

## EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA AND THE “THIRD RACE”: CHRISTIANITY, HELLENIZATION, AND A HARNACKIAN IRONY

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### Prologue: the Dilemma of Two Harnackian Arguments

ADOLF VON HARNACK’S *History of Dogma* is rightly regarded as a primary source for the argument, much used and abused by modern theologians, that the history of Christian doctrine is a history of the Hellenization of the gospel—and a history that would need to be undone for the sake of preserving the gospel.<sup>1</sup> Harnack also wrote a significant study of the “mission and expansion” of early Christianity, in which he addressed the issue of how Christianity, an originally obscure Eastern movement in a highly pluralistic pagan world, came to such prominence in the first three centuries of its existence—and explained the victory of Christianity in large part on the grounds of its ultimately syncretistic character as it became a “universal religion,”<sup>2</sup> an explanation of the success of Christianity that fit well with his understanding of the Hellenization of the gospel.

Scholarship has, for some time, disputed the main thesis of Harnack’s history,<sup>3</sup> rejected the neat Hebrew-Greek dichotomies assumed by Harnack, Hatch, and more recent writers like Boman,<sup>4</sup> and done significant work on the question of Christianity

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1. Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. from the third German edition by Neil Buchanan, James Millar, et al. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1896–1899). Similar assumptions govern Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, ed. A. M. Fairbairn, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1891); and Thorleif Bowman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).

2. Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, revised and enlarged, trans. and ed., James Moffatt, 2 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1908), I, pp. 312–318.

3. E.g., Roy Kearsley, “The Impact of Greek Concepts of God on the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria,” in *Tyndale Bulletin*, 43/2 (1992), pp. 308–309, 328–329; cf. R. M. Price, “‘Hellenization’ and Logos Doctrine in Justin Martyr,” in *Vigiliae christianae*, 42/1 (1988), pp. 18–23; E. P. Meijering, *God, Being, History. Studies in Patristic Philosophy* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing, 1975), pp. 116–118, 149, et passim.

4. See, e.g., Paul Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of Impassible God: the Dialectic of Patristic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 22–46; cf. the comments in Richard A. Muller, “Incarnation, Immutability and the Case for Classical Theism,” in *Westminster Theological Journal*, 45 (1983), pp. 22–40, here, pp. 36–37. There is a significant survey of the

and philosophy as debated in the centuries before Nicaea.<sup>5</sup> This historiographical point is significant in and of itself, given the ongoing failure of a very large number of contemporary systematic theologians to rid themselves of Hebrew-Greek dichotomies.

What has gone unnoticed in the critiques of Harnack is that, despite the broad agreement of the Hellenization thesis of *The History of Dogma* and the syncretism thesis of *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, there remains a significant sub-argument in Harnack's own work, set in the latter study, that, once elaborated across the spectrum of patristic usages, tends to modify the main thesis of syncretism and thereby undercuts the more famous Hellenization thesis of *The History of Dogma*—and does so in a highly significant theological and philosophical manner when examined in the light of the patristic tradition of apologetics. I refer to Harnack's excursus on descriptions of Christianity as the “third race,” which points toward an early Christian assumption of a fusion of Hebraic and Hellenistic religion and philosophy that consciously strove to supersede both—and that, accordingly, would have viewed the removal of Greek thought from Christianity in search of a Hebraic gospel to be a violation of Christianity itself and a denial of the purpose of the gospel. In what follows, I propose to trace out the patristic argument concerning the “third race,” bracketed by the work of Eusebius of Caesarea, who arguably brought the argument to its fullest theological and philosophical elaboration.<sup>6</sup>

### Eusebius (ca. A.D. 262–340) in the Christian Apologetic Tradition

The tribulation through which the church had passed was still painfully before Eusebius' mind when, ca. A.D. 314, he began his apologetic summation, the thirty-five books entitled *Praeparatio Evangelica* and *Demonstratio Evangelica*,<sup>7</sup> and the

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scholarship on the cultural relation of Christianity to Greek, Roman, “barbarian,” and Jewish culture in Stamenka Antonova, *Barbarian or Greek? The Charge of Barbarism and Early Christian Apologetics* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

5. See C. J. De Vogel, “Platonism and Christianity: A Mere Antagonism or a Profound Common Ground?” in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 39 (1985), pp. 1–62; Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism: Re-Thinking the Christianisation of Hellenism,” in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 63/3 (2009), pp. 217–263; George Karamanolis, “Early Christian Philosophers on Aristotle,” in Andrea Falcon, ed., *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Aristotle* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2016), pp. 460–479.

