



Greek Fathers of the 4th-5th centuries and the secular education. Their acceptance in Greek thinking while rejecting pagan cults
Padres griegos de los siglos IV y V y la educación secular. Su aceptación por el pensamiento griego en su rechazo de los cultos paganos
Padres gregos dos sécs. IV-V e a educação secular. Sua aceitação pelo pensamento grego em seu rechaço pelos cultos pagãos

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Abstract: The Fathers were neither implacable enemies of Greek thought nor did they hate the works of the ancient Greek poets and writers. Great Basilus did not hesitate to show ancient people as examples of virtue who were referred to in the works of secular literature. He like others emphasized, however, that not everything within ancient literature is acceptable but that one should only keep what is useful for Christianity! The rest constituted sinister men's acts and should therefore be avoided. No one must imitate their actions. Cyril of Alexandria did not reject the ancient Greek thought as philosophy but as theology. The motive was obvious. The contrast between Christian theology and Greek philosophy existed only when the latter was presented as theology. It was a feud between a presupposed common area which each claimed for herself. The rejection of the Greek "false worship as totally useless" took place as a theological crisis. When the Fathers condemned the "Greek and avid ... malice" and exercised "control of the Greek fraud" they essentially failed on Greek philosophy, while targeting ancient Greek religiosity. Hence, Greek Fathers honoured Greek thinking, Greek language and used both in their writings but tried to avoid ideas of Greek pagan practice and cult and fought against these with all their powers.

Keywords: Pagan cults – Secular Education – Christian Theology – Philosophy – Christian Philosophy.

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Resumen: Los Padres de la Iglesia no eran enemigos implacables del pensamiento griego ni tampoco odiaban las obras de los antiguos poetas y escritores griegos. San Basilio no dudó en presentar los pueblos antiguos como ejemplos de virtud, a lo que se hace referencia en las obras de literatura secular. El y otros, sin embargo, hicieron hincapié en que no todo en la literatura antigua es aceptable, y que solo se debe mantener lo que es útil para el cristianismo. El resto constituía actos humanos siniestros, que, por tanto, debían evitarse. Nadie debe imitar las acciones de aquellos. San Cirilo de Alejandría no rechazó el pensamiento griego antiguo como filosofía, sino como teología. El motivo era obvio. El contraste entre la teología cristiana y la filosofía griega existía solo cuando esta se presentaba como teología. Fue una discordia entre un área que se presuponía común y que cada una reclamaba para sí como propia. El rechazo a la griega "falsa adoración como totalmente inútil" se realizó como una crisis teológica. Cuando los Padres de la Iglesia condenaron la "ávida... malicia griega" y ejercieron el "control sobre el fraude griego", fallaron fundamentalmente sobre la filosofía griega, por cuanto tenían en mente la antigua religiosidad griega. Por tal motivo, los Padres griegos honraron el pensamiento y el idioma griegos, y utilizaron ambos en sus escritos, pero trataron de evitar las ideas de la práctica y el culto paganos griegos, y lucharon contra ellos con todas sus fuerzas.

Palabras clave: Cultos paganos – Educación laica – Teología cristiana – Filosofía – Filosofía cristiana.

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I. The Greek philosophy and Greek language into the Roman-Byzantine Empire

When Roman armies conquered the remnants of Alexander's empire in 168 BCE, they also conquered the Greek city-states. The Romans soon realized the uniqueness of what they had overcome². "Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit", "Captured Greece captured its fierce conqueror"³, wrote the Roman poet, Horace. His point was that Romans recognized something in Greek culture that was more impressive than anything Rome itself had achieved, in spite of Rome's unprecedented military success. The result is that Roman culture adapted itself to the model of Greece, at least in art, religion, and

² M. J. Anthony, W. S. Benson, *Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education: Principles for the 21st Century*, publ. Kregel Publications, USA 2003, p. 97.

³ Horace, *Epist.* 2.1.15⁶⁻⁷



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literature. Roman statues, temples, and public buildings were rebuilt in imitation of those in Greece⁴. Greek stories of the gods were retold with Roman names in place of Greek. Roman thinkers adapted the philosophical ideas of the Athenian academy to their situation in the Roman republic and especially in the Roman Empire⁵. In this, Hellenism, the term used to describe the influence of Greek culture on the peoples the Greek and Roman Empires conquered or interacted, through poetry, philosophy, theatre, sculpture and architecture, emerged as a culture of social distinction. It became the culture of the Roman or, rather, the Greco-Roman aristocracy.

The educated roman citizens were being taught Latin and Greek. They were the dominant languages of the Roman Empire. Educated Romans, particularly those of the ruling elite, studied and often achieved a high degree of fluency in Greek, which was useful for diplomatic communications in the East even beyond the borders of the Empire. The international use of koine Greek⁶ was one condition that enabled the spread of Christianity, as indicated for example by the choice of Greek as the language of the Epistles of Paul⁷ and its use for the ecumenical councils of the Christian Roman Empire. As Christianity became the dominant religion, Attic began to be used in Christian writings in

⁴ In art, especially in the early Christian period, ancient prototypes are “transferred” in the iconography of the new religion (e.g: Hermes with the ram on his shoulder became the image of the Good Shepherd, Psyche and Orantes became symbols of immortality represented amidst the flowers of Paradise and Apollo on a chariot from the breastplate of “Augustus of Prima Porta”, became the image of Christ). In architecture, one can even trace the Greek subtlety in the use of the pendentive in Aghia Sophia and in philosophy and education, in the attempt of Julian to revive the ancient Greek religion and philosophical schools. Photios composed the famous *Myriovivlo*, which included reviews of numerous classical writings.

⁵ M. J. Anthony, W. S. Benson, *Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education: Principles for the 21st Century*, publ. Kregel Publications, USA 2003, p. 97.

⁶ Koine Greek had become the “lingua franca” of the eastern Mediterranean and into Asia Minor after the conquests of Alexander the Great. The koine, or “common” language that was formed in the Hellenistic period to aid in the linguistic uniformity of a vast and culturally diverse region, was the language of the Byzantine world with the “atticizing” school -represented most typically by Lucian- to imbue the literary world. Cf. F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II (408–450)*, University of California Press, California 2006, p. 279; W. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 5

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 5, 6.



addition to and often interspersed with koine Greek⁸. With the dissolution of the Empire in the West, Greek became the dominant language of the Eastern Roman Empire, later known as the Byzantine Empire.

