

The Watchers' Whispers: Athenagoras's *Legatio* 25,1-3 and the *Book of the Watchers*

Penultimate version of the article published in *Vigiliae Christianae* 61,3 (2007) 258-281.

Summary

The passage 25,1-3 in Athenagoras's *Legatio pro christianis*, a writing replete with Greek philosophical and mythological material, seems to represent a retelling of a Jewish narrative, both biblical and pseudo-epigraphic, namely the myth of the Watchers. A thorough investigation of the passage from *Legatio* discloses that Athenagoras's version of the myth is closest to the earliest form of the narrative, namely to the *Book of the Watchers*. At the same time, the Athenian introduces Greek philosophical terminology and problems within his retelling of the myth. However, the most significant discovery is the fact that Athenagoras, employing especially Stoic psychological terms, investigates the way the fallen angels act within the human souls. In this way, one may say that the Athenian internalized the myth and conferred on it a psychological analysis. He was probably the first to undertake this kind of investigation—before Clement, Origen, and especially Evagrius, the latter being the one who articulated the most elaborate analysis of the psychological effects of the demonic influences.

Keywords

Watchers, giants, fallen angels, demons, Enoch, Athenagoras of Athens, apology, apologist, irrational movements, soul, sympathy / affinity of the soul, thoughts, impression / representation, evil thoughts, inclination, rationality / free will, image, idol.

Several scholars argue that Athenagoras of Athens, a philosophically instructed Greek, sent a supplication on behalf of his fellow Christians to the emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius. The event seems to have taken place in the late seventies of the second

century A.D.¹ Among the abundant Greek philosophical and mythological material in the supplication, one encounters this passage of Jewish resonance:

These angels, then, who fell from heaven busy themselves about the air and the earth and are no longer able to rise to the realms above the heavens. The souls of the giants are the demons (δαίμονες) who wander about the world. Both angels and demons produce (ποιέω) movements (κινήσεις)—demons movements which are akin to the natures they received, and angels movements which are akin to the lusts (ἐπιθυμίας) with which they were possessed. The prince of matter, as may be seen from what happens, directs and administers things in a manner opposed to God's goodness ... But since the demonic impulses and activities (δαμονικαὶ κινήσεις καὶ ἐνέργειαι) of the hostile spirit (πνεῦμα) bring these wild attacks (ἄτακται ἐπιφοραί)—indeed we see them move men from within and from without, one man one way and another man another, some individually and some as nations, one at a time and all together, because of our kinship (σμπάθεια) with matter and our affinity with the divine ... But to the extent that it depends on the reason peculiar to each individual and the activity (ἐνέργεια) of the ruling prince and his attendant demons, one man is swept along (φέρεται καὶ κινεῖται) one way, another man another way, even though all have the same rationality (λογισμός) within.²

The roots of the passage seem to go back to the main story of the *Book of the Watchers*, one of the documents included in the Enochic collection known under the title of *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch* or *1 Enoch*.

¹ Regarding the temporal localization of the *Supplication*, L.W. Barnard argues for a date between 176 and 180 (*Athenagoras. A Study in Second Century Christian Apologetic* [Paris: Beauchesne, 1972] 19). Moreover, making room in discussion for a study on the imperial titles ascribed to Marcus Aurelius and his son Commodus, B. Pouderon even raises the hypothesis of a more precise date, namely A.D. 177 (ed. and tr. B. Pouderon, *Athénagore: Supplique au sujet des chrétiens et Sur la résurrection des morts* [SC 379; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1992] 23). For scholarship regarding Athenagoras's theological system, see F. Schubring, *Die Philosophie des Athenagoras* (Wiss. Beilage zum Programm des Koelnischen Gymnasiums, 1888); L. Richter, *Philosophisches in der Gottes- und Logoslehre des Apologeten Athenagoras von Athen* (1905); J. Geffcken, *Zwei griechische Apologeten* (1907); A. Puech, *Les Apologistes grecs du IIe siècle de notre ère* (1912); H.A. Lucks, *The Philosophy of Athenagoras: Its Sources and Value* (1936); J.H. Crehan, *Athenagoras* (ACW XXIII, 1956); A.B. Malherbe, "The Structure of Athenagoras' 'Supplicatio pro christianis,'" *Vigiliae Christianae* 23 (1969) 1-20; B. Pouderon, *Athénagoras d'Athènes, philosophe chrétien* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1989); B. Pouderon, *D'Athènes à Alexandrie: études sur Athénagore et les origines de la philosophie chrétienne* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval; Louvain: Editions Peeters, 1997); B. Pouderon, "Athénagore et la tradition alexandrine," in *Origeniana Octava*, Vol. 1, ed. L. Perrone (Leuven: Peeters, 2003) 201-19; B. Pouderon, *Les Apologistes grecs du IIe siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 2005) 205-7.

² Athenagoras, *Leg.* 25,1-3 in W.R. Schoedel's *Athenagoras: Legatio and De resurrectione* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) 61-3. For other translations, see C.C. Richardson's in *ECF* (London, 1953), J.H. Crehan's *Embassy for the Christians. The Resurrection of the Dead* (London: Longmans, 1956), and B.P. Pratten's in *ANF II*: 129-48. For the Greek text, I use in the present study Pouderon's version from SC 379, 1992. Cf. W.R. Schoedel's in *Athenagoras* and M. Marcovich's edition *Athenagoras, Legatio pro Christianis* (Berlin; New York: W. de Gruyter, 1990).

6:1/ When the sons of men had multiplied, in those days, beautiful and comely daughters were born to them. 2/ And the watchers, the sons of heaven, saw them and desired them. And they said to one another, "Come, let us choose for ourselves wives from the daughters of men, and let us beget children for ourselves." [...] 5/ Then they all swore together and bound one another with a curse. 6/ And they were, all of them, two hundred, who descended in the days of Jared onto the peak of Mount Hermon. [...]

7:1/ These and all the others with them took for themselves wives from among them such as they choose. And they began to go in to them, and to defile themselves through them, and to teach them sorcery and charms, and to reveal to them the cutting of roots and plants. 2/ And they conceived from them and bore to them great giants. And the giants begot Nephilim [...] 3/ They were devouring the labor of all the sons of men, and men were not able to supply them. 4/ And the giants began to kill men and to devour them. 5/ And they begin to sin against the birds and beasts and creeping things and the fish, and to devour one another's flesh. And they drank the blood.³

The present study suggests that beyond the overall similarities that one may discern between the two passages, the distinctive Athenagorian note consists of the insertion within the supplication narrative of a few Greek philosophical terms, most of them originating in Stoic psychology. These terms not only lend a philosophical color to the whole account, but also suggest that the Athenagorian fragment might represent the link between, or at least an important milestone on the way from the *Book of the Watchers* to the Evagrian *Treatise on the Various Evil Thoughts*. On the one hand, Athenagoras

³ 1 En. 6:1-7:5, in *1 Enoch. A New Translation*, eds. G.W.E. Nickelsburg and J.C. VanderKam (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004) 23-5. As the editors claim, "The Book of the Watchers probably took its present form by the mid- or late third century B.C.E." (*1 Enoch. A New Translation*, 3). For secondary literature, see for instance, J.T. Milik, "Turfan et Qumran: Livre des géants juif et manichéen," in *Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt*, eds. G.Jeremias, H.-W. Kuhn, and H. Stegemann (Göttingen, 1971) 117-27 ; D. Dimant, « *The Fallen Angels* » in *the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic Books Related to Them* (Ph.D. Thesis, Hebrew University, 1974); M. Delcor, "Le Mythe de la chute des anges et l'origine des géants comme explication du mal dans le monde dans l'apocalyptique juive. Histoire des Traditions," *RHR* 190 (1976) 3-53, 22-24 ; P. Hanson, "Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel and Euhemeristic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6-11," *JBL* 96 (1977) 195-233; G.W.E. Nickelsburg, "Apocalyptic and Myth in 1 Enoch 6-11," *JBL* 96 (1977) 383-405; D.W. Suter, "Fallen Angels, Fallen Priests. The Problem of Family Purity in 1 Enoch 6-16," *HUCA* 50 (1979) 115-35; J. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (The C.B.Q. Monograph Series 16; Washington: The Catholic Association of America, 1984); I. Fröhlich, "Les enseignements des veilleurs dans la tradition de Qumran," *RQ* 13 (1988) 177-87; M.J. Davidson, *Angels at Qumran. A Comparative Study of 1 Enoch 1-36, 72-108 and Sectarian Writings from Qumran* (Sheffield, 1992); P.S. Alexander, "Wrestling Against Wickedness in High Places: Magic in the Worldview of the Qumran Community," in *Qumran Fifty Years After*, eds. S.E. Porter and C.A. Evans (Sheffield, 1997) 319-30; A.M. Reimer, "Rescuing the Fallen Angels: The Case of the Disappearing Angels at Qumran," *DSD* 7 (2000) 331-53.