6. See Aryeh Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea Against Paganism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), pp. 100–101, notes Eusebius use of the concept but does not elaborate the point; note also Sabrina Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors: His Citation Technique in an Apologetic Context* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006), p. 114.

7. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Eusebii Pamphili Evangelicae Praeparationis, Libri XV. Ad codices manuscriptos denuo collatos recensit anglice nunc primum reddidit et notis et indicibus instruxit E. H. Gifford*. 4 volumes in 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903), translation in vol. 3/1 and 3/2; and Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel being the Demonstratio Evangelica of Eusebius of Caesarea*, trans. W. J. Ferrar, 2 vols. (London: S.P.C.K., 1920). Eusebius himself regarded the two works as parts of a unified whole: see *Preparation for the Gospel*, I.i (pp. 4–

future of Christianity under the new toleration was not at all assured. This remained the case when, after Nicaea, Eusebius composed the third portion of his apologetic, the *Theophania*.<sup>8</sup> Well into the fifth century the entrenched paganism of the old Roman aristocracy would raise the charges of atheism, of barbarism, and of antagonism to *romanitas* that had characterized the earliest complaints against the Christians. Eusebius' great apologetic work, the gathering of the largest and most comprehensive collection of apologetic materials from the patristic era, attempts to consolidate the arguments of his predecessors in the genre, to elicit the broadest possible catena of citations from pagan authors in support of Christian counter-contentions, to analyze the ancient Hellenistic and Hebraic sources of Christian teaching, and to prove the superiority of Christianity over all previous religious and philosophical systems.<sup>9</sup>

Eusebius' full apologetic—both the *Praeparatio Evangelica* in fifteen books and the *Demonstratio* proper in the remaining twenty, plus the five books of the *Theophania*—is more than a simple defense.<sup>10</sup> His apologetic is a codification which, in the words of W. J. Ferrar, employs earlier essays by Justin, Athenagoras, and Origen as sources for the acknowledged “*loci communes*” of Christian apology,<sup>11</sup> and draws on a wealth of Greek materials, some of which are now known only by way of the fragments found in Eusebius' work. Eusebius proposed to improve on the work of his predecessors in two ways: first, he will provide more extensive documentation and second, more importantly, he will follow the logic of his own argument rather than refute his opponents point for point. In short, he did not submit to pagan logic and pagan order of debate. Eusebius' work is a Christian apologetic on the offensive, exercising for the first time a powerful freedom of expression and, indeed, ownership of an intellectual tradition both Hebraic and Hellenistic in which Greek thought is

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5); on the unity of Eusebius' project, see Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea*, pp. 74–99. Note that of the thirty-five books belonging to the work, only twenty-five survive—fifteen in the *Praeparatio* and only ten of the original twenty of the *Demonstratio*.

8. Eusebius of Caesarea, *On the Theophania or Divine Manifestation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, trans. Samuel Lee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1843), probably written between A.D. 333 and 337, is not only of a later date than the *Preparatio* and *Demonstratio*, but is in many places reliant on these two earlier apologies and on other works of its author; cf. Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea*, pp. 276–279, 285, 288.

9. Cf. the evaluation of Eusebius' work in Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 4 vols. (Allen: Christian Classics, 1983), III, p. 328; also F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *Eusebius Pamphili, Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine and First Christian Historian: A Study of the Man and His Writings* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1933), pp. 118, 140–141.

10. As Kofsky points out, *Eusebius of Caesarea*, pp. 74–75, *Demonstratio Evangelica* is likely the name for the entire two-part project, with the *Praeparatio* standing as an introduction: the two parts function as a single massive apologetic treatise; cf. W. J. Ferrar, “Introduction,” in Eusebius, *Proof of the Gospel*, p. ix.

