all later editions. It is nevertheless highly problematic, since it contains many lacunae and is very corrupt. One of the main challenges to comprehension is the fact that Arethas himself engaged in an extensive reworking of the text copied by Baanes, introducing his own emendations. This makes establishing a critical edition a highly complicated task. Here, we ought to mention the editions by Schwartz, Schoedel and Marcovich.[5]

There is not much that we know about Athenagoras' life with certainty. An Athenian philosopher converted later to Christianity, he may have continued to direct his minor Platonic philosophical school. It is even possible that he may have directed the Catechetical school of Alexandria for some time.

The *Legatio* is to be dated to the year 177, the same year of the ferocious persecutions of Christians in Gaul. When a number of natural disasters occurred in the final years of Marcus Aurelius' reign, the populace held the Christians – among others – responsible for these calamities they believed were caused by the wrath of the gods. Accordingly, exacerbated by the mystery that surrounded Christians in their beliefs and practices, and by the consequent misunderstanding, several persecutions took place at the command of provincial magistrates, since there was no central legislation on such a matter. Within this context of recrudescence of persecution, Athenagoras writes to the emperor, asking him to put a stop to them, while at the same time refuting the accusations against Christians by

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[1] *Leg. pro Christ.* 24.2

[2] Meth. Olymp. *Res*. 1.37.1–3.

[3] Critical text in Schwartz 1891, and also (with English translation) in Schoedel 1972 and Marcovich 1990. Text and French translation in Pouderon 1992. English translation in Crehan 1956.
Studies: Barnard 1967a; Bauer 1902: Farquharson 1952; Bardy 1943; Ubaldi and Pellegrino 1947; Barnard 1967b; Barnard 1970a; Malherbe 1970a; Barnard 1972; Pouderon 1989; Pouderon 1994; Pouderon 1997; Pouderon 2005; Friedrowicz 2005 and Rankin 2009. Cf. Jacobsen 2014.

[4] There has been a long dispute on the attribution of this work to Athenagoras. The most recent studies (such as Kiel 2016) consider that the *Resurrection* treatise is pseudonymous, dating it rather to the first half of the third century. The question is however still open.

[5] Schwartz 1891; Schoedel 1972; Marcovich 1990.

providing a short presentation of Christian doctrine and ethics.[6] His goal was to obtain the reinstatement of the rescripts of Trajan and Hadrian, considered favourable to Christians since they advise against the initiation of prosecution and discourage calumniators.[7]

Within the apologetic category of writings, the *Legatio* (πρεσβεία) is a genre which supposes a delegation addressed to the emperor.[8] It is not clear if this actually took place or if it is rather a literary fiction. Furthermore, the text is obviously intended for publication, as a kind of 'open letter', attempting to reach not only the emperor, but also the informed pagan public.

Its structure can be divided into an introduction (1-3) and two main parts.[9] In the first one (4-30), Christianity is opposed to pagan religion (in the first section it deals with the accusation of atheism as denial of all divinity [4-12], and in the second with the accusation of atheism regarding the refusal to sacrifice to and to recognize local divinities [13-30]). The second part of the *Legatio* presents the contrast, this time between Christian and pagan ethics (31-37), where Athenagoras responds to the accusation of incest (32-34) and those of infanticide and anthropophagy (35-36). The conclusion is drawn in chapter 37.

The style of the *Legatio* is Atticistic, in line with 'the Second Sophistic' movement. It is precise and rigorous,[10] or in the words of Fiedrowicz "klar strukturiert, konziliant formulierend, stringent argumentierend". It is the most philosophical of all the apologies, showing a very good knowledge of the different philosophical schools of antiquity and of great relevance.[11] Given this, it is difficult to agree with Marcovich, who says that he finds it ill-organized and not always clear.[12] Pouderon expresses exactly the opposite.[13] In this sense, Barnard offers clear insights into the quality of the *Legatio*:

> Athenagoras' works show a marked literary excellence which places them in a class by themselves in the apologetic literature of the second century. His *Legatio* is far and away the best piece of literature

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[6] Cf. Barnard 1970b on the doctrine and Malherbe 1969a on ethics.
[7] Cf. Pouderon 1989, 62.
[8] Cf. Engberg *et al*. 2014.
[9] Cf. Malherbe 1969c.
[10] Cf. Pouderon 1989, 353 and also Fiedrowicz 2006, 77: "Klar strukturiert, konziliant formulierend, stringent argumentierend, zeigt diese Apologie, wie der Philosoph aus Athen seine Vergangenheit nicht verleugnete, sondern in eklektischer Weise an die besten Elemente der griechischen Kultur anknüpfte, um diese, insbesondere das Bekenntnis der Dichter und Philosophen zum Monotheismus (leg. 5-6), als Vorbereitung des Christentums zu betrachten, da diese Traditionen fortführt und vollendet."
[11] Barnard 1972, 177: "The study of Athenagoras has suffered, not only from the apologist's almost total neglect in Christian antiquity, but also from his being lumped together with the other Greek apologists, in the histories of early Christian doctrine, for the purposes of elucidating the development of Christian dogma. This has done him a real injustice for his subtle use of the Greek philosophical tradition differs from that of the other apologists." Cf. also Powell 1967 and Lucks 1936.
[12] Cf. Marcovich 1990, vii: "Athenagoras' learned and eloquent Plea for Christians (ca. AD 177) stands apart from the rest of Greek and Latin apologies. Doubtless, it is the most philosophical and, at the same time, the most controversial one […] However, Athenagoras' Plea is of great apologetic significance, and his Atticistic style is in line with 'the Second Sophistic' […]. Athenagoras' trend of ideas is not always clear and easy to follow. His exposition is ill-organized, and he is fond of showing off his rhetorical skill by introducing parenthetic sentences miles long. No wonder then that uneducated medieval scribes had misunderstood and mishandled his text."
[13] Pouderon 1989, 353: "[...] une construction précise, rigoureuse, même; une argumentation qui ne se disperse pas, mais qui ne tend qu'à un seul but, récuser les accusations païennes, quitte à les renvoyer à leurs auteurs."

> of its type which the Antonine age can boast. His well chosen language, considerable vocabulary, exalted style rising at times to great descriptive heights, his many technical and abstract words impress themselves upon the careful reader. It was not only his competence as a philosopher but his clarity of thought and fine mentality which enabled him to have such a sympathetic insight into the true meaning of Christian philosophy. And his moderation of judgement contributes to the authority of his conclusions which are reached by generally weighty and convincing arguments. In contrast to the high-handed and dogmatic attitude of Tatian and Theophilus, Athenagoras first assembles the evidence, discusses it and finally delivers an unbiased judgement. His approach is similar to Hooker in the seventeenth, and Bishop Butler in the eighteenth, centuries. It is all the more to be regretted that his works were so little known in Christian antiquity. It remains an insoluble riddle why this was so.[14]

Among Athenagoras' sources, and although he explicitly mentions the doxographies (ἐπὶ τὰς δόξας),[15] it is evident that beyond these and summaries of Platonic and Stoic philosophy, he has a deeper knowledge of the different schools, knowledge that transcends those sources. In addition to this, there are the biblical texts: these are not limited to the four quotations of the Old Testament and passages of the New Testament, especially from Paul and from the Sermon on the Mount. As Rankin puts it: "For apologetic reasons any reliance on the testimony and authority of scripture are kept to a minimum, but they are there."[16] Athenagoras is presenting the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in categories of the God of the philosophers. From the Christian tradition, in several passages, he seems to be aware of what Justin wrote in this regard.[17]

As stated before, at the start and after setting the context of the *Legatio* and having presented the three accusations (atheism, sexual immorality, anthropophagy) against Christians, Athenagoras focuses upon the first one, that of atheism.[18] In this context, he distinguishes between the rightful condemnation of Diagoras of Melos by the Athenians on the grounds of atheism and that brought against the Christians. His argument is the same in several passages: surprisingly, it is based upon the distinction and even contraposition of God and matter. This distinction is, in his eyes, the clear proof that Christians are not atheists:

> But surely it is not rational for them to apply the term atheism to us who distinguish God from matter (διαιροῦσαν ἀπὸ τῆς ὕλης τὸν θεὸν) and show that matter (τὴν ὕλην) is one thing and God another and the difference between them is great (πολύ); for the divine is uncreated (ἀγένητον) and eternal (ἀίδιον) and can be contemplated only by thought and reason, whereas matter is created and perishable (γενητὴν καὶ φθαρτὴν).[19]

Athenagoras shows that this distinction was already in the poets when he writes: "Philolaus too, by saying that God encompasses all things as in a prison, shows that God is one and that he is above matter."[20] Something similar is stated below in a further

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[14] Barnard 1972, 179.
[15] *Leg. pro Christ.* 6.2.
[16] Rankin 2009, 167.
[17] Cf. Edwards 2016 and also Parvis 2007.
[18] Cf. Just. *1 Apol*. 13.1. Cf. Schoedel 1973.
[19] *Leg. pro Christ.* 4.1.
[20] *Leg. pro Christ.* 6.1.

argument: "[…] would it make sense to have us banished because we have a doctrine which distinguishes God and matter and their respective substances?"[21] An analogous juxtaposition between God and matter appears in 15.2, where any acceptance of a correspondence between these contraries is regarded as a sign of atheism:

> To be sure, if matter and God are the same – two names for one thing – then we are irreligious […] not matter but God its artificer justly receives the praise and honour for the arrangement and good order of things.[22]

In this, Christians agree with poets and philosophers,[23] who, relying upon this distinction could not be considered as atheists, since they recognize that there is only one God, the so-called gods being demons, matter or men.[24]

However, in other passages, the accusation of atheism is not explicitly linked to this lack of distinction, but simply related to Christians' refusal to acknowledge pagan gods. Indeed,

> Even those [Athenagoras states] who accuse us of atheism for not acknowledging the same gods they know do not agree with each other about the gods.[25]

Or, even more precisely, in relation to local divinities: "they accuse us of not recognizing the same gods as do the cities."[26] The *Legatio* reproaches the accusers for not having understood who God is. Meanwhile, it is apparent that one of the reproaches made against Christians is their lack of sacrifices. Indeed,

> they have not even the foggiest notion of the nature of God, are ignorant of scientific or theological doctrine and have no acquaintance with them, and measure piety in terms of sacrifice.[27]

In the texts referred to above a further distinction is presented between the substance of God and that of matter.[28] The main difference is their uncreated or created character. Additional distinction is put forward through the opposed pairing of 'eternal-perishable', while it is affirmed that only from God do we attain his knowledge (contemplated only by thought and reason).[29] This dimension recurs with the same formulation "apprehended by mind and reason" (νῷ [μόνῳ] καὶ λόγῳ) in two other passages.[30]

By doing this, the *Legatio* has begun to provide God with attributes. This presentation appears in different passages. For instance:

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[21] *Leg. pro Christ* 24.1.
[22] *Leg. pro Christ.* 15.2–3.
[23] Cf. Malherbe 1970b.
[24] Cf. *Leg. pro Christ.* 24.1.
[25] *Leg. pro Christ.* 14.1.
[26] *Leg. pro Christ.* 13.1, also 14.1.
[27] *Leg. pro Christ.* 13.1.
[28] Cf. *Leg. pro Christ.* 24.1.
[29] Cf. *Leg. pro Christ.* 4.1.
[30] *Leg. pro Christ.* 10.1, and 23.7.

> Did he [Plato] then who came to understand the eternal God apprehend by mind and reason, who singled out his attributes (τὰ ἐπισυμβεβηκότα): true being (τὸ ὄντως ὄν), oneness of nature (μονοφυές), the good which is truth flowing from him […].[31]

Besides his uncreated and eternal character, which features appear in most of the cases, further characterization is given in his description as "uncreated, impassible, and indivisible; he does not consist of parts".[32] Also God's impassibility recurs on several occasions.

The most complete description of these attributes is offered, however, in the relevant chapter 10. There, Athenagoras writes:

> We have brought before you one[33] God who is uncreated, eternal, impassible, incomprehensible, and infinite who can be apprehended by mind and reason alone (ἕνα τὸν ἀγένητον καὶ ἀίδιον καὶ ἀόρατον καὶ ἀπαθῆ καὶ ἀκατάληπτον καὶ ἀχώρητον, νῷ μόνῳ καὶ λόγῳ καταλαμβανόμενον), who is encompassed by light, beauty, spirit, and indescribable power […].[34]

Clear Middle Platonic influence is apparent in those six adjectives that start with α-. They present a clear negative theology. Next, Athenagoras continues his description, this time in a positive (although δύναμις is qualified by a negative adjective, ἀνεκδιηγήτῳ) presentation throughout, in images traditionally used for the divine. It is remarkable that here God is not linked to being,[35] while this happens in other passages, where he is described as τὸ ὄν[36] or even τὸ ὄντως ὄν.[37]

The above-quoted paragraph is the first out of the five which compose chapter 10 of the *Legatio*. In this, Athenagoras summarizes his doctrine on God. While the first paragraph refers to God in himself and in relation to his creation, introducing at the end the role of the Logos, paragraphs 2-3 present this Logos to be regarded now also as Son, paragraph 4 focuses on the Spirit, while the last one is a brief summary of Christian Trinitarian teaching and God's providence over the world through his angels and ministers.

A further attribute, clearly within the Platonic tradition, is the one of goodness. "This goodness belongs to God as an attribute and is coexistent with him as colour is with corporeal substance; without it he does not exist."[38] Indeed, in his presentation of Plato, he states:

> Did he then who came to understand the eternal God apprehended by mind and reason, who singled out his attributes: true being, oneness of nature, the good which in truth flowing from him […].[39]

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[31] *Leg. pro Christ.* 23.7.
[32] *Leg. pro Christ.* 8.3.
[33] Better than Schoedel 1972's 'a'.
[34] *Leg. pro Christ.* 10.1.
[35] An exception is 4.2: "But since we teach that there is one God (ἕνα θεὸν), the Maker of the universe (τοῦ πάντος ποιητήν), and that he is not created (οὐ γενόμενον) (since it is not Being that is created, but non-being), whereas all things were made by the Word that issues from him (τοῦ παρ᾽αὐτοῦ λόγου πεποιηκότα) […]."
[36] *Leg. pro Christ.* 15.1.
[37] *Leg. pro Christ.* 23.7.
[38] *Leg. pro Christ.* 24.2.
[39] *Leg. pro Christ.* 23.7.

Going back to the first paragraph referred to above, before the six apophatic adjectives, its most important assertion is of the 'one' (ἕνα) God. Indeed, after the introduction of the *Legatio*, and having laid out the accusations to which Christians were exposed, Athenagoras produces a sort of creedal formulation:

> But since we teach that there is one God (ἕνα θεὸν), the Maker of the universe (τοῦ πάντος ποιητήν), and that he is not created (οὐ γενόμενον) (since it is not Being that is created, but non-being) whereas all things were made by the Word that issues from him (τοῦ παρ᾽αὐτοῦ λόγου πεποιηκότα) […].[40]

In this succinct formulation, very similar to the one of the tenth chapter, but more focused on the essential aspects, four statements are to be discovered: the oneness of God, who is the Creator, being himself uncreated. Finally, he creates everything through his Word. God is put in relation to all things by regarding him as ποιητής. Everything is connected to God through the mediation of his Word/Logos, who issues (is) from him. There is here a clear reference to John 1:3.[41] Finally, there is no mention here of the Spirit. This happens however in several creedal statements even of the New Testament itself.

The author presents Christian 'teaching' (λόγος) as essentially monotheistic. Immediately after the cited passages and in the following two paragraphs, Athenagoras claims that this same belief in the one God is present in Greek poetry and philosophy.[42] This is the case, in his mind, of Euripides and in Sophocles. Indeed, he writes:

> Sophocles agrees with him [Euripides], when he says: 'There is one God, in truth there is but one, Who made the heavens, and the broad earth beneath.'[43]

In addition to them, as already referred, "Philolaus too, by saying that God encompasses all things as in a prison shows that God is one and that he is above matter."[44]

In the rest of chapter six, Athenagoras proceeds to show how the philosophers made the same claim. After discussing what his sources are and proclaiming his trust in the emperors' knowledge of philosophy, he presents this doctrine of the one God in Plato, in Aristotle and his school and, eventually, in the Stoics.

For Plato, he quotes the famous passage of *Ti*. 28c:

> Plato says: 'It is a hard task to find the Maker and Father of this universe, and having found him it is impossible to declare him to all.' Here he understands the uncreated and eternal God to be one (ἕνα).[45]

Athenagoras has to deal, nevertheless, with the fact that Plato acknowledges other 'gods' and explains this problem, eventually concluding: "he [Plato] understands the Creator of all things to be the one uncreated God […]."[46] In doing so, it follows that Christians hold:

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[40] *Leg. pro Christ.* 4.2.
[41] πάντα δι᾽αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἕν, ὃ γέγονεν.
[42] Cf. Zeegers-van der Vorst 1972.
[43] *Leg. pro Christ.* 5.2. Although quoted by the fathers, it does not belong to Sophocles.
[44] *Leg. pro Christ.* 6.1. Also Justin, Clement, Tertullian and Minucius Felix cite this passage.
[45] *Leg. pro Christ.* 6.2.
[46] *Leg. pro Christ.* 6.2.

> neither are we atheists when we acknowledge him by whose Word all things were created and upheld by his Spirit and assert he is God.[47]

After this highly-significant Trinitarian excursus, it is Aristotle's turn. He and his school, at least in the presentation of the apologist, are monotheists:

> Aristotle and his school bring before us one (ἕνα) God whom they liken to a composite living being and say that he consists of soul and body.[48]

The case gets more complex with the Stoics:

> The Stoics, although they multiply names for the divine being by means of titles corresponding to the permutations of matter through which they say the Spirit of God moves, in reality think of God as one (ἕνα)… then it follows from their teaching that God is one […].[49]

Athenagoras is aware that, at least in first impression, they do not seem to be monotheists. His explanation refers to their notion of "artisan fire" (πῦρ τεχνικόν) and especially to the Spirit of God that pervades all.

With this in mind, he concludes his excursion through Greek poets and philosophers by stating:

> Seeing, then, that by and large all admit, though reluctantly, when they get down to the first principles (ἀρχάς) of everything, that the divine being (το θεῖον) is one (ἓν) [...].[50]

Christians do not think otherwise: "we think and rightly believe that God is one", (ἕνα θεὸν εἶναι).[51]

In chapter eight, another argument for the one God is offered. This time it is an argument *ad absurdum*. Relevant here is the pivotal position that Athenagoras attaches to the doctrine of the one God:

> Consider, in light of the following arguments, the teaching that God, the Creator of this universe, is one (εἷς) from the beginning so that you may also understand the reasoning which supports our faith (τὸν λογισμὸν ἡμῶν τῆς πίστεως).[52]

In addition to this attempt to show Greek poets' and philosophers' support for Christian doctrine, in several passages Athenagoras stresses again and again their belief in the one and only God. Indeed: "God the Maker of the world is from the beginning one

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[47] *Leg. pro Christ.* 6.2.
[48] *Leg. pro Christ.* 6.3.
[49] *Leg. pro Christ.* 6.4.
[50] *Leg. pro Christ.* 7.1.
[51] *Leg. pro Christ.* 7.1.
[52] *Leg. pro Christ.* 8.1.

and alone (εἷς […] καὶ μόνος)."[53] This doctrine had been proclaimed by the prophets.[54] Everything is subordinated to the one God, the Creator of everything.[55]

It is clear that in most of the passages that have been quoted above, and alongside the proclamation of the one God, his function as Creator is central. Everything has been created by God. This appears already in the early summary of 4.2: "since we teach that there is one God, the Maker of this universe (τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς ποιητήν)."[56] These are almost exactly Plato's words: ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς.[57] In that passage, Plato uses also another formulation: δημιουργὸς πατήρ. Akin to this is Athenagoras' summary of the philosopher's teaching: δημιουργὸν τῶν ὅλων.[58]

In the eighth chapter, where, as stated, Athenagoras introduces an argument *ad absurdum*, there is a clear concentration on the title of 'Maker of the world'. Indeed, the expression ὁ δὲ τοῦ κόσμου ποιητὴς appears, with slight variations, five times.[59] A similar expression is ποιητὴν […] καὶ δεσπότην.[60]

Related to this is the thought that creation, in its order and beauty, leads to the Creator: the cosmological argument.