reshaped the Enochic narrative about Watchers, about their fall, and their influence on human conduct. On the other hand, Athenagoras descended into the domain of human psychology and investigated the way the fallen angels and their offspring act within the human soul. He was probably the first to undertake this kind of investigation, before Clement,⁴ Origen,⁵ and Evagrius,⁶ all of whom most likely followed, mediated or not, the Athenagorian project.⁷ Relying on this tradition about internal demonic influences and on the spiritual experience of the fathers of the desert, Evagrius will articulate, through philosophical terms, the most elaborate and organized examination of the internal processes inspired by the evil spirits.⁸ Nevertheless, the origins of Evagrius's enterprise

⁴ See, for instance, *Paed.* 3,3-15; *Protr.* 2,41; 3,42-4; *Str.* 2,20,114, *Eclogae* 46,1. See also F. Andres, "Engel- und Dämonenlehre des Klemens von Alexandrien," *RQ* 34 (1926) 129-40; 307-30.

⁵ For instance: *P.Arch.* 1,8,1; 3,2,4; 3,3,4; *C.Cels.* 1,31; 4,92-3; 6,69; 8,31; *Com.Lc.* 12; 35; *Com.Jn.* 13,59; *Hom.Jos.* 15,4-5; *Com.Ct.* 3-4 (for *διαλογισμοί* = *cogitationes*), and many others. See also J. Daniélou, "Démon: Dans la littérature ecclésiastique jusqu'à Origène," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, Vol. 3 (Paris, 1937-1967); F. X. Murphy, "Evagrius Ponticus and Origenism," in *Origeniana Tertia*, eds. R.P.C. Hanson and F. Crouzel (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985) 253-69; M. O'Laughlin, "Elements of Fourth Century Origenism: The Anthropology of Evagrius Ponticus and Its Sources," in *Origen of Alexandria*, eds. C. Kannengiesser and W.L. Petersen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988) 357-73; A. M. Castagno, "La demonologia di Origene: Aspetti filosofici, pastorali, apologetici," *Origeniana Quinta* (Leuven: Peeters, 1992) 320-5; G.S. Gasparro, "Eguaglianza di natura e differenza di condizione dei *logikoi*: la soluzione origeniana nel contesto delle formule antropologiche e demonologiche greche del II e III secolo," *Origeniana Quinta*, (Leuven: Peeters, 1992) 301-19; H. Crouzel, "Diabls et démons dans les homélies d'Origène," *BLE* 95 (1994) 303-31; G. Gould, "The Influence of Origen on Fourth-Century Monasticism: Some Further Remarks," *Origeniana Sexta* (Leuven: Peeters, 1995) 591-98; M. Peshty, "*Logismoi* origéniens – *logismoi* évagriens," *Origeniana Octava* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003) 1017-22.

⁶ The doctrine about the various kinds of influences that demonic spirits exert on the human soul is present almost everywhere in the Evagrian treatises. Thorough analyses occur especially in *The Prakticos*, *Antirrheticos*, *Treatise on Various Evil Thoughts*, or *The Chapters on Prayer*. See, for instance, A. Guillaumont's synthesis "Démon: Littérature monastique: Evagre le Pontique," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Vol. 3, 196-205; A. Guillaumont, *Les 'képhalaia gnostica' d'Evagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'Origénisme chez les grecs et chez les syriens* (Paris: Eds. du Seuil, 1962); A. Guillaumont, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien: pour une phénoménologie du monachisme* (Bégrolles en Mauges, Maine & Loire: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1979); A. Guillaumont, *Mélanges Antoine Guillaumont: contributions à l'étude des christianismes orientaux: avec une bibliographie du dédicataire* (Genève: P. Cramer, 1988); J.T. Lienhard, "On 'Discernment of Spirits' in the Early Church," *Theological Studies* 41 (1980) 505-29; G. Bunge, *Akedia: Die geistliche Lehre des Evagrius Pontikos vom Überdruss* (Köln: Luthe-Verlag, 1983); M. O'Laughlin, "The Bible, Demons and the Desert - Evaluating the Antirrheticus of Evagrius-Ponticus," *Studia Monastica* 34:2 (1992) 201-15; A. Diogenes, "Ascetic Theology and the Eight Deadly Thoughts: [Evagrius of Pontus' Teachings As Resource for Spiritual Regeneration]," *Evangelical Journal* 13 (1995): 15-21; A. Diogenes, "Ascetic Theology and Psychology," *Limning the Psyche* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 297-316; A. Louth, and J. Raft, *Wisdom of the Byzantine Church: Evagrius of Pontus and Maximus the Confessor. Four Lectures* (Columbia, Mo.: Department of Religious Studies, University of Missouri, 1998); A. Guillaumont, *Un philosophe au désert. Evagre le Pontique* (Paris: Vrin, 2004) 220-59.

⁷ Pouderon argues that Athenagoras, Clement, Origen, Eusebius, or Cyril shared various ancient Greek sources (see Pouderon, "Athénagore et la tradition alexandrine").

⁸ As one can see in the above note 6, scholars analyzed in great detail Evagrius's elaboration.

most probably lie on the Athenagorian *Legatio pro christianis*. For this reason, the following pages investigate the Athenagorian construction in its border-like character, in its two pivotal dimensions: the mythological-Jewish and the philosophical-Greek.

The Jewish and Jewish-Christian Context

As documentary evidence shows, the tradition about giants and Watchers was circulating in multiple versions during Athenagoras's lifetime. The most elaborate reports of the myth of Watchers and giants find expression in the version of the *1 (Ethiopic) Enoch* 1-36 (*Book of the Watchers*), in that of *Jubilees* 5,⁹ which preserves a very similar narrative in an extended form, and finally in that of *2 (Slavonic) Enoch* 18.¹⁰ Justin Martyr makes two references to the myth, in *1 Apology* 5,2 and *2 Apology* 5,3-5. In the first apology, which Justin produced in 154 or 155,¹¹ he took over the general lines of the Enochic narrative and identified the giants with "demons." In the second one, elaborated around 165,¹² he operated with the distinction between fallen angels and demons, conceiving of demons as the children of the fallen angels.¹³ Tatian in his *Oration to the Greeks* 7,3 also mentions that a certain "first-begotten one" (ὁ πρωτόγονος) became a demon and many other angels imitated him. Tertullian, too, proves to be acquainted with the myth of the

⁹ J.C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (CSCO 511; Leuven: Peeters, 1989). Cf. O.S. Wintermute's translation in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2, ed. J.H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985) 52-142. See also K. Berger, "Das Buch der Jubiläen," in *Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit. Bd. 2: Unterweisung in erzählender Form*, eds. W.G. Kümmel; H. Lichtenberger (Gütersloh, 1981) 273 – 576; J.C. VanderKam's "The Angel Story in the Book of Jubilees," in *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives: The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proceedings of the International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 12-14 January, 1997*, eds. E.G. Chazon and M.E. Stone (Leiden, New York, Köln, 1999) 151-170; G.W.E. Nickelsburg's "The Nature and Function of Revelation in 1 Enoch, Jubilees, and some Qumranic Documents," in *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives*, eds. E.G. Chazon and M.E. Stone, 91-119; M. Albani; eds. J. Frey and A. Lange, *Studies in the Book of Jubilees* (TSAJ 65; Tübingen, 1997).