The Greek philosophy had a great influence on Christians in early Christianity. Having been educated in classical and philosophical studies, some of their teachings were influenced by and engaged with aspects of Neo-Pythagorean, Neo-Platonist, and other strains of contemporary philosophical thought. Of course, many Christians tried to develop Christian theology based on Greek philosophy. The result was the creation of heresies. The most important heresy of the mixture of Greek philosophy and Christian theology was Gnosticism. It is known mainly from the writings of Irenaeus of Lyon, who was one of its chief early opponents. The Gnosticism was mainly influenced by Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy. Not all Gnostics believed exactly the same thing, but the general outlines of the belief are fairly clear. Gnostics were dualists, teaching that there are two great opposing forces: good versus evil, light versus darkness, knowledge versus ignorance, spirit versus matter. According to them, this world, the material cosmos, is the result of a primordial error on the part of a supra-cosmic, supremely divine being, usually called *Sophia* (Wisdom) or simply the *Logos*. This being is described as the final emanation of a divine hierarchy, called the *Plérôma* or “Fullness”, at the head of which resides the supreme God, the One beyond Being⁹.

Soon the anti-gnostic fathers understood the primacy of faith and the paradox of Christianity and did not believe that Greek philosophy could surpass Christianity in rational sharpness and clarity. However, the ecclesiastical fathers and writers were continuing to live in an area, which was influenced by the ideas of Plato, Aristotle and Stoic Philosophers. Some theologians tried to speak about Christian Theology without taking care of the philosophical environment of that era or others were influenced by that dangerously¹⁰. The great theologian Fathers understood that the Greek philosophy as philosophy was acceptable and argued that Christianity was not in conflict with the Greek philosophy that the pagans revered and respected. In addition, they distinguished the Greek philosophy from the truth of Christian Theology.

⁸ M. Alexiou, *After Antiquity: Greek Language, Myth, and Metaphor*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, New York 2001, p. 23.

⁹ W. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 5, 6.

¹⁰ S. Papadopoulos, *Patrologia II*, Athens 1990, p. 35.



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They used Greek philosophical terminology with different meanings for Christian theology. So they “metousiosan” the meaning of the word, they changed it¹¹. The Christian theology was heavily indebted to the Classic word¹², but without staying loyal to the meaning of the classic vocabulary. Moreover, the contact with the Greeks was considered by Jesus as the “hour”, the default of God's plan “time”, in which will “the son of man be glorified”¹³ with his return to the glory of God through the cross, the resurrection. The Accession of the Hellenic into Christianity was the most impressive historical fact of original Christianity in the eyes of the apostles themselves first¹⁴.

The Greek element of language and philosophy became the only dominant elements when the roman emperor Great Constantine I built a new capital for the Roman Empire. Constantinople -Nova Roma- was founded by Emperor Constantine the Great in 330 AD, at the place of the ancient Greek city Byzantium. The empire was the ark of the ancient Greek knowledge, because many ancient documents preserved in the monasteries and the library of Constantinople. Therefore, Christianity gave the opportunity to the excluded populations access to elite culture through the Greek and Latin of its fundamental texts, teachings and preaching's¹⁵. The Roman Empire continued to exist and its close affinities with the Hellenistic world are apparent in all forms of expression and in philosophy. Slowly by slowly the Roman Empire became only Byzantine Empire.

The later was connected with the Greek element, because in the eastern Roman Empire, the people used the Greek language and after the 7th century AD, it became the official language. Therefore, the Greek literature, language and philosophy became part of all Christians and mainly many educated Fathers were brought up in this Hellenistic environment. They released that the truth of Christ's teaching is different from the Greek philosophy and pagan Theology, as it is referred above. Because of this differentiation, it was prevented the Hellenization of Christianity and the Christianization of

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² C. A. Mango, *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2002, p. 101.

¹³ Jn. 12:20.

¹⁴ I. Zizoulas, *Hellenization and Christianity. The meeting of two worlds*, publ. Apostoliki Diakonia, Athens 2003, p. 97.

¹⁵ A. M. Ward, F. M. Heichelheim, C. A. Yeo, *History of the Roman People*, A, pub. Pearson, Published on: 11/10/2009⁵, p. 453.



Hellenism¹⁶. Moreover, each attempt to make Christianity understandable by the Greek thinking, passed through the crucible of the Christian conscience that the result was in a fundamental alteration of Greek terminology¹⁷.

Although Greek culture exerted influence on the spread, language, and culture of Christianity, and even spawned unbiblical cults, it did not affect the orthodox theology. The story of a single, triune God, and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ remain untouched by Hellenism. Martyrs went to their graves in order to ensure the gospel message stayed true. Hellenism in the days of the early church remains an example of how to use a culture to spread the message while not allowing the culture to change the message¹⁸.

II. The adaptation of Greek philosophical thought in the data of the Triune God's Revelation

The problem of the composition and appointment of the two major intellectual figures of history, Hellenism and Christianity was usually treated by most scholars as very important achievement of the fourth or the fifth century. But many scholars remain unaware of the conditions and processes which occurred during the first decades of the historical period of Christ, by people who conceived the idea of a dynamic synthesis of Hellenism and Christianity and the concurrence of these two major intellectual currents in historical development.

In Orthodox Patristic Theology, the use of Greek Philosophy was concerned only using terminology and schemes and not acceptance ancient theologians' thought. The patristic Hellenism constitutes self-transcendence versus pre-Christian Greekness as the certain Greek Fathers affirm until the 14th century. The official position of the Church repelled both fanatic monks' contempt to the "secular" wisdom, and to the excessive admiration of certain scholar circles, which upset the established equilibrium composition by the great Greek Christian Fathers¹⁹.

¹⁶ S. Papadopoulos, *Patrologia II*, Athens 1990, p. 35.

¹⁷ I. Zizoulas, *Hellenization and Christianity. The meeting of two worlds*, publ. Apostoliki Diakonia, Athens 2003, p. 99.

¹⁸ Cf. E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries*, Expanded Third Edition, Zondervan 1996.