11. Ferrar, “Introduction,” pp. xiv–xv; and see Arthur Droge, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989), who analyses the early Christian apologetic appropriation of Greek culture from Justin to Eusebius.

critiqued and Judaism is argued as the prophetic ancestor of the Christian teaching of salvation. It needs to be noted that Eusebius was highly critical of Greek philosophy, with Plato alone receiving largely praise.<sup>12</sup> A significant portion of the *Theophania* is devoted to an attack on pagan polytheism and an exposition of the errors of the philosophers.<sup>13</sup>

There were, of course, major apologetic treatises written after the Eusebius—notably Augustine’s *De civitate Dei*, Theodoret of Cyrrhus’ *Graecarum affectionum curatio*, called by Tixeront the “most perfect apology produced by the Greek Church,”<sup>14</sup> and Cyril of Alexandria’s *Contra Julianum*—but all three belong to a different age and address different problems than Eusebius’ great work. Whereas Eusebius stands as the last major apologist to have lived through the persecutions and sums up a tradition in which Christianity was described as the highest form of philosophy and ethics attainable in an engagement with the Hebraic and Hellenic achievements, later apologists, like Augustine, Theodoret, and Cyril, all needed to move beyond this form of the apologetic problem and focus on the disengagement of Christianity from the last flowering of pagan Hellenism and *romanitas*. Eusebius brings the earlier age of apologetics to a close, hands on the materials of apology, and points to the more discursive and dogmatic models of the later writers, and in so doing, he arguably places a capstone on the argument for Christianity as the “third race.”

### The Apologetic Tradition and the “Third Race”

Throughout the writings of the Apologists, from the third century onwards, the Pauline statement (Gal. 3:27–28) that those who have “put on Christ” are “neither Jew nor Greek” is supported by the apocryphal *logion* of Peter, known to Aristides, Clement of Alexandria, and probably to Origen: “Worship not this God in the manner of the Greeks . . . neither worship him in the manner of the Jews . . . we are Christians, who as a third race worship him in a new way.”<sup>15</sup> This produced a theory that the Christians were a new people, rooted in the best traditions of both pagan and Jewish antiquity, but distinct from the errors of both Hellenism and Judaism, in short, a “third race,” and the true heir of all religious truth.<sup>16</sup> This early Christian sensibility of identification as a “third race” is, moreover, reinforced by a parallel self-identification as a people

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12. D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Eusebius of Caesarea* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1960), pp. 140–147.

13. Eusebius, *Theophania*, II (pp. 66–154).

14. J. Tixeront, *A Handbook of Patrology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1923), p. 207.

15. *Kerygma Petrou* in *New Testament Apocrypha*, revised edition, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, Westminster, 1992), II, pp. 38–39. Cf. the Greek text in Ernst von Dobschütz, *Das Kerygma Petri kritisch untersucht* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1893), p. 21, where Christians are identified as a τριτῶ γένει. Dobschütz’ comments on this fragment (*ibid.*, pp. 45–50) do not take up the issue of a “third race.”

16. Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, I, pp. 266–278; and cf. David F. Wright, “A Race Apart?: Jews, Gentiles, Christians,” in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 160/638 (2003), pp. 134–137.

or “race” characterized by “righteousness” and “fear of God.”<sup>17</sup> Development of an apologetic based on an identity that was “neither Jew nor Greek,” as Frances Young has indicated, reflects the alien status of converts to a religion regarded with suspicion by the surrounding cultures and the attempt of the converts to assert the positive significance of their distinction from Jewish and Greek cultures,<sup>18</sup> albeit also recognizing their rootage in both.

While recognizing the impact of Graeco-Roman philosophy on the Christian writers of the second and early third centuries, this sense of otherness, “neither Jew nor Greek,” was evidenced in two nearly opposite approaches to the pagan philosophical tradition. There was one line of Christian thought that expressed an almost entirely negative view of pagan culture and philosophy (despite its connections and indebtedness), extending from the apologetic treatises of Aristides, Tatian, and Theophilus of Antioch to the anti-gnostic writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian. There was also a line of argument that identified the best of pagan philosophy as a positive background to Christianity together with the Judaism of the Old Testament, as illustrated in the works of Justin Martyr, Minucius Felix, and Athenagoras, that carried over into the thought of the Alexandrian fathers, Clement and Origen.<sup>19</sup> It has been pointed out that these two views are not absolutely opposed: if philosophy were defined generically as the pursuit of wisdom and truth, it would have generated little opposition among the writers of the early church—if on the other hand philosophy were defined specifically as a particular form or tradition of thought, reasons for its rejection were obvious.<sup>20</sup>