> If we held opinions like those of Diagoras in spite of having such impressive signs conducive to piety (θεοσέβειαν) in the order (τὸ εὔτακτον), the perfect harmony (σύμφωνον), the magnitude, the colours, the shapes, and the arrangement of the world (τὴν διάθεσιν τοῦ κόσμου) […].[61]

Speaking about Euripides, he affirms that:

> [...] he discerned Another from his works, understanding the things that appear as providing a glimpse of things unseen. The one whose works they are and by whose spirit they are guided he took to be God.[62]

Referring to Plato and in agreement with him, he warns against bestowing divinity on creatures:

> If then I admire the sky and the elements as products of his craftsmanship and yet do not worship them as gods, since I know the law of dissolution which governs them, how can I call things gods which I know were made by men?[63]

As clearly shown, an essential element of Christian faith for Athenagoras is that God is the Creator of the entire universe. Together with this claim, comes the statement

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[53] *Leg. pro Christ.* 8.7.
[54] Cf. *Leg. pro Christ.* 9.2.
[55] *Leg. pro Christ.* 18.2 (and to the Word that issues from him).
[56] *Leg. pro Christ.* 30.6 brings exactly the same construction.
[57] *Leg. pro Christ.* 6.2. These two names come again in 27.2.
[58] *Leg. pro Christ.* 6.2.
[59] *Leg. pro Christ.* 8.4.
[60] *Leg. pro Christ.* 16.3.
[61] *Leg. pro Christ.* 4.2.
[62] *Leg. pro Christ.* 5.2–6.1.
[63] *Leg. pro Christ.* 16.5.

that he is himself uncreated. Athenagoras uses for this the concept of ἀγένητος. The alternative concept of ἀγέννητος does not imply yet at this stage something different as the Word's generation.

Indeed, in the first summary, several times already cited, Athenagoras writes: "we teach that there is one God, the Maker of the universe, and that he is not created."[64] Interpreting Plato, he says: "Here he understands the uncreated and eternal (ἀγένητον καὶ ἀίδιον) God to be one."[65] This connection between ἀγένητος and ἀίδιος is very characteristic and appears several times in the *Legatio*. For instance, in chapter 10, the first two negative attributes (after affirming that God is one) are the ones of ἀγένητον and ἀίδιον.[66] The same combination appears in another place too.[67]

While in the *Legatio* we find several formulations that are explicitly Trinitarian, there are more formulations where only the Logos/Word appears, the Spirit being absent. This is nothing new in itself, since, as already affirmed, something similar is to be found in the New Testament.

In numerous quotations above, we have seen the reference to the mediation of the Word in creation. I would like to focus upon two of them. Both are very relevant. The first one is Athenagoras' first statement regarding Christian faith and the refutation of the accusation of atheism. It is the confession of the one God, the uncreated Creator. In this context, two affirmations are made concerning the Logos. Firstly, everything was made διά him. The second one refers to the origin of that Logos. Although the Greek text does not have a verb for this relation, it is clearly understood. The Logos is, proceeds from and issues from God (τοῦ παρ᾽αὐτοῦ λόγου):

> But since we teach that there is one God, the Maker of the universe […] whereas all things were made by the Word that issues from him […].[68]

The second passage is the first paragraph of chapter 10. There, in a detailed presentation of God, the mediation of the Word is further described:

> We have brought before you a God who is uncreated, eternal, impassible, incomprehensible, and infinite, who can be apprehended by mind and reason alone, who is encompassed by light, beauty, spirit, and indescribable power, and who created, adorned, and now rules the universe through the Word that issues from him (ὑφ᾽οὗ γεγένηται τὸ πᾶν διὰ <τοῦ παρ᾽> αὐτοῦ λόγου καὶ διακεκόσμηται καὶ συγκρατεῖται).[69]

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[64] *Leg. pro Christ.* 4.2.
[65] *Leg. pro Christ.* 6.2.
[66] *Leg. pro Christ.* 10. 1: "We have brought before you a God who is uncreated, eternal, impassible, incomprehensible, and infinite, who can be apprehended by mind and reason alone, who is encompassed by light, beauty, spirit, and indescribable power, and who created, adorned, and now rules the through the Word that issues from him. I have given sufficient evidence that we are not atheists on the basis of arguments presenting this God as one."
[67] *Leg. pro Christ.* 22.5.
[68] *Leg. pro Christ.* 4.2.
[69] *Leg. pro Christ.* 10.1.

As expressed, the paragraph passes from God's attributes through his "indescribable power" to his presentation as Creator. This is carried out through three passive verbs: γεγένηται, διακεκόσμηται, συγκρατεῖται. It must be said here that in the original text the construction is in the passive voice and subject is the universe (τὸ πᾶν). All this happens through the mediation of αὐτοῦ λόγου, his Word. The Uncreated creates through his Word. The relation of the Logos to God is affirmed with the same expression of 4.2: τοῦ παρ᾽αὐτοῦ λόγου. The function of the Word is further introduced as not only making, but also as adorning (there is also an ordering function to be considered here) and holding together (better than Schoedel's 'rules').[70] From this perspective, it is the Logos that produces and upholds the universe. Remarkable is that fact that the verb συγκρατῶ is often associated with the activity of the Spirit.[71]

Two further passages explain God's Logos. In the first one, the divinity of God and his Word are stated.

> Proof has now been offered to show to the best of my ability, if not as it deserves, that we are not atheists when we recognize the Maker of the universe and the Word proceeding from him (καὶ τὸν παρ᾽αὐτοῦ λόγον) as God.[72]

In the second one, in a bold move, Athenagoras compares the relationship existing between both emperors, to the one between God and his Logos.

> […] for as all things been subjected to you, a father and a son, who your kingdom from ('for the king's life is God's hand', as the prophetic spirit says), so all things are subordinated to the one God and the Word that issues from him (καὶ τῷ παρ᾽αὐτοῦ λόγῳ) whom we consider his inseparable Son (υἱῷ νοουμένῳ).[73]

New here is the identification between God's Logos and Son. A deeper analysis of this aspect is to be found also in the relevant chapter 10. As above stated, paragraphs 2–3 discuss the Logos, considered now also as the Son.

> For we think there is also a Son of God. Now let no one think that this talk of God having a Son is ridiculous. For we have not come to our views on either God the Father or his Son as do the poets, who create myths which they present the gods as no better than men. On the contrary, the Son of God is the Word of the Father in its Ideal Form and Energizing Power (ἐν ἰδεᾳ καὶ ἐνέργειᾳ); for in his likeness and through him all things came into existence, which presupposes that the Father and the Son are one. Now since the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son by a powerful unity of spirit (ἑνότητι καὶ δυνάμει πνεύματος), the Son of God is the mind and reason of the Father.[74]

As referred to above, the first paragraph had introduced the Logos as creating and upholding creation. The new paragraph links it to God's Son. In doing so, the author

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[70] Indeed, in the following quotation, Schoedel translates the verb as 'upheld'.
[71] *Leg. pro Christ.* 6.2: ὑφ᾽οὗ λόγῳ δεδημιούργηται καὶ τῷ παρ᾽αὐτοῦ πνεύματι συνέχεται τὰ πάντα.
[72] *Leg. pro Christ.* 30.6.
[73] *Leg. pro Christ.* 18.2.
[74] *Leg. pro Christ.* 10.2

needs to justify his position, distancing himself from those myths where a god may have a son. The myths concerned are here attributed to the poets: Athenagoras takes a critical stance, though hitherto his attitude to the poets throughout the *Legatio* has been rather positive, seeing them as witnesses to monotheistic thought. At any rate, God's Son is identified with "the Word of the Father" (λόγος τοῦ πατρός). A little earlier, Athenagoras had introduced the idea that God is the Father. This notion appears in Plato's discussion on the divine as well. The identification between Son and Logos is then further explained: it happens ἐν ἰδεᾳ καὶ ἐνέργειᾳ.[75] Schoedel's translation ("in Ideal Form and Energizing Power") is somewhat puzzling, showing the difficulty of understanding this – to a great extent bewildering – expression. While ἰδέα is a central element in Plato's system, the same can be said about ἐνέργεια for Aristotle. Schoedel proposes, however, to consider it a Stoic-Philonic distinction between the (cosmic) λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and (containing all the Forms) and the λόγος προφορικός (as agent in creation).[76] Through this expression, Athenagoras would be offering his views on the Logos theory in its different phases. Unlike Justin, the *Legatio* does not openly propose that theory, but appears to refer to it only implicitly. As well as this precise explanation, it throws some light upon the mediation of the Logos in creation. It is apparent that there is here no reference to its incarnation, nor to the historical existence of Christ. This is perhaps due to the polemical character of Athenagoras' argument,[77] but the Logos' relevance and function is especially cosmic (and intellectual). Like in Justin, the notion of Logos, which has a long philosophical, Jewish and even Johannine background, assists in explaining the production of the universe by the transcendent God.

After this, the text emphasizes the union existing between God and his Logos-Son. This is expressed in terms of *perichoresis*, further described as ἑνότητι καὶ δυνάμει πνεύματος. While Schoedel translates it as "by a powerful unity of spirit", it could also be translated "by the unity and power of the spirit". In any case, although one may be tempted here to see a mention of the Trinity, one needs to take into account that πνεῦμα has no article.[78] Further, the Logos is identified with the Father's νοῦς καὶ λόγος:

> If in your great wisdom you would like to know what 'Son' means, I will tell you in a few brief words: it means that he is the first begotten (πρώτον γέννημα) of the Father. The term is used not because he came into existence (οὐχ ὡς γενόμενον) (for God, who is eternal mind (νοῦς), had in himself his logos from the beginning, since he was eternally rational (λογικός)) but because he came forth (προελθών) to serve as Ideal Form and Energizing Power (ἰδεᾳ καὶ ἐνέργειᾳ) for everything material which like an entity without qualities and [...] underlies things in a state characterized by the mixture of heavier and lighter elements.[79]

Athenagoras delves further into the Son's being, i.e. into his relationship with the Father. In order to do this, he needs to distinguish the origin of the Son from the origin of the creatures. Unlike the latter, he was not created (οὐχ ὡς γενόμενον), but proceeds

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[75] This strange formula is to be found also in Hipp. *Haer*. 5,7,22 with regard to pagan divinities.
[76] Cf. Schoedel 1972, 21, n. 10.2.
[77] Cf. 21.4: Yet if a god assumes flesh by divine dispensation (θείαν οἰκονομίαν), is he forthwith a slave of lust?
[78] Neither does it have it in Marcovich's edition. Cf. Marcovich 1990, 40.
[79] *Leg. pro Christ*. 10.3.

from (προελθών) God. This is as much as he can say on the Logos. It has a different origin from God than that of the creatures. Implicitly, it is said that the Logos *is* God, since it has been affirmed several times that God is ἀγένετος. The Logos is with God, and not with the creatures. There is still no clear notion of generation though. The *Legatio* contents itself with the participle προελθών. In addition to this, unlike all temporal creative processes, the procedure involving the Logos is eternal.[80] Here the Son is presented as God's λόγος, eternally present in the νοῦς, which is the Father. This expression is somehow confusing, since at the end of the previous paragraph, Athenagoras had stated that "the Son of God is the νοῦς καὶ λόγος of the Father."[81] Consequently, the Logos would be the νοῦς of the νοῦς. Similarly, as the text reads, God has always been λογικός because he eternally has his λόγος in him. In any case, the procession or origination of the Son, presented here again with the expression ἰδεᾳ καὶ ἐνέργειᾳ, has a cosmic function. It is oriented towards creation and information of matter. He came forth in order to be the idea and power for the material world.

Concerning the Spirit Athenagoras provides unmistakably less information compared to what was offered on the Logos-Son.[82] In some passages, he speaks rather of a dyad, ignoring completely the Spirit. There is a clear example in chapter 30:

> Proof has now been offered to show to the best of my ability, if not as it deserves, that we are no atheists when we recognize the Maker of the universe and the Word proceeding from him as God.[83]

If we leave aside references to the teaching of the poets and philosophers (chiefly Euripides and the Stoics), relevant here is Athenagoras' description of prophetic inspiration, his understanding of it as an outflow or 'effluence', as well as its presence in several Trinitarian formulas.

As already quoted, speaking about Euripides, he affirms that

> he discerned Another from his works, understanding the things that appear as providing a glimpse of things unseen. The one whose works (ποιήματα) they are and by whose spirit they are guided (ὑφ᾽οὗ τῷ πνεύματι ἡνοχεῖται) he took to be God.[84]

Athenagoras attributes the Spirit to God; it is his Spirit. His function here appears to be of directing and guiding creatures. The verb ἡνοχεῖται means to hold the reins, to hold control originally of a horse; metaphorically of a reality, in this case, the universe. So regarded, the Spirit is the charioteer of creation.

The Spirit has more relevance attached to its concept in Stoic thought. After presenting the doctrine of the one God of Plato and Aristotle, Athenagoras describes this theme as it existed within the Stoic school on two occasions. As stated, the first occasion is after the presentation of Aristotle's views. Here he writes:

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[80] Cf. Dettling 1981.
[81] *Leg. pro Christ.* 10.2.
[82] Cf. Malherbe 1969b.
[83] *Leg. pro Christ.* 30.6.
[84] *Leg. pro Christ.* 5.2–3.

> The Stoics, although they multiply names for the divine being by means of titles corresponding to the permutations of matter (κατὰ τὰς παραλλάξεις τῆς ὑλης) through which they say the Spirit of God moves (δι᾽ἧς φασι τὸ πνεῦμα χωρεῖν τοῦ θεοῦ), in reality think of God as one. For if God is an artisan fire (πῦρ τεχνικόν) systematically proceeding to the production of the world, containing in itself all the generative principles (σπερματικοὺς λόγους) by which everything takes place accord with Destiny, and if his Spirit penetrates the whole world (τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ διήκει δι᾽ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου), then it follows from their teaching that God is one, receiving the name 'Zeus' to correspond to the 'seething' element of matter or 'Hera' to correspond to the 'air', and being given all his other names to correspond to every part of matter, which he pervades.[85]

From this, it is clear that the Spirit of God has an active role by penetrating (διήκει) and moving (χωρεῖν) matter and the entire world. And doing so, he assists God, understood in the Stoic system as a πῦρ τεχνικόν, in producing the world. As well, it is clear that it has a unifying function.

In another passage, the *Legatio* presents once again the Stoic doctrine on the Spirit in a similar form. Here, the Spirit pervades matter, transforming it. New here is that the different names of the divine in Stoic thought are applied in the following paragraph explicitly to the Spirit:

> But in the case of the Stoics this can be said: 'If you think that the supreme God is one, both uncreated and eternal, and you say that there are composite entities resulting from the mutation of matter and that the spirit of God pervading matter in its permutations (καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τῆς ὕλης κεχωρηκὸς κατὰ τὰς παραλλάξεις αὐτῆς) receives now one name, now another,[86] then material things will be God's body, and when the elements perish at the cosmic conflagration, such names must perish together with these things and the spirit of God alone remain.' Who then could believe those to be gods whose bodies the permutation of matter destroys?[87]

Beyond these philosophical speculations on the Spirit, in the biblical realm his understanding of the prophetic Spirit is germane, when Athenagoras delves into his pneumatological thought on the Spirit. Other apologists, chiefly Justin, have emphasized this dimension as well.

In chapter seven, he contrasts the knowledge of God attained by poets and philosophers to that received by Christians. From the outset, he emphasizes its fragmentary and *en passant* character which explains their different and opposed doctrines on God. However, in passing, he acknowledges a positive element in their quest:

> For poets and philosophers have gone at this and other matters by guesswork, each of them moved by his own soul through some affinity with the breath of God (κατὰ συμπάθειαν τῆς παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πνοῆς) to seek, if possible, to find and understand the truth.[88]

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[85] *Leg. pro Christ.* 6.4.
[86] Good summary of Stoic doctrine.
[87] *Leg. pro Christ.* 22.5.
[88] *Leg. pro Christ.* 7.2. Tatian, Theophilus and Clement had also contrasted knowledge gained by conjecture to revelation.

It seems here to present a sort of *praeparatio evangelica*, where somehow the Spirit of God or his breath (τοῦ θεοῦ πνοῆς) mysteriously guided them from within in their quest for God. This activity of the Spirit in the shadows of the human soul becomes, however, clear and open in his account of the inspiration of the prophets:[89]

> We, however, have prophets as witnesses of what we think and believe. They have spoken out by a divinely inspired Spirit about God and the things of God. You too would admit, since you surpass others in wisdom and reverence for the truly divine, that it would be irrational to abandon belief in the Spirit from God (τῷ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεύματι) which had moved the mouths of the prophets like musical instruments (ὡς ὄργανα) and to pay attention to human opinions.[90]

Here, Athenagoras states that in the prophet it is the Spirit of God who speaks. The object of their revelation is "God and the things of God". More interesting still is his inspiration theory. The prophets are regarded as (musical) organs of the Spirit.[91]

Further elucidation of prophetic inspiration comes two chapters below, where, after having demonstrated the existence of the one God through an argument *ad absurdum*, Athenagoras comes to present the biblical doctrine on this issue. Here he puts forward four short quotations of the prophets that deny the existence of other gods.[92] The introduction to those citations is of particular interest:

> But since the voices of the prophets affirm our arguments – and I expect that you who are so eager for knowledge and so learned are not without understanding of the teachings either of Moses or of Isaiah and Jeremiah and the rest of the prophets who in the ecstasy of their thoughts, as the divine Spirit moved them (κινήσαντος αὐτοὺς τοῦ θείου πνεύματος), uttered what they had been inspired to say, the Spirit making use of them as a flautist might blow into a flute (ὡς εἰ καὶ αὐλητὴς αὐλὸν ἐμπνεύσαι) – what, then, do they say?[93]

Here Athenagoras goes further into what he had already expressed concerning the prophets as organs of the Spirit. New here is the statement that revelation occurs "in the ecstasy of their thoughts" and the 'organ' image is here presented more in detail with the image of the flute. It is the Spirit who moves them – exalting them outside the limits of their natural thinking – and speaks in and through them. At the end of the previous paragraph is again presented the distinction between human and divine knowledge that opened the chapter. Only in God – through his Spirit – we are made able to know God and the divine. While poets and philosophers have succeeded in gaining some sort of knowledge of God, chiefly his unity, the way forward can only be followed with an open revelation of the Spirit in history.[94] One needs to take account here of the positive evaluation made by Athenagoras of Greek poetry and philosophy. Although not explicitly

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[89] Bingham 2016.
[90] *Leg. pro Christ.* 7.3.
[91] Cf. Just. *1 Apol.* 36; Theoph. *Ad Autol.* 2.9; Clem. *Protr.* 8. 78.1.
[92] *Bar*. 3:36; 1. 44:6; *Is*. 43:10–11; *Is*. 66:1.
[93] *Leg. pro Christ.* 9.1.
[94] Cf. Peglau 1999.

considering them λόγοι σπερματικοί,[95] the *Legatio* sees elements of truth in their quest and even divine assistance.[96]

After this introduction, Athenagoras resumes the teaching of the prophets on the one God. Actually, they simply deny the existence of other gods. In this way, the argument of the prophets complements the argument *ad absurdum* of the previous chapter: there are no gods besides the one God. This revelation is carried out by the same Spirit of God, mysteriously in the poets and prophets, more openly in the prophets. In this way, the Spirit moves and unifies creation and at the same time reveals to human beings the mystery of the one God.