¹⁹ I. Zizoulas, *Hellenization and Christianity. The meeting of two worlds*, publ. Apostoliki Diakonia, Athens 2003, p. 99.



The Greek thought passed through a creative encounter with Christianity and suffered “major transformations, whilst not eliminate the Greekness, they made it to change orientation, to obtain information had not previously. For example, in the area of Christology, the purpose of these transformations was to preserve the heritage of Jewish monotheism from misconceptions and lesions polytheistic, Neoplatonic etc.²⁰ In the history of the Church, how to avoid these risks, ultimately, offered the spirit of the Greek Fathers, with the basis which had already given in the New Testament²¹.

According to the professor George Martzelos, “the use of contextual representations and images in order the doctrinal truths to be understood by people with different cultural backgrounds, it is often not only legitimate but also necessary. This is a fundamental missionary and educational authority, which is deeply rooted in the history and life of the Church. But the use of these contextual representations and images limited only to morphology of the doctrine and leaves intact and unforged to its essence. The attitude is exactly fulfilled both the Apostles and the Fathers of the Church; although they used pictorial representations and terminology of the contextual background of the Greek cultural world, however, they were limited exclusively in morphology and did not alter the message of divine revelation”²².

Mainly, the early Christian Fathers of the 4th and 5th century saw in ancient Greek thought elements or germs of divine revelation. The Cappadocian fathers in particular and the Alexandrian and several Antiochian theologians formulated the attitude of Orthodox Christianity toward the ancient Greek heritage²³. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzinus, the theologian and John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Isidore of Pelusium became successful men of letters, great theologians and church leaders. They had studied in Athens, Constantinople, and Antioch - the Athens of the East - and became effective social reformers, defenders of Orthodox Christianity, and supporters of Greek learning²⁴.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 111.

²¹ Ibid, p. 112.

²² G. D. Martzelos, “Theologikos animismos and orthodoxy pneumatology”, *Kath odon*, 4 (Jan - April 1993), p. 101-111 publ. Paratiritis, Thessaloniki, p.105.

²³ D. J. Constantelos, “Hellenic Paideia and Church Fathers - Educational Principles and Cultural Heritage”, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, <http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith8143> (2014)

²⁴ Ibid.



III. The friendly attitude of church writers and fathers to the Greek philosophy and their hostile one to the Greek (pagan) theology in the 4th and 5th centuries

Although the vehemence between Greek thought and Christian faith has never been missing from the stage of history and experience of Hellenism, a mixture and a equilibrium was succeeded in the fourth and fifth centuries because of the intellect of persons like Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory the theologian, Cynesios of Cyrene, Socrates Scholastikos and others who were trained in the Greek classics and the Holy Scriptures²⁵. These champions of Catholic Faith endeavored to effect reconciliation with precise studies.

Before them, Clement of Alexandria, a Christian writer of the 2nd and early 3rd century, demonstrated Greek thought in writing: “Philosophy has been given to the Greeks as their own kind of Covenant, their foundation for the philosophy of Christ ... the philosophy of the Greeks ... contains the basic elements of that genuine and perfect knowledge which is higher than human ... even upon those spiritual objects”²⁶. General the Greek patristic tradition was in favour of that Christians must be improved in faith in Christ, but also in the realm of secular education²⁷.

The 4th century the Cappadocian fathers, Basilus of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzinus, Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostomus drew a sharp line of demarcation between Greek religion and Greek culture²⁸. They were very careful with the use of Greek philosophy and they did not permit the corruption of Christian theology by it²⁹. So Gregory Theologos underlined that: “Attack the silence of Pythagoras and the Orphic beans, and the novel brag about The Master said. Attack the ideas of Plato, and the transmigrations and courses of our souls, and the reminiscences, and the unlovely loves of the soul for lovely bodies. Attack the atheism of Epicurus, and his atoms, and his unphilosophical pleasure; or Aristotle's petty Providence, and his artificial

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 6. 8

²⁷ J. Payton, “Toward a Russian Orthodox Worldview for Post-Soviet Society”, (299- 318) in *Orthodox Christianity and contemporary Europe: selected papers of the international conference held at the University of Leeds, England, in June 2001*, (ed.) J. Sutton & W. Van den Bercken publ. Peeters, Leuven 2003, p. 311.

²⁸ W. Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, Harvard University press, Washington 1985, p. 74.

²⁹ A. Theodorou, *History of Dogma*, I, part II, publ. Gregory, Athens 1978, p. 519.

system, and his discourses about the mortality of the soul, and the humanitarianism of his doctrine. Attack the superciliousness of the Stoa, or the greed and vulgarity of the Cynic. Attack the Void and Full (what nonsense), and all the details about the gods and the sacrifices and the idols and demons, whether beneficent or malignant, and all the tricks that people play with divination, evoking of gods, or of souls, and the power of the stars”³⁰. Although, Gregory Nazianzen was usually disrespectful of pagan Greek philosophy or better theology, many times he expressed his admiration to Greek authors of classical literature: “Let us leave such jesting to the legends and the Greeks, who think that but little of truth and enchant ear and mind by the charm of their fictions and the daintiness of their style”³¹.

And he understood that the Greek philosophy or literal works didn't do any harm to a man. It depended on the way that they were used by men: “we know that neither fire nor food nor iron nor any other of the elements is of itself most useful or most harmful except according to the will of those who use it”³², “... so from secular literature we have received principles of inquiry and speculation while we have rejected their idolatry”³³. Also, in *His Carmina ad Seleucum*³⁴ and in the poem *Nicobuli filii ad patrem*³⁵ made hymns for the study

³⁰ Gregory Nazianzinus, *First Theological Oration*, PG 36, 24AC.

³¹ Gregory Nazianzinus, *Apologetica*, 2, PG 35, 504CD: “Γαῦτα μὲν παιζόντων μῦθοι καὶ Ἑλληνας, οἱ, τῆς ἀληθείας ὀλίγα φροντίζοντες, τῷ κομψῷ τῶν πλασμάτων καὶ τῷ λίχνῳ τῶν λέξεων καὶ ἀκοῆν καὶ ψυχὴν γοητεύουσιν”.

