A Latin Christian Adaptation of Cicero

Abstract

The earliest Christian apology that was written in Latin was that of Minucius Felix: a dialogue called The Octavius (late 2nd century AD). This dialogue, which aims to convince pagan Romans to accept Christianity is interestingly largely based on a pagan Roman source: De Natura Deorum, of Cicero. Cicero’s work provided the structure for this Christian apology, and one passage from it (1,25-42) is taken over verbatim as Chapter 19 of the Octavius. We will compare these two texts (pagan and Christian) and see what we can learn about the continuing reliance of early Roman Christianity on the classical tradition.