¹⁰ A. Vaillant, *Le livre des secrets d'Enoch: Texte slave et traduction française* (Paris: Institut d'Études Slaves, 1952); F.I. Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol.1, ed. J.H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985 [1983]); A. Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2005).

¹¹ E.R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin the Martyr* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1968) 81.

¹² Ibid., 86. Cf. A. Wartelle, *Saint Justin, Apologies*. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, commentaire (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1987) 22 and 29-35.

¹³ Justin, *2 Ap.* 5. Barnard suggests that Justin follows a Jewish tradition also encountered in *Zohar on Gen.* 6:4; *R. Judah* (AD 200); *Pirq. de R. Elizer* 22; *Clem. Hom.* 6,18; Papias, *Fr.*4. According to this tradition the sons of the fallen angels are demons. On the contrary, Athenagoras seems to rely on more ancient materials such as 1 En. 15:3 and Jub. 4:22, where the children of the fallen angels are the giants (see Barnard, *Athenagoras*, 114).

fallen spirits who disclosed corrupt knowledge to humankind.¹⁴ Irenaeus's *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 18, elaborated almost one or two decades after Athenagoras's *Supplication*¹⁵ and retelling the story of *1 Enoch* 6-9 in its major lines, may represent an important witness for the widespread acceptance of the narrative of the Watchers among the Christian communities of the second century.¹⁶

One of the most interesting retellings of the Enochic story about the fallen angels, in particular its scenario of the fall, may be encountered in the eighth pseudo-Clementine homily.¹⁷ As a distinguishing mark, the original sin and thus the way evil entered the world are differently conceived than in both the tradition of Adam and Eve and the tradition of the Watchers: the original sin belongs to the whole humankind and consists of luxury and lack of the fear of God.¹⁸ In this context the angels of the lower rank asked to be sent on the didactic mission in which they would show to the humans the ways of holiness. Making use of their capacity of changing their substance and form, they transformed themselves into men, precious stones, and gold, as well as beasts and reptiles.¹⁹ However, changed into men in all respects, the angels partook of human lust and tasted fatal cohabitation with women. Making a possible reference to Psalm 103/104:4 and Hebrews 1:7 ("He makes his angels spirits and his servants flames of fire"), the anonymous author further explains how the weight of lust extinguished the heavenly fire in angels. Emptied of their power, the angelic creatures become unable to turn back to the first purity of their nature.²⁰ On the contrary, they advance in lustfulness and, wishing to please their mistresses, reveal the secrets of the earth and the cosmos: metals and precious stones, magic and astronomy, garments and jewels.²¹ Their offspring

¹⁴ Tertullian, e.g. *De anim.* 2; *De Virg. Veland.* 7; *Adv. Marc.* 5.18; *De idol.* 9.

¹⁵ Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. Joseph P. Smith (London, 1952) 6.

¹⁶ For other Irenaeic occurrences of the myth, see *Dem.* 27; *Haer.* 4,16,2, and 4,36,4.

¹⁷ Ps. Clem. *Hom.* 8,11-23 in *ANF VIII*: 272-5. Cf. F. Bovon and P. Geoltrain, *Ecrits apocryphes chrétiens II* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005) 1380-4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8,11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8,12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8,13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8,14. The disclosure of secrets represents an Enochic motif (cf. *1En.* 7-8). However, the reason of disclosure is different; while the Enochic material sets it as part of the diabolic plan of the Watchers, in the Clementine account the reason of disclosure is lustfulness. In general terms, since the fallen angels are not guilty for the original sin, the primary evil action that may be charged on the fallen angels is lustfulness.

are the giants and, as a sign of ultimate decadence, giants indulge themselves in drinking blood and eating human flesh.²²

The interesting fact is that all these accounts of the myth of the Watchers are different from the biblical ones and, keeping in mind the modified aspects of the myth, especially those of the pseudo-Clementine version, they are close to the Enochic narrative. Biblical materials such as Genesis 6:1-8, Numbers 13:33, and Deuteronomy 1:28; 2: 10, 21; 9:2 were most likely used in the Christian communities of the first centuries. While the text of Genesis 6 recounts the fornication of the sons of men (*h'lhym*) and mentions the presence of giants (*nplym*) on earth, the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy associate the giants with the terrestrial people of Anakites, the sons of Anak, the inhabitants of Hebron at the time when the Israelites came from Egypt; this association most likely reflects a different tradition. Several other fugitive references to the myth appear in Wisdom 14:6, Sirach 16:7, Baruch 3:26-8, *Testament of Reuben* 5:6, and *Testament of Naphtali* 3:5, and a larger remaking in Philo's *De Gigantibus* 6-18 and 58-61.²³

In *De Gigantibus* 16, Philo of Alexandria identifies souls with daemons and angels, considering them no more than different names of the same sort of animated reality distributed everywhere within the elements of the universe. However, some of these realities descended into bodies while others never consented to a union with any parts of the earth and devoted themselves to the service of the Father and Creator.²⁴ The descended animated realities seem to be Philo's reworking of the myth of the Watchers. For the Alexandrian, the evil ones cloak themselves under the name of angels and do not know the "daughters of right reason, the sciences and virtues (τὰς ὀρθοῦ λόγου θυγατέρας, ἐπιστήμας καὶ ἀρετάς, οὐκ εἰδότες), but court the pleasures which are born of men."²⁵ Furthermore, displaying in a clearer manner his allegorical reading of the myth, Philo envisions the giants as a particular species of human beings, the "born of earth" persons or the "sons of the earth," who hunt the bodily pleasures. On the contrary,

²² Ibid., 8,15.

²³ It might be worth mentioning that the short passage from the *Testament of Reuben* 5:6 charges the Watchers primarily with the crime of lustfulness similarly with the later eighth pseudo-Clementine homily. Another noticeable common element of the two writings would consist of angels' capacity of changing their form, especially into the human one.

²⁴ *De Gig.* 12, in *Philo II* (LCL, 1950).

²⁵ Ibid., 17-18.

the humans “born of heaven” are concerned with the pleasures of the mind (νοῦς), i.e., with arts, sciences, and moral life. Finally, the humans “born of God,” namely priests and prophets, direct their interest beyond the sensible world towards the realm accessed only noetically.²⁶

Athenagoras’s Reading of the Enochic Story through Greek Cosmological Notions

While it is reasonable to assume that Athenagoras could have had a direct or mediated access to a part of these materials, the following question arises naturally: why did he appropriate the Enochic report? Since the cases presented above lead to the hypothesis that the Enochic version of the myth circulated widely among Christian writings of the first three centuries and there is no evidence of their polemic with the biblical account, the Enochic material seems to have been read as a sort of explanation of the biblical passages. A constant feature, however, among the mentioned Christian documents seems to consist in a literal, non-allegorical reading, to which may be added a certain freedom in re-working the details of the Enochic narrative. None of these theologians confers to this narrative a treatment through philosophical terminology.

Plot or carelessness? Athenagoras, in his turn, chooses the Enochic account from all the diverse reports about the fall of the Watchers, and, in a manner similar to that of his Christian fellows, does not show much reverence to this account.²⁷ From his perspective, angels had the task of administrating the universe; more accurately, they were charged to exercise *providence* (πρόνοια) on the things that God had set in order²⁸ and to manage the *matter* (ὕλη) and its *forms* (εἶδη).²⁹ It is significant that, by inserting these Greek philosophical terms into the narrative, Athenagoras offers a new semantic input to an old tradition about the task of the angels, a tradition that also finds expression

²⁶ Ibid., 60: οἱ μὲν γῆς, οἱ δὲ οὐρανοῦ, οἱ δὲ θεοῦ γεγόνασιν ἄνθρωποι. In *Leg. All.* 2,72 ff. and 3,66 ff. the serpent of the book of Genesis is also interpreted, in a similar allegorical manner, as the human desire (ἡδονή) for material things, which induces passions into the human soul.

²⁷ Pouderon, *Athénagoras d’Athènes*, 149-153.

²⁸ *Leg.* 24,3.