³² Gregory Nazianzinus, *Funeris oratio in laudem Basilii Magni Caesareae in Cappadocia episcopi*, 11.3.

³³ Gregory Nazianzinus, *Funeris oratio in laudem Basilii Magni Caesareae in Cappadocia episcopi*, 21.5.

³⁴ Gregory Nazianzinus, *Carmina ad Seleucum*, PG 37, 580-1581: “Σοφῶς ἀπάντων συλλέγων τὸ χρήσιμον. Φεύγων δι' ἐκάστου τὴν βλάβην κεκριμένως. Σοφῆς μελίττης ἔργον ἐμιμούμενος, ἥτις ἐφ' ἅπασιν ἄνθεσι καθιζάνει, τρυγᾷ δ' ἐκάστου πανσόφως τὸ χρήσιμον, Αὐτὴν ἔχουσα τὴν φύσιν διδάσκαλον. Σὺ δ' ἐκ λογισμοῦ, τῶν μὲν ἀφθόνως δρέπου τῶν ὠφελούντων· εἰ δέ τι βλάβην φέρρει, Συνεῖς τὸ φαῦλον, ὀξέως ἀρίπτασο... ταῦθ' ὡς βρόχους τε καὶ πάγας ἀποστρέφου. Ἄμφω δ' ἀναγνούς, τοὺς Θεούς, καὶ τοὺς λόγους, Θεοὺς γελοίους, καὶ λόγους ἐρασμίους, καταφρόνει μὲν τῶν φιλήδωνων θεῶν, Λόγους δέ τιμῶν, ὥσπερ ἐξ ἐνός φυτοῦ καὶ τὰς ἀκάνθας φεῦγε, καὶ ῥόδον δρέπου”.

³⁵ Gregory Nazianzinus *Nicobuli filii ad patrem (carm. 4)*, 1510.6-1511.5: “Καλὸν δ' ἱστορίας φρὴν ἐμπλεος· ἱστορίη γὰρ Συμπερτὴ σοφίη, πολλῶν νόος· οὐκ ὀλίγον δὲ Γραμματικὴ ξύουσα λόγον, καὶ βάρβαρον ἠχὴν, Ἑλλάδος εὐγενέος γλώσσης ἐπίκουρος ἀρίστη· Καὶ λογιῆς τέχνης τὰ παλαιάματα, οἷς ὕπ' ἀληθῆς Κρύπτεται, ὃ τριφθεῖς δὲ λόγος περίφαντον ἔθηγεν· Ὅσσοις τ' ἤθεα κεδνὰ διαπλάσσουσιν ἄριστοι, Ὡς τυρὸν πλεκτοῖσιν εἰδόμενον

of classical pagan Greek literature and philosophy for the education of Christian students.

Although his criticisms of Greek philosophers, on the whole he seemed to follow the policy of Origen, in whose writings he had immersed himself. In his Letter to St Gregory Thaumaturgus³⁶, Origen speaks of despoiling the Egyptians, carefully extracting from Hellenistic philosophy that which is true and helpful to the service of the gospel. Nazianzen would later express his stance toward Greek culture in the apothegm “Avoid the thorns, pluck the roses”³⁷ Gregory urges discrimination and caution. His attitude may be described as critically positive³⁸ Gregory has absorbed the teaching of Aristotle on logic; but he understands that the mysteries of God cannot be proven by syllogistic reasoning. He is appreciative of Greek paideia and of the education

ταλάροισιν· Ἡδ' ὅποσα πτερόεντι νόῳ λεπταῖς τε μερίμναις Βένθεα διψήσαντες, ὁ μὲν τοῦ, τοῦ δέ τις ἄλλος, Ἄνδρες ἐθήησαντο σοφοί, βίβλοισι δ' ἔδωκαν· Ἡερῶν, χθονίων τε καὶ εἰναλίων φύσιν εὔρον, Οὐρανίων τ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι Θεοῦ νόον ἀφράστοιο”·

³⁶ Origen of Alexandria, *Letter to Gregory Thaumaturgus*, 1-2: “I wish to ask you to extract from the philosophy of the Greeks what may serve as a course of study or a preparation for Christianity, and from geometry and astronomy what will serve to explain the sacred Scriptures, in order that all that the sons of the philosophers are wont to say about geometry and music, grammar, rhetoric, and astronomy, as fellow-helpers to philosophy, we may say about philosophy itself, in relation to Christianity. Perhaps something of this kind is shadowed forth in what is written in Exodus from the mouth of God, that the children of Israel were commanded to ask from their neighbours, and those who dwelt with them, vessels of silver and gold, and raiment, in order that, by spoiling the Egyptians, they might have material for the preparation of the things which pertained to the service of God”. – “ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τῇ πάσῃ τῆς εὐφυίας δυνάμει σου ἐβουλόμην καταχρησασθαί σε τελικῶς μὲν εἰς χριστιανισμόν· ποιητικῶς δὲ διὰ τοῦτ' ἂν ηὔξάμην παραλαβεῖν σε καὶ φιλοσοφίας Ἑλλήνων τὰ οἶονεῖ εἰς χριστιανισμόν δυνάμενα γενέσθαι ἐγκύκλια μαθήματα ἢ προπαιδεύματα, καὶ τὰ ἀπὸ γεωμετρίας καὶ ἀστρονομίας χρήσιμα ἐσόμενα εἰς τὴν τῶν ἱερῶν γραφῶν διήγησιν ἴν', ὅπερ φασὶ φιλοσόφων παῖδες περὶ γεωμετρίας καὶ μουσικῆς γραμματικῆς τε καὶ ῥητορικῆς καὶ ἀστρονομίας, ὡς συνερίθων φιλοσοφία, τοῦθ' ἡμεῖς εἶπωμεν καὶ περὶ αὐτῆς φιλοσοφίας πρὸς χριστιανισμόν. Καὶ τάχα τοιοῦτό τι αἰνίσσεται τὸ ἐν Ἐξόδῳ γεγραμμένον ἐκ προσώπου τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα λεχθῆ τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ αἰτεῖν παρὰ γειτόνων καὶ συσκήνων σκεύη ἀργυρᾶ καὶ χρυσᾶ καὶ ἱματισμόν· ἵνα σκυλεύσαντες τοὺς Αἰγυπτίους εὔρωσιν ὕλην πρὸς τὴν κατασκευὴν τῶν παραλαμβανομένων εἰς τὴν πρὸς θεὸν λατρείαν”.

