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**MODERN GREEK STUDIES
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CONTENTS

Gough Whitlam	Keynote Address – 5th Biennial Conference of Modern Greek Studies Association of Australia and New Zealand	7
Vrasidas Karalis	The Occluding Alphabets of a National Poet: The Case of Dionysios Solomos' <i>Reflections</i>	19
Dionysios Solomos	<i>Reflections</i> and Other Fragments	41
Katie Liakatos	Deity or Divine Sorceress: The Evolution of the <i>donna angelicata</i> in the Italian Works of Dionysios Solomos	46
P. D. Mastrodimitris	C.P. Cavafy and the Beloved City	58
Jen Harrison	Death and Salvation in Nikos Kazantzakis' <i>Captain Michalis</i>	66
Andrew Mellas	Manic Eroticism and Sexual Melancholia: Romos Philyras and the Aesthetics of Madness	76
Romos Philyras	<i>My Life in the Dromokaiteion</i>	91
Nasos Vagenas	Identity and Poetic Discourse	110
Steve Georgakis	T.S. Eliot, Giorgos Seferis and the Anzacs	114
	Sport and the Global Greeks	118
Michael Loosli	The Kallikantzari – An Image in Nikos Gatsos' <i>Amorgos</i>	125
	Nikos Gatsos: A Bibliography	129
Anne Reynolds	A Short History of Italian Cafés and Restaurants in Sydney	136
Vassilios Adrahtas	Socrates Christianus – Images of Socrates in Early Greek Christian Literature	156
Tim Buckley	An Ontology of Freedom in Proclus' <i>Commentary in Parmenidem</i> 1022:24-27	167
J. M. A. Nijjem	Sources of the Word in Sikelianos, Seferis, Lawrence and Eliot: ὄργια, ekphrasis, anathematicity [PART ONE]	184
Andrew Itter	The Terror of History and the Mythical Paradigm of Existentialism in G. Seferis' <i>Mythistorêma</i>	203

BOOK REVIEWS

Despina Michael	Στάθης Gauntlett, <i>Ρεμπέτικο Τραγούδι, Συμβολή στην επιστημονική του προσέγγιση</i>	215
John Barnes	Dimitris Tsaloumas: <i>Stoneland Harvest: New & Selected Poems</i>	
	Dimitris Tsaloumas: <i>New and Selected Poems</i>	219
Martha Klironomos	Anca Vlasopolos: <i>No Return Address: A Memoir of Displacement</i>	222
Yiorgos Kalogeras	Helen Papanikolas: <i>The Time of the Little Black Bird</i>	225
Jen Harrison	Nadia Wheatley: <i>The Life and Myth of Charmian Clift</i>	228

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for his heroic efforts to make this journal readable.
This issue is dedicated to Véronica and Andras.*

VASSILIOS ADRAHTAS

The University of Sydney

SOCRATES CHRISTIANUS

IMAGES OF SOCRATES IN EARLY GREEK CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

This article attempts to trace the history of the early Christian appropriation of Socrates. My frame of reference is the corpus of the Greek texts produced during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE. Basically, I have concentrated on those Christian writers that played a decisive role in the reconstruction of the Greek philosopher. Thus, I have not included the works of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, because – despite their quite excessive references to Socrates – they have incorporated him in a natural and positive way, already prepared by some of the following trends.

SOCRATES, OR PHILOSOPHY AS PROPHECY

Justin the Martyr (c. 100–165 CE) regards Socrates as the *most typical example of logical judgment*²; for him the Greek philosopher is *a sort of prototype*³, regarding the significance of reason in human life. But what exactly does Socrates stand for? What does he personify according to the theological understanding of Justin?

The historical context within which Socrates is presented in Justin's *First* and *Second Apology* is his condemnation to death. However, it is interesting that Justin does not focus on the events that led up to Socrates being condemned; in other words, he does not attempt to trace the social causes that resulted in the philosopher's death. Probably, this is not due to Justin not knowing the precise conditions of Socrates' condemnation. Rather, we should consider it to be a *conscious* choice, so that an interpretation of the overall historical context can be presented. *Justin wants to present a more profound, i.e., his own theological, interpretation of Socrates' condemnation to death.*

According to Justin, Socrates is not just a philosopher; he is something more crucial. Or better, being precisely a philosopher makes him something greater. But, in this respect, Justin's endeavor turns inevitably into *a consideration of the gist of philosophy*. Thus Socrates'

death ends in speaking volumes for true philosophy. And for Justin it is the latter that constitutes the core of his proposed interpretation⁴: taking Socrates as an example, one can contemplate on what philosophy really is, and thus understand its role in human history, i.e., its partaking in God's intervening in human affairs. In other words, true philosophy – as exemplified in the case of Socrates – can be appreciated only in the light of religion: *true philosophy is a religious vocation*⁵.