Again in the significant chapter 10, further insights on Athenagoras' thoughts on the Spirit appear. Starting with 10.1, but especially developed in 10.2–3, the *Legatio* refers to God's Logos, who is also his Son, and especially his function in creation. Here, Athenagoras refers to the Spirit. His observation connects up with the previous chapter through a biblical quote attributed, as it has been stated before, to the prophetic Spirit. Having said so, the author intends to provide a glimpse into the same Spirit. Here he uses the image of ἀπόρροια.[97]

> The prophetic Spirit also agrees with this account. 'For the Lord', it says, 'made me the beginning of his ways for his works.'[98] Further, this same Holy Spirit, which is active in those who speak prophetically, we regard as an effluence of God which flows forth from him and returns like a ray of the sun (ἀπόρροιαν εἶναι φαμεν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀπορρέον και ἐπαναφερόμενον ὡς ἀκτῖνα ἡλίου).[99]

It must be said here, though, that in quoting the biblical citation the apologist confuses the Logos with God's Wisdom. Highly significant is the notion of ἀπόρροια used for the Spirit. Although it comes close to what Philo says (though he does not use the term itself), this image is a real contribution of Athenagoras to the debate.[100] The Spirit is regarded in a very dynamic relation with God. The image of the sun's ray as well as the one of light from fire, which comes in another passage,[101] will become successful images in later Trinitarian thought to describe divine processions.

With the following and last paragraph of the tenth chapter, we come to Athenagoras' explicitly Trinitarian formulas, which will be presented and analysed now.

After describing Plato's views on the one God, Athenagoras, referring now to Christians, writes:

> […] neither are we atheists when we acknowledge him by whose Word all things were created (ὑφ᾽οὗ λόγῳ δεδημιούργηται) and upheld by his Spirit (καὶ τῷ παρ᾽αὐτοῦ πνεύματι συνέχεται τὰ πάντα) and assert that he is God […].[102]

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[95] Although this terminology comes in 6.4, it is in the context of creation and information of matter.
[96] Cf. Pouderon and Doré 1998.
[97] The term appears in *Wis*. 7:25.
[98] *Prov.* 8:22.
[99] *Leg. pro Christ.* 10.4.
[100] Ph. *Gig*. 25–27.
[101] *Leg. pro Christ*. 24.2.
[102] *Leg. pro Christ*. 6.2.

Here we find a classical presentation of the distinct functions of the two other divine persons. While creation takes place through the Word, it is upheld by the Spirit. In this way, we find here a more precise description of the Trinitarian God. God (Father) acts through his Word and his Spirit. As was the case with the Logos, the Spirit is now presented as παρ᾽αὐτοῦ as well. Both display an inherent reference to God; they belong to God and issue from him. Beyond these attributions to Word and Spirit, Athenagoras displays his Trinitarian thought in the following three highly-relevant passages.

> Who then would not be amazed if he heard of men called atheists who bring forward God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit and who proclaim both their power in their unity (ἐν τῇ ἑνώσει δύναμιν) and their diversity in rank (καὶ ἐν τῇ τάξει διαίρεσιν).[103]

The same opposition between ἕνωσις and διαίρεσις appears in the following passage, where again the distinction according to the rank is present (a slight difference constitutes κατὰ τάξιν instead of ἐν τῇ τάξει):

> We say that there is God and the Son, his Word, and the Holy Spirit, united in power (ἑνούμενα μέν κατὰ δύναμιν), yet distinguished in rank (διαιρούμενα δὲ κατὰ τάξιν) as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, since the Son is mind, reason [λόγος, word], and wisdom of the Father and the Spirit an effluence like light from fire (ἀπόρροια ὡς φῶς ἀπὸ πυρὸς τὸ πνεῦμα).[104]

New here is the further characterization of the Son and of the Spirit as well. This development is designed again with the notion of ἀπόρροια, which is illustrated here through a different image (light from fire instead of the sunbeam).

In the following passage, appear the previous concepts of ἕνωσις and διαίρεσις, along with ἑνότης and not least κοινωνία:

> For we are men who consider life here below of very little worth. We are attended only by the knowledge of him who is truly God (τοῦ τόν ὄντως θεὸν) and of the Word that issues from him (καὶ τὸν παρ᾽αὐτοῦ λόγον) – a knowledge as to what is the unity (ἑνότης) of the Son (τοῦ παιδὸς) with the Father, what is the communion of the Father with the Son (πρὸς τὸν ὑιὸν κοινωνία), what is the Spirit, what is the unity (ἕνωσις) of these [powers] – the Spirit, the Son (τοῦ παιδός), and the Father – and their diversity when thus united (καὶ διαίρεσις ἑνουμένων).[105]

These three passages are extremely significant for understanding Athenagoras' contribution into the Trinitarian realm of thinking. It is crucial in that he introduces terminology that later became very successful in voicing the evolution of Trinitarian theology. The Father is God, even more, ὁ ὄντως θεός. The Son is νοῦς καὶ λόγος of the Father. One sees here an intellectual focus in the understanding of the Logos. Emphasis is laid upon the unity between God and his Word/Son.[106] In the third paragraph, this

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[103] *Leg. pro Christ.* 10.5. For this last formulation cf. Tert. *Adv. Prax*. 2 and also Just. *1 Apol*. 13.3.
[104] *Leg. pro Christ*. 24.2.
[105] *Leg. pro Christ*. 12.3.
[106] Curiously, in that passage the Son is introduced – as for instance in the *Didache* – as παῖς, but immediately afterwards as υἱός.

ἑνότης is affirmed exclusively for them. In other words, the Spirit is excluded. Even more, their κοινωνία is predicted, a term usually connected with the Spirit. Only at the end of the passage, ἕνωσις and διαίρεσις are attributed to the three 'persons' – which are never described as such.[107] The use of both notions, as well as of κοινωνία in Trinitarian language, is a significant contribution of Athenagoras.

The three passages are characterized by this tension between unity and distinction. While the first one is linked to δύναμις,[108] more interesting is the distinction κατὰ τάξιν. This notion could have some point in common with Justin and might have influenced Tertullian later.[109] In any case, it needs to be understood as a functional distinction. It establishes neither a hierarchy nor subordination.[110]

For the Spirit, little is said, only the image of a ἀπόρροια is presented. To some extent, this could be said for the Logos too. This time the effluence is not compared to a sunbeam but also with another popular image, light from a fire. At any rate, Athenagoras is aware of the dynamic tension of the Trinity – a term which he does not use, a διαίρεσις ἑνουμένων.[111]

After this long discussion of the *Legatio*, it is time to draw some conclusions. Athenagoras' *Legatio* stands in the tradition of the second-century apologies. Within a clear context and having an explicit goal, they address the authority (highly sophisticated emperors, especially Marcus Aurelius, in the case of Athenagoras, who could follow the *Legatio*'s arguments) and with it the informed (pagan) public. The topic of the apologies is a defence of Christianity, by offering a compendium of its doctrine (especially showing its faith in the one God) and practices. In this sense, we ought to be aware of this aim in analysing pieces of this genre. It is a presentation *ad extra*, relying on cultural and philosophical arguments, which intends to demonstrate chiefly that Christians are not atheists and, on this basis, asks for a change in the state's attitude towards them. It is fundamental to understand that it does not aim at providing a full presentation of Christian doctrine,[112] nor is it addressed to Christians:

> When we remember that he was not writing a theological treatise for Christians but an apology addressed to a pagan Emperor his originality is seen to be striking. Had Athenagoras written a work on the Trinity *for Christians* it is possible that we would possess one of the most outstanding contributions to Trinitarian theology of the ante-Nicene period of the Church.[113]

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[107] The concept of ὑπόστασις comes in at 24.5, with another meaning.
[108] For δύναμις in Athenagoras and in general in Early Christianity, cf. Edwards 2017, esp. 161–162.
[109] On Justin, cf. *1 Apol* 13. 1 and 3. Here Jesus appears ἐν δευτέρᾳ χώρᾳ and the prophetic Spirit ἐν τρίτῃ τάξει. On Tertullian, cf. *Adv Prax*, 2: *Tres autem non statu, sed gradu; nec substantia, sed forma; nec potestate, sed specie*.
[110] Cf. Giunchi 1998 and also Pouderon 1989, 132: "[…] etablit, à notre avis, non pas une distinction hiérarchique, qui relèverait de l'hérésie, mais une distinction fonctionnelle, chacune des personnes ayant son rôle propre."
[111] *Leg. pro Christ.* 12.3.
[112] Cf. Pouderon 1989, 139: "C'est dire que le propos de l'apologiste n'était pas d'exposer la doctrine chrétienne, mais bien de défendre les chrétiens contre d'injustes accusations, et de montrer que le christianisme n'est pas incompatible avec la raison!"
[113] Barnard 1972, 181–182.

With this in mind, we can discuss the apologists' and, in this case, Athenagoras', *presentation of God.*[114] As stated, he shows how the Christian God is in many extents not so different from the one considered by the best Greek reflections and thoughts. He displays a substantial usage of philosophical ideas and concepts, while biblical sources are spare. The *Legatio* is even less biblical than the works of other apologists, such as Justin for instance.

Throughout the chapters of the *Legatio* we find the main insistence is on the unicity of God. That this did not sound extremely strange to the addressees is due to the fact that a certain sort of monotheism was evolving within Greek philosophy.[115] The God presented by Athenagoras is clearly the god of the philosophers, of the (Middle) Platonic tradition but also – in Athenagoras' eclectic presentation – with traces from other schools, but filled with biblical thought.[116] This one God is the transcendent creator and father of the universe, who also directly or indirectly provides for it.[117] Uncreated, he is separated from matter by an abyss. Unlike this temporal material, he is eternal, impassible and perceptible only through mind and reason. In this way, Athenagoras states that Christians actually do not believe in a God different from the one that poets and philosophers have progressively discovered – not without difficulties – through a sort of 'partial inspiration'.[118] In this sense, divine revelation through the prophets confirms and corrects the long secular speculation of poets and philosophers.

This said, in the *Legatio*, God, the Father, is said to concentrate in himself God's being (ὁ ὄντως θεός), as the sole source and origin of the other 'persons'. Pouderon sees in these rather functional emanations (λόγος-σοφία, on the one side, ἀπόρροια, on the other):

> Le Père ayant droit plus que tout autre au titre de Dieu (qui n'est pourtant pas refusé au Fils, particulièrement en *L.* X, 5), il concenter sur sa personne les attributions de Dieu, comme la fonction créatrice ou la fonction judiciaire, et distribue à son Verbe et à l'Esprit d'une part, aux anges d'autre part, les fonctions cosmique, prophétique et providentielle, véritables délégations de pouvoir et de puissance – comme le montre par exemple l'emploi de la préposition *διά*, 'par l'intermédiaire de'.[119]

Barnard has, nevertheless, a different view:

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[114] Cf. Barnard 1970b.
[115] Cf. Barnard 1972, 82: "in the second century, among the philosophers, the ancient polytheism of the masses had become harmonized with a kind of monotheism."
[116] Cf. Barnard 1972, 84: "Athenagoras, to a greater extent than Justin, expressed his idea of God in philosophical terms. However, as we shall see, he was careful to adapt from Middle Platonism only what he needed for his purpose and he is able to set forth clearly the Christian conception of God as loving Creator and Father."
[117] Cf. *Leg. pro Christ.* 10.5: "Nor does our teaching concerning the Godhead stop there, but we also say that there is a host of angels and ministers whom God, the Maker and Artificer of the world, set in their places through the Word that issues from him and whom he commanded to be concerned with the elements, the heavens and the world with all that is in it and the good order of all that is in it." See also *Leg. pro Christ*. 24.2: "So also we have recognized that there are other powers which are concerned with matter and operate through it."
[118] Cf. Just. *2 Apol*. 13.3.
[119] Pouderon 1989, 136.

> The lineaments of later Trinitarian orthodoxy are clearly visible in Athenagoras. Father, Son and Spirit were to him three distinct persons – a triad – and the logos-Son and the Spirit were not simply functions subordinate to the Fount of the Godhead. Athenagoras recognised the plurality of the Godhead – how the logos-Son and Spirit, while really manifested in the world of space and time, could yet abide eternally within the being of the Father.[120]

Also in line with the philosophical doctrines of his time, Athenagoras introduces a Logos, who proceeds from and is with God. It has the function of an agent of God in producing and animating the world, by organizing matter, becoming the archetypical idea; in a certain sense, a δημιουργός. This account of the Logos as an explanation of creation and with a cosmic function is, however, not as developed and clearly stated with the different stages of the Logos (ἐνδιάθετος and προφορικός) as in Justin, remaining rather implicit in the *Legatio*. In addition to this, Athenagoras' use of the Logos is very reserved and its main importance is metaphysical.[121] While it has been rightly stated that neither the incarnation of the Logos nor its soteriological dimension are here present, this is explained, however, by the genre and aim of the writing.[122]

The doctrine of the Spirit is even more sparingly developed,[123] focusing upon prophetic inspiration and referring to some cosmic functions,[124] making the Spirit an immanent power in creation.[125] In this regard, there is not much more to observe, especially if one takes into account that the function of the animation of the world had already been attributed by Athenagoras to the Logos. Furthermore, the Spirit plays no role either in the being of each individual Christian or in the creative act.

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[120] Barnard 1972, 111.

[121] Cf. Barnard 1972, 96.

[122] Cf. Barnard 1972, 102: "However Athenagoras' purpose was apologetic rather than systematic. He is defending the faith against certain calumnies and setting forth arguments for Christian theism, rather than giving a systematic account of the beliefs which he held. We should therefore be unwise to assume that he had no knowledge of, nor was uninterested in, such matters as the historic incarnation in Jesus Christ. Moreover, as we have suggested earlier, it may be that Athenagoras was aware of pagan criticisms of the founders of schools and so he presented Christianity as the 'truth' rather than as something stemming from a historical founder and his teaching."

[123] Cf. Pouderon 1989, 140: "Puisqu' Athénagore attribue au Verbe (Λόγος, l'équivalent du Λόγος stoïcien) la fonction d'animation, l'Esprit se retrouve bien démuni! En effet chez Athénagore comme chez la plupart des Pères du ne siècle, son rôle se limite à l'inspiration prophétique; chacune des formules qui le désignent – en dehors de celle du Credo trinitaire - mentionne sa fonction inspiratrice."

[124] Cf. Barnard 1972, 105: "In comparison with this what they have to say about the Holy Spirit and the Trinity is meagre in the extreme. This was due to two reasons. In the first place the deity of the Holy Spirit raised no special problem once it was conceded that the Godhead was not unitary. So Tertullian, amid copious emphasis on the *trinitas,* bases his argument in fact on the unity and distinction of the Father and Son alone. Even as late as Apollinarius *(fides sec. part.* 18), the explanation for regarding the holy triad as one God is in terms of the relation between the Father and the Son, the argument for the unity of two persons covering the unity of three. The second reason for the slow development of theological reflection on the Spirit was the Subjective nature of His operations. The being of God as transcendent and His action in creation and redemption are more easily objectified than His presence as immanent in the human heart."

[125] Cf. Rankin 2009, 179: "In his treatment of the Spirit/Holy Spirit, Athenagoras is again concerned to articulate the way in which the supreme Creator–Father–God can remain transcendent and outside his creation and yet be fully engaged with it."

Although situated at the beginning of Christian theological and Trinitarian speculation and conditioned by being written in the genre of an apology, Athenagoras' contributions are significant. He had a better command of philosophical methods than Justin. He was a better dogmatician as well. In this regard,

> Athenagoras carried theological speculation on the Trinity further than the other second-century Greek apologists in his conception of unity and fellowship or kinship within the life of the Godhead.[126]

Even if many aspects are still fluid and unsettled, even if there are fundamental aspects still missing, his important achievements[127] have chiefly to do with introducing terminology that would prove fundamental in the presentation of the Trinitarian mystery,[128] becoming later on technical terms.[129] Barnard is right when he writes:

> The fact that he could use so many terms, not used before, of the Godhead - ἑνότης, ἕνωσις, διαίρεσις, κονωνία, ἀπόρροια - is very remarkable in a defence of Christianity addressed to a pagan Emperor. Had Athenagoras written a theological treatise *for Christians* it is possible that we should now possess one of the most outstanding contributions to Trinitarian theology of the pre-Nicene period.[130]

In the second half of the second century, the Athenian philosopher, moved by cruel persecutions, produced a special piece of writing. In it, aiming at effecting a change of attitude of the authorities, he develops an explanation of Christian faith and ethics, in order to show that these do not substantially disagree with the best achievements of Greek

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[126] Barnard 1972, 109.

[127] Barnard 1972, 182: "Athenagoras made a distinctive contribution to the more strictly defined sphere of Christian theology. He carefully avoided the pitfalls into which Justin Martyr fell in his unguarded language about the logos-Son which was open to a subordinationist interpretation. In contrast to Justin, he emphasised more the metaphysical and spiritual aspect of the logos who existed essentially and eternally within the Godhead. This approach provided a shield for an essential element in Christian theology: against the belief that the logos was a mere faculty prior to His generation from the Father for the purposes of creation and redemption. It was however in his reflection on the relationship of the persons of the Trinity, in which he went further than any other second-century thinker, that Athenagoras made his distinctive contribution to Christian theology. The Greek terms which he used for this relationship are very revealing. The Holy Spirit is the 'effulgence' or 'outflow' (ἀπόρροια) from God resembling the sun's rays. Within the inner life of the Godhead there exists between the persons unity (ἑνότης, ἕνωσις), fellowship (κοινωνία), and diversity (διαίρεσις) These later became technical terms in Trinitarian theology and in Athenagoras they appear for the first time applied to the Father, Son and Spirit."

[128] Pouderon 1989, 353–354: "La *Supplique* contient du reste plusieurs idées originales, sinon entièrement nouvelles: la réduction des personnalités divines païennes à des noms, des images, des actions ou des symboles; l'application de la théorie stoïcienne de la perception aux phénomènes surnaturels; une tentative d'explication, encore maladroite, certes, de la Trinité divine; et quelques nouveautés moindres. Elle manifeste surtout un ton propre, plein de tolérance, mais sans concession, qui forme à notre avis la caractéristique la plus remarquable de cette œuvre."

[129] Pouderon 1989, 142 has more critical views: "Ainsi donc, si l'affirmation dogmatique de la Trinité paraît tout à fait conforme à ce que sera l'orthodoxie, trois 'personnes' en une, à la fois distinctes et confondues, les divers développements sur le rôle de Dieu et de chacune des personnes qui composent la Trinité, s'en écartent sensiblement: l'on constate à la fois une tendance subordinatianiste et un rejet de l'Esprit en tant que personne divine à part entière. La théologie n'en était qu'à ses débuts, et Athénagore n'était pas un esprit assez puissant pour apporter des réponses claires et satisfaisantes dans un débat qui ne faisait que s'engager."

[130] Barnard 1972, 111.

culture.[131] Christianity was not unworthy of philosophy. In this regard, Christians carry on that tradition in affirming the one transcendent God and by living in accordance with him. In portraying this God, he refers also to the Logos and the Spirit – present in philosophical speculation as well – in keeping the unity (and diversity) of God. Christians are therefore within the Empire the best θεοσεβεῖς,[132] subject to the emperors, and should expect from them the chance to be able to "lead a quiet and peaceable life".[133]

[131] Cf. also Pouderon 1989, 130: "Athènagore a donc défini son Dieu avec le vocabulaire et selon les concepts de la philosophie: c'était une condition *sine qua non* pour ne pas détourner de lui le public philosophique et au premier rang, l'empereur. Mas ce fut sans concession; l'apologiste rend fidèlement compte de la doctrine chrétienne et de sal particularité: la trinité divine dans l'unité."
[132] *Leg. pro Christ*. 37.1.
[133] *Leg. pro Christ*. 37.2.