³⁷ Gregory Nazianzinus, *Epistle to Theodoro*, 183.2-3: “... καὶ ὄντως ῥόδα ἐξ ἀκανθῶν, ὡς ἡ παροιμία, συλλέγομεν”. This common expression can also be found in Basil's Letter to the Young on the Value of Greek Literature and Gregory of Nyssa, Ep. 28.

³⁸ Fr. Norris, “Of Thorns and Roses”, *Church History* 53 (Dec., 1984), 455-464.



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he has received; but he firmly resists the subjugation of divine revelation to secular criteria³⁹.

Pseudo-Macarius underlined that there was an important difference between Christian thought and that of profane thought⁴⁰: ““The world of Christians is of a special kind, their style of living, their thinking, their speech, and all their actions. That of men of this world is completely different. There is a great difference between them. The inhabitants of this world, the children of this age, are like wheat in a sieve. They are being sifted by restless thoughts of this world. They are constantly tossed back and forth by earthly cares, desire, and absorption in a variety of material concerns... For Christians live in another world, eat from another table, are clothed differently, prefer different enjoyment, different dialogue, and a different mentality. Because of this they exceed all other men”.

On the other hand, Gregory of Nyssa supported that the secular thought and education could be profitable for a Christian. In addition, bishop of Nyssa thought that the Church shouldn't allow the Greek education to be away from the life of a believer in Christ. This education offered much that could enhance the life and service of Christian and thus an endowment to the Church⁴¹: “For truly barren is profane education, which is always in labor but never gives birth. For what fruit worthy of such pangs does philosophy show for being so long in labor? Do not all who are full of wind and never come to term miscarry before they come to the light of the knowledge of God, although they could as well become men if they were not altogether hidden in the womb of barren wisdom? ... Indeed moral and natural philosophy may become at certain times a--comrade, friend, and companion of life to the higher way, provided that the offspring of this union introduce nothing of a foreign defilement”.

³⁹ S. Papadopoulos, *Gregory the theologian. The wounded eagle of the Orthodoxy*, Athens 1980, p. 89-98. S. Papadopoulos, *Patrologia II*, Athens 1990, p. 497.

⁴⁰ Pseudo-Macarius, *The Spiritual Homilies* 5:1, 5:11.

⁴¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *In the Life of Moses*, 2:11. 2:37 cf *Ibid.*, 2:12, 2:115-116. cf. J. Payton, “Toward a Russian Orthodox Worldview for Post-Soviet Society”, (299- 318) in *Orthodox Christianity and contemporary Europe: selected papers of the international conference held at the University of Leeds, England, in June 2001*, (ed.) J. Sutton & W. Van den Bercken, publ. Peeters, Leuven 2003, p. 311.



In his work, *the Life of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus*, the brother of St. Basilus

Spoke about the relation between Hellenism and Christianity. He explained that Gregory Thaumaturgos had received an excellent secular education⁴² “ἔξω σοφία”⁴³, “ἔξω φιλοσοφία”⁴⁴, “ἔξωθεν διδασχῆ”⁴⁵, but he did not get seduced by the pagan thoughts for God, but he put himself servant to the real God⁴⁶.

In *the Life of St. Macrina*, Gregory of Nyssa explained that the Holy Bible could be used to the same goal as the classical Greek philosophical tradition. Through the Wisdom of Solomon, Macrina is taught the ethos and philosophy of classical upbringing without having to encounter the stories belonging to pagan mythology⁴⁷:

“The education of the child was her mother's task; she did not, however, employ the usual worldly method of education, which makes a practice of using poetry as means of training the early years of the child. For she considered it disgraceful and quite unsuitable, that a tender and plastic nature should be taught either those tragic passions of womanhood which afforded poets their suggestions and plots, or the indecencies of comedy, to be, so to speak, denied with unseemly tales of “the harem”. But such parts of inspired Scripture as you would think were incomprehensible to young children were the subject of the girl's studies; in particular the Wisdom of Solomon and those parts of it especially which have an ethical bearing”⁴⁸.

⁴² Gregory of Nyssa, *the Life of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus*, PG 46, 900A, 901A.

⁴³ “καὶ οὕτως τοῦ ζητουμένου τυχεῖν, οἷον ἐπιβάντα τῆς ἔξω σοφίας, καὶ γενόμενον δι' αὐτῆς ὑψηλότερον, ὥστε προσεγγίσει τρόπον τινὰ δι' αὐτῆς τοῖς ἀλήπτοις”, Ibid, PG 46, 901A.

⁴⁴ “Μέγας οὗτος, τῇ ἔξω φιλοσοφίᾳ δι' ἐπιμελείας καθομιλήσας, δι' ὧν ὁ Ἑλληνισμὸς τοῖς πολλοῖς βεβαιοῦται, διὰ τούτων ὠδηγήθη πρὸς τὴν τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ κατανόησιν, καὶ καταλιπὼν τὴν πεπλανημένην τῶν πατέρων θρησκείαν, ἐζήτησε τὴν τῶν ὄντων ἀλήθειαν, ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν πεπονημένων τοῖς ἔξωθεν διδασχθεῖς τὸ τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν δογμάτων ἀσύστατον”, Ibid, PG 46, 901AB.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *the Life of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus*, PG 46, 900A, 901A.

⁴⁷ S. Rubenson, “Philosophy and Simplicity: The problem of Classical Education in Early Christian Biography, (110-139), in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. by T. Hägg, Ph. Rousseau, Chr. Høgep, University of California Press, California 2000, p.127.

⁴⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Macrina*, PG 46, 962D, 964A.

Generally, Gregory of Nyssa accepted that the secular education, the classical greek texts had a significant role in order the man or the woman to be able to obtain a deeper knowledge of things divine, to understand better the revelation or true wisdom of Triune God⁴⁹.

Another well-educated father of Cappadocians, St Basil the Great urged that the pagan classics were properly selected and intelligently taught and received; their influence in education was beneficial and necessary. St Basil's attitude towards the pagan classics appears the most enlightened and balanced of his time⁵⁰.