Justin writes that "...when Socrates attempted to make these things [i.e., that gods are demons] known and to draw men away from the demons by true reason and judgment, then these very demons brought it about, through men delighting in evil, that he be put to death as an atheist and impious person, because, they claimed, he introduced new divinities."⁶ According to this passage, Socrates the philosopher is presented more or less as a *religious reformer*⁷. His practice of "true reason and judgment" is understood as having a religious purpose, namely the demonstration of those elements that constituted the falsehood of ancient Greek religion, on the one hand, and the recommendation of those that should be acknowledged as the truth, on the other. To be exact, the first aim of his two-fold vocation was to denounce the deities of ancient Greek religion as false ones. This could mean that he was acting either as an atheist or a monotheist, or at least as one who wanted to "introduce new divinities". So the second aim of his vocation is not obvious – the third of the possibilities mentioned above is what his fellow citizens claimed he was doing. But apparently that was not the case, as far as Justin is concerned.

In another passage Justin is clearer: "They [i.e., Socrates' accusers] claimed that he introduced new deities and rejected the state-sponsored gods. But what he did was to ostracize Homer and the other poets, and to instruct men to expel the evil demons and those who perpetrated the deeds narrated by the poets; and to exhort men by meditation to learn more about God who was unknown to them, saying: 'It is not an easy matter to find the Father and Creator of all things, nor, when He is found, is it safe to announce Him to all men'."⁸ Even though indirectly, Justin chooses here to depict Socrates as a monotheist – and in doing so he refuses flatly to accept the opinions of those who regarded him as an atheist or a polytheist reformer. Nevertheless, he confirms positively the characterization of Socrates as a reformer, by contrasting him to the Greek poets, and more specifically to Homer. Socrates' rather platonic⁹ opposition to the poetic version of ancient Greek religion is not an overall rejection of religion, since the Greek philosopher is presented –again in a platonic way– as revealing the "God who was unknown" to the Greeks. This "unknown"-element renders Socrates' religious reformation innovative¹⁰. For Justin *Socrates is not just a reformer of ancient Greek religion, but a genuine innovator, a pathfinder in the context of ancient Greek religious ideas*.

At this point, the basic issue is how Justin's understanding of Socrates is theologically founded; or on what basis the Christian Justin justifies the non-Christian Socrates. Drawing

on a cardinal stoic doctrine¹¹, Justin managed to propose his own comprehensive version of *spermatikos logos*, which undoubtedly constituted one of the most bold, sophisticated, and original theological ideas during the period of early Christianity¹². More specifically, the innovative religious vocation of Socrates was realized thanks to his reason (*logos*), which in fact did what “the *Logos* Himself” did “among the non-Hellenic peoples”, i.e., the Jews¹³. In this respect, the human logos and the Divine Logos are closely related; actually their relation is to be conceived according to the schema “whole – part” or “vagueness – clarity”¹⁴. This Divine Logos “...assumed a human form and became a man, and was called Jesus Christ”¹⁵ and acted “through His own power”¹⁶. This implicitly means that the human logos can “find” and “announce” God only through the power of the Divine Logos, i.e., Christ. This is precisely the sense in which we can fully appreciate some of the most famous passages in Justin’s *Apologies*, such as “those who lived by reason are Christians, even though they have been considered atheists”¹⁷, and “...those who have lived reasonably, and still do, are Christians...”¹⁸. Thus the non-Christian Socrates ended in being Christianized.

However, Socrates was not just Christianized; at the same time he was presented as a *martyr*, since he suffered “the very same thing”¹⁹ the “enemies of Christ”²⁰ “endeavor to do”²¹ to Christians. Moreover, Socrates’ persecution is regarded as an instance of a phenomenon that recurs throughout human history²². But what might seem more amazing is that Justin alludes to Socrates being *a Greek equivalent of the Old Testament prophets*. The latter, just like Socrates, proclaimed²³ God through the power of the Logos, and just like Socrates, they were persecuted by their fellow men²⁴. So we should assume that for Justin a true philosopher played the role that a prophet played; *philosophy and prophecy were but differentiated versions of a single vocation, namely the discerning of God’s presence in human history*²⁵.