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Aristides and Athenagoras of Athens on Angels: From Christian–Jewish Polemics towards Universalism

Serafim Seppälä

The second-century apologists Aristides and Athenagoras of Athens both mention angels rather briefly in their respective apologies. Behind their remarks, however, there exist well thought-through beliefs and profound ideas with scores of subtexts. In their comments on angels, Aristides and Athenagoras are facing completely different needs and questions, which in turn provide some indications on the development of Christianity in the half a century between the two apologies.

Aristides on angels

In the case of Aristides, the immediate context of his reference to angels is one of the most remarkable features in the whole of his *Apology* – that is, his evaluation of Judaism. Most likely written as early as in the 120s, Aristides is contemporary with writings such as the *Letter of Barnabas* that customarily highlight the difference of Judaism and Christianity in almost aggressive terms. The narrative of Aristides, however, is distinguished by its extraordinarily responsive and positive view on Jews and Judaism, even though the context would have admitted, or even demanded, a more polemical approach. In the middle of a harsh critique of Hellenic cults, the author states that the Jews are distinguished by their monotheistic faith that is close to the truth:

> The Jews then say that God is one, the Creator of all, and omnipotent; and that it is not right that any other should be worshipped except this God alone. And herein they appear to approach the truth more than all the nations, especially in that they worship God and not his works.[1]

An early Christian author of course can be expected to admit that a biblically based vision of God is not without its worth. What is more surprising, however, is that Aristides proceeds to praise also the practical and ethical applications by affirming the Jewish way of life as righteous and praiseworthy. And even more, the praise is applied also to Jewish *tradition*, for all the good in the Jewish life-style results from the inherited tradition of their fathers:

> And they imitate God by the philanthropy which prevails among them; for they have compassion on the poor, and they release the captives, and bury the dead, and do such things as these, which are acceptable before God and well-pleasing also to men, […] which (customs) they have received from their forefathers.[2]

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[1] Arist. *Apol.* 14.3.
[2] Arist. *Apol.* 14.3.

This is probably the only praise of this kind in early Christian literature, in which the general intention was to create and preserve certain distance from Judaism. After these positive remarks, however, Aristides states that the Jews, too, have "erred from true knowledge", and in practice their servitude is not to God but to the angels, a rather unusual argument in a theological discourse:

> […] in their imagination[3] they conceive that it is God they serve; whereas by their mode of observance it is to the angels (*malakhē*) and not to God that their service is rendered.[4]

Then Aristides continues to give some concrete examples of the religious activity that is accorded to the angels. Perhaps surprisingly, these are the most evident details of the Jewish law: the Sabbath, feasts, fasts and kosher food.[5] In other words, the most basic constituents of Jewish identity are used as examples of religious observance directed to angels.

In the following account, the aim is to provide a commentary for the above remark, by setting it into a wider context of the early Jewish–Christian polemics. Where did the idea of servitude to angels come from; what kind of background did it arise from? What kind of theological interests did the remark serve, and what kind of needs did it fulfil in the second century? And finally: how did the interest in angels develop in Athens during the second century, as witnessed by Athenagoras' remarks on angels some five decades later.

In addition, the textual history of Aristides' *Apology* compels us to ask not only where did the idea come from, but also, where did it go to? In the Greek version of the text, embedded in the famous legend of *Barlaam and Josaphat*, the basic version of which dates from around the tenth century, the reference to angels has been omitted altogether, indicating that the line of thought was inconceivable or unfitting in the early Middle Ages. The fact that the original reading has been preserved in Syriac is not extraordinary, due to the extremely peculiar textual history of the text: the Greek version is shorter by a half, abbreviated to fit the Indian context of *Barlaam*. The Syriac version, on the other hand, is known to contain its own additions and pecularities. Unfortunately, the Armenian fragment of Aristides does not cover the chapter in question and thus does not provide assistance.

In the Greek version, the Jews are depicted as "stubborn and ungrateful" (φανέντες καὶ ἀχάριστοι) instead, and it is even stated that they "often served the idols of the nations". The Greek version, while admitting that "to this day they worship the one God Almighty", observes that this does not take place "according to knowledge" (κατ᾽ἐπίγνωσιν). The Greek text concentrates on the Jews' denial of Christ: instead of elevating them above the heathen, the text rather stresses the lack of any substantial qualitative difference.[6]

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[3] Syriac *tarʿīṯā* refers to cognitive activity in a wide sense: it may be translated as thinking, mind, thought(s); in this context, 'imagination' is not impossible.

[4] Arist. *Apol*. 14.4.

[5] After enumerating "Sabbaths, beginning of months, feasts of unleavened bread, a great fast, fasting and circumcision" and "the purification of meats", it is added that Jews do not observe these perfectly.

[6] The description of Jews in the Greek text ends up likewise: "For they deny that Christ is the Son of God; and they are much like to the heathen, even although they may seem to make some approach to the truth from which they have removed themselves" (Arist. *Apol*. 14).

In other words, the appreciation for Jewish monotheism was kept to the absolute minimum, and all praises for Jewish ways of life were dropped altogether by the editor of the tenth-century Greek text. As a side-effect of this purge, the reference to Jewish worship being directed at angels disappeared likewise. The omission is understandable as such, for the ideological context of the remark had withered away by the seventh century.[7]

Angels in 'half-biblical' literature: Substituting God for the Nations?

What, then, was the original context of the idea? It is well-known that during the emergence of Christianity there was a huge interest on angels in many sectors of Judaism. Angels are a central theme in a good portion of deuterocanonical literature, especially in *First Book of Enoch*, *Second Book of Enoch*, *Book of Jubilees*, *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *Ascension of Isaiah.* These books probably had more relevance in second-century Christianity than is usually recognised. It is not necessary to go into details here, but it is worth recalling that the first Christians did not consider these kinds of books as 'non-canonical'. This is not only because *Enoch* and *Jubilees* were later considered canonical in Ethiopia, and not even because *Enoch* is quoted in the New Testament, but rather because the whole idea of texts being strictly canonical or not was neither significant nor fundamental among the first Christians, nor in the first century (pre-Yavneh) Judaism.

In the Apocrypha, the idea of angel-worship appears in a rather surprising context: the function for which it was used was no less than to provide an answer to the mystery of the linguistic, cultural and religious diversity of the world. In the Hebrew text of the *Testament of Naphtali* (not the Qumran fragment, but the one published by Gaster in 1899), there is told the story of the emergence of languages, inspired by *Gen*. 11. According to the story in *T. Naph.*, seventy angels taught languages to seventy nations respectively; consequently, all the non-Jewish nations chose to be protected by the angel who had taught them their language, but Abraham refused to ask for an angel and chose to worship his Creator alone. The implicit message is that in all the other religions, the worship and servitude is limited to the angel who protects them.[8]

The same idea appears also in the *Book of Jubilees*, dating to the first century BC, which seems to have been popular reading, or perhaps rather, a collection of popular stories and interpretations. In *Jub*. 15:27 it is stated that Israel was sanctified before the angels. God did not appoint any angel for Israel, but personally took care of them:

> But over Israel He did not appoint any angel or spirit, for He alone is their ruler, and He will preserve them and require them at the hand of His angels and His spirits, and at the hand of all His powers in order that He may preserve them and bless them, and that they may be His and He may be theirs from henceforth for ever.[9]

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[7] For a detailed discussion on the textual process between the Greek *Vorlage* and the existing Syriac and Greek versions, see Rutherford 2013.

[8] *T. Naph.* 12–14, translation by M. Gaster 1899.

[9] *Jub*. 15:32. Cf. *Ben Sirah*: "For each nation he appointed a leader, and the Lord's portion is Israel" (17:17, *NETS* translation). The latter sentence could be translated "but Israel is the portion of the Lord".

For the other nations, however, God "placed spirits in authority to lead them astray from Him".[10] If the piece sounds like collective self-praise, one should note that in the very same context it is stated that Israel will forsake the covenant: "the children of Israel will not keep true to this ordinance" and even that "there will no more be pardon or forgiveness unto them […] for all the sin of this eternal error".[11] Yet the main argument is clear: the worship of other nations is based on the (misleading) activities of angels, which implies that their worship is directed at their angels.

We cannot say precisely how general this way of thinking was. Due to the peculiar reception history of *Jubilees*, it is even difficult to estimate whether the story was more popular among the Semitic Judaism of the Middle East, or whether it was more typical of the Hellenistic Jews.[12] In his discussion on *Gen*. 11 in *De Confusione Linguarum*,[13] Philo does not refer to the angels of nations, or cults arising thereby, but elsewhere he does present the idea that the number of nations corresponds to the number of angels, arguing that each angel has a particular virtue, but the portion of God is his chosen people Israel.[14] Given the popularity of (Hebrew) *Jubilees* in Qumran, however, one may suppose that the idea had come to Athens rather from Jerusalem than from Alexandria.

However this may be, the idea must have been present among the Jews more widely than in a couple of detached literary notions only. Theologically, the story of national angels behind the cults of nations obviously serves to fulfil two distinct functions. On the one hand, it secures the supremacy of One God, as well as that of Jewish monotheism; and on the other hand, it does grant some spiritual value to the existing religions, their cults and traditions, and even explains the existence of supra-natural or miraculous phenomena in these traditions. To combine these two aspects has usually been painstakingly difficult for the monotheistic religions, but angels did serve as a functional answer for the tension between the demands of one-cult monotheism and the existence of local cults and spiritualities.

The early Christian takeover of the idea: Apologists on Jews and angels

It seems that the early Christians quickly turned the argument against Jews themselves. Determinedly aiming to be more universalistic, the Christians assumed that they had a full approach to God in Christ, and the ordinary Jews were seen to be limited in their worship correspondingly. Nevertheless, it was inappropriate to consider Jewish worship as totally wrong or worthless, given that it was the worship of patriarchs, prophets, even of Christ and the apostles themselves. But what, then, was the spiritual value of prayers performed with an understanding of God which was essentially incomplete, lacking and outdated? Where were such prayers going to? This limited character of Jewish worship was expressed and interpreted with the help of the existence and role of angels.

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[10] *Jub*. 15:31.
[11] *Jub*. 15:33–34.
[12] The Hebrew original was popular in Qumran, and the Greek version was rather well known to the early church fathers; yet it has survived only in Ethiopian, not in Rabbinic Judaism or in Greek.
[13] For Philo, angels serve as the explanation for the origin of evil (*Conf. ling.* 8 [28]) or are a symbolical expression for 'company of incorporeal souls' (*Conf. ling.* 34 [103]).
[14] Ph. *Post.* 91–92.

The earliest Christian remark for such discussions is almost certainly in *Col*. 2. Paul, in his project of developing a Christ-centered re-interpretation of the Jewish law, warned of those who delight in "worship of angels" (θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων). This has often been read as a warning against angel-worship, perhaps of some obscure Gnostic cult, but literally speaking, Paul did not warn about angel-worship as such, but against *those who* go in for a "religion of angels" or "cult of angels", as the expression in question could also be translated. In the context, the warning is in fact a rhetorical conclusion for the description of those Jews who basically pay attention to kosher rules ("eat or drink"), festival days and Sabbath observance. In other words, Paul seems to label the traditional Torah-based religiosity as θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων, thus reusing the idea mentioned in *Jubilees* and turning it inside out.[15] Moreover, Paul takes it for granted that such Christless Judaism will be comprehended as θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων among his readers, for he does not explain his remark at all.

Another early witness is the splendid discussion in *Heb*. 1–2, in which the focus is on the fact that Christ is essentially superior to the angelic beings, a most serious early Jewish-Christian concern. It is fundamentally related to our topic, for the discussion in Hebrews implies that one central interest underlying the text is to show that to worship Christ is essentially more than to worship angels.

Another set of reactions to the same topic is the angelic perspective accorded to the incarnation, as portrayed in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, a possibly second-century Christian version of a Jewish text. The Messiah descends from the highest divine reaches of heaven to his incarnate form on earth by passing through the angelic realms: he becomes an angel, a less glorious one in each realm, thus losing his divine light step by step.[16]

Aristides of Athens was, most likely, from a non-Jewish background and therefore perhaps not familiar with Jewish traditions in great detail, but one may assume that the Jewish 'half-biblical' stories, such as those in *Jubilees*, were well-known among the very first generation(s) of Christians – and in any case, among the Jewish opponents in the early second century. Thus, the idea of 'servitude to angels' could even have been brought to Athens by Paul himself, as the narrative in Colossians suggests. In fact, the topic could hardly have been avoided in the first-century discussions about Judaism and universal truth in Athens. Most probably, Aristides just followed his Christian teachers in using the argument (the much less likely option is that he had heard the basic claim from the Jews in the beginning of the second century and reacted to it by turning it back on them). In fact, such *topoi* easily survive for decades after the times of their most urgent usage. Indeed, it may be that they continue to live on in the other traditions (in this case, Christianity) by being opposed, even when the original community (in this case, Judaism) has already forgotten or abandoned the notions in question.

Obviously, Aristides was not alone in stating that the Jewish servitude is not to God but to the angels. Angels in general had a considerable role in Jewish-Christian

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[15] *Col*. 2:16–19 (NIV). "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow."

[16] *Asc. Is.* 10, translation by Sparks 1984.

debates. It is telling that whilst Justin Martyr mentioned angels in his *Apologies* on fifteen occasions, in his *Dialogue* with his (imagined) Jewish opponent angels come up about eighty times.[17] The numbers speak for the relevance of angelology in Jewish-Christian debates. For Justin Martyr, the main concern in this regard was the presence of Logos in the ancient angelophanies of the OT; he also stressed the free will of angels and men.

The early Christian angel-Christology, famous from the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Justin Martyr, was basically an outgrowth of an Old Testament exegesis concerning the appearances of Logos in the Old Covenant. As the *Ascension of Isaiah* in its own way shows, for God both to become human and to become an angelic being can be seen as variations of the same principle, that of *kenosis*. Justin stated that "He who is called God and appeared to the patriarchs is called both Angel and Lord, in order that from this you may understand him to be minister to the Father of all things."[18] Justin underlined that as the Logos of God, the Son has appeared "sometimes in the form of fire, and sometimes in the likeness of angels (εἰκόνος ἀσωμάτου)".[19] For Justin, the Triad that appeared in Mamre was the Logos with two angels; thereby Justin managed to explain in logical terms why it was that the Lord himself was at times speaking in the Biblical narrative.[20]

For the interpretation of Aristides' remark, however, the most interesting textual evidence is certainly in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata*, in which he accused Jews of angel-worship:

> Neither worship as the Jews; for they, thinking that they only know God, do not know him, adoring as they do angels and archangels (λατρεύοντες ἀγγέλοις καὶ ἀρχαγγέλοις), the month and the moon.[21]

What makes this interesting is the fact that the text is part of a lengthy quotation from the lost *Kerygma Petrou*. This might hold out to us a possibility of how to explain the origin of the idea in Aristides: it is possible that he had read *Kerygma Petrou* and learned of the idea from it. This may be a bit too technical a notion, however, given that Aristides himself stressed the oral kerygmatic nature of Christian doctrine: in the circulation of Christian ideas, the main vehicle was neither books nor scrolls.[22]

Finally, there is some evidence that the reference to angel-worship should not be seen as an apologetic literary manoeuvre only. The interest in angels seems to have been considerable among the Jews in practice. This is not easy to see from the literature of the second and third centuries, for the earliest Rabbinic authors remained silent on angels – an amazing fact that can be explained only by a conscious counter-reaction to

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[17] Correspondingly, δαιμόνιον (common in Gospels) occurs only four times in the *Apologies*, but twenty seven times in *Dialogue*. Yet δαίμων appears only four times in *Dialogue*, but fifty times in *Apologies*, which is possibly due to the fact that the term was preferred by Greek philosophers. See Grant 1988, 63.
[18] Just. *Dial.* 58.3.
[19] Just. *1 Apol.* 63.10. 'The bodiless ones' is a basic way to refer to angels in the patristic and Orthodox tradition.
[20] Just. *Dial.* 56.1, 56.6, 58.3, 126.5.
[21] Clem. *Str.* 6.5.41.2.
[22] Arist. *Apol.* 2:4. For Aristides, the gospel was in the first place an oral tradition. He can also be understood to mean that the written gospel was a somewhat new phenomenon. The oral character of the Christianity of Aristides is also reflected in the fact that he does not use biblical quotations at all in his argumentation. In his compact summary of the basic teachings of Christianity, Aristides manages to refer twice to the twelve apostles fulfilling the plan of Christ in various regions of the world. The theme of tradition is present also in the Quadratus (Kodratos) fragment. Some time later Irenaeus continued the analysis of Christianity as *apostolic* truth.

the prevalent interest on angels among the Jews.[23] Even during the times of early Rabbinic silence, however, there was a strong connection between Jews and angels in the eyes of outsiders. Namely, not only the Christian polemists, but even the famous archenemy of Christians, Celsus, seem to have claimed that Jews pray to angels – a claim that Origen rejected on a scriptural basis:

> Celsus, who professes to know everything, brings a false accusation against the Jews, when he alleges that they worship angels, and are addicted to sorcery, in which Moses was their instructor.[24]

It is remarkable that the church father who was the most deeply familiar with Judaism did not accept the claim that Jews were worshipping angels.[25] It seems that the claim as such is polemical by nature and exaggerated in character; yet on the other hand, the interest in angels was real and pragmatic, and may be labelled as a 'folk religion'. This is witnessed by the wordings of Jewish incantation bowls in which angels were invoked (see below).

In these discussions, both sides shared a common paradigm and similar assumptions: the highest service and worship, the one in accordance with the truth, is to the Supreme God, while all the other forms of religious and cultic activity fail to reach the Godhead and are limited to the sphere of angels alone. In other words, those who believe that they alone partake of this highest truth are obliged to think that the worship and servitude of the others is limited to the sphere of angels.

The situation is illustrated in Fig. 1 that shows how a worship that is incomplete by its substance remains short with regard to its goal. This also illustrates the central concern of *Heb*. 1–2: if one considers Christ an angelic being, and nothing more than that, his worship correspondingly falls short. On the other hand, since angels belong to the created order, there should be no essential or unsurpassable ontological gap between humans and angels. A peculiar outcome of this view is the idea that human beings can become angels; the idea appears in different forms in Jewish traditions, like the famous transformation of Enoch, but remained less utilized in Christianity, which developed a doctrine of deification instead.[26]

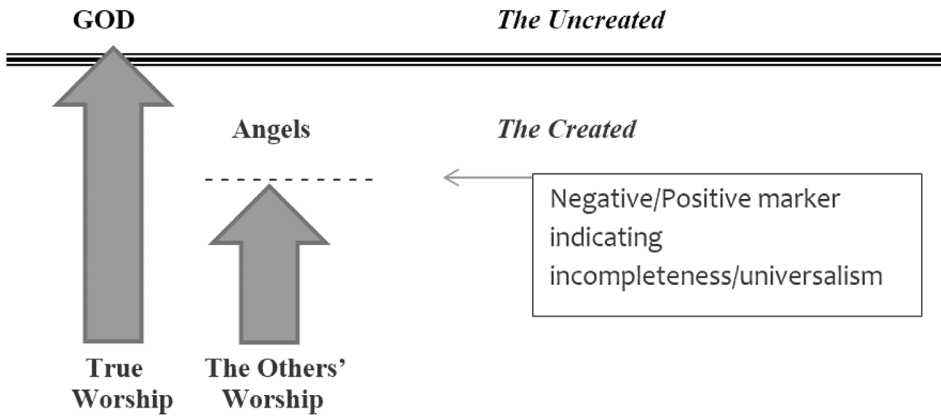

Fig 1. Worship of angels.