Many scholars could think that Basil rejected the secular education, because he called to his own secular education and acquisition of worldly knowledge as ματαιότης - vanity⁵¹, but he knew how important was the Greek classical paedeia for Christian children. In his work, *To the young, how they can benefit from the Greek texts*⁵², supported that classical Greek and Christian wisdom were considered in relation to each other and secular knowledge is likened to the leaves of a plant which bears the fruit of Christian truth⁵³. The secular

⁴⁹ S. Rubenson, "Philosophy and Simplicity: The problem of Classical Education in Early Christian Biography, (110-139), in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. by T. Hägg, Ph. Rousseau, Chr. Høgep, University of California Press, California 2000, p.128.

⁵⁰ E. Yong, "Myths of Greece and Rome. Christian attitudes to pagan mythology in the period between 150 and 500 AD veered between extreme hostility and the desire to save as much as possible for continued use and enjoyment", p.8, https://www.academia.edu/1899184/Christian_Attitudes_to_Pagan_Mythology_c.150_-_500_A.D (2014)

⁵¹ "Εγὼ πολὺν χρόνον προσαναλώσας τῇ ματαιότητι, καὶ πᾶσαν σχεδὸν τὴν ἑμαυτοῦ νεότητα ἐναφανίσας τῇ ματαιοπονίᾳ ἣν εἶχον προσδιατρέιβων τῇ ἀναλήψει τῶν μαθημάτων τῆς παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ μωρανθείσης σοφίας, ἐπειδὴ ποτε, ὥσπερ ἐξ ὕπνου βαθέος διαναστάς, ἀπέβλεψα μὲν πρὸς τὸ θαυμαστὸν φῶς τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, κατεῖδον δὲ τὸ ἄχρηστον τῆς σοφίας τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου τῶν καταργουμένων", Basilus of Caesarea, *Epistle 223.2*.

⁵² Basilus of Caesarea, *To the young, how they can benefit from the Greek texts*, PG 31, 564-589. cf Th. Boura, "The Relationship between Hellenism and Christianity in St. Basil's speech to the young", *Vox Patrum*, 32 (2012) t. 57, p. 53-57.

⁵³ Basilus of Caesarea, *To the young, how they can benefit from the Greek texts*, PG 31, 568C: "If, then, there is any affinity between the two literatures, a knowledge of them should be useful to us in our search for truth; if not, the comparison, by emphasizing the contrast, will be of no small service in strengthening our regard for the better one. With what now may we compare these two kinds of education to obtain a simile? Just as it is the chief mission of the tree to bear its fruit in its season, though at the same time it puts forth for ornament the

literature can be a benefit the young, because there were many good examples that virtuous characters should be imitated as Hercules⁵⁴ and Socrates⁵⁵. On the other hand, many bad examples should be avoided. Theoni Boura underlines that: “the fact that Basil does not hesitate to encourage young people follow non-ecclesiastical examples of ancient Greek men, posing as a criterion virtue, indicates his free from any prejudice or narrowness thinking. He finds analogy between the ancient-Greek’s virtuous acts and the acts which the Bible recommends”⁵⁶.

Basil the Great urged that Christians should collect only the good things from the secular paideia, the literal texts of the Greeks. They must be like bees, which collect only the honey from flowers. So were men agreeable only for their fragrance and color, even so here also those who looked for something more than pleasure and enjoyment in such writers may derive profit for their souls⁵⁷. So Christians, if wise, should take from heathen books whatever befits them and was allied to the truth, and should pass over the rest. And just as in culling roses they avoid the thorns, from such writings as these we will gather everything useful, and guard against the noxious⁵⁸. Therefore, from the very beginning, they must examine each of Greeks' teachings, to harmonize it with Christian ultimate purpose, according to the Doric proverb, “testing each stone by the measuring-line”⁵⁹.

Basil was not alone in his avocation of the use of pagan examples to draw lessons from. Another important father of the Church, John Chrysostom suggested that the secular world could be utilised to realise spiritual truths. In

leaves which quiver on its boughs, even so the real fruit of the soul is truth, yet it is not without advantage for it to embrace the pagan wisdom, as also leaves offer shelter to the fruit, and an appearance not untimely. That Moses, whose name is a synonym for wisdom, severely trained his mind in the learning of the Egyptians, and thus became able to appreciate their deity. Similarly, in later days, the wise Daniel is said to have studied the lore of the Chaldaeans while in Babylon, and after that to have taken up the sacred teachings”.

⁵⁴ Ibid., PG 31, 573B.

⁵⁵ Ibid, PG 31, 576D.

⁵⁶ Th. Boura, “The Relationship between Hellenism and Christianity in St. Basil's speech to the young”, *Vox Patrum*, 32 (2012) t. 57, p. 53-57. Basilus of Caesarea, *To the young, how they can benefit from the Greek texts*, PG 31, 576CD.

⁵⁷ Ibid, PG 31, 569C.

⁵⁸ Ibid, PG 31, 569D.

⁵⁹ Ibid. St. Gregory Nazianzen cites this proverb in *Letter 38.3.6*, and St. John Chrysostom in *Job*, PG 64, 645D, 648A.



his work “Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life”⁶⁰ he spoke with a pagan father whose son had adopted the monastic lifestyle. He stated that he would show the superiority of this course of action to the worldly situation the father wished for his offspring by means of only pagan arguments, not Christian⁶¹. John Chrysostom certainly condemned pagan religion, but not the classical cultural inheritance. He had said in his Homily on the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians that: “Read, if you will, both our own (books), and those without (meaning pagan books) for they also abound in such examples. ...if you admire the works of philosophers, go even to them. They will instruct thee, relating ancient calamities, as will poets, and orators, and sophists, and all historians. From every side, if you will, you may find examples”⁶².

He also brought arguments that “pagan philosophers men” could as well teach something to us, as in the case of Magi: “For which of you, for Christ's sake, hath made so long a pilgrimage -Magi for their pilgrimage to worship baby Jesus, traveled approximately 2 years-, you that have received countless benefits, as these barbarians, or rather, these wiser than the wisest philosophers?”⁶³ On his homily, “An Address on Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children”⁶⁴, underlined the effectiveness of the classical-Christian synthesis.