As to the actual phrase, “third race” or *tertium genus*, Harnack argued a progression of usages. He did not include reference to the fragments of the *Kerygma Petrou* found in Clement of Alexandria or to the phrase as present in *Apology of Aristides*, and, accordingly, did not connect that earliest positive reference to a “third race” with the later usages—oddly, inasmuch as Harnack’s *Mission and Expansion* was written after the appearance of both Dobschütz’ edition of the *Kerygma Petrou* and the Harris-Robinson edition of *Aristides*. In any case, in the absence of consideration of these two sources, Harnack argued a progression from negative pagan usage, to a Christian acknowledgment of the usage in Tertullian, to positive Christian

17. On which, see Judith M. Lieu “The Race of the God-Fearers,” in *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 46/2 (1995), pp. 483–501.

18. Frances Young, “Greek Apologists of the Second Century,” in Mark Edwards, et al., ed., *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 81–104, here, pp. 81, 88, 89.

19. See Droge, *Homer or Moses*, pp. 53–161.

20. See George Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity* (Durham: Acumen, 2013), pp. 29–31; cf. Jean Daniélou, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea*, 3 vols., trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), II, pp. 23, 40–44, 47–48, 51–52; III, pp. 209–211; and note Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition: Studies in Justin, Clement, and Origen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 1–2.

acceptance of the term in Pseudo-Cyprian. Thus, throughout the second century, there are pagan references to Christians as being a distinct people or nation having distinctive ideas concerning God, worship, and the conduct of life, in a few cases framed positively, but more typically in highly derogatory terms. Harnack concluded that by the end of the second century identification of Christians as a third group after Romans and Jews was virtually a commonplace among the pagan writers.<sup>21</sup> Tertullian commented, ca. A.D. 197, with reference to detractors of Christianity, “we are called the third race [*tertium genus dicimur*]”—noting the term or epithet as a negative pagan or Roman description of Christians. Less than a half century later, A.D. 242–243, Pseudo-Cyprian states in his *De Pascha*, “we are the third race [*tertium genus sumus*],” indicating positive acceptance of the term as a descriptor of Christians as a distinct people.<sup>22</sup> Harnack’s analysis, then, did not trace out the patristic trajectories of related usages nor does it offer much in the way of positive linkage of the language of “third race” to the Pauline and Pseudo-Petrine language of “neither Jew nor Greek.” Nor did Harnack consider the parallel identification of Christians as a God-fearing “race of the righteous” as illuminating the identification of Christians as the “third race.”

What can be traced out, then, in some contrast to Harnack’s proposal, is a double trajectory of usage—one side of which encounters the negative pagan usage of “third race” and deals with it apologetically, and another side of the argument that accepts the notion of a “third race” or third kind of people early on and develops it as a positive self-identification. Various Christian writings of the second century, moreover, while lacking the actual term “third race,” contained apologetic arguments that paralleled the pagan characterization and turned the distinctiveness of Christianity over against both pagan and Jewish theism to positive use.

Beyond the *Kerygma Petrou*, specific identification of Christians as a distinct class or group among the “races” can be found, ca. A.D. 132, in the *Apology of Aristides*, which, arguably, drew on the *Kerygma Petrou* as one of its sources.<sup>23</sup> Whereas the earlier document simply makes the point that Christians worship differently from the Greeks and Jews, in Aristides’ work it makes its debut, as it were, as a major premise of early Christian apologetics.<sup>24</sup> The Syriac and Armenian texts of the *Apology* identify four groups—Barbarians, Greeks, Jews, and Christians.<sup>25</sup> The Greek text, however, offers what would become the standard formula in the early church, echoing the Pauline formula or the Petrine *logion* (or both), “there are three races (*τρία γένη*) of people in the world, namely, the worshipers of the gods acknowledged among you,

21. Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, I, pp. 267–269, 273.

22. Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, I, p. 274, n.1.

23. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, II, p. 34.