Angels and universalism in the early church (*Dt*. 32:8)

So far the 'servitude to angels' has been discussed mostly in a negative light, as an indicator of incompleteness in approaching God. The fact that the worship by others only reaches the angelic realm, however, does not have to be a purely negative estimation: it may also be a positive recognition of the fact that the worship was heading in the right direction, even though falling somewhat short. What is even more interesting, perhaps, is the fact the theme could be applied to other religions as well. The matter of angel-worship is not just some small detail in theological discourse, but rather a way to answer one of the most profound theological questions: what is the value of the other religions? What is the role and relation of God and his divine order to the nations and traditions outside the true religion? No religion with a claim on universal truth has ever fully and thoroughly solved this problem.

The formation of Christian identity took place in an (antithetical) reaction to the ethnic character of 'chosenness' expressed in the Hebrew faith. For the Hellenes and other non-Jewish Christians, however, it was more relevant to find out how the relation between God and other nations had been viewed in the times before Christ. The Old Testament is not a very fruitful source in this respect, but one single verse proved essential for the early church in this respect.

The question of the spiritual value of divergent cultures was read through the prism of *Dt*. 32:8. In the Hebrew text, God set the boundaries of nations "according to the number of sons of Israel" (למספר בני ישׂראל). The oddness of sense generated by the unusual wording strongly suggests that the original reading may have been something else. Indeed, in Septuagint the nations were divided "according to the number of angels" (κατὰ ἀριθμὸν ἀγγέλων θεοῦ).[27] The translators of Septuagint most likely offer a literal reading of the Hebrew text as they had it. This is strongly supported by the *benē ʾelohīm* reading in Qumran.[28]

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[23] In the *Mishnah*, the oldest stratum of the Talmud, angels are not mentioned at all; in the other Tannatic sources angels do appear, but the ones with *names* are avoided. It may also be argued that the technical character and legal content of the *Mishnah* makes such references somewhat unlikely. However, in later Rabbinic literature, angels do appear in discussions on the *halakhah*, in addition to the Midrashic tales.

[24] Or. *Cels.* 1.26. The same argument appears again in 5.6. "He next proceeds to make the following statement about the Jews: The first point relating to the Jews which is fitted to excite wonder, is that they should worship the heaven and the angels who dwell therein, and yet pass by and neglect its most venerable and powerful parts, as the sun, the moon, and the other heavenly bodies, both fixed stars and planets, as if it were possible that 'the whole' could be God, and yet its parts not divine."

[25] The classic work on the topic is de Lange 1976.

[26] *2 En.* 22. In addition to the classical examples of Enoch and Eliah, there are also discussions on the angelic transformation of Jacob to Israel in mystical traditions.

[27] Cf. Just. *Dial.* 131. "But I shall quote the passage by which it is made known that God divided all the nations. It is as follows: 'Ask thy father, and he will show thee; thine elders, and they will tell thee; when the Most High divided the nations, as He dispersed the sons of Adam. He set the bounds of the nations according to the numbers of the children of Israel; and the Lord's portion became His people Jacob, and Israel was the lot of His inheritance.' And having said this, I added: 'The Seventy have translated it, "He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God." But because my argument is again in nowise weakened by this, I have adopted your exposition'."

[28] 4QDt has בני אלהים and 4QDt^{q} has [ ]בני אל. For discussion, see Heiser 2001.

Nevertheless, one may also speculate whether it could be possible that the translators interpreted Israel here as a reference to angels. The option, artificial and far-fetched as it may seem, is in fact not totally unfeasible, especially in Alexandria, for there are certain texts of Egyptian origin in which Israel is identified with angels. In the fragment of *The Prayer of Joseph*, Jacob declares himself to be an angel of God and even "Archangel of the Power of the Lord", perhaps a mystical interpretation of the name Israel that was given to Jacob after wrestling with the angel. Thus he became a personification of Israel, as if thereby elevating Israel to the level of angels. There are also Coptic texts in which an angel called Israel is serving God in heaven.[29]

Whatever the origin of the wording, it is clear that the idea of *angels of nations* seems to have developed before the translation of Septuagint, perhaps as an aftermath of the exile in Babylon. The angels of Persia and Greece appear for the first time in *Daniel*.[30] Due to the Septuagint reading of *Dt*. 32:8, the idea was natural in the Greek-speaking Judaism. Philo of Alexandria stated in his interpretation of the verse, "as many angels of God as there are, so many nations and species of virtue are there."[31]

The origins of the idea, or the implications in the influences behind the pre-Christian sources, do not really concern us here. The essential point for the second-century angelology is that the idea of angels behind the various nations – and consequently, behind their cults – was biblically based and thus widely present in common understanding. But what was the actual spiritual function of this presence in early Christian thought, outside the Jewish-Christian polemics?

It is no surprise that the teachers of the early church took the idea of *Dt*. 32:8 and developed it gradually.[32] Clement of Alexandria, to name one, stated that the angelic powers are divided according to nations and cities.[33] The notion that the number of nations and tongues has been set in relation to the number of angels seems to have been also a part of early Armenian catechesis.[34] Similar notions appear later in the most remarkable patristic authors such as Origen, Basil the Great and John Chrysostom.

The Jewish view that the relationship of angels and nations started from the mixing of languages in Babel was taken into the church's thinking at least by Origen, perhaps through his Jewish teacher. Origen also seems to confirm the Jewish tradition that the angels played a role in the emergence of languages.[35]

What were the actual functions of the angels of nations? This is where the second-century Christian dialogue developed some of its most interesting ideas. Clement of Alexandria saw angels and their activity behind no less than everything good: "For by angels, whether seen or not, the divine power bestows good things."[36] This applies also to religious and philosophical enterprises. According to Clement, the angels did

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[29] The *Prayer of Joseph* is preserved only in quotation by Origen in *Comm. Joh.* 2.25. Israel seems to be the heavenly counterpart of Jacob. For more discussion on the sources, see Pesthy 2001, 69–71.
[30] *Dan*. 10:13, 20. According to the famous Talmudic tradition, names of angels were brought from Babylonia (TJ, *Rosh ha-shana*, 6a).
[31] Ph. *Post.* 26 (91).
[32] E.g. Iren. *Haer.* 3.12.9.
[33] Clem. *Str.* 6.17 (157.5) and 7.2 (6.4). Clement was less sure about personal guardian angels.
[34] Agath. *Doct. Gr.* 297, 321.
[35] Or. *Cels.* 5.30.
[36] Clem. *Str.* 6.17 (161.2).

not only deliver the law to Jews, but in a similar fashion they delivered philosophy and jurisprudence to the Greeks. After his remark against the Jewish adoration of angels, Clement proceeds to state: "The same God that furnished both the Covenants was the giver of Greek philosophy to the Greeks, by which the Almighty is glorified among the Greeks."[37] These in fact are among Clement's most famous thoughts, but the role of angels in the process has often remained unnoticed by modern readers and scholars.

This statement in fact opens up a whole worldview. The approach implies that all the essential intuitions of human wisdom are invisibly and unconsciously given by angelic beings as intuitive inspirations, which means that the roots of philosophy and rationality are ultimately located in transcendence. The difference between the biblical Jews and pagans, then, is that the Greek philosophy emanated from angels of lower rank than those who mediated the Law of Moses: God "gave philosophy to the Greeks by means of the inferior angels (ὑποδεεστέρων ἀγγέλων)".[38]

In *De principiis,* Origen has a long discussion on the role of angelic beings, "princes of this world", who deliver wisdom such as Chaldean astrology, Egyptian esotericism or Hindu philosophy. Origen estimated that such forms of wisdom are not delivered by the corresponding angels in order to destroy, hurt, injure or even ensnare humans: "as these princes of this world esteem such opinions to be true, they desire to impart to others what they themselves believe to be the truth." Though their activity may deceive people in practice, yet still Origen seems to suppose that all traditions contain something valuable and that this is due to the angelic beings' role in inspiring various forms of wisdom, albeit in a twisted way.[39] This seems to imply that each angel of a nation had a teaching and cult for his nation, just like in the Jewish traditions.

The universalistic vision opens up a few most interesting questions: should Christians really think that the endless variety of religions and spiritualities is caused by the angels and of their free-will and creativity? Does this not mean that elements of divergent religions could be united to Christianity in one way or another, if their origin is in the same angelic world? Unfortunately, this is where the early Christian authors become silent – or turned the discussion to the demons (in the Christian sense of the word).

Angels and Universalism in Athenagoras

Universalism of angels is not only about cult and worship, but even more so about their role in the cosmos in general. This observation leads us to our latter second-century Athenian apologist, Athenagoras, who composed his apology in 176 for the famous philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius who visited Athens at that time. In a curious twist of history, the religion of Athenagoras triumphed over the imperial faiths, but Athenagoras himself remained virtually unknown in later history. Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* took its place among the classics of the world literature, while his Empire and its religions ultimately collapsed.

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[37] Clem. *Str.* 6.5 (42.1).
[38] Clem. *Str.* 7.2 (6.4).
[39] Or. *Princ*. 3.3.2.

Athenagoras of Athens presented the Christian belief in angels in an important context. In his apology, angels were presented as marking a continuation in the Christian doctrine on God. Christian theology does not come to an end with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but it recognises also a "multitude of angels and ministering beings" (πλῆθος ἀγγέλων καὶ λειτουργῶν).[40] The remark serves to downplay the difference between Hellenistic cults and Christianity somewhat, and its purpose is connected with Athenagoras' attempt to defend Christianity against the claims of atheism. It also happens to illustrate the fact that in Hellenistic religions, 'gods' were usually understood as heavenly beings that cannot be considered essentially 'higher' than angels are in Christianity. Clement of Alexandria in fact used 'gods' (θεῶν) for angelic beings, and Origen counted them as 'divine' beings - that is, god-like, but not uncreated.[41]

In this context, Athenagoras presented the view that after the creation, angels were provided with control over matter and the principles governing the forms of matter**.**

> The common function (σύστασις) of the angels is to exercise providence (πρόνοια) over the things set in order by him, so that God may achieve the universal (παντελικήν) and general providence of the whole, as the particular parts (are controlled) by the angels appointed to watch over them.[42]

Athenagoras' argument is that God, through his Logos, has set in place an enormous number of angels to carry out certain functions that include control over matter and the modes of its existence; that is, activities that sustain the creation and its functions. The situation was so defined by Athenagoras that the general and universal providence belongs to God, but the particular parts of the whole belong to the angels set to watch over them.

Likewise in Alexandria, Origen taught that angels are in charge of (the four) elements, space, plants and animals. "An angel has been appointed also for the sun and another for the moon, another also for the stars." From this basis, Origen could open exciting perspectives for interpreting biblical passages. For example, Jeremiah stated that "the earth mourns" (πενθήσει ἡ γῆ) for the inhabitants in it, and Origen explained 'earth' as referring to the angel of the earth.[43] The idea has also Jewish subtexts, for in books such as *Jubilees* various natural phenomena have their own angels.[44]

Overall, it is perhaps no accident that during the five decades between the two Athenian apologists the relevance and function of angels had shifted from a Jewish-Christian encounter to more universal concerns. The context, orientation and questions of Christians in the 170s were no longer identical to those in the 120s. The distinction from Judaism had become stable; the relation to other nations and worldviews was being processed.

Comparison with Justin Martyr shows certain other related developments in process. For Justin, angels were messengers of God who accompany Christ in his coming on the last day. Athenagoras shows no trace of such Synoptic eschatology.[45] This absence,

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[40] Athenagoras *Leg. pro Christ.* 10.5.
[41] Clem. *Str.* 7.2 (5.6); Or. *Cels.* 3.37, 5.4.
[42] Athenagoras *Leg. pro Christ.* 24.3 according to *SC* numbering (in *PG*, §22). For discussion on Athenagoras and angels, see Barnard 1972, 111–114.
[43] Or. *Hom. 10 in Jer.* 6 (cf. *Jer*. 12:4).
[44] *Jub*. 2:2.
[45] Barnard 1972, 111.

albeit almost unnoticeable, exemplifies the multi-layered process Christianity was experiencing. The profound change that Christianity underwent in order to turn from a Jewish sect into a universal religion did not last three hundred years, as is often supposed, but essentially the change was achieved in the second century, and a good deal of it during the fifty years between Aristides and Athenagoras. Their respective references to angels happen to give an illustrative example of this transformation.

The free-will of angels was self-evident for Athenagoras – a view that was often challenged in Rabbinic Judaism.[46] It also served to explain the origin of evil. Interestingly, Athenagoras did not use any particular name for the Devil but spoke about the "ruler of matter" instead. That particular being is not the opposite of God, but the opposite of God's *goodness*, aiming to subvert the material world into a direction contrary to God's good will. In this way, Athenagoras remained free of dualism, even though he connected evil (angels) to the material reality. He also managed to make his discussion sound less bizarre than Justin, and perhaps even less unbalanced than Philo who defined angels as incorporeal souls hovering in the air.[47] Moreover, by defining 'goodness' as a mere property on the surface of God, Athenagoras – unlike Clement of Alexandria – managed to avoid the Platonic tendency to introduce hierarchies of ideas, or that of *nous* and *psyche*, inside God.

Athenagoras was the first Christian author to define the fallen angels as guardians of lowest firmament around the earth, as the unfallen ones remain in charge of the higher spheres. This may be partially inspired by Plato who discussed the random element present in nature, as Barnard has suggested.[48]

Nevertheless, the main reference for the fall of angels in Athenagoras seems to be the story on the origin of giants in *Gen*. 6, which was also the principal biblical reference for the fall in Judaism. As a matter of fact, there is a variant reading in the Septuagint that translates the descending 'sons of God' (*benē ʾelohīm*) as ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ, which perhaps was the original Greek reading, the later main reading being υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ. Philo uses this particular variant in his interpretation.[49]

Angels in Judaism during the formation of Christianity

Since we started our excursion into the angelology of Athenian apologists from the angle of Jewish-Christian polemics, we shall conclude by asking how the angelic discussions developed on the Jewish side. The answer is clear, simple and short. The discussions disappeared – from literature at least. After all the first-century enthusiasm and speculation on angels, it is amazing that in the oldest, most central and most authoritative part of

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[46] E.g. *BT*, Šabbat 88b. See also *Hagiga* 13b–14a. For further discussion, see Schäfer 1975.

[47] Ph. *Gig.* 6; *Conf. ling.* 176. According to Barnard (1972, 114), Philo in these very places associated certain spirits with earth, water and fire respectively, but his reading seems to be taken too far. Rather, Philo seems to imply that angels/souls are thoroughly present in the air *in the same way* than certain creatures are present in the water etc.

[48] Pl. *Ti*. 34c, 46e. Some discussion in Barnard 1972, 114.

[49] Philo quotes the verse, "And when the angels of God saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful, they took unto themselves wives of all of them whom they chose", and immediately notes: "Those beings, whom other philosophers call demons, Moses usually calls angels." Ph. *Gig.* 2. (6).

Rabbinic Script, the *Mishnah*, angels are not mentioned at all. This of course cannot be due to lack of interest in angels, but on the contrary, the silence is rather a rabbinic counter-reaction to subdue the over-heated interest in angels in many first-century Jewish circles.

In other words, of all the movements of Judaism in the second Temple era, it was the one with the least interest in angels that became the official form of medieval Judaism. Moreover, the silence may also be to some extent in reaction to the polemical accusations by Christian and even pagan intelligentsia, such as Celsus.

The tendency to avoid or not emphasise the role of angels continued from the third century onwards. The rabbis did later start to make references to angels again, but the Tannaitic rabbis avoided mentioning names and did not emphasize the significance of angels.

The silence applies to early Rabbinic authoritative literature. All the other material indicates that the role of angels was still important and there was no lack of beliefs and practices. Concrete invocations of angels have been preserved in Aramean magic bowls,[50] amulets and certain magical texts. The most important text in this respect is certainly *Sefer ha-razim*, which seems to represent a peculiar Jewish magical syncretism of early date. It gives the names of seven hundred fifty angels, arranged according to the seven firmaments, as well as special formulas to influence the angels in various kinds of cases.[51]

Later, there certainly was a rather spectacular re-emergence of angels in Jewish thought in Rabbinic, not to mention Kabbalistic texts. Probably the interest in angels was present in practical (folk) Judaism all the time, and little by little this came to be reflected in Rabbinic texts too.

Conclusion

Aristides' comment on the worship directed towards angels is not an isolated remark or a careless throwaway comment, but a basic constituent of Christian self-definition in relation to Judaism, and indirectly even to other religions. It reflected a wide background of biblical interpretation and theological discussion in the early church, and even in pre-Christian Judaism. The fact that the idea was of Jewish origin was nothing special in the second-century atmosphere, but the universalism inherently present in the thought was more fitting in the Christian context and Christian usage than in Judaism – at least in the apologists' view.

For Athenagoras, angels were already a part of a discussion dealing with more Hellenistic concepts and concerns. Even though his remarks on angels are only minutiae in his presentation, they happen to hit an important note. The basic dilemma of second-century Christian thought was the tension between sectarianism and universalism. Exclusive faith, sacramental mysteries, demanding ethics and the practical situation (persecutions) all spoke for sectarianism. Yet on the other hand, there was the understanding of Christ as

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[50] Dating from third to seventh centuries. Shaked *et al*. 2013.

[51] The magical parts seem to be much older than the final composition of the work. The formulas of invocations give a good overall view on what exactly the angels were needed for: to destroy enemies or to disturb their sleep, in matters of love, for the return of runaway slaves, interpretation of dreams, silencing of adversaries, as well as for protection from wild animals and all perils. *Sefer ha-razim*, II, p. 47.

universal Saviour, the redeemer of humanity, and, to put it simply, of the universalism of the Christian God, and therefore of the whole religion.

This tension required a unifying solution that would explain how the universal truth functions according to, and in relation to, Christian principles. The apologists who had to wrestle with this very challenge used the idea of angels as universal agents to make their worldview more holistic. Athenagoras did this by referring to angels as beings who are present in the creation and take care of its development in a way that in fact is parallel to the basic Hellenistic notions on gods. In that sense, one may say that the angels took the place of gods in this formative period of the Christian worldview.

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Providence (*Pronoia*) in the Early Apologists and Creeds

Gunnar af Hällström

The structure of the early Christian creeds reflected the tripartite baptismal formula ("in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"). The first part (or 'article'[1]) about the Creator is always rather short, followed by a much longer passage about Jesus Christ. The third part on the Spirit, the church and eschatology was, again, rather short. The length of the second part about the Son was partially a result of the duration of the Christological controversies in the fourth century. A few words and expressions derive from the doctrinal decisions of the Ecumenical councils, such as the famous *consubstantialis* (ὁμοούσιος). But the main part of the creeds derives from the baptismal teaching of the local churches – the Nicaean Creed, for example, from the creed of the church in Jerusalem ('J'). But a clearly formulated tripartite formulation was present as early as in the end of the second century in the so called Old Roman Creed ('R').[2] In this creed the middle part was, again, more than double the length of the others. This is so also when the creed had an interrogative form: that is, when formulated as a question. In the early third century, the author of the *Traditio apostolica* presents it as follows:

> When the person being baptized goes down into the water, he who baptizes him, putting his hand on him, shall say: 'Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty?' And the person being baptized shall say: 'I believe.' Then holding his hand on his head, he shall baptize him once. And then he shall say: 'Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and was dead and buried, and rose again the third day, alive from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, and sat at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?' And when he says: 'I believe,' he is baptized again. And again he shall say: 'Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in the holy church, and the resurrection of the body?' The person being baptized shall say: 'I believe,' and then he is baptized a third time.[3]

The section about the Son surpasses by far those about the Father and the Spirit, even though the creed is Trinitarian in structure.