²⁹ Ibid., 24,2; 25,5. For a short introduction into the philosophical tradition of the terms ‘matter,’ ‘forms,’ ‘providence,’ from Plato and Aristotle to the Neo-Platonists, see for instance F. E. Peters’s *Greek Philosophical Terms* (New York: New York University Press, 1967). It seems that Athenagoras, though considered a Platonist by some scholars (see, e.g., Lucks, *The Philosophy*, 33-37, Malherbe, “The Structure,” 1), takes forms to lie within the things, similarly to the tradition originated in Aristotle.

in *1 Enoch* 60:12-22, 75:1-9, 80:1-8, *2 Enoch* 19:1-4, *Jubilees* 2:2 or Papias.³⁰ Angels, according to this tradition, personify celestial overseers and ministers of the various cosmic elements such as the sun, moon, stars, rains, winds, and their circular movements in the universe. Similarly, the duty of the angels is to supervise seasons, rivers, fruits, and any sort of food.

According to the Athenagorian version of the narrative, some of the angels manifested carelessness (ἀμέλεια)³¹ in their duty and desired terrestrial virgins. The fruits of this celestial affair were the giants: an ethical lesson that a monstrous outcome follows an outrageous act.³² Together with the souls of the giants, they stand for demons and represent both the agent and origin of evil.³³ As L. W. Barnard observed, Athenagorian theology does not connect the origin of evil in the world with the fall of Adam and Eve, but with this account about the fallen angels.³⁴

Nevertheless, Athenagoras once more modifies the story. The Enochic report informs that the Watchers, under the leadership of Shemihazah, actually plotted against God.³⁵ However, there is no mention of the carelessness in their providential duty, in the Enochic corpora. On the contrary, the Watchers purposely descended to earth giving birth to every evil thing from sorcery and charms (7:1), weaponry (8:1) and cutting the roots to astrology, knowledge of the signs, and observing the stars and the course of the sun and the moon (8:3). Their time was one of “much bloodshed on the earth,” “ungodliness and violence” (9:1). Succinctly said, they revealed to the humankind every sort of evil deed (9:8) and “the whole earth was filled with iniquity” (9:9). Nevertheless, Athenagoras,

³⁰ See *Fr.* 12, after Andreas of Caesarea, in *Apocalypsin* c.34, serm.12, where the manager angels are the fallen ones, i.e., the Watchers (in U.H.J. Körtner and M. Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente. Hirt des Hermas* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998] 64).

³¹ Athenagoras, *Leg.* 24,5.

³² Athenagoras, *Leg.* 24,6.

³³ *Ibid.*, 25.1. Cf. *1 En.* 15:8-9 where giants are called ‘evil spirits’ who came out of their bodies. While at 15:10 they are called the ‘spirits of the earth,’ at 15:11 their title is that of the ‘spirits of giants.’

³⁴ Barnard, *Athenagoras*, 117-8. See also L.T. Stuckenbruck’s “The Origins of Evil in Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition: The Interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4 in the Second and Third Centuries B.C.E.,” in *The Fall of the Angels*, eds. C. Auffarth and L.T. Stuckenbruck (Leiden: Brill, 2004) 87-118. Pouderon analyzed Athenagoras’s view on the relationship between matter and evil, which are intimately connected, as in the whole Platonic tradition. On the contrary, for Athenagoras, God made himself flesh without the element of desire. For this reason Pouderon is inclined to place the origin of evil (in Athenagoras) not in the flesh but in the carnal influences (*Athénagoras d’Athènes*, 171-7, esp. 175). Sometimes matter seems to be, for Athenagoras, just the medium through which the evil Prince of matter who resides around matter operates against the human soul (e.g. *Leg.* 24 ff.). In this scenario, matter is not evil *per se*.

³⁵ *1 En.* 6:2-7. Cf. *Sib. Or.* 1,98; 1,123.

instead of providing this detailed table of evil actions, investigates the psychological processes that the Watchers induce into the human mind.

A different text, the *Testament of Reuben* 3:3-6, may also be connected with the theme of the internal operations of the evil spirits. The author of the testament associates the wicked *spirits*, in number of seven, with the seven, probably capital, *vices*.³⁶ This text thus witnesses to the Hellenistic phenomenon of cultural syncretism, in which Greek and Jewish terms and images function together as semantic tools within the same text. As for Athenagoras, one may reasonably affirm that he also was part of, and offered his personal contribution to, this phenomenon.

The leader of the rebels: Shemihazah, the Serpent, or the Prince of Matter?
Another Athenagorian Greek terminological insertion within the story may be noticed if one focuses attention on the leader of the fallen angels. While Justin, for instance, called the leader “serpent, Satan, and devil,”³⁷ terms belonging to the Jewish language and imagery, Athenagoras entitled this character the “Prince of matter and the forms in it” (ὁ τῆς ὕλης καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ εἰδῶν ἄρχων),³⁸ the “spirit around/about the matter,” (τὸ περὶ τὴν ὕλην πνεῦμα),³⁹ the “ruling prince” (ὁ ἐπέχων ἄρχων),⁴⁰ or the “material spirit” (ὕλικὸν πνεῦμα) as opposed to the “pure” (καθαρόν)⁴¹ or “heavenly” (οὐράνιον)⁴² one. This distinction between the spirit of matter and the pure or celestial spirit recalls the tradition of the two spirits, now in a mixture of biblical Jewish and mythological Greek flavors.⁴³

³⁶ Cf. Evagrius’s *De octo spiritibus malitiae*, where the author explains how wicked spirits cause the human vices. For the number of eight spirits and thoughts, see for instance Guillaumont, *Un philosophe*, 214-5.

³⁷ *I Ap.* 28.1.2: ὄφις καλεῖται καὶ σατανᾶς καὶ διάβολος. See also Theophilus’s remark that Satan or the demon is a revolted angel (*Ad Aut.* 2.28).

³⁸ *Leg.* 24,5,4. Cf. 24,6; 25,1 and also see ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου in *Jn.* 12:31 and *1 Jn.* 5:19.

³⁹ *Leg.* 24,2,16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 25,4,6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 27,1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 31,4,12.

⁴³ The ‘two-spirits’ theme appears in the *Community Rule* at Qumran 1QS 3:17-25 and the *Testament of Judah* 20:1. The ‘two-spirits’ language has strong connections with the imagery of the ‘two-ways’ and of the ‘two-inclinations,’ both of them part of ancient mentalities ranging from Babylon to Egypt and Greece, as G.-H. Baudry shows in his book *La voie de la vie. Étude sur la catéchèse des Pères de l’Église* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1999). The idea of two inspiring divinities seems to exist also in the Greek and Latin cultures, as in the oracle cited by Lydus. The name of these divinities was that of δαίμονες or *manes* (P. Boyancé, “Les deux démons personnels dans l’Antiquité grecque et latine,” *Revue de philologie*, 1935,

Punished at the final judgment or addicted to matter? A different aspect of the story underlines the theme of the punishment ascribed to the evil agents for their horrific deeds. For Athenagoras, the consequence of the Watchers' original act of desiring earthly virgins was their imprisonment within the domain of atmosphere and earth. While the sapiential tradition of Wisdom 14:6 and Baruch 3:26-28 speaks about the vanishing of the giants, the *Book of the Watchers* does not make any mention of such an event. Only chapter 67 of *1 Enoch*, part of the *Book of Similitudes*, written probably in the first century BC, offers a description of the last judgment and of the punishment of the fallen angels.

Jubilees 5:6 then portrays the fallen angels as sent to the earth rather than plotting against God or manifesting carelessness in their duty. While the account of *Jubilees* does not bring up the sin of the Watchers, it is said that the other angels of heaven received the mission to "tie them up in the depths of the earth."⁴⁴

Nonetheless, Athenagoras, instead of taking into discussion the issue of judgment, preferred to talk about a special binding, of a psychological nature, that inhibits any ascent of the fallen angels and keeps them bound to the earth.⁴⁵ Jean Daniélou noticed that Christian documents such as Ephesians 6:12 or *Ascension of Isaiah* 10:29-30 preserved a different Jewish tradition, similar with Athenagoras's, namely that the fallen angels received the punishment of residing in the air or atmosphere. On the contrary, Christian writers such as Papias, Justin, and Tatian preserved another tradition, which claims that actually the first firmament was the postlapsarian place for the imprisonment of the fallen angels.⁴⁶ As Athenagoras mentions the air and the earth (25,1), he probably mixed the traditions attested in Ephesians and *Ascension of Isaiah* with that of *1 Enoch*. In *1 Enoch* 15:10 one can encounter the clear-cut distinction between the "spirits of the earth" (i.e., the Watchers) and the "spiritual beings of heaven" (i.e., the angels).