24. See Robert M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), pp. 38–39.

25. Aristides, *Apology*, ii, in *ANF*, IX, p. 264, translating in parallel the Greek and the Syriac.

and Jews, and Christians.”<sup>26</sup> Aristides philosophical argumentation, moreover, offers a strong argument for monotheism and for the identity of God as eternal, perfect, and utterly beyond created things, points to the problems of pagan idolatry despite the monotheistic views of various poets and philosophers, argues the superiority of Jewish monotheism with its vision of the Creator, but also the failure of Judaism in its ceremonialism and ritualism—leaving Christianity as the religion that alone understands and follows the true God.<sup>27</sup>

Quite early on, the positive strand of the third race theme can be identified in apologetic arguments that identify the best of pagan philosophy as derived from Jewish religion and then claim Christianity as the true successor of Judaism. In the form of this argument found in Justin Martyr’s *First Apology* and the Pseudo-Justin *Address to the Greeks*, Plato learned his philosophy in Egypt, where he encountered Mosaic monotheism and its law.<sup>28</sup> Whether or not one accepts Justin’s aetiology, the underlying assumption of a long interpenetration of Hebraic and Hellenic or Hellenistic, specifically the Judaeo-Christian aetiology of the origins of Greek philosophy in ancient Judaism was widely argued and believed in late antiquity.<sup>29</sup> Contrary to Harnack’s estimation, however, Justin did not engage in an attempt to reconcile Christianity with Greek philosophy—rather his argument, paralleling the concept of the third race, was intended to show the derivative nature of Greek thought and to demonstrate the successor-status of Christian teaching both to Greek philosophy and to its Mosaic source.<sup>30</sup>

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26. Aristides, *Apology*, ii, in *ANF*, IX, p. 264; cf. the Greek text in *The Apology of Aristides*, ed. with an introduction and translation by J. Rendel Harris, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893), p. 100.

27. Aristides, *Apology*, xiii-xiv, in *ANF*, IX, pp. 274–279.

28. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, lix, lx; cf. Pseudo-Justin, *Address to the Greeks*, xx–xxvi (*ANF*, I, pp. 182–183, 281–284); cf. A. Davids, “Justin Martyr on Monotheism and Heresy,” in *Nederlands Archief*, 56 (1976), pp. 210–234, here, pp. 211–214; Arthur J. Droge, “Justin Martyr and the Restoration of Philosophy,” *Church History*, 56 (1987), pp. 303–319, here pp. 307–310; also idem, *Homer or Moses*, pp. 58–65; Price, “‘Hellenization’ and the Logos Doctrine,” pp. 18, 22; and E. R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Jena: Frommann, 1923), pp. 105–106.

29. Droge, *Homer or Moses*, pp. 1–48, presents in detail the pagan literature respecting Moses and the Jewish background to the theory of Moses priority; and see Henry Chadwick, “Philo,” in A. H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 139; also Josephus’ exposition of the novelty of Greek thought and its dependence on Eastern sources in *Of the Antiquity of the Jews Against Apion*, I.ii–vi, in *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans William Whiston, revised by A. R. Shilleto, 5 vols. (London: George Bell, 1889–1890), V, pp. 176–179; note also Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 5–6; and Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition: Studies in Justin, Clement, and Origen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 14–15.

30. Cf. Droge, “Justin Martyr and the Restoration of Philosophy,” p. 307.; which goes beyond the notion of a “synthesis” of pagan and Jewish thought as noted in Guy Stroumsa, *Barbarian*

There is little reason to dispute the judgment made over a century ago and carried forward in more recent scholarship, that Justin's relationship to "the various philosophic schools" was one of "free criticism of them combined with evident traces of their continued influence," most notably the influences of Platonism and Aristotelianism mediated by way of the Middle Platonists.<sup>31</sup> Justin saw no need to accommodate his reception of biblical teaching and early Christian doctrine to his philosophy: he assumed a harmony of faith and reason and understood his Christianity, defined by Christ as the Logos, to be the true fruition of the biblical revelation and the fulfillment of the promised truths of philosophy. If moreover, Christ is the Logos and the Logos is the source of true knowledge, then Christianity represents the more pure and ancient wisdom.<sup>32</sup> Pseudo-Justin's *Address*, written between the late second and the mid-third century and somewhat less positive on the value of Greek philosophy, delves at length into the Mosaic and prophetic antecedents of Greek philosophy,<sup>33</sup> and follows its account of Moses with a catena of Greek poets and philosophers from Orpheus and Homer to Plato all of whom evidenced some encounter with biblical monotheism, probably by way of Egypt.<sup>34</sup>