The way Justin understands Socrates should not be treated as a source that depicts Socrates in his own historical situation, but mainly as evidence of Justin’s own reflection on history – or better on a certain history. As a pagan who became a Christian, Justin felt bound to relate his own Greek historical background with the given Jewish historical background of the Church; he just had to form a broader understanding of Church history, an understanding that could include positively the historical consciousness of a pagan. As the Church had previously founded its historical consciousness on a certain interpretation of the history of Israel, so Justin attempted to do the same in regard to the history of the Greek world. Thus, if the Church constituted the culmination of a series of crowing instances within the history of Israel, it could equally be regarded as a culmination of an analogous series within the history of the Greeks. Since for Jewish Christians it was through their prophets that they were able to preserve and at the same time renew their historical memory, Justin utilized the Greek philosophers to do exactly the same thing. *Justin envisaged the sequence of the philosophers as God’s intervention that guided the Greek world to the Church*²⁶.

Finally, Justin worked in a purely dialectical manner. He did not justify the history of the Greek world indiscriminately, but rather picked what he regarded as its quintessence and re-understood it in the light of the incarnation of the Logos. This dialectical affirmation and transcending of the Greek world resulted in *a new Christian historical consciousness*; a consciousness that placed side by side faith and reason, prophecy and philosophy, Jews and Greeks. Justin's historical perspective was truly a universal one, not just in terms of accepting all peoples, but also in terms of accepting their respective histories. Justin's theology emerged as an original elaboration of the Church's universal consciousness, and *Socrates became for him the symbol of that universality*.

SOCRATES, OR THE INNOCENT VICTIMS OF HISTORY

Athenagoras the Athenian (d. c. 180 CE) regards the case of Socrates' condemnation as an indication of "some kind of divine law and sequence"²⁷. To be exact, he seems to draw on and elaborate a suggestion already made by Justin; namely that "good men" become eventually the victims of evil. What Christians are dealing with can be described, according to Athenagoras, as a "game" played "before those who are well advised of such tricks", since "from time long gone by, and not against us [i.e., the Christians] alone, it has been customary... for evil to fight against the good"²⁸. These are the words Athenagoras uses to introduce his remark about Socrates. So what we can implicitly infer is that for Athenagoras – in contrast to Justin – *Socrates is not to be considered a Christian*; however – in conformity with Justin – he places Socrates in the category of "good men".

Athenagoras' main reference to Socrates in the *Embassy for the Christians* is the following: "...the Athenians, too, condemned Socrates to death. And just as they [i.e., the men of virtue] were no worse men in the scale of virtue for this opinion of the multitude, so we are not besmirched in our life of virtue"²⁹. The foundation of the argument in this passage is obviously the idea of virtue³⁰. However, it seems that Athenagoras alludes to something more profound. The mentioning of Socrates makes sense only as *an indisputable example of the superiority and eventual prevalence of virtue*: everyone knew what kind of a man Socrates was, and revered him for that³¹, despite his condemnation by wicked men. So *in the light of Socrates*³², Christians should be "fearless and untroubled"³³ – as Justin would have said – since they are on the side of virtue. They should be content; but not because they are immortal, or because there will be a resurrection and a final judgment, but because they are virtuous – and to all this Socrates is the proof.

One might assume that Athenagoras' understanding of Socrates is a second-rate one compared to that of Justin's³⁴. But such a view is rather superficial. *Athenagoras' Socrates may not be a Christian, but he is the evidence of Christians being superior to their enemies*³⁵, i.e., "the

*multitude*³⁶ of non-Christians. This opinion about Socrates hardly can be regarded as a second-rate one; it simply implies a different perception from that of Justin's understanding, and thus the handling of a different issue. Athenagoras is not interested – as far as Socrates is concerned – in elaborating a Christian historical consciousness that would comprise the Greek heritage³⁷. He rather seems to focus on a different dimension of history – no less Christian than the one Justin was interested in. What is the role of evil in human history? What should one assume when he witnesses the outdoing of good by evil? Undoubtedly, these are questions that constitute *a sort of theodicy*, i.e., an issue that a Christian had to deal with in view of the persecution of his faith.