189-202). For Athenagoras, the terms δαίμων and πνεῦμα appear to be almost synonymous as one can see in *Leg.* 25,1-3, quoted above.

⁴⁴ Jub. 5:6, in VanderKam's translation. As VanderKam states, "it now seems safe to claim that the Book of Jubilees was written between years 170 and 150 B.C. (VanderKam, "Introduction," in *The Book of Jubilees*, vi).

⁴⁵ One can further see in the present study that Athenagoras designated this binding, in the case of human beings, with the Stoic term συμπάθεια.

⁴⁶ Daniélou, "Démon," 165. Cf. H. Bietenhard, *Die himmlische Welt* (Tübingen 1951) 209-21 and H. Rahner, "Erdgeist und Himmelgeist," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 13 (1945) 237-75.

However, in this case again, Athenagoras imprints the story with his Greek philosophical seal, since in *Legatio* 24,2,6 he portrays the fallen powers as concerned with, or even residing around, matter (περὶ τὴν ὕλην ἐχούσας) and operating through it (δι' αὐτῆς).

Athenagoras's Elaboration of the Narrative through Psychological Terminology

1. *The Theory of the Irrational Movements of the Soul*

Although a Christian philosopher from Athens, Athenagoras did not dismiss the narrative about the Watchers as purely symbolical. The Watchers, therefore, had to have an ontological, not only symbolical, substance.⁴⁷ Athenagoras articulated his peculiar treatment of the narrative through philosophical terminology in several distinct theories, which will constitute the subject of the following pages.

Before Athenagoras, Justin approached the matter of the internal movements that the demons may produce. For Justin, demons try to subdue humans by deceiving strategies, “sometimes by appearances in dreams, and sometimes by magical impositions.”⁴⁸ But according to Athenagoras, demons induce other types of movements (κινήσεις) and activities (ἐνέργειαι) within the human souls as well, sometimes in an individual (καθ' ἕνα), sometimes in a whole nation (κατὰ ἔθνη).⁴⁹

Studying the meaning of the Stoic concept of “internal movements,” Richard Sorabji pointed out Seneca's distinction between three kinds of emotions or passions

⁴⁷ Athenagoras, *Leg.* 24,5.

⁴⁸ Justin, *1 Ap.*14. For non-Jewish or Jewish-Christian contexts, especially for the Greek world, Plutarch should be mentioned for the idea that the daemons are active in feasts and religious ceremonies (*De Def. Orac.* 13, 417a. Cf. Albinus, *Epit.* 15,2). However, on ethical and daily levels, the theme of the two daemons, which P. Boyancé claims has roots in the Pythagorean tradition (Boyancé, “Les deux démons,” 189-202), is more important. It might be encountered in Athenagoras's time in one of his contemporaries, Numenius of Apamea. In *Fr.* 37 (preserved from his original *On the Incorruptibility of the Soul* in Proclus's *In Tim.* 1,76, 30-77) Numenius claims that daemons may be good or bad and they may be classified in three categories: divine, relational, and those destroying the souls (É. des Places, *Numénius: Fragments* [Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1973]). However, Athenagoras seems to be the first to investigate the evil psychological influence of the daemons in the context of the Enochic story. In fact, Numenius claims that matter is the source of the evil in the human soul: τῆ ψυχῆ τὸ κακὸν, ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς ὕλης (*Ibid.*, *Fr.* 49b).

⁴⁹ Athenagoras, *Leg.* 25,3.

(*adfectus*, which translates the Greek πάθη).⁵⁰ Galen gives witness that Chrysippus defined emotion as “an irrational movement of the soul contrary to nature.”⁵¹ The scheme of the three kinds of emotions that Seneca expounded in his *On Anger* 2.4.1 was in fact an attempt at harmonizing the previous Stoic positions. According to the Senecan scheme, the first type of emotions, or the first movement (*primus motus*)⁵² of the mind, is involuntary, cannot be avoided by reason, and affects even the wise.⁵³ The aspect which is worthy of notice at this first stage of the scheme consists in the fact that the first movement of the soul is not ethically good or bad, but neutral. On the contrary, “in the second stage,” as Sorabji explains, “the mind assents to the appearance of injustice,” and, in this way, a “moral mistake of reason”⁵⁴ will take place. Finally, the third stage of Seneca’s scheme is that of the uncontrolled (*impotens*) mind, which “has overthrown (*evicit*) reason.” Sorabji observes as well that this third stage “corresponds to Chrysippus’ talk of disobeying reason and turning away from it.”⁵⁵ Treatises

The first movement needs further attention since, as Sorabji claims, Origen made a “decisive change” in the theory of the first movements of the mind by connecting them with evil thoughts (λογισμοί, [lat. *cogitationes*]).⁵⁶ For the Alexandrian theologian, therefore, the term “first movement” acquired a negative connotation and its ethical neutrality vanished. Athenagoras develops a similar doctrine to that elaborated by Origen. In order to understand Athenagoras’s position, it is necessary to have recourse to a

⁵⁰ R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind. From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford 2000) 61ff.

⁵¹ Galen, *PHP*. 4,2,8, p.240 de Lacy, from Sorabji, *Emotion*, 60.

⁵² In his *On Anger*, Seneca refers to the first internal movement with the following terms: *primus ictus animi* (2,2,2); *movet mentes* (2,2,4); *animum impellunt* (2,3,1); *motus animi* (2,3,4); *prima agitatio animi* (2,3,5); *primus motus* (2,4,1); *primus animi ictus* (2,4,2). As Sorabji noticed, the roots of the idea of the first movement of the mind can be also encountered in Zeno, Plutarch, or Cicero (Sorabji, *Emotion*, 67).

⁵³ Seneca, *On Anger*, 2,4,1-2; 2,2,2.

⁵⁴ Sorabji, *Emotion*, 61.

⁵⁵ Ibid. According to Sorabji, Seneca undertook his synthesis as an attempt at harmonizing Chrysippus’ and Zeno’s positions (Ibid., 55-65).

⁵⁶ Sorabji, *Emotion*, 346. Cf. Origen, *P.Arch.* 3,2,2-4; *Hom.Jos.* 15,3; *Com. Mt.* 21; *Com.Ct.* 3; *Com.Ps.* 54,5. One should also keep in mind that, for Origen, thoughts (*cogitationes*) as first movements (*primi motus*) can also come from God or angels and they are evil just when they come from the adverse spirits (*P.Arch.* 3,2,4). Origen mentions in *Peri Archon* 3,2,2-3 such natural movements (*naturales motus*) as sexuality, anger, or sorrow, which do not seem to be evil as long as they do not exceed the bounds of natural measure (*naturalis mensura*) and moderation (*temperantia*). Moreover, the second homily on the Song of Songs commences with the affirmation that the movements of the soul are good by nature. The idea of first movement as a demonic attack will be present in many ascetical and mystical Christian treatises, especially those included in the well-known collection of the *Philokalia*, and sometimes considered not an ethical error (e.g. Mark the Ascetic, *The Spiritual Law* 141, etc.).

perspective different from the philosophical one: namely, the above-mentioned idea of ‘two inclinations’ and ‘two spirits,’ especially in its biblical form. Jean Daniélou’s explorations may bring a deeper insight for understanding the doctrine of διαλογισμοί in Origen’s theology. The French scholar studied this doctrine from the prism of the Jewish tradition of the ‘two inclinations’ (*yšr*, from Genesis 6:5 or 8:21, rendered in Greek by διαβούλιον [resolution, decision, deliberation] in the *Septuagint* and by *concilium* in the *Vulgate*). *Yšr* denotes the inclination of the human heart either towards good or towards evil actions.⁵⁷ The idea was also present in Sirach 15:14 and 37:3 and had later developments in the *Talmud* (Qidd 30b) and *Pirke Aboth* 4:2.⁵⁸ It is remarkable that the *Testament of Asher* 1:3-6, in referring to the two opposite inclinations, employed the same term of διαβούλιον as the Greek texts of Sirach 15:14 and 37:3. Furthermore, A. and C. Guillaumont associate the Evagrian concept of λογισμός with the same biblical *yšr* through the tradition of the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* and Origen’s *Homilies in Joshua*.⁵⁹