From Galatians 3:28 and the *Kerygma Petrou*, early Christians received a positive sense of their distinct identity as a third race, neither Jew nor Greek. In some parallel with this positive understanding of the third race, the early church received from the Greek tradition and Hellenistic Judaism an identification as people characterized by the fear of God and righteousness. This terminology appears in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (A.D. 156),<sup>35</sup> where in two places the text refers to Christians as "the race of the righteous," τοῦ γένους τῶν δικαίων, who are described as God-fearing (θεοσεβοῦς).<sup>36</sup>

Echoing the point made by Aristides and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, the *Letter to Diognetus* (ca. A.D. 200?) embodies the thought of a third people race, albeit not the phrase: "Christians . . . do not treat the divinities of the Greeks as gods at all, although on the other hand they do not follow to the superstition of the Jews . . . this new race

*Philosophy: The Religious Revolution of Early Christianity* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), pp. 8–26.

31. George Tybout Purves, *The Testimony of Justin Martyr to Early Christianity* (New York: Anson D.F. Randolph, 1889), p. 137; cf. Carl Andresen, "Justin und der mittlere Platonismus," in *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 40 (1952/53), pp. 157–195; also L. W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 27–38; Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought*, pp. 11–12.

32. Droge, *Homer or Moses*, pp. 65–68; cf. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought*, pp. 18–22.

33. Pseudo-Justin, *Hortatory Address to the Greeks*, ix–xii, in *ANF*, I, p. 277–278; cf. the remarks in Bardenhewer, *Patrology*, p. 53; with Quasten, *Patrology*, I, p. 205.

34. Pseudo-Justin, *Hortatory Address to the Greeks*, xv–xxxiv, in *ANF*, I, pp. 279–288.

35. See Quasten, *Patrology*, I, pp. 76–79.

36. *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, xiv, xvii, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, edited, with introductions by J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (London: Macmillan, 1898), pp. 194, 195; cf. Lieu, "Race of God-Fearers," p. 486.

or way of life has appeared on earth now.”<sup>37</sup> The *Letter to Diognetus*, then, strongly presents the premise of neither Jew nor Greek, and identified Christians a living in all countries but as “aliens” or “foreigners,” members of a “new race,” whose citizenship is in heaven.<sup>38</sup> Although the date of the work is uncertain, its probable use of Irenaeus and its echoes of Hippolytus place it toward the end of the second century or perhaps the beginning of the third.<sup>39</sup>

The term “third race” appears in the third century—from a negative background in Tertullian, from positive sources in Clement of Alexandria and probably in Origen. As already noted, it is in Tertullian’s works, notably in his *Ad Nationes*, that the phrase *genus tertium* appears—and clearly as a slur:

We are indeed called the third race. Are we monsters, Cyropennae, or Sciopades, or some subterranean Antipodeans? If you attach any meaning to these names, pray tell us what are the first and second of the race, that so we may know something of this “third” . . . it is in respect of our religion and not of our nation that we are supposed to be third: the series being the Romans, the Jews, and the Christians after them.<sup>40</sup>

Tertullian’s interest, moreover, is not in identifying Christians as a new and distinct group and it is unlikely that he had Galatians 3:28 in mind: his focus is on a contemporary hatred of Christians.<sup>41</sup> Nor does Tertullian’s reference to the epithet “third race” indicate an endorsement in any sense, particularly not of Christianity as representing a distinct ethnicity: he disputes the enumeration of nations or races and argues hyperbolically that this “third race” might better be called “first” inasmuch as no nation exists where there are no Christians. He then denies that nationality has any relationship to Christianity by noting that the epithet has been applied because of a religious distinction between Christians, Romans, and Jews, and finally asks rhetorically, “Where are the Greeks?”<sup>42</sup> Arguably, Tertullian’s negative renders him a bit of an outlier in the early Christian use of the phrase “third race” and their sense of representing a distinct kind of people.

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37. *The So-called Letter to Diognetus*, i, in *The Early Christian Fathers*, ed. and trans. Cyril C. Richardson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), p. 213.

