

Luca Arcari (Università di Napoli "Federico II")

Reinventing the Pythagorean Tradition in the IV century CE
The *Cohortatio ad Graecos*

In the *Cohortatio ad Graecos*, a work included in Justin Martyr's *corpus* and recently attributed to the Monarchian Bishop Marcellus of Ancyra (cf. C. Riedweg, B. Pouderon), there is a passage dedicated to Pythagoras (cf. 19). Such a reference is part of a string of quotations from pagan authors on the subject of the so-called monotheism. Having already proved the antiquity and excellence of Moses, the first prophet (9-12), and presented the story of the Septuagint translation (13), Ps.-Justin makes further remarks about Greeks having become acquainted with the writings of Moses in Egypt and therefore expressing 'monotheistic' views (14). Other authorities quoted are Orpheus (15), Sibyl (16), Homer (17), Sophocles (18), and Plato (20), after which the work progresses as a more detailed attempt to show the dependence of Plato and Homer on the Hebrew Scriptures. In this paper, I aim to explore the *Cohortatio* account on Pythagoras in its connection with the other authorities quoted in the text, in order to stress the cultural work carried out by Ps.-Justin/Marcellus about the Greek Philosopher and the ideological elements ascribed to him in the treatise. In keeping with his general intention of bringing forward Greek expressions of monotheism, the subject Ps.-Justin announces for Pythagoras is *monás* (19,1,5), drawing a sort of parallel with the *religion* of Orpheus (Orpheus is explicitly said to have visited Egypt). The conclusion one can reach is that the monotheism attributed to Pythagoras is a cultural construct, strictly connected with Orpheus, and that the author of *Cohortatio* aims to defend the so-called Monarchianism, around the period of Arian crisis. My main objective is to emphasize how the (re-)invention of a Pythagorean monotheism and/or *religion* constitutes a Christian apologetic discourse strictly linked with the invention of an Orphic monotheism, two cultural constructs carried out in the period of the Nicaea Council (325 CE), a seminal phase in the formation of Christian monotheism.

Biography:

Luca Arcari (b. 1977), Assistant Professor in Early Christianity, Department of Humanities, University Federico II, Naples. Director of the FIRB Project 2012: "The Construction of Space and Time in the Transmission of Collective Identities. Religious Cohabitations and/or Polarizations in the Ancient World (1st-6th cent. CE)". I'm finishing a book on the (re-)invention of orphism in Ps.-Justin's *Cohortatio ad Graecos*. More recent publications on questions connected with my conference-topic are: "Discorsi monoteistici nell'antichità. L'unicità divina come strumento di auto-definizione", in *Mediterraneo antico* 13/1-2 (2010), pp. 311-352, "Tradizione orfica e cristianesimo antico: un bilancio", in *Mythos* n.s. 4 (2010), pp. 167-178, "I monoteismi tra storia, comparazione e tipologia", in *Historia Religionum* 3 (2011), pp. 95-118, "Memorie monoteistiche 'pagane' nella *Cohortatio ad Graecos* pseudo-giustina. L'unicità divina come strumento di auto-definizione e/o di attacco", in *Auctores Nostri* 9 (2011), pp. 283-315. For other publications, see <http://unina.academia.edu/httpublicationslistorglucaarcari>.