The *yšr* doctrine is significant for the present study as far as it excludes from the very beginning the ethical neutrality, and Origen gave a Greek philosophical treatment to this old Jewish tradition. He ascribed to the Jewish conception of inclination to evil (*yšr* / διαβούλιον) the Stoic term of διαλογισμός (*cogitatio* [lat.], λογισμός for Evagrius),⁶⁰ the term used for denoting the first movement of the soul, but removed its neutral character. Consequently, both *yšr* and διαλογισμός, though not synonymous, exhibit several similarities. Both are not ethically neutral, but denote a human intention or commitment either towards the evil or towards the good. Consequently, it appears that the Jewish tradition of *yšr*, Origen (e.g. *P.Arch.* 3,2,4), and Athenagoras (e.g. *Leg.* 24,4

⁵⁷ Daniélou, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Vol. 3, 152-89. *Yšr* may also signify ‘council’ as in Job 18:7 (βουλή in LXX) or ‘thought’ as in 1 Chr. 29:15 (διάνοια in LXX, which echoes Genesis 6:5 where *yšr* is rendered through τις διανοείται [ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ]).

⁵⁸ The Greek term used in the passages from the Book of Sirach is διαβούλιον. A. & C. Guillaumont observed that the word employed in the Syriac version is *yašrā*, while the Hebrew manuscript from Cairo Genizah has *yšr*; see A.& C. Guillaumont, *Évagre le Pontique. Traité pratique ou le moine* (SC 170:1; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1971) 60-3 who base their argumentation on I. Lévi’s *L’Écclésiastique ou La Sagesse de Jésus, fils de Sira*, Vol.2 (Paris 1901), 110-1.

⁵⁹ Guillaumont, *Évagre le Pontique*, 60.

⁶⁰ The term διαλογισμός also appears in Plato, *Axiochos* 367a, Strabon 284, Stobaeus 2,7,10c, Chrysippus, *SVF* 2,890; 891; 911; Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.9.10; 4.2.4; 4.4.48; *Ench.* 24.1. The term λογισμός occurs in Chrysippus and Epictetus as well.

and 25,4) presuppose implicitly or explicitly that free will is a cardinal player in human intentionality.⁶¹

Athenagoras, before Origen, elaborated a theory of psychological processes with no place for ethical neutrality. For the Athenian theologian, the evil in the human soul seems to originate in two distinct sources, the first one is external and comes from the “shocks / attacks” (ἐπιφοραί)⁶² that the wicked spirits infuse into the mind. Athenagoras also calls the effects of these attacks “irrational movements” (ἄλογοι κινήσεις)⁶³ – with one of Chrysippus’s expressions – and “activities / operations” (ἐνέργειαι), and qualified them as “demonic,” for their coming from an adverse spirit.⁶⁴ The second source of interior evil is internal and consists in human affinity and deliberation (22,12; 24,4), which are not ethically neutral. The next section of the present study is dedicated to their analysis.

In general terms Athenagoras sets the irrational and demonic processes of mind in opposition to that of contemplation (θεωρία) of the Truth and to that of the intuition of the Father (περινόησις τοῦ πατρὸς). According to him, the human mind (νοῦς) and reason (λόγος) have the capacity of comprehension (κατάληψις; 10,1) and intuition (περινόησις) of God.⁶⁵ Hence there are two opposite ways in which the human mind may operate: evil internal movements *versus* contemplation of the divine. It seems that this strong disjunction does not leave room for the ethical neutrality of the mind.

2. The Theory of συμπάθεια: A Phenomenology of Human Mind's Affinity

⁶¹ For the connection between λογισμός and προαίρεσις (‘deliberation’ or ‘choice’), see Aristotle’s *Metaph.* 1015a.33. Λογισμός and διαλογισμός, therefore, encompass deliberation and choice, and this Greek philosophical aspect should not be overlooked during the course of this discussion.

⁶² Athenagoras, *Leg.* 25,3. It might be worth mentioning that later Porphyry will talk about the brutal and surprising negative attacks of the daemons (*De Abst.* 2,39,4).

⁶³ Athenagoras, *Leg.* 27,1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 25,3: αἱ ἀπὸ τοῦναντίου πνεύματος δαιμονικαὶ κινήσεις καὶ ἐνέργειαι. Cf. 27,1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 27,2. For περινόησις, see 23,7 where the term comes in association with the notion of ‘Truth’ (ἀλήθεια, i.e., God, probably the Son), a divine title different from that of ‘Father’. As in *Leg.* 27,2 the faculty of θεωρία is associated with the Truth, one may suppose that περινόησις and θεωρία have, if not a synonymous, then a similar meaning. As Clement of Alexandria testifies, Posidonius viewed the ultimate goal of existence as “to live contemplating the truth of all” (τὸ ζῆν θεωροῦντα τὴν τῶν ὅλων ἀλήθειαν) is present in Posidonius (see *Str.* 2,21,129,4; cf. *Posidonius. Volume I: The Fragments*, eds. L. Edelstein and I.G. Kidd [Cambridge 1972], *Fr.* 186).

Each of these two ways in which the human mind may operate depends on a special sort of previous “inclination” or affinity of the mind. In its turn, the “inclination” does not appear to be ethically neutral and Athenagoras offers several indications for upholding its lack of neutrality. In this context, an analysis of his concept of συμπάθεια (affinity, attachment, co-affection, kinship)⁶⁶ may lead to the conclusion that this concept plays a similar function to that of the biblical concept of ‘inclination’.

The term of συμπάθεια also derives from Stoic vocabulary and suffered semantic reshaping under Athenagoras’s pen. F.E. Peters observed that the Stoic theory of συμπάθεια has deep roots in a series of premises that the Greek philosophy shared from its very beginning.⁶⁷ While Milesians, for instance, conceived the world as a living entity, Pythagoreans envisaged it as an ordered whole. Plato, in his turn, in *Timaios* 30d, also regarded the *kosmos* as a living being. On the basis of these theoretical constructs, Stoics proposed the conception of the *kosmos* as a unity (D.L. 7,140), rational being (ζῶον λογικόν; *SVF* 1,111-4), and organism/whole (ὄλον; *Med.* 7,13). For the philosophers of the Stoa the *kosmos* was not a totality (πᾶν; *SVF* 2,522-4) of disparate things, but rather an organism where every thing was in a strong inter-connection with the others, connection that they used to call συμπάθεια. Posidonius was the one who synthesized the Stoic conceptions on the interactions or affinities between the parts of the universe.⁶⁸

Nonetheless, Epicurus, in his *Letter to Herodotus* and within the theoretical context of his atomism, had represented things as organisms and envisioned συμπάθεια as the interaction that holds each organism as a whole. Through the same concept, he also qualified as sympathy the interrelation between the human soul and body, and that between the components of external things as well.⁶⁹ Moreover, one should not overlook

⁶⁶ *Leg.* 25,3: ἡ πρὸς τὰ θεῖα συμπάθεια. Cf. *Leg.* 7,2; 22,12; 27,1; *Res.* 15,2-3; 21,4 (esp. for the affinity for material things).

⁶⁷ Peters, “Sympatheia,” in *Greek Philosophical Terms*.

⁶⁸ See for instance *Fr.* 106 from the edition of Edelstein and Kidd. For modern scholarship, see K. Reinhardt, *Kosmos und Sympathie. Neue Untersuchungen über Poseidonios* (München: C.H. Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1926) or A.A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974) chap. “The Problem of Posidonius,” 216-21, and J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists. 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977) chapter “Posidonius,” 106-113.