38. *The So-called Letter to Diognetus*, i, v (pp. 213, 216–217).

39. Cf. Theofried Baumeister, “Zur Datierung der Schrift an Diognet,” in *Vigiliae christianae*, 42/2 (1988), pp. 105–111; with possible earlier dating indicated by Henri Irénée Marrou, *A Diognète*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1965), p. 265; with J. J. Thierry, *The Epistle of Diognetus* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964), p. 6.

40. Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, I.viii, in *ANF*, I, pp. 116–117, slightly altered.

41. Cf. W. H. C. Frend, “A Note on Jews and Christians in Third-Century North Africa,” in *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, 21/1 (1970), pp. 92–96, here, p. 94.

42. Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, I.viii, in *ANF*, I, p. 116; cf. Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 154–155.

Clement of Alexandria not only cites the text of the *Kerygma Petrou* on the point of Christians being a third race or kind of people, he elaborates at some length on the text. From the *Kerygma*'s declaration "that there is one God, who made the beginning of all things, and holds the power of the end," Clement infers that the following command of the *Kerygma*, "worship this God not as the Greeks," implied that the best and most knowledgeable of the Greeks worshiped the same God as the Christians, but in an unsatisfactory manner. So too, the next command, "neither worship as the Jews; for they, thinking that they only know God, do not know him," implies that the one and only God is also the proper object of Jewish worship—albeit also worshiped in an unsatisfactory manner.<sup>43</sup> Inasmuch, Clement declares, as God has made a new covenant with the Christians, "what belonged to the Greeks and Jews is old" and therefore, "we, who worship Him in a new way, in the third form, are Christians. For clearly, as I think, he [i.e., Peter] showed that the one and only God was known by the Greeks in a Gentile way, by the Jews Judaically, and in a new and spiritual way by us."<sup>44</sup> Still, the advent of this new covenant and third kind of worship does not imply a radical rejection of the predecessor forms. God, after all, provided the previous covenants to the Gentiles in the form of the gift of philosophy and to the Jews in the form of the revealed law.<sup>45</sup> Clement echoes Justin in asserting the Mosaic origins of true philosophy—as well as the angelic or demonic sources of philosophical error. Clement also held a theory of common notions, true natural conceptions, akin to Stoic epistemology, that allowed him to argue that truth is universally present by way of the Logos but fully understood only by Christians.<sup>46</sup> The Christian "gnostic" is, therefore, the inheritor of all true knowledge.<sup>47</sup>

Origen's apologetics, as presented in the *Contra Celsum*, extend the argument for the legitimacy of Christianity beyond Clement and the earlier apologists with a wealth of learned detail and philosophical acumen but, as Chadwick remarks, Origen remained "considerably indebted to such predecessors as Justin, Tatian, Theophilus, and Athenagoras, not for detailed arguments, but for having so to speak constructed a platform for his own apologetic," specifically, for the "contention that Moses and the prophets could be proved to be earlier than the Greek philosophers and poets, and therefore must have been the source of their learning."<sup>48</sup> Origen also knew of the

43. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI.v (ANF, II, p. 489).

44. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI.v (ANF, II, p. 489).

45. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI.v (ANF, II, pp. 489–490).

46. Salvatore R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 12–13, 15; noted also in Droge, *Homer or Moses*, p. 139.

47. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI.x–xii (ANF, II, pp. 489–504).

48. Henry Chadwick, "Introduction," in Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. ix. Note Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.16; IV.11, 37; VI.43; VII.28 (pp. 18, 190–191, 212, 359–360, 417); cf. Droge, *Homer or Moses*, pp. 164–165.

passage in the *Kerygma Petrou*, perhaps by direct access to the work,<sup>49</sup> and certainly by way of its citation in Heracleon.<sup>50</sup> He also presents the teachings of Christ as intended not only for Jews, but also for the Greeks and the barbarians,<sup>51</sup> and in at least one place identifies the Christians as a race, τὸ Χριστιανῶν γένος.<sup>52</sup> Like Justin Martyr, neither Origen nor Clement understood their work as a Platonizing or Hellenizing of Christianity—rather, they viewed their philosophical Christianity as the fruition of the truths of Moses and of the derived truths of Plato and the Greek tradition, and the highest form of God-given reason, the religion of the Logos fully given in the flesh and, therefore, the highest philosophy.<sup>53</sup>

