
In Plato and Theodoret: The Christian Appropriation of Platonic Philosophy and the Hellenic Intellectual Resistance, Niketas Siniossoglou sets out to establish the contours of the late-antique conflict between Christians and Hellenes over the proper interpretation of Plato’s philosophy. In particular, Siniossoglou seeks to define the distinction between what he calls the “philosophical mode of interpretation,” characteristic of the Neoplatonic schools, and the “rhetorical mode” of the Christian apologists who sought to appropriate Plato in support of Christian doctrine over-against pagan religion and philosophy. He focuses specifically on the Graecarum Affectionem Curatio of Theodoret of Cyrrhus, a work of Christian apologetic that has been positively evaluated by modern scholarship as an articulate response to pagan philosophy. In his reading of Theodoret, Siniossoglou seeks to uncover the dynamics of his appropriation and transformation of Platonic terminology and concepts to get at just how he, and by extension, other Christian apologists, went about rewriting Plato as a supporter of the Judaeo-Christian worldview. To do this, the author attempts to hear Theodoret from the perspective of the intended audience of the Curatio, the Hellenic intellectual elite, so as to be attentive to the philosophical and cultural significance of the moves Theodoret makes with respect to the texts of Plato. In brief, Theodoret, from this point of view, seeks to fragment the Platonic philosophical corpus so as to render it incoherent as a whole and open it to his own selective retrieval of elements that accord with established Christian dogma. It is these retrieved and appropriated elements that Theodoret (echoing earlier Christian apologists) claims to be the authentic Platonic tradition, which derive from the Hebraic tradition, whereas the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato, Theodoret claims, is a corruption of this original intention of Plato.

The author uses the introduction to establish a hermeneutical framework for his project. First, he lays out a typical distinction between “philosophical” and “rhetorical” modes of interpretation. Philosophical interpretation is “exegetical” in that it seeks to clarify, without interpolations, the meaning (nous) of the text by

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