⁶⁹ Epicurus, *Epistula ad Herodotum*, in Epicuro, *Opere* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973). For the interaction between soul and body, see 63,7 and 64,10. For that between the parts of the external things, see 48,10; 50,2; 52,7; and 53,1.

the presence of this doctrine among the Neopythagoreans and in the Egyptian magical texts (e.g. Bolus of Mendes in the second century BC)⁷⁰ as well as in the mystery religions.⁷¹

An emblematic semantic development emerges in the mystery cults and Posidonius's system when the idea of affinity is developed in an anthropologic direction. On the one hand, the initiand in the mysteries has to empathize with the suffering god in order to receive salvation. On the other hand, according to Posidonius, there is an affinity between human beings and deity on the basis of some 'elements' which humans share with the deity.⁷²

Sharing this anthropologic development, Athenagoras conceives of συμπάθεια as the connection between the human soul and an external instance, either matter or the divine things. Since matter is the dwelling place of the demons,⁷³ the consequence of having an affinity (συμπάθεια) for matter consists in the emergence of irrational movements within the mind. In the tractate *On Resurrection*, ascribed to Athenagoras, one can find explicitly expressed the idea that the body with its material leanings draws the soul to affinity for material things.⁷⁴ On the contrary, the affinity for divine things (τὰ θεία; *Leg.* 25,3) will entail good behaviors (πράξεις ἀγαθαί; *Ib.* 11,4), moderate life (μέτριος βίος; *Ib.* 12,1), intuition of the truth (νοῆσαι τὴν ἀλήθειαν; *Ib.* 7,2), and Father's adoption (*Ib.* 11,2, citing Mt 5:45). While in *Leg.* 7,2, for another instance, Athenagoras speaks about sympathy for God's breath (πνοή), a few pages further (*Leg.* 22,12) he makes use of the expression "sympathy for the heavenly realm" (οὐράνιος τόπος).

While a negative connotation of the term συμπάθεια, as affinity for material things, appears only in *De resurrectione* 21,4, the *Supplication* comes with various synonymous terminologies. In *Legatio* 25,3 Athenagoras states that the degree of the

⁷⁰ See the book *On Affinities and Antipathies*. Cf. P. Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic. Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1995), esp. 298-300, 335-8.

⁷¹ S. Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity. A Study in the Religious Background of Early Christianity* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925) 117-21.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 48-9 for Posidonius; for affinity in mysteries, see 58-62, 117-21, 229.

⁷³ Athenagoras, *Leg.* 24,2; 25,1; 27,2.

⁷⁴ *Res.* 21,4. Scholars are divided in their opinion on the paternity of this tractate. In his critical edition, M. Marcovich, though ascribing the date of the tractate to the end of the second century A.D., denies Athenagoras's authorship. See *Athenagorae qui fertur De resurrectione mortuorum*, edidit M. Marcovich (*Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 53; Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000).

demonic attacks depends either on the human “material reasoning” (κατὰ τὸν τῆς ὕλης λόγον) or on the affinity (συμπάθεια) for the things divine. Another expression which reflects human inclination towards material things is “to look down towards the earthly things” (κάτω πρὸς τὰ ἐπίγεια βλέπειν).⁷⁵ This attention ascribed to sensible things leaves an open way to opinions instead of truth, which may be reached only through the contemplation of the divine.⁷⁶ Moreover, in the process of perception of the sensible things, especially seeing the statues of idols, the human soul receives (προσβαλοῦσα) the “spirit of matter” and mingling (ἐπισυγκραθεῖσα) with it.⁷⁷

Every human person manifests, therefore, various inclinations in different degrees either toward matter or toward God. In other words, the Athenian philosopher and theologian took over a cosmological term from the Stoic vocabulary and articulated a phenomenology of human intentionality. Sympathy seems to be the first mental act, an intention oriented toward an external instance or reference. Human being is endowed with the mental power to control the orientation of sympathy, and this mental power of decision bears the name of “reason, rationality” (λογισμός) or “free will” (αὐθαίρετον).⁷⁸ Although from many perspectives under Stoic influence, Athenagoras committed himself as a partisan of the free will as long as in his view every human being is in possession of mental capacities of λογισμός and αὐθαίρετον, and thus able to make a deliberate choice. He explicitly states in *Legatio* 24,4 that human beings have the freedom to choose between virtue and vice. In fact, at least for some of the Stoics (e.g. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius), every individual has a center of autonomy which is called ἡγεμονικόν, i.e., the

⁷⁵ *Leg.* 26,1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 27,1-2. The Platonic epistemological framework transpires in this passage: while the truth is connected with the noetic and eternal ideas, opinion belongs to the sensible and perishable things.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 27,1.

⁷⁸ For λογισμός, see *Leg.* 25,4. Used also in the field of arithmetic with the sense of ‘counting’ (Plat. *Pri.* 318e; Xen. *Mem.* 4,7,8 et al.), λογισμός has, for Greek philosophers, the meaning of ‘rational,’ ‘reasoning’ (Plat. *Leg.* 805a; Xen. *Hell.* 3,4,27; *Mem.* 4,3,11 et al.), or ‘power of reasoning’ (Epich. 257,1; Democr. 187; Arist. *Metaph.* 980b28; *de An.* 415a8; Epicur. *Sent.* 16 et al.) [cf. Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* 2, 1056]. For an emblematic aspect of λογισμός, namely its connection with deliberation and free choice, see note 61 of the present article. For αὐθαίρετον, see *Leg.* 24,4. The term defines the human capacity of self-determination, free will/choice, or independence (E. *Supp.* 931; Th. 1,78; Arist. *EN* 1114b6; II Cor. 8:17; Max.Tyr. 17,4b3; 34,4e2; 35,6e6; 36,6b1; Clem.Al..*Str.* 7,3,15,2; Ps-Justin 396c3; 446a6; 166c4 et al.). Compare with Pouderon, *Les Apologistes*, 222.

ruling principle or the center of consciousness of the human being.⁷⁹ As for Athenagoras, most likely συμπάθεια was not ethically neutral, and this bereft of ethical neutrality may come to comparison only with Origen's διαλογισμός and the inclination (*yšr*) of the Jewish tradition.

Nevertheless, according to *Legatio* 7,2 and 25,3, συμπάθεια does not appear to be simply the first movement of the soul, but a continuous commitment that accompanies all the following psychological processes either focused on matter or focused on divine things. Hence, sympathy seems to be in the power of human reasoning and a matter of deliberation, as one can see in *Legatio* 22,12, where the Athenian reproaches the Greeks for not having affinity for the heavenly realm; he further explains that, by way of consequence, they are not able to raise their reason (λόγος) on high and therefore pine away among the forms of matter and deify the elements of the universe.

Since affinity represents a first movement of the human mind, an intention oriented towards an external instance, it always presupposes a feedback from that external instance towards the human mind. This 'feedback' is twofold. On the one hand, as one can see a few lines above, the affinity for the divine things implies as a matter of consequence not only a mental intuition of the "Father and of the Truth," but also a change in human behavior and life. On the other hand, the sympathy for matter may entail an imprinting of the soul with false [i.e., material] ideas and false opinions (ψευδεῖς δόξαι).⁸⁰ Athenagoras is again within a Stoic pedigree. While Zeno sets opinion in a different domain than that of the virtue and truth⁸¹ and Chrysippus qualifies passions as 'false judgments,'⁸² Epicurus considers that opinions should belong to the sphere of falseness (τὸ ψεῦδος) and error (τὸ διημαρτημένον).⁸³

⁷⁹ Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius reckon three capacities of the ruling principle: desire (ὄρεξις), impulsion (ὀρμή) towards actions, and assent (συγκατάθεσις) to judgments. For Epictetus, see the *Handbook* 1,1; 2,1, and especially *Discourses* 3,2. For Aurelius, see *Meditations* 12,3. P. Hadot makes a detailed analysis of all these concepts in his *La citadelle intérieure. Introduction aux Pensées de Marc Aurèle* (Paris: Fayard, 1992) esp. 98-115 and 119-44. Cf. Sorabji, *Emotions*, 332 and K. Seddon, *Epictetus' Handbook and the Tablet of Cebes. Guides to Stoic Living* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005) 31-44 and 111-5.

⁸⁰ Athenagoras, *Leg.* 27,2.

⁸¹ See Cicero, *Acad.* 1,42 (*SVF* 1,60). See also in *Tim.* Plato's distinction between the realm of ideas and truth and the realm of becoming and opinion.