Strangely enough, the writings of the second-century apologists, though contemporaneous with the first versions of the Old Roman Creed, do not reflect this concentration on the second article of faith, that concerning Jesus Christ. In their teaching the presentation of God the Father and Creator is the most extensive one, whereas the second article is short or even non-existent. The teaching contained in the third article of the

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[1] All basic doctrinal definitions may be called 'articles of faith', but on the other hand, the three main parts of the early Creeds may be called 'articles' as well. In this article, the term 'article' is used in the latter sense.

[2] Kelly has a chapter on the Old Roman Creed in his famous study *Early Christian Creeds* (third edition 1972). The estimates concerning the date of the origin of R. vary from the beginning of the second century to the last decades of it. This vagueness is understandable because baptismal creeds existed already in New Testament times and developed only slowly towards a greater length and fixity of expression.

[3] *Ap. Trad*. 21.16–40.

creeds is, again, a bit more detailed in their presentation, usually containing a discussion on the resurrection of the body and everlasting life. This inversion of emphasis between the articles of faith is, in itself, worth considering. What happened to the Christocentric teaching of the early church in the writings of the apologists? The distance between the apostolic fathers and the apologists is considerable as regards Christocentricity, though these two groups of authors were active roughly at the same period of time. The apostolic fathers and the early creeds seem to represent a united front against the apologist in this central question.

There are, of course, differences between the apologists themselves regarding the emphasis on Christology. If we include the Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* among the apologies, we find in fact quite a lot of Christological discussion there. Probably this is the case as the opponent was a biblically erudite Jew, accepting the expectation of a coming Messiah. Justin also seems to have known of an exclusively Christological confession alongside the Trinitarian one.[4] But the fact remains that the early apologies concentrated on God the Father and Creator. This was so already in New Testament times. From Paul's apologetic speech on the Areopagus (*Acts* 17:22–31) all the way to Athenagoras' *Legatio* we can notice this trend: the first article of faith is predominant. Neither of these two works even mentions the name of Christ, a feature quite remarkable in writings defending and presenting Christian faith. Paul just refers to "a man appointed by God to judge the world", which is a rather modest presentation of Jesus Christ. Aristides of Athens, wishing to explain the origin of Christian religion, has a short passage on Christ, forming just a fraction of the entire treatise.[5] The *Letter to Diognetus*, often printed together with the apostolic fathers but in fact an apology dedicated to a single person,[6] provides a theoretical basis for the disproportionate presentations of the Father and Son. "If you desire this (Christian) faith", the author says, "first of all learn to know […] the Father."[7] This principle seems to suggest that the presentation of the principles of Christian faith had to follow a certain order. The apologists rarely got beyond the first person in the Trinity.

The New Testament, early Christian literature in general and the early creeds in particular differ from the apologists at least in one more regard: only the apologists made use of the term Providence (Πρόνοια, *Providentia*).[8] In fact they were the ones that introduced this term, so popular in later theological reflection into Christianity. The doctrine of divine Providence belongs traditionally in the context presenting God the Father, a presentation that is remarkably detailed in the apologetic writings. In the following we will analyse what the apologists meant by Providence, why they introduced the term and why they elaborated a theology connected to the term. All this will be done with a Christocentric concept of Christianity in mind.

The apologies are, as is well known, strongly polemical texts. Thus, it is hardly surprising that Providence is also treated in them in a polemical manner. The polemic is directed towards Graeco-Roman paganism and philosophy, but also to some extent against Judaism. In the *Letter to Diognetus,* the argument goes as follows: if God provides

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[4] See Kelly 1972, 75.
[5] *Apol*. chapter 2 in the Syriac version.
[6] See the Preliminaries in the article of J. Blomqvist in this volume.
[7] *Ad Diogn.* 10.1: Πρῶτον μὲν λάβης ἐπίγνωσιν πατρός.
[8] See the presentation of the word/term πρόνοια by Behm 1968, 1012.

humankind with all things needed, what sense is there in presenting offerings to God?[9] He already has everything. In other words, humans should not be acting as subjects, expected to give gifts to needy gods, for in fact they are the objectives or targets, those who receive gifts from the richness of the Creator. The argument has force only if it is accepted that Providence really looks after humans – the tract presupposes that the readers do hold such a view. As for the Jews, the anonymous author of *Ad Diognetum* is less certain about their attitudes: using the optative, he states that the Jews should regard paganism as insane, since the heathen humans provide for the divinity, not the other way round.[10] If the argument of the author is simplified and exaggerated, one might venture the following conclusion: the difference between Christianity and paganism consists of the fact that according to the former, men receive gifts from God, whereas the pagans think that they should present gifts to the gods. And the latter kind of behaviour is, according to the author, sheer madness. What can be given to a person who already has it all? Underpinning the author's argumentation is the early Christian concept of God being ἀνενδεής.[11] The *Letter to Diognetus* applies the tenet in the discussion concerning Providence. The biblical background provides the polemic against sacrifices, as fulminated by the Old Testament prophets.

Another aspect of the polemical use of Providence is presented by Aristides of Athens. As his *Apology* is written as early as in the 120s, the argument must be one of the oldest against the Graeco-Roman religion. In the description of the traditional Greek gods, Aristides notes that they need help themselves. He describes them one by one and shows their vulnerability. His conclusion is: gods needing help are unable to help humans.[12] In other words, they cannot guarantee the manner of intervention provided by Providence. What he does not mention, however, is that the same traditional Greek gods, in spite of their limitations, often intervened on behalf of their favourites among humans, according to the great Greek poets.

A third argument based on Providence against the pagans is to be found in Theophilus of Antioch. The Greek gods, Zeus explicitly mentioned among them, are local gods.[13] Being limited locally, they cannot be active, as is Providence, on behalf of humans everywhere. But, and this Theophilus does not say, in spite of their local limitation, or perhaps precisely because of this limitation, they were able to provide for and help the locals. Athena could help the Athenians, and that was good enough, most locals would probably have argued.[14]

The above-mentioned arguments against the concept of Providence in the Graeco-Roman religion could not be effective against thinkers denying Providence altogether. The apologists were well aware of the existence of such persons. There are those, according to Justin's *Second Apology*, who maintain that God may exist or not, but at any rate he

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[9] *Ad Diogn.* 3.4.
[10] *Ad Diogn.* 3.3.
[11] *PGL*, 133 refers to Justin Martyr, Athenagoras and Clement of Alexandria among the second-century authors.
[12] *Apol.* repeatedly in chapters 10–13, the Syriac text.
[13] *Ad Autol.* 2.3. But in *Ad Autol.* 2.8, Theophilus presents a lengthy quotation from Aratus which contradicts the idea of Zeus being locally restricted: "Let us take our beginning from Zeus, whom we men never leave unmentioned; all highways are full of Zeus, all market-places; full are the sea and the harbours; everywhere we all have need of Zeus. For we are his offspring [...]." Translation by R.M. Grant 1970.
[14] The cult of Athena Pronoia confirms our conclusion. See *RE* 23.1, *s.v.* πρόνοια 745–746.

does not take an interest in humans.[15] The ethical consequence of this view is also stated: in such a case we can do whatever we wish – since God does not care, even if he exists. Theodorus of Cyrene, Diagoras of Melos and even Protagoras of Abdera are mentioned as famous atheists. But those denying the existence of Providence were in minority. No ink was wasted on these 'extremists' since the apologists concentrated on those sharing at least some convictions with them.[16]

The apologists knew Providence to be a generally accepted belief among non-Christians. They felt that they shared this conviction with a multitude of peoples on earth – with the Old Testament prophets, Greek poets such as Euripides and with most philosophers, as well as with the Sibylla.[17] Providence as the Christians conceive it is the best possible Providence, but belief in it is universal, not only Christian or Jewish.

The early Christian missionary sermons often used the generally accepted belief in Providence as a point of departure. This is the case in apostle Paul and Barnabas' speech in Iconium.[18] Here the belief in the Creator is mentioned first. Then follows an exhortation to make a conversion to God who "has not left you without some clue to his nature, in the kindness he shows: he sends you rain from heaven and crops in their season, and gives you food and good cheer in plenty." Providence is not a cause for polemic, it is the argument for why people should convert to the Christian God. Apostle Paul's Areopagus Speech in Athens presents even more clearly the belief in Providence as a common ground, a belief uniting rather than separating Christians and non-Christians.[19] The fundamental consensus concerning the existence of Providence is not shaken by the above-mentioned limitations of the Homeric gods. As in so many other cases, the apologists side with Greek philosophy rather than with their poetry and religion. And, once again, the attitude is decisively eclectic: Plato and the Stoics are their support against Aristotle and Democritus. One of the non-Christian texts, quoted frequently with approval among the apologists and early church fathers, is Plato's *Timaeus* in general and section 28c in particular, since Plato presupposes the existence and benevolent providence of 'the Father and Maker' of the universe.

Do ut des is the main non-Christian principle of ancient religious thinking: humans give sacrifices in order to get something (else) in return. Later on, within Christianity, another principle was formulated: *da quod iubes, et iube quod vis* (Augustine). In other words: God is expected to give a gift first, and humans can react to God's generosity – though not by making sacrifices. A fresh attempt to define the difference between the Christian and non-Christian positions would therefore look like this: though both parties agree that there is such a thing as divine Providence, they disagree as to whether god/God needs sacrifices for one reason or other. The *do ut des* principle seems to suggest that the initiative lies with the humans, and God/the gods react, whereas the Christians claim that

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[15] *2 Apol*. 9.
[16] Athenagoras, *De res.* 19.2 is an exception, debating in brief with "those who disagree on the fundamentals".
[17] Theophilus, *Ad Autol.* 2.8 states rather pessimistically that there are both defenders and opponents of Providence among the non-Christians. His aim is, however, to show the inconsistency of non-Christian thinkers. Athenagoras describes the situation as follows: "Those who [...] accept the same first principles as we do (i.e. the existence of Providence), and then for some strange reason repudiate their own presuppositions." *De resurrectione* 19.1. Non-Christian thinkers are not only in disagreement among themselves, but sometimes also inconsistent in their teaching (on Providence).
[18] *Acts* 14:14–17.
[19] *Acts* 17:22–31.

the initiative is within God, in his goodness, and humans react. As apostle Paul put it in his Areopagus Speech: "God did this (providential works) so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him."[20]

The non-polemic teaching on Providence in the writings of the apologists is most conveniently opened with the names and attributes God is said to have. This is so since God being Providence is repeatedly deduced from his names. The most famous passage in this respect is probably that of Theophilus of Antioch in the beginning of his *Ad Autolycum*:

> He is called God because he established everything on his own steadfastness [*Ps.* 103:5] and because he runs; the word 'run' means to run and set in motion and energize and nourish and provide and govern everything and to make everything alive.[21]

Theophilus has noted the closeness between the words 'God' (Θεός) and the verb θέειν, which means 'to run.' The dictionary of Liddell, Scott and Jones provides examples how the verb was used: persons, horses, birds and the potter's wheel are said to θέειν.[22] But God is not. This etymology is not a creation of Theophilus. It derives from Plato's *Cratylus* 379d. The context is, however, different: Plato wrote about heavenly bodies 'running' in space. The movements of these heavenly gods are not connected to Providence. Even if the etymology is probably incorrect, from the point of view of the history of ideas it is remarkable that the 'unmoved mover' introduced by Aristotle has changed into a God who both 'runs' himself for the benefit of his creatures and also makes these move.[23] So much so, that he got his name from this providential running. In his definition of Theos, Theophilus explains it by using verbs such as κινεῖν, ἐνεργεῖν, τρέφειν and, most importantly for our topic, προνοεῖν as well as κυριεύειν and ζωοποιεῖν τὰ πάντα. All these activities signify somehow variations of God's providence towards his creation.

Theophilus' definitions of the names Κύριος, Πατήρ and Δημιουργός also illustrate different aspects of God taking care of his world. The attribute 'Father' is particularly worth noting in this respect. In the early Christian Creeds, divine Providence is not mentioned *expressis verbis*. But in every single one, we find the attribute 'Father'. Admittedly, this attribute can be understood as the Father of Christ, the Son, since the creeds continue by presenting the Son. But in Theophilus' definition, 'Father' is related to the universe: he is the Father τῶν ὅλων.[24] This expression is also found in Plato's above-mentioned statement, repeatedly quoted by the apologists and church fathers, according to which it is hard to find τὸν Πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν τῶν ὁλων. Also in Plato God is referred

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[20] *Acts* 17:27.
[21] *Ad Autol.* 1.4, translation by R.M. Grant 1970.
[22] *LSJ s.v.* θέειν.
[23] Theophilus' etymology does not work in Latin, but the idea that God is constantly running is also present in Minucius Felix's dialogue *Octavius*. Caecilius, an opponent of Christianity, is presented as saying: "But the Christians, moreover, what wonders, what monstrosities do they feign! – that he who is their God […] he runs about everywhere, and is everywhere present: they make him out to be troublesome, restless, even shamelessly inquisitive, since he is present at everything that is done, wanders in and out in all places." *Oct.* 10, transl. *ANF* 4.178.
[24] In Latin, God is called *parens omnium* by Minucius Felix (*Oct.* 18.7, 19.1). Kelly 1977, 83 claims that in the second century, "'Father' referred primarily to His role as creator and author of all things."

to as having created and now providing for the universe. The words of the Creed "We believe in One God, the Father" means, in the light of Theophilus, first of all "We believe that God cares" – since he is the Father. Providence is so strongly connected to the first person in the Trinity that the Son is mentioned only very rarely and only in passing as the instrument 'through' whom the Father exercises his providential activity.[25]

Other attributes as well given to God the Father imply the existence of Providence. Κύριος means control all over the world, Theophilus says. The attribute just by itself does not make clear whether the person called Κύριος is good or bad, and his ruling over his territory is to the benefit or ruin of its inhabitants. But in a Christian context, Κύριος is a man-loving ruler, and Providence is implied in the attribute. The epithet Παντοκράτωρ is rare in the texts of the apologists. But it is mentioned and described by Theophilus in such a way as to indicate God's providence. "He is called […] Almighty because he controls and surrounds everything", he says.[26] Providence is immanent in this name of God itself. One cannot be a 'Παντοκράτωρ' unless one actually controls all things. Thus, though Providence is not mentioned in the early Christian Creeds, there is reason to believe that it is indicated in such epithets as 'Father', 'Lord' and 'Almighty.'[27]

One of the apologists, Justin Martyr, discusses at some length what we might call *delegated* Providence. God takes care of his universe, but by using assistants, namely *angels***.** Since angels and Judaism are combined a number of times in the apologetic literature, one could presume that angelic Providence would be discussed in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*. This is, however, not the case, but the topic is discussed twice in the *Second Apology*, as in the fourth chapter:

> When God made the universe and put all earthly things under man's dominion, and arranged the heavenly bodies for the increase of fruits and the change of seasons, and decreed a divine law for these [...] He appointed His angels, whom He placed over mankind, to look after men and all things under heaven.[28]

According to this passage, God takes care of the whole universe, whereas the angels take care of men and the sublunary world, and humans look after plants, animals and things 'below' the humans. Humans imitate God when they take care of each other and carry each other's burdens, the *Letter to Diognetus* says.[29] But we should probably not think in spatial categories here: the idea is not that God is far away, the humans on earth and the angels mediating in between. In the same way as humans and animals are

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[25] Athenagoras says that God "rules the universe through the Word that issues from him" (*Leg. pro Christ.* 10.1). But even here, the subject exercising providence is the Father.

[26] *Ad Autol.* 1.4. It is worth noting that the gods presented in Seneca's *De Providentia* are not almighty, nor is the creator and ruler of the universe almighty. They are subordinate to Providence, which is the highest principle of all (*Prov.* 5).

[27] Scheffczyk 1963, 29 concludes quite correctly (though not referring explicitly to the apologists): "Dass in keinem dieser Symbole die göttliche Vorsehung ausdrücklich Erwähnung findet, besagt keineswegs ein vollständiges Fehlen dieser Wahrheit in ihnen; den zunächst schwingt im Vaterbegriff wie in der von der Stoa beeinflussten παντοκράτωρ-Formel der Gedanke an die Welterhaltung durch den Schöpfergott mit, zumal wenn man bedenkt, dass in der Frühzeit das griechische παντοκράτωρ vielfach mit dem lateinischen *omnitenens* wiedergegeben wurde."

[28] *2 Apol.* 5, translation by T.B. Falls 2003.

[29] *Diogn.* 10.6.

not situated in different worlds but in one and the same, but the humans are nevertheless in charge of the animals, thus God, the angels and men are not necessarily understood as being spatially in different worlds. There is just an order of operation within the one world. This point needs to be emphasized, since the apologists do not, in spite of the stress on God's transcendence, think that our world is void of God. God is omnipresent, he is close to everybody (as stated already in the Areopagus Speech), but he takes care of the world in a certain order, where angels do have their place. If omnipresence is denied, we end up in the same position attributed to non-Christians according to which Zeus, for example, is locally limited and consequently unable to take care of the world in its entirety.

Justin continues, after having stated how Providence is using angels, by saying that the angels *fell*, and so did the humans.[30] Are we entitled to draw the conclusion that, consequently, Providence is not any more what it was meant to be? Unfortunately, Justin does not elucidate the consequences of the fall for Providence: is it more or less defective in the present situation, or even destroyed, or arranged differently than it was originally intended? Theologically, it makes an enormous difference whether we think that Providence works perfectly even now, and every single event is planned and provided by God, or whether we think that the world is out of order, though neither abandoned nor outside the power of God.

Despite the fall, Providence includes, according to the apologists, all places and all kinds of beings. This was suggested above in the text quoted about from Aristides dealing with God, angels and humans in the activity of Providence. Theophilus agrees:

> We acknowledge a God, but only one, the Founder and Maker and Demiurge of this whole universe. We know that everything (τὰ πάντα) is governed by providential care, but by him alone.[31]

And later on, Theophilus writes:

> The world is not uncreated nor is there spontaneous production of everything [...] instead, the world is created and is providentially governed by the God who made everything.[32]

Again, the object of Providence is τὰ πάντα and the (whole) κόσμος. Attention should be drawn to the fact that Providence is not an impersonal power, or a (Roman) goddess such as *Providentia Romana*. It is identical with the One God, the Father and Creator.

A philosophical discussion took place as to how far Providence would go into the details. Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, states that philosophers may accept that Providence takes care of big things, but deny its concern for insignificant matters.[33]

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[30] *2 Apol. 5*. Papias presents a similar view: "Papias thus speaks, word far [sic] word: To some of the angels He gave dominion over the arrangement of the world, and He commissioned them to exercise their dominion well. And he says, immediately after this: but it happened that their arrangement came to nothing." Translation by Roberts and Donaldson 1885.

[31] *Ad Autol*. 3.9, translation by R.M. Grant 1970.

[32] *Ad. Aut*. 3.26, translation R.M. Grant 1970.

[33] *2 Apol.* 9. Plato*, Leges* X 900d seems to have embraced the view that Providence includes minor beings also, whereas Cicero thought that *magna dii curant, parva negligunt* (*De natura deorum* 51–56).