In this respect, Athenagoras attempted to give his own Christian answer to an old and challenging question: how can it be that the virtuous suffers from the wicked? What is the role of God in such a condition? Athenagoras' answer seems to imply a certain conception of history. More specifically, throughout the latter two realities, good and evil, are manifested, and both of them obey a single power, which as we have already seen Athenagoras described as "some kind of divine law and sequence". Since this "law" is "divine", its sequence is inviolate, which means that whatever happened to Socrates exactly the same is to happen to the Christians. In other words, the latter are to prevail at last. *Like Socrates* nothing could really harm them; on the contrary, everyone would sooner or later acknowledge the superiority of their virtue³⁸.

*Athenagoras' historical consciousness did not comprise a series of Logos-inspired philosophers or prophets, but a series of divinely redeemed innocent victims*³⁹. This was the way Athenagoras come to envisage his Greek historical background, and as a Christian he just had to extend the series so that the Church could be included. In this historical frame *it was inevitable to see the persecuted Christians as a peculiar continuation of the innocent victims, and Socrates as their most typical forerunner*⁴⁰.

SOCRATES, OR THE FOOLISHNESS OF PAGANISM

After the writings of Justin and Athenagoras, a bishop, Theophilus of Antioch (d. c. 190 CE), wrote three treatises titled *Ad Autolyicum*. This is a work in which Socrates is depicted in a completely different way from what we have seen in the writings of Justin and Athenagoras; *Socrates is not a person Christians should look up to, but an example of how foolish the pagans were in their beliefs*. In a rather ironic manner, Theophilus asks, "What did... the oath by dog and goose and plane-tree [avail] for Socrates, not to mention his oath by the lightning-struck Asclepius and his invocation of the demons?"⁴¹ It seems that for Theophilus the case of Socrates could only provoke mockery!

Theophilus not even singles out Socrates; he just mentions him among several other pagans⁴². For Theophilus *the Greek philosopher has nothing exceptional* – even in negative terms –

to present; *he is just a case of the useless ancient Greek religion*⁴³. Moreover, what is extremely interesting is that Theophilus' understanding of Socrates is not just different from the respective ones of Justin and Athenagoras, but rather *opposite* to them. Even though he would have been compelled to acknowledge something positive in cases like that of Socrates⁴⁴, at the end Theophilus could not accept them as useful examples. And we must keep in mind that this radical differentiation regarding the Christian attitude towards Socrates was recorded in virtually one generation; Theophilus wrote his treatises twenty-five years after Justin. So the basic issue at this point is what was the reason that led to such a divergence.

Actually when one examines the way early Christianity dealt with the historical figure of Socrates, the ultimate question is not what various theologians thought about Socrates as a person, but why they thought about him the way they did. In other words, *Socrates is just an occasion for the expression of different historical standpoints*. This means that when we trace different Christian images of Socrates, we should not assume that a debate was going on about the person of Socrates or his potential place in the Christian pattern of history. What was really going on was a debate about history itself and the role of the Church within it⁴⁵. Thus, when Theophilus rejects the way Justin or Athenagoras understood Socrates, he implicitly affirms a historical consciousness that is different from theirs. Theophilus can not engage in a creative dialogue with paganism; he is of course eclectic, but only for polemical purposes. As a consequence his theology is not a dialectical one, but an exclusive way of understanding the role of the Church in human history: the world that surrounds the Church must be rejected⁴⁶, along with everything that characterizes it. And if the core of that world is paganism, then the latter should be assessed in an appropriate way, i.e., as a foolish construction that can not really help anyone. Finally, *Socrates has to be rendered a fool who died standing up for false beliefs*.

SOCRATES, OR THE IGNORANCE OF PHILOSOPHY

At the beginning of the 3rd century a fine piece of literature was produced, namely the *Exhortation to the Greeks*, falsely attributed to Justin. No more than twenty years had passed since the remarks of Theophilus about Socrates, and a new Christian theologian came forth to add his own opinion about the Greek philosopher. For him Socrates was neither a pre-Christian prophet, nor an innocent victim redeemed thanks to the superiority of his virtue—and of course he was not a pagan fool. *Socrates was just a man wise enough to testify the ignorance of the philosophers*.