⁸² *SVF* 3,466; 480.

⁸³ Epicurus, *Ep. Hdt.* 50,8.

3. *The Theory of Representation* (φαντασία)

Sense-perceptions (αἰσθήσεις) create within the human mind or soul an imprint (τύπος, τύπωσις, σφραγίς, *vestigium*) or a similar form (μορφή) with that of the external things.⁸⁴ Epicurus and the Stoics called this imprint φαντασία (representation, impression).⁸⁵ According to Athenagoras, the irrational (ἄλογοι) and fantasizing (ινδαλματώδεις) movements of the soul induce a diversity of impressions / representations (φαντασίαι) and images (εἶδωλα).⁸⁶ These impressions / representations may issue from two sources: they might either derive from matter (i.e., the representation of an external object within the human mind), or be fashioned in the movements of the soul (ψυχῆ).⁸⁷ This doctrine of the twofold origin of impression is identical to the classical Stoic tradition described by Diogenes Laertius in the following passage:

⁸⁴ Ibid. The idea that sense-perception functions as a seal on the human soul can be traced back to Plato's *Theaet.* 192a, but the Stoics developed it on a larger scale. Terms such as μορφή, τύπος, τύπωσις, σφραγίς, σφραγίζω, ἐνσφραγίζω represent *topoi* of the Chrysippean language. Some of them also appear in Epicurus and Epictetus. It is worth mentioning that the verb ἐναποσφραγίζω ('to imprint something inside from outside') from *Ep. Hdt.* 49,2 (cf. Cicero's *imprimo* from *Acad.* 2,21) also occurs in Athenagoras's *Leg.* 27,2.

⁸⁵ For φαντασία, see for example Epicurus, *Ep. Hdt.* 50, Epictetus, *Ench.* 1,5; 10; 16; 18; 19; 20; 34; etc., Marcus Aurelius 1,14,15,16; 2,5,7; 3,4 etc., Diogenes Laertius 7,49-51 (*SVF* 2,52; 55; 61), Aetius 4,12,1-5 (*SVF* 2,54), Plutarch, *Comm. Not.* 1084F-1085A (*SVF* 2,847), Sextus Empiricus *M.* 7,242-6 (*SVF* 2,65). While Epicurus pays more attention to the external origins of the representation and its connection with the external objects, Stoics are more interested in the psychological context of the representation and its relationship with the assent given to the judgments about a specific representation. According to Epicurus, a thin structure of atoms detaches from the external object with the same shape and color as the object itself and enters human eyes and mind (διάνοια) producing there the representation. Epicurus calls that thin external moving structure εἶδωλον (e.g. *Ep. Hdt.* 48-50). On the other hand, Stoics are more interested in the way through which the center of consciousness (ἡγεμονικόν) describes by means of judgments (ὑπολήψεις) the nature, quality, and value of the external object that produces a specific representation. Furthermore, Stoics consider that the ἡγεμονικόν gives an assent (either positive or negative) through which representations are known and judged. While representations are not voluntarily presented and imprinted in the human mind, assent represents an exercise of free will (e.g. Epictetus, from Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights* XIX,1,15-20; cf. Hadot, *La citadelle intérieure*, 119-44, esp. 120-1).

⁸⁶ The word εἶδωλον occurs thirteen times in *Legatio* with a greater semantic flexibility than the Epicurean concept. Its general meaning in *Legatio* is that of 'idol' or 'external image of a certain divinity,' or 'statue' (e.g. *Leg.* 17,4; 18,1,2; 23,1,2,3; 26,1; 27,2; 28,5). Moreover, while in *Leg.* 15,1 and 27,1 εἶδωλον seems to have the sense of a mental image of external origin, in 27,1 we are also told that the soul may give birth to εἶδωλα. Thus the concept does not have the Epicurean technical sense and it seems that 27,1 leaves the door open for understanding εἶδωλον as synonymous with φαντασία.

⁸⁷ Athenagoras, *Leg.* 27,1.

They [the Stoics] divide impressions into those which are sensory (αἰσθητικαί) and those which are not. Sensory impressions are ones obtained through one or more sense-organs, non-sensory are ones obtained through thought (διάνοια) such as those of the incorporeals and of the other things acquired by reason (λόγος).⁸⁸

However, according to Athenagoras, the demons who reside about the matter insert their attacks among delusive opinions and the irrational movements created around opinions. In this way they lunge their attacks against thoughts, causing to flow the phantasms about idols. Eventually, all false images and opinions give birth to idolatry, lack of truth, immorality, or crimes.⁸⁹

A different, interesting Athenagorian innovation is also worth mentioning. According *I Enoch*, the Watchers' activity might represent an attempt at creating a world parallel to the one that God made.⁹⁰ The Watchers proclaim a word as God did (the "Let it be" expressions in Genesis 1 and the oath in the Watchers' case), bind themselves with a curse, and subsequently act with the purpose of fashioning the world in accordance to their plan (*I Enoch* 6:4-8:4). Their behavior is essentially mimetic (or counter-mimetic), since the Watchers actually make an attempt at copying God's primordial gestures, and at replacing his creation with a new demiurgic work (*I Enoch* 69:16-26). The same feature seems to re-occur in Athenagoras, but this time, again, in an internalized form. Demons, in fact, fashion a false worldview within the human soul by producing mental fantasizing movements, false images, false opinions, and false representations (*Legatio* 27,1-2). The next step is that of attracting / pushing (προάγειν) the souls toward the idols (τὰ εἰδωλα: 26,1) with the purpose of idolatrous worship and ultimately evil actions.

Concluding Remarks

At the current stage of research, several conclusions can be formulated. First, Athenagoras provided, probably for the first time, a philosophical treatment of the

⁸⁸ Diogenes Laertius 7,49-51, after A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, London, New York 1987) 236-7. Cf. Epicurus, *Ep. Hdt.* 50.

⁸⁹ Athenagoras, *Leg.* 27,2.

⁹⁰ Private communication from Dr. Andrei A. Orlov.

Enochic story (especially with regard to the acts of the Watchers), while later, Clement, Origen, and Evagrius added greater complexity to his psychological analysis. Evagrius offered the most detailed, organized, and probably the most influential form of the Athenagorian tradition. The Evagrian elaboration will constitute, in mediated forms, a referential theory for many centuries in Christian theology, spiritual exercises, or ethics.

Second, the present study points to the more general phenomenon of the internalization of religious features, terminologies, and practices. The phenomenon was widespread in late antiquity and Gadaliahu Stroumsa made an important effort in analyzing and tracing its general lines.⁹¹ From this perspective, Athenagoras's enterprise was one of internalizing the evil actions of the Watchers.

Third, regarding the myth of Watchers from a diachronic perspective, it was not static in its chain of retellings, but produced various trajectories which might unveil something about the continuous human interest in, and investigation—through various theoretical constructions—of, the mechanism through which evil enters and operates within the sensible world.

Finally, from the prism of theological language, Athenagoras's contribution might represent a link not only between two emblematic texts, but also between two different ways of articulating a theological discourse: from a (more) mythological (Jewish, in this instance) one to the Greek and (more) philosophical-conceptual one.

⁹¹ G. Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom. Esoteric Tradition and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996) or "Milk and Meat: Augustine and the End of Ancient Esotericism," in *Schleier und Schwelle. Geheimnis (Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation, Vol. V, eds. J. Assmann and A. Assmann (Munich: W. Fink, 1997-1999). Cf. J. Raasch, "The Monastic Concept of Purity of Heart and Its Sources," *Studia Monastica* 11:2 (1969) 269-314; A. Orlov and A. Golitzin, "'Many Lamps are Lightened from the One': Paradigms of the Transformational Vision in Macarian Homilies," *Vigiliae Christianae* 55 (2001) 281-98; A. Golitzin, "'Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men': The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Nicetas Stethatos, and the Tradition of 'Interiorized Apocalyptic' in Eastern Christian Ascetical and Mystical Literature," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001) 125-53; B.G. Bucur, "The Other Clement of Alexandria: Cosmic Hierarchy and Interiorized Apocalypticism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 60 (2006) 251-68.*