Or, more philosophically expressed, the godhead takes care of the universe, the general and even the species on earth – but not of the individuals. The apologist(s) disagree with such views, though the idea that God externalized some parts of his providential work to angels has a certain affinity with them. You and I, Justin Martyr says, are included in *Providentia divina*. God's care reaches down even to us as individuals. If it did not, prayer would be useless.[34] Athenagoras, sometimes regarded as Ps-Athenagoras, argues as Justin did before him:

> Those who accept God as Maker of our universe must ascribe to his wisdom and justice a concern to guard and provide for all created things […] they must think of nothing either on earth or in heaven as unattended to or unprovided for, but must recognize that the Maker's care extends to everything, the invisible as well as the visible, the small and the great. For all created things need the care of their Maker, each one in its own way.[35]

Athenagoras mentions the various species and their need of Providence, but he is not willing to catalogue all the species to show how they are provided for.[36] What is important here is the logic used. Since everything, big or small, is created by God, it follows that he cares for them all. *Nec universitati solummodo deus, sed et partibus consulit*.[37] The size of the creature is not important. Further, since God created also the invisible world, his Providence reaches even to the invisible beings! The apologists draw a picture of a universe totally dependent on God, allowing no exceptions, a concept which irritated the non-Christian Caecilius in the dialogue *Octavius*, as will be shown below.

Having said all this, it should be clear that the non-Christians are included among the beneficiaries of Providence, as well as everything else in the universe. This was already clearly stated in the Areopagus Speech: God fixed the epochs of their history and the limits of their territory. And at Lystra, apostle Paul proclaimed: "God sends you rain from heaven and crops in their season, and gives you food and good cheer in plenty." Universal Providence is portrayed by Minucius Felix in a similar way, emphasizing the beneficial order in the world. He wishes to persuade the non-Christian Caecilius to accept faith in God:

> For what can possibly be so manifest, so confessed, and so evident, when you lift your eyes up to heaven, and look into the things which are below and around, than that there is some Deity of most excellent intelligence, by whom all nature is inspired, is moved, is nourished, is governed?[38]

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[34] Just. *Dial*. 1.4. The translation of T.B. Falls 2003 does not make this argument sufficiently clear.
[35] *De res.* 18.2–3. Translated by W.R. Schoedel 1972. Cf. Scheffczyk 1963, 39 where the role of the angels is stressed – but even so Providence reaches down to the details.
[36] *De res.* 18.3.
[37] "God does not care only for the entire universe, but for its parts also." *Oct.* 18. The example of God's care that follows in *Octavius* is worth mentioning: Britain has not got much sunshine, but the surrounding sea keeps it warm! Seneca presents the same argument in favour of Providence, though not explicitly mentioning Britain: "The seas pour into the valleys and so temper the climate of the land" (*Prov.* 1). Minucius puts more emphasis on the individual, whereas Seneca stresses the universal aspect. The gods care more for all mankind than for individuals, the latter says (*Prov.* 3).
[38] *Oct.* 17. The whole chapter is dedicated to different aspects of Providence. The orderly movement of the universe with its parts seems to impress Minucius Felix the most. This is true also for Seneca, who regards the movements of the stars and their regularity as operations brought about by Providence (*Prov.* 1).

The fact of universal Providence opens up interesting, and maybe even daring, perspectives. How closely cared for are the non-Christians in the hands of God, according to the apologists? How much correct understanding of religion do they possess? Justin's doctrine of Logos living within men in general and within good philosophers in particular is well known. Plato was a kind of Christian before Christianity. Theophilus also suggests that Homer, Hesiod and Orpheus may have been instructed by divine providence (ἀπὸ θείας προνοίας μεμαθηκέναι).[39] But the Christians have even better instructors, he adds. Even so, there is no monopoly related to Providence. Clement of Alexandria denies that the partial truths seen by the Greek philosophers could be accidental:

> Whether, then, they say that the Greeks gave forth some utterances of the true philosophy by accident, it is the accident of a divine administration (for no one will, for the sake of the present argument with us, deify chance; or by good fortune, good fortune is not unforeseen. Or were one, on the other hand, to say that the Greeks possessed a natural conception of these things, we know the one Creator of nature.[40]

Thus, Providence extends to all, and to all areas of life. Further, it affects *dead people*, too. Theophilus quotes the *Book of Proverbs* (3:8) saying: "There will be healing for the flesh and treatment for the bones."[41] It seems that in this passage, Providence is essentially a kind of grace, grace in the Pauline sense. This is particularly clear in the emphasis on God's care for the dead "bones" – these are not capable of doing good deeds, not even of praying or worshipping. But God takes care of them. Providence is not often mentioned by the apologists in connection with the deceased. But the resurrection of the dead is a central topic indeed! The doctrine of Providence brings a fresh aspect to the concept of grace: we can read it in the light of God's Providence that takes care of that which is nothing, analogous but not identical with the *creatio ex nihilo*. Creation out of nothing was, as we know from the fathers, understood as an act of God's love towards what was not even in existence. When meeting the creedal words *carnis resurrectionem* (σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν) or *corporis resurrectionem* (σώματος ἀνάστασιν),[42] we are probably entitled to understand that God's Providence and grace are included in the mention also.[43]

Even the Last Judgement, following the general resurrection, may be seen as an act of God's providence. Athenagoras claims this in passing.[44] Justice demands a (final) judgement. Good and evil persons should get their due treatment, and the fact that they

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[39] *Ad Autol.* 3.17: "Did not the poets Homer, Hesiod, and Orpheus say that they had been instructed by divine providence? Furthermore, it is said that there were diviners and seers at the time of the historians, and that people who learned from them wrote accurate histories. How much more, then, shall we know the truth, since we learn it from the holy prophets, who were filled with the holy Spirit of God?" The passage suggests that there is a difference in the degree of knowledge, not a contradiction between lies and the truth.

[40] *Strom*. 1. 19, transl. *ANF* 2.

[41] *Ad Autol.* 2.38.

[42] The Old Roman Creed used the expression *carnis resurrectio*, the resurrection of the flesh. I have shown elsewhere that the expression, though more precise than the other ones in use, is synonymous with *corporis resurrectio* and *resurrectio mortuorum*. See af Hällström 1988.

[43] This is the case already in *1 Clement* 24.5. The death of the seed and rise of a new plant is seen as a model of the future resurrection. But all this happens to the seed and plant through προνοία τοῦ δεσπότου. See also Athenagoras *De res.* 18.1.

[44] *De res.* 18.1. See the discussion in Bergjan 2002, 115–202.

will get it is a consequence of divine Providence. In other words, God takes care of all men, but this has negative consequences for the evil ones.

In Seneca's treatise *De Providentia* the central topic is why *good* people have to suffer.[45] The apologists do not treat this topic, at least not automatically, in spite of the extremely dangerous situation in which they and the other Christians were living. If anyone*, they* had a reason to ask God why the Christians had to suffer in the Roman Empire. How can God allow such injustice? But the apologists did not blame Providence, nor did Seneca – his friend Lucilius was the one who required a theodicy, an apology on behalf of Providence which allows good men to be treated badly. The accusations of the apologists were directed to the Roman politicians (to whom their apologies were written, in most cases). Do not blame God (Providence) for evils caused by the authorities, they seem to say.[46]

In the apology called *Octavius*, Minucius Felix presents a pagan thinker called Caecilius. According to this Caecilius, there is no *divina providentia*. Therefore, good and bad people experience the same sufferings. According to Caecilius, in the hypothetical case that there is such a thing as Providence, we would be able to notice the effects of it. Socrates would not have received the lethal cup of poison. The harvests would never be destroyed by hailstorms, and so on.[47] Caecilius concludes: *Fortuna dominatur.* Blind coincidence rules, unrestrained by any laws.

Interestingly enough, Caecilius seems to be familiar with the above-mentioned Christian argument that Providence reaches down to the smallest details. The Christian God, he says, is so busy with small details that he has lost control over the entirety, over the universe. As a result, Caecilius concludes, it is quite logical that Christians believe that the universe will break down, so that heaven and earth will be dissolved.[48] He seems unable or unwilling to comprehend that Providence could comprise both the totality and the details: either/or has to be chosen. The answer of Octavius is remarkable. He presents an analogy from the sun and its beams:

> Once more look at the sun: it is fixed fast in the heaven, yet it is diffused over all lands equally; present everywhere, it is associated and mingled with all things […] How much more God, who has made all things, and looks upon all things, from whom there can be nothing secret, is present in the darkness, is present in our thoughts […] Not only do we act in him, but also, I had almost said, we live with him.[49]

Seneca and Minucius Felix give the same answer to the question why *boni*, i.e. 'good people' (the terminology of Seneca; Octavius speaks of Christians), have to suffer. Both speak with the same enthusiasm about how useful sufferings are, how little good people/Christians fear them, how they even voluntarily welcome sufferings, since they

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[45] Seneca was in fact explicitly asked to answer this question: "You have asked me, Lucilius, why, if the world be ruled by providence, so many evils befall good men?" (*Prov.* 1).
[46] Justin seems to adopt a different view at least occasionally. In his *Dialogue with Trypho* 16.4, he states that the officials prevent the Jews from doing evil to the Christians. In other words, the officials play the part of Providence in such cases.
[47] *Oct.* 5.
[48] *Oct.* 10.
[49] *Oct*. 32, translation by R.E. Wallis (1880).

purify and strengthen the philosopher/the Christian. A version of this idea is presented by Minucius Felix in *Octavius:*

> How beautiful is the spectacle to God when a Christian does battle with pain; when he is drawn up against threats, and punishments, and tortures; when, mocking the noise of death, he treads underfoot the horror of the executioner [...].[50]

Confronted with pain and misfortune, the Christian in the era of martyrdom and the non-Christian philosopher give surprisingly similar answers. They 'despise' death and pain, we are told. Seneca even glorifies suicide, something that Minucius Felix does not. Suicide and Providence can be combined, in Seneca's view, since the latter may direct a person to commit an act of self-destruction. Broadly speaking, both thinkers interpret Providence from their own ideological perspectives, and that causes a substantial difference between them. The differences in world views make the following quotation from the *Letter to Diognetus* altogether unacceptable to the non-Christian participant:

> The Almighty and all-creating and invisible God himself founded (among men) the truth from heaven […] not, as one might suppose, by sending some minister to men, or an angel, or ruler […] but the very artificer and Creator of the universe himself, by whom he made the heavens [...] As a king sending his son, he sent him as King, he sent him as God, he sent him as Man to men.[51]

The intervention by the Son invites humans to believe that God is our τροφεύς,[52] our nourisher, our giver of food, our Provider. The Incarnation is, then, the zenith of culmination for Providence: the Creator sends his Son to take care of the humans.[53] Sending sun and rain on the fields is of course important and that is what Providence is often said to be doing, but sending the Creator himself to the aid of man is incomparably more important. So, why do the apologists usually remain silent about Incarnation, about Jesus Christ? And why, on the contrary, does the *Letter to Diognetus* speak quite openly about him? A theory, as yet unproven, could go as follows: the *Letter to Diognetus* represents, chronologically, a more advanced stage of evangelization than the apologetic literature in general. Diognetus, the recipient, had already heard the basics. He had already announced his very great interest in hearing more about the doctrines of Christianity, and about the love which the Christians had towards each other.[54] This was not the case when Paul spoke to the members of the Areopagus. This was not the case when Justin wrote to the emperor and the Senate. Thus, the theory goes as follows: before the early Christians could present the Son of God, they regarded it advisable to present God, the Father. "First of all, learn to know the Father."[55] Therefore, the varying proportions observed between the articles of faith as presented in the early creeds seems to be adapted to needs of the catechumens and believers, whereas the apologists address an altogether different audience.

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[50] *Oct.* 37.
[51] *Diogn*. 7.2–3.
[52] *Diogn.* 9.6.
[53] This view becomes dominant in the next few centuries; see Prestige 1959, 67.
[54] *Diogn.* 1.
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The Characteristics of Greek Religion According to Origen's *Contra Celsum*

Aspasia Kaloudi

Historical framework

The rapid increase in the number of Christian communities and the influence which they were acquiring created stresses in the foundations of the Roman Empire, leading to the taking of direct measures against the disturbing phenomenon with persecutions and other extreme actions.[1] The future of Christianity was connected to that of the Roman Empire: its spreading was mainly limited to within the borders of the Roman state. The Christian religion was considered outlandish, regarded as the cause of the problems in traditional life; it also forced the prevalent beliefs to reconsider their fundamental ways of thinking.[2]

Roman society had been strongly influenced by Greek culture. At the time in question, the population's ways of thought and action were contributing factors to the fundamental principle of the official religion – worshipping the emperor. The citizens worshipped other deities as well. The devotion and the adoration of the emperor's person strengthened the hold of the regime.[3]

Particular interest was taken in religious syncretism.[4] Frequent movements of the population provided an opportunity for the exchange of ideas and the dissemination of new religious and philosophical traditions. To choose a sacramental form of worship or some philosophical trend was considered reasonable and justified: there was a general turmoil in the Graeco-Roman world and people felt a religious insecurity.[5] The inability to modify and affect the political and economic conditions, the desire for change and the search for well-being and safety urged people to try to find an answer through religion. That encouraged the emergence of new religious currents and cults within the ranks of the Roman army, as well as within Roman society in general. Such burgeoning cults were those of Isis, Mithras, Christianity, Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism and others. As a result, cults and religious movements formed.[6]

In such an environment, the need and ability to defend the principles of Christianity emerged.[7] The followers of the new religion were considered to be unintelligent, ruthless, unholy and incestuous cannibals. Their representatives were considered criminals, naïve and abject people. To confront their condemnation, Christians reacted with the composition of apologies, written down to be kept in the archives of the churches and at the same time to help in determining their Christian identity. Scholars, apologists, ex-

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[1] Rhee 2005, 9–10; Stark 1996, 5–7; Hopkins 1998, 192–195; Novak 2008, 81.
[2] Kirtatas 2003, 68–69; Barnes 1968, 520–521.
[3] Beard *et al*. 1998; Karavidopoulos 2000, 130; Anastasios 1982, 23–25.
[4] Pachis 2003a, 327; Pachis 2003b, 97–125; Martin 1987, 10; Burkert, 1994; Karavidopoulos 2000, 130.
[5] Brown 1989, 58–59; Karavidopoulos 2000, 130–131.
[6] Martin 1987, 10–11; Pachis 2003a, 327–329; Tarn 1966, 355; Hadas 1959, 191; Karavidopoulos 2000, 25–28.
[7] Fidas 1994, 132; Novak 2008, 150–152.

gentiles with a great philosophical education found in Christianity the true meaning of life.[8] They argued and convinced with their knowledge, eloquence and zeal.[9]

Origen of Alexandria was one of the early theologians with a profound secular education.[10] He was a man with a most powerful and systematic persona, and was to influence the church of the first centuries.[11] As a theologian and an interpreter he worked tirelessly, defending his religion in a scholarly way, a religion which was suffering from multiple schisms and sects.[12]

Origen was probably born in Alexandria around AD 185, as one of the sons of a large family. In a short time, he became known for his zeal for learning and for Christianity. He studied in the circles close to Clement of Alexandria, Pantaenus and Ammonius Saccas; he was entrusted with the direction of the Catechetical School, as the head of which he remained for twenty-eight years.[13] Origen travelled to the most famous centres of the Roman world, teaching and writing. In AD 253/54, a few years after the persecution of Decius, exhausted from the tortures he had suffered, he died, leaving behind a great work, in size and in quality. Only a small part of his writings has survived.[14]

His work was exegetical, dogmatic and apologetic. With the recognition of the central role of the Bible in Christian faith and with the aid of a deep knowledge of the principles of Plato's philosophy, Origen formed his theology, connecting Greek philosophy with Christian tradition.[15]

Valuable testimony to this is the apologetic work of Origen, *Contra Celsum*. The treatise reveals the prevailing view among the intellectual pagans about Christianity. A philosopher named Celsus wrote a treatise titled *True Logos* in AD 178.[16] It has survived only partially but came to us thanks to Origen.

At first, Celsus's treatise did not seem to have attracted the attention of either pagans or Christians. For many years, it went unnoticed. It came to notice only about seventy years after its completion, when Ambrose, a friend of Origen, observed that it remained marginalized.[17] Ambrose encouraged his friend to answer to Celsus's falsehoods, but Origen believed that the best 'apology' was the right way of living: actions speaking louder than words. Finally in AD 248, he decided to write a refutation, though Celsus had already died, in order to satisfy his friend and to support all those who had been disturbed by the treatise.[18] In those days, Christians were threatened again by renewed persecutions,[19] and Origen was one of the few capable of defending the new religion.[20]

The *True Logos* was drafted in order to express the dissatisfaction of Celsus with the emerging Christian culture, which was gaining ground throughout the Roman

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[8] Koukousas and Valais 2011, 111.
[9] Tatakis 1989.
[10] Beck 1992, 264.
[11] Anastasios 1982, 206.
[12] Arabatzis 2010, 175.
[13] Trigg 1998, 9–10, 12.
[14] Christou 2005, 805–883.
[15] Despotis 2015, 10–11.
[16] Arabatzis 2010, 179; Fidas 1994, 132.
[17] Ulrich 2007, 116.
[18] Christou 2005, 805–883; Papadopoulos 1982, 393–422.
[19] Edwards 1993, 70–89.
[20] Trigg 1998, 53.

Empire.[21] In introducing the discussion, Celsus outlined Christianity as an offshoot of Judaism, as a novel heresy with naive and uneducated followers.[22] It might, though, bring about the total breaking up of the prospering empire. It was a propaganda effort against the lifestyle and the new morals that Christians professed, and it was also an attempt to defend the Roman emperor's policy in his provinces.[23]

This treatise was the first systematic text directed against Christianity. Celsus had prepared the attack, after studying written Christian sources. Using excerpts from the Old and New Testaments, and from the Apocrypha, he displayed the corrupt doctrine of the Christians and urged the government to extirpate the new heresy.[24] Celsus altered biblical passages. His 'insights' also derived from the observation of the life of the Christians and from oral sources.[25]

Celsus's position

In the beginning, Celsus presented the general characteristics of Greek religion. During the process, he pointed out a number of details as well about its theology, cosmology, soteriology and anthropology.

According to this philosophically trained man, Greek culture was characterized by light, in contrast to Christian culture, which was marked by darkness and secrecy.[26] Gentiles did not exercise their religion in secret and were not ashamed or afraid for their manners and customs. They did not hesitate to express and defend their religious beliefs proudly and bravely. They were law-abiding and offered the certainty and safety of a lawful and official way of living.[27] Answering the accusations of Celsus concerning a 'hidden dogma', Origen stated that this particular tactic of secrecy was applied in philosophical circles as well. Many wished to prevent their values being misrepresented and misunderstood by non-believers, and therefore abided by them, practicing in secret.[28] Others followed the Pythagorean example αὐτός ἐφὰ and were teaching openly.

According to Celsus whatever is somehow related to the past is best. Thus, in any comparison between an older philosophical way of thinking and Christianity, the first always triumphs. His personal feeling was that the latter lifestyle derives from the first, which is the source of the truth.[29] The Greek religion was not a 'disguised religion', like Christianity, but an intact, original and established one. He called his treatise *True Logos* because he asserts that if something claims to be true, it should be ancient, stable

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[21] *Cels*. 4.1.10–15.
[22] *Cels*. 4.36.
[23] De Lange 1976, 64; Anastasios 1982, 110; Fidas 1994, 132.
[24] *Cels*. 2.1.65–70.
[25] Christou 2005, 118. Celsus's sources were the *Psalms* in the Old Testament, the *Gospels*, Paul's *Epistles* and the *Acts* in the New Testament.
[26] *Cels*. 1.3.5: [...] ὡς συνθήκας κρύβδην πρὸς ἀλλήλους ποιουμένων χριστιανῶν παρὰ τὰ νενομισμένα, ὅτι τῶν συνθηκῶν οἱ μὲν εἰσὶ φανεραί, ὅσαι κατὰ νόμους γίνονται, αἱ δὲ ἀφανεῖς, ὅσαι παρὰ τὰ νενομισμένα συντελοῦνται.
[27] *Cels*. 1.1.2–10.
[28] The typical example was the mystic ceremonies of the famous Eleusinian mysteries, where the chance to participate was granted only to the initiated, who agreed to keep secret all the events that took place in the process.
[29] *Cels*. 1.14.25–30.

and unaltered.[30] Thus, it was not possible for this 'new word', as professed by Christian thinkers, to be the true one, simply because it was attempting to overturn the 'old word'. Celsus refers to Plato,[31] as he believed that Plato did not express new ideas, but supported ancient dogma.[32] Celsus defended Judaism over Christianity.[33] Knowing that Christianity appeared later in history than Judaism, Celsus assumed that the former was a heresy originating from the latter.