“Socrates, indeed, was the wisest of your [i.e., Greek] wise men according to your oracle, which, you say, made the following statement: ‘Socrates is the wisest of all men’. Now, if Socrates confesses that he knows nothing, how can they who came after him presume to

know even heavenly things?”⁴⁷ The author of this passage seems first of all to accept a fundamental distinction between the Church and the Greek world⁴⁸; that’s why he makes so intense a use of the second person. And secondly he seems to have a genuine spirit of reasoning. However, this second feature of his starts from Socrates. Does that mean that Socrates’ testimony is really regarded as true or that it is just taken as an alleged truth? In any case, it would not make any difference for the author of the *Exhortation*: it would be proved (either by Socrates or by what the Greeks thought about Socrates) that the Greek philosophers did not know the truth about God. *So it was Socrates’ confession that he knew nothing that proved that the Greek world was self-discredited⁴⁹ in its own knowledge.*

“Socrates, indeed, affirmed that he was called wise, because, while others pretended to know what they did not know, he did not hesitate to admit that he knew nothing. For he said: ‘I seem to be the wisest because of this one fact, that I do not think that I know what I do not know’”⁵⁰. We must admit that this passage is a bit self-contradictory. Did Socrates know nothing or did he just know that he did not know what he really did not know? The second is undoubtedly the correct answer, but the above passage seems to manipulate things in order to present Socrates as someone who knew nothing. In other words it stresses the negative and not the positive aspect of Socrates’ confession. Moreover, Socrates never said that the philosophers before him knew nothing; at best, he challenged the sophists’ claim that they actually had a true understanding of things. Even though the author of the *Exhortation* had a quite good knowledge of the so-called Socratic method⁵¹, it seems that he was somehow compelled not to take into consideration some very crucial details concerning the actual history of Socrates’ contribution to philosophy.

So Socrates, the wisest among the Greeks, confessed that he knew nothing and thus pointed out to us the ignorance of the philosophers. More specifically, although Socrates testified to “...the fact that only God knows the things that are concealed from us”, the Greek philosophers “...profess to know heavenly things as though they had seen them, when they do not even have a knowledge of earthly matters”⁵². But between the (truly) wisest and the (allegedly) wise, the former has to be correct. That’s why the Greek philosophers are not true philosophers. Besides, “...if the aim of philosophy, according to them, is the discovery of truth, how can they be called true philosophers who do not have a knowledge of truth?”⁵³ At this point it seems that Justin’s question about true philosophy comes up again. However, now the true philosopher is not the one that through true reason partakes of Logos-Christ, but *the one that is wise enough to acknowledge the limits of his own wisdom.*

The limits of human wisdom are drawn by God’s concealing from us the things that only He knows, i.e., “heavenly things”. But the crucial question is whether these limits can be transcended. The answer that the *Exhortation* implies is certainly “yes”, but this transcendence is not to be regarded as an achievement of human reason; on the contrary, it is the act of

God's revelation⁵⁴. Greek philosophy is rendered ignorant, because it did not manage to acknowledge the vital importance of revelation⁵⁵. However, on the other hand, *Socrates can be justified from a Christian point of view, because he did appreciate the need of God's revelation.*

SOCRATES, OR THE ORIGINS OF HERESY

The final chapter in the history of the early Christian appropriation of Socrates was written by Hippolytus (c. 170–235 CE). In *The Refutation of All Heresies* he speaks of Socrates in a purely historical manner as a moral philosopher that “left no writings after him”, “a hearer of Archelaus” that was “reverencing the rule ‘Know thyself’” and had many pupils, Plato being “superior to all”⁵⁶. But this quite neutral attitude was just one level of Hippolytus’ standpoint. In the same *Refutation* he was to write that the heretic “Hermogenes... availed himself of the tenets of Socrates, not those of Christ”⁵⁷. As a consequence, *the famous Greek philosopher ended up as the instigator of all Gnostic heresies*. This might seem as a total surprise, but actually it points to two very important historical elements. Firstly, the figure of Socrates had managed to dominate the imagination of early Christianity, and secondly the Church was still struggling to find a meaning for its confrontation with history. The inclination of Hippolytus to a rather apocalyptic⁵⁸ version of historical consciousness had *no place for Socrates in the exclusive Christian frame, except as the counterbalance that was necessary for its own affirmation.*