This treatise is a systematic exposition of Christian education; one of the most enlightening fruits of the Greek Christian soul, based not only in the Holy Scriptures, but also in the psychological and pedagogical teachings of the ancient Greeks, as well as experience⁶⁵ St. John faced critically the Greek philosophy. He rejected every aspect of the ancient Greeks that are not consistent with the teachings of the Church, as the views for God, for the creation of the world and man, but sometimes he denied some ideas of

⁶⁰ John Chrysostomus, *Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life*, PG 47, 319-386.

⁶¹ Ibid, PG 47, 321AD. J. H. Gane, *Fourth Century Christian Education: An Analysis of Basil's Ad Adolescentes*, PhD in the School of Historical Studies, October 2012, p. 61-73.

⁶² John Chrysostomus, *Homily on the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians*, PG 62, 472A.

⁶³ John Chrysostomus, *Homily on Matthew*, 7, PG 57, 79C.

⁶⁴ John Chrysostomus, *An Address on Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children*, Sources Chretiennes 188.

⁶⁵ Th. Zisis, “Raising Children According to Saint John Chrysostom”, Orthodox Christian Information Center, www.orthodoxinfo.com/praxis/raising-children-according-to-saint-johnchrysostom.aspx (accessed March 12, 2011). N. D. Carr, *Classical and Christian paideia according to saint Chrysostom, Saint Basil, and Saint Augustine*, Charlotte, NC, December 2011, p.15.

morality. He praised Socrates, Diogenes and Thivaaios Krati only for their behavior or ethical issues for their condemning material goods but not for their metaphysical theories and ideas for God. He refuted the Aristotelian's thought the accessible to God, since John always taught inaccessible and “akatalipto” of Trinitarian Godhead. At the same time he opposed to Plato's love to materials⁶⁶.

A few decades after John Crysostomus, in the fifth century two other very special Church Fathers, Cyril of Alexandria and Isidore of Pelusium spoke about the relation of classical Greek texts and the Christianity. Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, was initially educated in the classical Greek fashion, but after learning how to read and interpret secular texts, he continued his education by focusing on the Bible, theology, and Christian disciplines. Although the theological education of Cyril was specialized heavily, it did not happen the same with his philosophical and secular education⁶⁷. If someone studies a number of works of Cyril, he will find that bishop's knowledge on the secular education is general. What is certain is that it was mainly based on philosophical texts and an anthology of Greek philosophers and poets. He handled the Greek philosophy and secular literature with full attention; nor despise nor was their prisoner. Besides, the patriarch of Alexandria did not reject the ancient Greek thought as philosophy, but as theology. The motive was obvious.

The contrast between Christian theology and Greek philosophy was only when the Greek philosophy was presented as theology and Christian teaching as a certain philosophy. The dispute between them required common space that either one was claiming for itself. His rejection of the “Greek fake worship as completely useless”⁶⁸ occurs as a theological crisis. When Cyril condemned as Trash “Greek and avid ... bad thoughts” and exercised “criticism to the frauds of the Greeks”⁶⁹ it was clear from the context that he doesn't criticize the Greek philosophy, but the ancient Greek religiosity.

⁶⁶ E. Artemi, “The children's brought up according Plutarchus and John Chrysostomus”, *Koinonia* 53(2010) 173 – 182.

⁶⁷ E. Artemi, “The usage of the secular literature in the whole work of Cyril of Alexandria”, *Poreia Martyrias*, (2010), 114-125.

⁶⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, *In John gospel*, VII and VIII, PG 74, 81CD. E. Artemi, “The usage of the secular literature in the whole work of Cyril of Alexandria”, *Poreia Martyrias*, (2010), 120.

⁶⁹ Cyril of Alexandria, *In John gospel*, V, 1, PG 73, 721CD. E. Artemi, “The usage of the secular literature in the whole work of Cyril of Alexandria”, *Poreia Martyrias*, (2010), 119.



Generally, the archbishop of Alexandria praised the writings of the Greek gentiles in structure and flow of speech, but stressed that their teaching differed from that of the Scriptures. In the latter, there was only the light of the unique truth⁷⁰. Additionally Cyril expressed his admiration for the Attic language⁷¹, but he had realized that the divine truth was not ensured through the beautiful words but by illumination of the Spirit. Only then could he be correct theology and not become influenced to heretical teachings. He used the language of secular education as a coaching culture in the true Lord's admonition⁷².

He understood perfectly the simplicity and poverty of expressive resources that characterized the biblical language, but he did not look to estimate the Holy Bible for the beautiful way of speech, but because in its bosom there was hidden the treasure of divine truth⁷³. On the other hand as Alexandrian theologian he was trying to praise reputation of the Christian teaching against Greek philosophy, the latter was giving a touch of philosophical true. At the same time in his effort, it showed the influence which he had received from the Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy, mainly. Last traces can be detected in this apologetic work of Cyril of Alexandria "Against Julian"⁷⁴.

Another Egyptian saint, Isidore of Pelusium had a great respect for the secular sciences, provided they are illumined by Divine truth. He quoted extensively from Demosthenes, Plato, and Aristotle. He was also fond of Homer. Isidore had a wide-ranging interest in everything secular and Divine, in everything that concerned the world in which we live and in everything that concerned the Church into which we are baptized. His judgment is passed on the secular world as well as the world of the Church⁷⁵.

From the whole work of holy Isidore became obvious that the Egyptian saint had studied ancient literature and was largely influenced to language and style.

⁷⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Julian*, 7, PG76, 856D-857A

⁷¹ Ibid. PG76, 857C.

⁷² Ibid. PG 76, 857D, 860A.

⁷³ Cyril of Alexandria, *In First Epistle of Corinthians*, PG 74, 868B.

⁷⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Julian*, Sources Chrétiennes 322.

⁷⁵ G. Florovsky, *The Byzantine Ascetic and Spiritual Fathers*, trans. Raymond Miller, et al., Vol. 10 in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, Vaduz, Europa: Bieververtriebsanstalt, 1987, p. 191.



We can see this as the way in which they were expressed and in the words they were used, which in many cases were the same as those of ancient texts. The mode of expression of Isocrates, Aeschines, but above the orator Demosthenes was for Isidore worthy of emulation⁷⁶.

