

Apuleius Christianus?
(*Arnobius Adversus nationes*)

Summary of Content

The work of elder Arnobius entitled *Adversus nationes* is in the centre of this paper, which is left to us in two manuscripts only. Researches so far now have also pointed out that apology has a special place in the Christian Literature of Latin language.

The paper studies two issues related to each other. On one hand it would like to provide a contribution to the intermediate situation, into which apology is placed between paganism and Christianity; on the other hand it finds an answer if there can be proved the connections between the *Adversus nationes* and the works of Apuleius. This question was also raised in the course of former researches in many terms, and several others addressed the possibility of connection between the two authors (MORESCHINI, FONTAINE), but no one has discussed this issue summarized so far.

The author of the latest comment (GIERLICH) precludes the possibility of the connection between Apuleius and Arnobius. There is only just a century between Arnobius and Apuleius. Augustine, living almost two hundred years later than Apuleius, refers to him the most frequently from the African authors therefore we should consider it as impossible that Arnobius, being a rhetorician, didn't have any connection with Apuleius' works, known as a wandering sophist, in some way.

This hypothesis is also supported by others. In addition that Arnobius was an African like Apuleius interpreting himself as *philosophus Platonicus*, Platon was the primary source of Arnobius as well. A lot of other problems result from the Christology of Arnobius. First of all, conclusions can be drawn referring to the concept of God of the apologist. In contrast to Fathers of the Christian Church, he doesn't see demons in pagan gods but gods of subordinate who are given their life and substance from the Christian God. Arnobius tends to regard any kind of being as god who was granted the gift of immortality from the Supreme God. In this way, human soul, attaining the knowledge from the Supreme God, also becomes god itself. Soul is of central importance for the apologist, the issue of soul is closely related to the concept of the gods and concept of god by Arnobius.

Discussing the possibility of relationship between the human soul of medium quality (*media qualitas*) and the demons known as *mediae potestates* at Apuleius, I argue for that that Arnobius could know the demonology system of Apuleius. On the basis of the facts known so far, the hierarchy of spiritual beings can be modified in a way that the Christ himself mediating between the Supreme God and humans is a *media potestas* as well, and in accordance with that demons are capable of taking the possession of the different grade in the hierarchy, the saved soul is graded higher along this spiritual ladder. In addition to these, Arnobius had two opinions on demons, however, he didn't harmonize the Christian and pagan interpretation, didn't attribute a great importance to this question because according to his view, demons are subordinated to the Supreme God such as pagan gods, and only one thing is important for him: to find salvation of the soul.

Considering the nature of soul, the former research already tried to connect Arnobius representing the view of Greek apologists with the territories of Greek language of the empire (Greek origin of the name, the immigrant family of Greek origin). This paper gives a new consideration to the issue: it presumes a relationship between the second sophistic coming from the territories of Greek language and Arnobius

In addition to the common origin and the Platonism, the third viewpoint is the common activity field on the basis of which the two authors are related to each other: Apuleius and

before his conversion Arnobius acted as rhetors as well. It can be said about the connection assumed between Arnobius and the second sophistic that the *Adversus nationes* is the string of the sophistical small genres (encomium, diatribe, ecphrasis, fictitious speech), which is considerably true in the case of the pagan books but it can be also noticed in the first two books of Christian content. Whereas the apologist runs against the sophistic practice, he uses himself consistently the tools of the second sophistic and applies it according to well thought-out viewpoints, obviously, to make his presentation more colourful.

It can be said in connection with the last book of the apology suggesting incompleteness as a contribution that the work is closed by the critique on the ideology of empire on the basis of which the work can be regarded as closed from Christian point of view. The presence of the pagan Chief God, Jupiter as a constant target is also can be considered as a consistent critique on the ideology of empire.

Aesculapius was also emphasized in connection with the finish of the apology whose two characters appear in the *Adversus nationes*. One is the god of the classic pagan cult whom Arnobius compares with Christ following the apologetic tradition. It became clear from the comparison of relating text places that the apologist calls Aesculapius' appearance to account with the same logic like Christ's incarnation. The two deities are in harmony considering only one thing: the *numen* is the same. It can be concluded from this that before his conversion the power of God of Aesculapius was of determinative importance for Arnobius as the deity of Christ after his conversion.

Besides the Platonism and the second sophistic, the Hermetism is the third intellectual trend on the basis of which I hypothesize the relationship between Apuleius and Arnobius. The hermetic tract of Latin language, the issue of *Asclepius* and its Apuleius' authority arose from this. This question can not be clarified even in the future, the connection can be also precluded between *Asclepius* and apology by Arnobius, however, the spiritual relationship, the desire for salvation, of which different forms are being, make connection between the two authors.

Apuleius was highly interested in the natural sciences, which proves the encyclopaedic character of his life-work. The interest on natural sciences can be noticed by Arnobius as well, which supports the apologetic intention.

The individuality of Arnobius' theology and anthropology is a mark of the considerable syncretism. He had a gap in his knowledge on Christian teaching considering fundamentally important issues. He knows the paganism better, which he attacks, than the Christianity, which he wants to prove. Not the creature of human being, not even the redemption is important for him, but the soul and salvation of the soul that the knowledge of God can provide by getting acquainted of Christ's teaching. Arnobius' aim is not different than to find the salvation of the soul therefore the apology can be mainly characterized as a specific soteriological alternative from the syncretic world of the 4th century AD.