NOTES

- 1 This article has been written on the occasion of the 2400th anniversary of Socrates’ death (399BCE–2001 CE).
- 2 “Socrates, the most ardent of all in this respect [i.e., regarding the judgement of things]...” (v. *The Fathers of the Church*, translated by Thomas B. Falls, vol. 6, p. 130, The Catholic University of America Press, 1965²).
- 3 Justin refers to the Greek philosophers collectively whenever he mentions Socrates by name; Justin’s typical expression is “such as Socrates and the like” (v. Op. cit., 126).
- 4 Justin’s “aim was to create the new and true type of philosopher, the Christian philosopher, as an expression of the unity of the truth in the world, and thus of the unity of the world itself” (v. Stylianos Papadopoulos, *Patrology*, vol. 1, p. 233, Athens, 1994²).
- 5 This understanding of philosophy was common in Late Antiquity. However, Justin was the first Christian writer to relate so closely philosophy and theology. It seems that his point of view should be regarded as the basis of the subsequent patristic identification of (true) philosophy with Christian theory and practice.
- 6 *The Fathers of the Church*, op. cit., 38.

- 7 It seems that Justin was the first Christian writer to propose an understanding of human history as a progress in religious ideas, a progress that was marked primarily by the crucial impact of certain extraordinary men. In this respect, he was able to speak about the divine revelation in broader terms than the Church before him.
- 8 *Op. cit.*, 130.
- 9 On Justin's Platonism, v. Robert M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, 50-2, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988.
- 10 For an introductory reading on the innovative character of religious developments, v. Vassilios Adrahtas, "Man, The Ecstatic Animal", in *Aphieroma Kyriakatikes Eleutherotypias*, Athens (09/10/01).
- 11 Cf. Stylianos Papadopoulos, *op. cit.*, 153.
- 12 According to Stylianos Papadopoulos, Justin "...is a new and sensational presence in the Church. His greatness lies not so much in the result of his attempt, but in its originality" (*Op. cit.*, 233).
- 13 *The Fathers of the Church*, *op. cit.*, 38.
- 14 Justin seems, indeed, to echo Paul's *1 Cor* 13:12, but in a distinctive way. Whereas Paul is orientated towards the future, Justin points rather to the past. However, when he speaks of philosophy he always has in mind his fellows Christians – not just the pre-Christian philosophers – so one could assume that he never dismisses the dimension of future. Could we, then, say that Justin's understanding of the fullness of the truth in the person of Logos-Christ preserves the eschatological character of first century Christianity?
- 15 *Op. cit.*, 38.
- 16 *Op. cit.*, 130.
- 17 *Op. cit.*, 83.
- 18 *Op. cit.*, 84.
- 19 *Op. cit.*, 38.
- 20 *Op. cit.*, 84.
- 21 *Op. cit.*, 38.
- 22 This recurrence is implied by the present tense in the following passage: "...we teach... that through the influence of evil demons good men... are persecuted and imprisoned" (v. *Op. cit.*, 126).
- 23 Since the Old Testament prophets were of cardinal importance to Justin (cf. Stylianos Papadopoulos, *op. cit.*, 236), the latter's positive attitude towards Socrates was to be expressed in close relation to the notion of prophecy. Thus the philosophical "announcement" was identified with the prophetic "prediction".
- 24 Here Justin seems to echo New Testament passages, such as *1 Thes* 2:15, *Mt* 23:34, and *Lk* 11:49.
- 25 Justin's understanding of world history acknowledges the existence of different, but at the same time analogous developments in the progress of religious ideas. That's why he can avoid confusing prophecy with philosophy, on the one hand, and affirm their similarities, on the other.
- 26 In this respect, one could say that Justin was quite conscious of constructing a Greek version of "Heilsgeschichte".
- 27 *Ancient Christian Writers*, translated by Joseph Hugh Crehan, S. J., vol. 23, p. 72, Newman Press, 1955.
- 28 *Op. cit.*, 71-2.
- 29 *Op. cit.*, 72.
- 30 Though this is probably indicative of a stoic background on the part of Athenagoras, we can be sure that it is due to his radical opinions concerning abstinence (cf. Stylianos Papadopoulos, *op. cit.*, 271 and 273-4).