When comparing something ancient with a novelty, wisdom was to be attributed to the first. Since Greek religion was chronologically older, it was 'natural' to presume it to be authentic and dependable. To make the same case for Christianity was something that Celsus deemed impossible. For a start, the emerging Christian faith had its vulnerabilities as it was relatively new: therefore, it could not contain the truth.

Philosophers are the possessors of wisdom and correct thinking. The values of Greek culture were sophisticated, and the virtues played a very central part in it all. The traditional religious systems and the philosophical schools in the Roman Empire harboured no barbaric, foreign, uneducated or uncultivated features. If the barbarians were to create new dogmatic principles, they would undoubtedly prove themselves to be transient, since their creators would fail to be able to prove them. Dogmatic truth can be established only by the means of philosophy.[34] According to Celsus, the barbarians lacked the essential beliefs in their faiths. Though he acknowledged their ability to come up with a new faith, he yet claimed that they were unable to provide a logical proof for the justification of their faith, as they did not have the means of real reasoning.

The superiority of Celsus's religion lay in the rational thought of its followers. The philosophical mind seeks explanations for everything. They thus consider themselves different from the 'naïve' Christians who lack rational reasoning in their expression of faith. Celsus searched for logical elements in religion.[35] Reasonable, understandable arguments and clear evidence were its criteria. Its supporters were wise and cultured; they did not follow the allegorical method of interpretation, but only the logical and the literal ones.[36] The gods in philosophy were not objects constructed with fallible human hands.[37] This was the reason why they were not ephemeral: Greek religion is the only logical one. Such wisdom and logic demonstrated the good faith.[38] In order to embrace a religious

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[30] *Cels.* 1.40. 25–32.

[31] *Cels.* 1.14. According to Plato, the more someone goes back in time, the wiser the men he can meet and the closer to the divine one gets. In Plato's way of thinking, immortality was the main characteristic of god. The perfection in a deity was considered to consist in its degree of separation from the other beings. Demons and demigods inhabiting the lower spheres of this world had an unclear idea of their celestial origin. The mortal creatures, if they are humans, try to gain a share in immortality with the creative arts (philosophy). All the others try to overcome mortality by trying to leave descendants (Pl. *Symp.* 202e).

[32] *Cels.* 6. 2.10. Affected as he was by Plato's ideas, the Christian values seemed fictitious to Celsus.

[33] *Cels.* 1.25.10–15.

[34] *Cels*. 1.2–7.

[35] Dodds 1965, 187. What made a great impression on the gentile observers of the Christian faith was the Christians' absolute belief in something that lacks proof and their obsession to die for it.

[36] Only those who can philosophize can reach an approximate knowledge of the divine and the demonic (*Cels.* 4. 65.10–25).

[37] *Cels.* 1.4.1–5.

[38] *Cels*. 1.8.10–15. According to Celsus, "[…] within each person there is a soul, which is superior to the flesh and is relative to the divine. The soulful people, wherever they are, crave this relative relationship, bringing it constantly to their mind. They always desire to learn about it. If they are going to embrace new doctrine, they have to be guided by the logical way of thinking."

creed, people should be guided by rational thinking, not by blind faith as in the Christian religion. Advocates of the slogan 'believe and do not inquire' were uncultivated; in their naïve attempt not to seek logic in religious matters, they may be misled and deceived, relying only on their barren faith.[39] The process of acquiring proof for everything, and the effort to explain everything logically, were of extreme importance for Celsus.

Celsus' theory about the divine is based on Plato's, who talked about purity and godliness. God is the supreme good (ἀγαθόν). He is the archetype of justice, nature and order.[40] He is in a state of perfection and excellence. The ἐπουράνιον could neither be described, nor praised as it deserved: no poet can manage to do that. A place without colours and shapes was impossible to describe. It was the place of divine dwelling, as well as a place for those who from the knowledge possessed could provide their souls with rest. Everything derives from god. However, he does not express an interest in anything that is prone to decay, as such things are contrary to his nature.[41]

Some philosophically trained and cultivated people who take care of their spiritual health might be able to express their opinion about the godhead.[42] In the personal relationship between mankind and the divine, a certain elitism can be observed.[43] Celsus stated that knowledge of god leads humans to study the words of the great thinkers of the past. Those who have no philosophical education are considered ignorant and inferior people. The divine being neither interferes with them, nor gives them any possibility of salvation. Even if it did, these people would be unable to take advantage of it because of their ignorance.[44] Prudence and wisdom are the main conditions elevating a person to the truth.[45]

Being omniscient, the divine being does not feel the need to know anyone or anything. It does not, therefore, socialize with mankind.[46] Every change or movement would inevitably imply a change away from the established good to evil. God is presented by Celsus as part of the harmony and equanimity in the cosmos. If god interfered with mankind, he would thereby unsettle the balance and inevitably unleash evil.

God remains a motionless spirit, and contains everything (a Stoic idea).[47] The divine does not share any features with mankind, thus it could not have created men to its image. It is colourless, shapeless and immaterial. One could say that god is not a part of matter, but on the contrary, matter could be a part of god. As god is passionless, humans cannot understand him.[48] He cannot have a son. Even if he had, this son should have to be a strong one, worthy of his divine origin. A weak son of god, prosecuted, arrested, crucified and fearing death,[49] has no place in a mighty religion, such as the Greek one.[50]

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[39] *Cels*. 1.9.1–4.
[40] *Cels*. 5.14.
[41] *Cels*. 5.14.
[42] *Cels*. 6.3.5.
[43] *Cels.* 6.8.5, 6.15.5–10.
[44] *Cels.* 6.14.5–15.
[45] *Cels*. 1.57.1–5.
[46] *Cels*. 6.3.5.
[47] *Cels*. 6.64, 4.5.3–5, 6.71.5.
[48] *Cels*. 6.64.
[49] A reference to the flight of Jesus in order to avoid the slaughter of the toddlers by Herod (*Cels*. 2.24.3–6).
[50] According to Celsus, the Christian God is a weak god. As a Father, he is not capable of saving his Son and as a Son, he did not manage to rescue himself from death (*Cels.* 2.68.2–5, 2.77.2–5).

God, as 'the great Lord' dominates the whole earth, his divinity makes everything proper and pleasant. It is impossible for a god to beg and mourn. Generally, any anthropomorphic features assigned to god are used by Celsus to express what god is not. He is not envious and he is not mortal.

Celsus tackles the Christian doctrine about the incarnation of Jesus.[51] The philosopher underlined the difference between the Christian and the Greek cultures. Being omnipotent, god had no need to incarnate, to distribute his blessings, or descend to the world of humans. God is strong and complete, he is capable of manipulating human nature as he wishes.[52] There was no need for god to get involved with the process of becoming human himself, affected by the wrong doings of the perishable world. God must stay fixed in his place. If he does not maintain his stable position, he would put his divine substance at risk.[53]

According to Plato, human souls follow the paths of the planets.[54] The soul is immortal. There is a true heaven and a true light that the human soul is not strong enough to bear. The soul was located on earth in order to be purified through designated circles of fate. The soul could be happy only if it was associated with god. The human soul is eager to meet the divine that is the source of all good things. Being superior to the human body, the soul dwells in the vicinity of the divine. Benevolent people tend to seek out divinity, which is all they are concerned to think and learn about.[55]

In his version of cosmogony, Celsus presented god as one who saw that matter was in disorder. He united it and endowed it with symmetries, disposing of other deities that were associated with it.[56] The universe had no inception, nor corruptibility, but everything on earth was subject to changes. It underwent natural events and disasters (floods and fires). Celsus, like the Stoics, supported the idea that the world had a divine origin, consequently all parts of it were divine, even 'wordless' animals.[57]

The world was not created for the sake of humankind. Lightning and thunder are not the results of divine acts.[58] God did not bring nature into existence as a result of a divine Providence, because nature includes cruelty.[59] Celsus regarded mankind as a part of nature and not something special. He puts humanity on the same level with the other creatures of the creation. The world was made in such a way that all parts could contribute to its perfection and completion. Everything was made to serve the 'whole' and not the 'one', and to seek the specific place it deserved.

From the aforementioned principles, the philosopher's anthropology emerges. God, according to the philosophical theory, did not participate in the daily lives of people, on the contrary, he seems to be totally alienated from humankind.[60] The acts of god have nothing to do with any product of materiality, which would at once make them perishable,

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[51] *Cels*. 6.34.5–25. Celsus ironically undermines the fact of incarnation.
[52] *Cels*. 4.3.4–6, 3.15–19.
[53] *Cels*. 4.14.1–13.
[54] *Cels*. 6.21.5.
[55] *Cels*. 1.8.10–15.
[56] *Cels*. 6.43.50–55.
[57] *Cels*. 5.7.
[58] God created only the immortal features. The mortals are 'another's' work, and certainly have nothing to do with God. Nothing perishable was ever the result of God's action (*Cels*. 4.52.6–15).
[59] *Cels*. 4.75.14–17. "In nature, trees coexisted with plants full of prickles and wild animals."
[60] *Cels*. 4.52.6–10.

but are to be characterized as eternal and immortal. Mankind can have confidence in god because he is the stronger than all. He does not deal with matter,[61] and of course does not die, nor does he need to return to the world,[62] unlike the Christian god, who suffered, feeling pain and being eventually crucified. Transition to the earth and an abandonment of his heavenly place is absolutely unthinkable. The intellectual culture by Greek doctrine was not anthropocentric; it did not see humans as the centre of the universe. Everything was to be viewed through the prism of a cosmic harmony. Mankind was not the only interesting aspect of creation. The above-mentioned features lead Celsus to prove the non-superiority of man in relation to other creatures of creation. Bees and ants also have organized societies and live in collective structures without disturbing the overall harmony.[63] The nature of man is corruptible, mortal; it is made from the same common material as all beings (bats and frogs).[64] The nature of all passes away and returns through various ways, to return to the same situation. The mortal life is part a loop, a cycle. When the cycle is complete, things restart. In that way, the image of perpetual change is presented, but it does not affect god, but only humans.

In the soteriology of Celsus, the human body was seen as a burden,[65] which man tries to find a relief from.[66] God did not create mankind, as he could not put a soul in something as unholy as the human body.[67] The excessive affection shown by humans to the human body can only distract human beings from searching for the divine. In contrast, spiritual cultivation gives people the ability to socialize with god's divinity. Continuous interaction of this latter sort can lead to salvation. This could indeed take place with the aid of philosophy. Humankind in its effort to reach the godhead had to transcend the mind, ignore the flesh and activate the spiritual sight. There was a conflict between the soul and the body: the first did not want to share with the latter, which was prone to decay. Celsus, in his effort to mock the resurrection of Christ, wondered how a rotting body, full of worms, could be restored to its previous condition.[68]

Through contemplating certain antitheses (such as intelligible-visible, true-delusion, science-personal vision), the path forward emerged. God always takes care of people; he does not show his interest only once,[69] and not merely for a specific group of followers, such as the Christians, but eternally for everyone.

Celsus's philosophical and theological model is characterized by the morals of global serenity. In his approach, morals played the leading part in practically achieving its application. They comprised the social balance. Thus, Celsus made an effort to illustrate the consequences of his philosophical theories accomplished by the means of strict philosophical thought. The privilege of salvation is granted to those who would cultivate their mind by the constant acquisition of knowledge. Demons/lesser deities

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[61] Celsus noticed that everything bad was related to materiality. God was not the creator of evil, that is why he stayed away from such (*Cels*. 4.52).
[62] Unlike New Testament incarnation theology.
[63] *Cels*. 4.82–83.
[64] *Cels*. 4.23.
[65] For Celsus, the human body was mortal, the soul was not. The human body belongs in the same category of flesh as frogs and bats (*Cels*. 4.30.45–50, 52.13–15).
[66] The nature of the human body is perishable. Gold and silver are more durable than humans.
[67] *Cels.* 6.72.5.
[68] *Cels*. 5.14; Demoura 1989, 385–392.
[69] At the precise moment of God's son's descent to the Earth.

must be honoured also. Originating as they do from god, they have his judgment as their guidance. They are to be ranked according to the task which they are assigned to perform. Celsus supported the idea that the inferior deities have to be worshipped also as divine creations.[70] Sacrifices must be performed to honour them so as to earn the favour of the highest god. Each deity is in charge of a specific task that includes all elements, such as air and water.[71] Deities comprised a part of the harmonious whole, and ignoring them would cause disarray. There are deities who protect each part of the body. Their cult should not exceed the cult of the highest Godhead, the Good, though. Evil is a necessity, it is the price one has to pay for experiencing the Good.

Origen's perspective

Origen responded to the philosophical and theological questions of Celsus, dismantling them one by one.[72] His theological answers were determined by the philosophical questions he was being asked.[73]

The arguments he used derived from the Bible and from history. The historical revelation of the Logos comprised Origen's main theological proof. The language he used was that of Greek philosophy.

Basically, he had to prove Christ's divinity through the Old Testament prophecies, the miracles, actions and revelations of the Holy Spirit.[74] His main goal was to make it clear that Christianity was the one and only true religion.[75] His weapons were his excellent knowledge of the Old and New Testament,[76] in contrast to Celsus who did not seem to be as strong in this matter, the principles of Greek philosophy,[77] and the allegorical method of interpretation.[78] Having acquired a deep insight into the ancient religions and customs of other civilizations, Origen became a forerunner of comparative religion.

In the preamble, he had made it clear that everything that would follow was based on an absolute loyalty to God. Faith, according to Christian interpretation, did not require the absence of logical argumentation.[79] Origen did not promote passive faith, but urged for a dialectical faith, based on evidence. Origen set about reconstructing rather than refuting what Celsus claimed.[80] He made clear the Christian point of view and went further in clarifying the inner meaning of his faith.

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[70] *Cels*. 4.65.
[71] *Cels*. 5.7.20. In Greek thought, rivers and seas were called 'demons'.
[72] He reverses the very reasoning of Celsus concerning antiquity as the main criteria of truth (*Cels*. 4.28.25).
[73] Piliouris 2008, 49.
[74] *Cels*. 1.50.5–10.
[75] Christou 2005, 119.
[76] Origen's sources were the *Psalms* from the Old Testament and the four *Gospels,* Paul's *Epistles* and the *Acts* from the New Testament.
[77] Beatrice 1992, 351–367. Porphyry acknowledged the Greek education of Origen. The only negative aspect of Origen was his commitment to Christianity.
[78] Christou 2005, 120; *Cels*. 6.6.
[79] Harnack 1931, 658.
[80] Origen's attitude towards the Greek basic theory concerning '*epouranion*' did not reject it, but comprised something that Paul himself embraced (*Cels*. 6.19.25–35).

Celsus's philosophical and theological worldview displays a moral quietism in all respects. In all such views, morality resulted from the practical application of theory. This constituted the framework that defined the balance within society.[81]

Origen's view of morality was totally different.[82] Such morality as Celsus' does not save mankind.[83] Morality in Christian faith is not bounded by any philosophy or society, any curbing of human free will.

According to Origen, proper morality springs from faith.[84] It is not the privilege of a restricted elite group, which having assumed the mantle of knowledge was perceived as the source of constant philosophizing.[85]

In his writings, Origen managed to rescue man's transition to divine nature, to maintain the certainty of God's unchangeable nature, and simultaneously defend the actual descent of God into the material world. Godhead was made incarnate to enable a meeting with mankind. Origen noted that knowledge of the Father was made possible through his image, the Son.[86] The Holy Spirit is the one who sanctifies man and allows him to accept God. Man is not capable of managing anything on his own. The Scriptures derive from the Holy Spirit. Therefore humankind must get to the very essence of the message that the Scriptures convey and not read them too literally. The biblical theologian saw salvation through a Trinitarian perspective.

The main characteristic in Origen's theology was the emphasis on asceticism and martyrdom.[87] People will not know God with the mind, as philosophers claim, but with the heart.[88] Origen himself lived his life as a prophet. With his ascetic way of living, he lived as he preached. Purity and devotion to God are achieved through spiritual struggle and abstinence from the world.[89] Origen was a part of the church tradition and was thus convinced that Celsus was the one who lived in ignorance.[90] In the philosopher's thinking, it was impossible for the Divine to descend to the earth and speak to humans. Christians argued that they were the ones who had the privilege and the honour to meet and know God, incarnated in flesh and bone. Origen, combining theory with practice (which was not the case with Celsus) made God approachable rather than inaccessible.[91] All the same, Origen and Celsus shared the same starting point, that of the inexpressible God.

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[81] A decent person, one who protected the laws of the state, was regarded a philosophically trained person.
[82] *Cels*. 5.24.5. Origen's attitude towards God is well known, both affirmative and apophatic. God is not the main leader of a stray cosmic disorder, but the main leader of justice and benevolence.
[83] *Cels.* 4.65.1–15.
[84] Origen reveals here Celsus' method of interpretation. Celsus was subjective and did not treat Christian and pagan intellectual texts in the same way. He ridiculed, abhorred and emphasized the ambiguity and the lack of logical arguments in Christian texts (*Cels.* 1.13).
[85] *Cels*. 1.18.10–11; 21.1–5.
[86] *Cels*. 5.24.25. The main source of everything, according to Origen and the Christians, was always God.
[87] Martens 2003, 1115–1121.
[88] Philosophy alone cannot save mankind (*Cels*. 4.65.10–25).
[89] af Hällström 1985, 10–12.
[90] Origen believed that he was the one who represented the truth present in the church.
[91] Cook 2004, 124–125.

Conclusion

Origen lived during a complex epoch that was the turning point of Roman history, between the second and the third centuries AD. He accepted the challenge of expressing the Christian values in philosophical terms. His works reflect an effort to define Christian morals and values within a philosophical approach to human life. Celsus in his work, *The True Word*, defended the religion and tradition of his ancestors. He expressed his conservative devotion to theology, as well as his opposition to the innovation displayed in Christianity.

Celsus's traditional view is partially visible in the works of Origen. It highlighted the moral codes in Greek religion, disseminated in all regions of the Empire, and how it complied with the imperial laws and orders. Its followers legally, openly and proudly performed all their religious duties. The ancient origin of Greek religion by itself justifies its truthfulness and status. Due to its ancient origin, much earlier than that of the Christian faith, the role of Greek religion was very significant. Philosophy as well as the actual thirst for investigation and the discovery of the true meaning of existence comprised ways of expression in Greek religion. The human mind managed to produce a logical explanation for religious beliefs and to approach the divine with the help of the philosophy, using the ancient 'true word' and present-day reflection. The divinity was unchanging in its wholeness, far removed from humanity, far from any attempt at definition. Only through comparison and antitheses was it possible to attribute characteristics to the divine, attributes that derived from the recognition of human inferiority. The superiority of the divine over humanity lies in its infinite power, without passion or decay. The immortality of the soul was a strict entitlement of the elite class of the sages, enabled by their capacity to achieve purification.

Every change that could threaten global stability was considered evil by Celsus. In all the excerpts quoted by Origen in his work *Contra Celsum*, one can observe an obsession on Celsus' part to support stability and the existing order of things, the *status quo*. Celsus thereby reveals his clear fear of the oncoming great change, which the spreading of the Christian religion could bring about.

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