The study of ancient literature by Isidore had as result to be influenced by Attic language and style of the ancient writers. It seems, indeed, that he had studied several ancient writers, from Homer – as it was referred in some previous lines- through the Hellenistic Jew Philo. He had the ability to grow the subject, which concerned him, with an imperative in style, serious, self-confident, as to leave no room for contesting the writings of the recipients of his letters. He believed, moreover, that the inspired texts had simple vocabulary, because the divine wisdom was understood by all. The meanings of these texts were inspired by God, indicating that the inspiration⁷⁷.

In contrast to the secular wisdom, the Scriptures used varied vocabulary and complex wording language, but the meanings had been of no importance to man's salvation⁷⁸. The sophisticated form of language of secular wisdom must be accepted in the church if only it was used as a means of expression and interpretation of celestial meanings rather than the importation of arbitrary thoughts⁷⁹. Only in this case the role would have relation with divine teaching. They would be interrelated, as the body expressed the soul, or of the lyre was the way of expression for the player lyre⁸⁰.

In no way Isidore accepted that the secular wisdom could be used in order to distort or to supplant divine truth. He did not condemn the secular literature, but he did not give greater value than that of the rightfully should. Of course, He accepted that the Greek literature until that time was lower than the truths

⁷⁶ E. Artemi, *Isidore's of Pelusium the teaching for the Triune God and its relation to the teaching of Cyril of Alexandria*, Athens 2012, p. 87.

⁷⁷ Isidore of Pelusium, *Epistle IV*, 67 –*Theognosto Diacono*, PG 78, 1125A

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Isidore of Pelusium, *Epistle V*, 281 - *Petro Monaxonti*, PG 78, 1500D: «Δύναται γὰρ ὄργανον εἶναι τῆς ὑπερκοσμίου σοφίας ἢ εὐγλωττία, εἰ καθάπερ σῶμα ψυχῆ ὑποκέοιτο, ἢ ὥσπερ λύρα λυρωδῶ, μηδὲν μὲν οἴοθεν καινοτομοῦσα νεώτερον, ἐρμηνεύουσα δὲ τὰ οὐρανομήκη ἐκείνης (τῆς θείας σοφίας) ἐκείνης νοήματα».

⁸⁰ Ibid.

were expressed through the ecclesiastical and patristic writings⁸¹. He did not the fact that a Christian could benefit -as the way of thinking and building a phrase- from the works of secular literature. This view was in other Christian fathers that we had referred⁸².

Conclusions

Greek literature and themes dominated Roman writing until the mid-third century B.C., which is about a century after Alexander the Great had started the spread of Hellenism -- including the Greek Koine language -- throughout the vast areas that he had conquered. Greek was the language Roman aristocrats demonstrated to show their culture. The Christians adopted the Greek language and safeguarded a selection of philosophical and poetic texts. They distinguished the Greek philosophy from the Greek pagan theology. Christian Fathers had to decide just how much of Greek philosophy, they could safely incorporate into their own Christian theological and philosophical constructs⁸³.

As conclusion we can say that the Greek Church was persuaded that the study of the works of Hellenic wises was both effective and preferable⁸⁴, provided that the Christian turned down sinister things and sustained all that was righteous and real. Christianity adopted the Greek language and thought

⁸¹ Isidore of Pelusium, *Epistle II, 3 – Timotheo Anagnosti*, PG 78, 457C: «Ὅσον μὲν οὖν χρήσιμον εἰς τὴν καθ' ἡμᾶς φιλοσοφίαν ἐκ τῆς ἔξωθεν παιδεύσεως, ὡσπερ ἡ μέλιττα, δροσφάμενος (πολλὰ γὰρ, εἰ χρῆ τάληθῆ λέγειν, ἀρετῆς ἔνεκεν περιλοσοφῆκασι), τὸ λοιπὸν ἅπαν χαιρείν ἔα».

⁸² E. Artemi, *Isidore's of Pelusium the teaching for the Triune God and its relation to the teaching of Cyril of Alexandria*, Athens 2012, p. 89.

⁸³ C.D.C. Reeve, Patrick Lee Miller, ed. "Introductory Readings in Ancient Greek And Roman Philosophy"; with a general introduction by Lloyd P. Gerson, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis 2006, p. 6.

⁸⁴ Summarising the attitude of Church Fathers toward the Greek classics, Socrates says: "Greek literature certainly was never recognised either by Christ or his Apostles as divinely inspired, nor on the other hand was it wholly rejected as pernicious. And this they did, I conceive, not without serious thought. For there were many philosophers among the Greeks who were not far from the Knowledge of God; ... for these reasons they have become useful to all lovers of real piety... It is well known that in ancient times the Fathers of the Church by unhindered usage were accustomed to exercise themselves in the learning of the Greeks, until they had reached an advanced age: this they did with a view to improve themselves in eloquence and to strengthen and polish their mind, and the same time to enable to refute the errors of the pagans", Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.16.



because of the Greek cultural milieu and Hellenistic historical setting. As a whole, however, the Fathers of the Greek Church did not seek to borrow essence and content from ancient Greek thought, for these they possessed in their sacred Scriptures⁸⁵. The Church Fathers put together the best parts of Greek classical antiquity with the best of the teaching of Christian theology⁸⁶.

Nevertheless, in this effort, Christian revelation did not escape infiltration by Greek thought, and Greek cultural and intellectual influences became interwoven with Christian faith. It was Christianity's encounter with Hellenism that made the former a cosmopolitan religion. This relationship, not without periodic tensions, prevailed throughout the Byzantine millennium and centuries beyond. Long before modern anthropologists, philosophers, and theologians, these Church fathers confirmed that Greek culture is the outer garment of religion and religion is the heart of culture, which is the two are inseparable. In this manner, Hellenic heritage of literal texts can be considered part of our Church's heritage. The Christianity embraced the Greek classical texts while rejecting the Rejecting Pagan Cults⁸⁷.

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⁸⁵ D. J. Constantelos, *Christian Hellenism. Essays and Studies in Continuity and Change*, pub. by A. D. Caratzas, New Rochelle, New York & Athens 1998, p. 14

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, Oxford University Press, New York 2011, p. 7.



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