- 31 Not just pagans, but Christians also. “For Socrates the Christians had a feeling of reverence, referring to him in accounts of their own martyrs...” (v. *Ancient Christian Writers*, op. cit., p. 162, note 274). On this matter, v. especially H. Musurillo (ed. and tr.), *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, Oxford Early Christian Texts, Oxford, 1972, p. 101, 159 and 349.
- 32 Not in the light of Jesus Christ! After all, “...Athenagoras never mentions Jesus Christ” (v. Robert M. Grant, op. cit., 109).
- 33 *The Fathers of the Church*, op. cit., 84.
- 34 For instance, this is at least implied in Stylianos Papadopoulos, op. cit., 274 and in *Ancient Christian Writers*, op. cit.
- 35 This allusion to superiority is compatible with the fact that Athenagoras belonged to or sympathized Christian circles (perhaps Montanist ones) which were known for their self-consciousness of superiority. Cf. Stylianos Papadopoulos, op. cit., 273-4, and for a different opinion v. Robert M. Grant, op. cit., 106 and 108.
- 36 *Ancient Christian Writers*, op. cit., 72.
- 37 Of course Athenagoras does propose such an elaboration, since his Embassy incorporates a great amount of pagan culture (proverbs, poetry, religion, history, art, and philosophy); cf. for instance Robert M. Grant, op. cit., 103-5.
- 38 Such an answer to the problem of theodicy was bound to have little effect on the development of Christian ethics; it was too abstract for the majority of Christians to rely on. However, we can imagine that it would console Christians that belonged to certain sophisticated circles – such as those Athenagoras seems to reflect?
- 39 This is all the more surprising, since according to Athenagoras “...man can move towards the truth ‘by God’s breath’. This move is characterized as ‘sympathy’ and rather presupposes kinship and relation with God, dependence and attraction from and to God. It’s about a new aspect of Justin’s notion about spermatikos logos” (v. Stylianos Papadopoulos, op. cit., 273).
- 40 Thus Socrates is understood as the “example” in whose “steps” one “should follow” (cf. *1 Pet 2:21*).
- 41 *Theophilus of Antioch ad Autolyicum*, text and translation by Robert M. Grant, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 101 and 103.
- 42 Op. cit., 101.
- 43 This is in stark opposition to Justin, for instance, who throughout the 18th chapter of his *First Apology* refers positively to a lot of elements from the ancient Greek religion.
- 44 “...while according to Justin pagans could somehow reach the truth by spermatikos logos, and according to Athenagoras by the ‘breath’ of God, in Theophilus this is possible by spiritual alertness, by the purification of the soul” (v. Stylianos Papadopoulos, op. cit., 281).
- 45 For an introduction on history as the fundamental problem of early Christianity, v. Vassilios Adrahtas, “The Political Dimension of Eschatology”, in *Church and Eschatology*, Athens: Kastaniotis, 2002.
- 46 I believe that this can be sustained by the fact that Theophilus was highly affected by apocalyptic literature (cf. Stylianos Papadopoulos, op. cit., 282). The latter, to be sure, was a deposit of world-rejecting ideas.
- 47 *The Fathers of the Church*, op. cit., 418.
- 48 For an introduction on this fundamental distinction, v. Vassilios Adrahtas, “Eschatology, The Other Side of the Church (part I)”, in *Orthodoxia*, Athens, 4, 53-4 (01/2001).
- 49 This can be regarded as an indirect reference to the fact that the Greek world was undergoing a process of self-transformation during Late Antiquity; and as a consequence ancient Greek religion

was being criticized and modified by its own adherents. At this point, the Christian apologist is just relying on something that is already under way.

50 *The Fathers of the Church*, op. cit.

51 For instance, when he says, “Now, should anyone conclude that Socrates, in a sarcastic way, merely feigned ignorance... as he did on so many occasions during his discussions...” (v. Op. cit.).

52 *The Fathers of the Church*, op. cit.

53 Op. cit.

54 It seems that the author of the *Exhortation* was the first Christian thinker to turn theology to the dialectics of revelation versus reason; a schema that was to play a prominent role in subsequent patristic theology.

55 That is, of course, the Christian version of revelation.

56 *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. V, p. 17, American Edition, 1981.

57 Op. cit., 117.

58 Cf. Stylianos Papadopoulos, op. cit. 370-2.