### The Theory of the “Third Race” and Eusebius’ Apologetics

The claim of dependence of Plato on Moses is of particular importance in the form given to it by Eusebius in relation to the identification of Christians as “neither Jew nor Greek” and his adaptation of the theme of a “third race.”<sup>54</sup> For the Christians are “Greeks by race, and Greeks by sentiment” who have put aside their ancestral superstitions and who now look to “Jewish books” for “the greater part” of their “doctrine.”<sup>55</sup> The Greeks, with some justice, view Christians as converts to barbarian culture exemplified by the Jews. Yet neither are the Christians Jews: their teaching “is neither Hellenism nor Judaism, but a new and true kind of divine philosophy.”<sup>56</sup> Eusebius’ argument has been characterized as “legitimizing Christianity as the disruption of the ethnic identities of its converts.”<sup>57</sup> In other words, the identification of Christianity as neither Jew nor Greek meant for Eusebius not only as a different religious belief but also, quite distinct from Tertullian’s argumentation, as a different

49. Cf. Origen, *On First Principles*, trans. with an introduction and notes by G. W. Butterworth (London: S.P.C.K., 1936), I, preface, §8 (p. 5). Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, II, pp. 36–37, questions Origen’s knowledge of the actual work.

50. Origen, *Commentary on John*, 13:17; cf. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, II, pp. 34, 41 n14; and *The Fragments of Heracleon*, ed., with an introduction by A. E. Brooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), pp. 31, 35; and the text, pp. 78–79 (ll. 23–27).

51. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.59 (p. 54).

52. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, III.53; also note VIII.43, 56 (pp. 164, 483, 494); cf. the Greek text in *Origenes Werke* (Leipzig Hinrichs, 1899), I, p. 249; II, p. 257, 272.

53. Cf. Ramelli, “Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism,” p. 261.

54. Note Eduard Iricinschi, “Good Hebrew, Bad Hebrew: Christians as *Triton Genos* in Eusebius’ Apologetic Writings,” in Sabrina Inowlocki and Claudio Zamagni, eds., *Reconsidering Eusebius: Collected Papers on Literary, Historical, and Theological Issues*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2011), pp. 69–86.

55. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, I.v (p. 16b); following Gifford’s translation and his marginal pagination, which can be used to reference either Gifford’s edition of the Greek text (vols. 1–2) or his translation (vol. 3, pts 1–2).

56. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, I.v (p. 16d).

57. Aaron P. Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius’ Praeparatio Evangelica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 199.

race or ethnicity, grown out of the Hebrew and Greek cultures but also having a priority over both.

Arthur Droge well described Eusebius' apologetic as, more than an answer to Porphyry's *Against the Christians*, "an attempt to provide a definitive statement about the place of Christianity in the general history of culture."<sup>58</sup> In the *Praeparatio* Eusebius addressed the first member of this problem: that Christians are no longer Greeks, having shed the errors of Greek religion and philosophy, but nonetheless carrying with them the truths known to Greek culture. In the *Demonstratio* addressed the second issue, that they are something more than Jews, and that their religion rests both on oracles and on reason, indeed, on a deeper antiquity than Judaism.<sup>59</sup> The key to his argument, indeed, its full rationale is stated close to the beginning of the *Demonstratio*. There he summarizes the argument of his *Praeparatio*, "that Christianity is neither a form of Hellenism, nor of Judaism, but that it is a religion (θεοσέβεια) with its own characteristic vision, but something of the greatest antiquity, something natural and familiar to the godly men before the times of Moses," namely, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who, Eusebius insists, were neither Jews nor Greeks, inasmuch as they lived prior to the giving of the Decalogue.<sup>60</sup> This ancient theology or wisdom, at the root of both traditions, Jewish and Greek, provided Eusebius with the interpretive key to his promulgation of Christianity as the most ancient truth endowed with the right to amalgamate the wisdom of the two traditions, recognizing the clearer truth of the Jewish tradition and reading both traditions through the lens of Christian proclamation. He continues,

These men, then, were not involved in the errors of idolatry, moreover, they were outside the pale of Judaism; yet, though they were neither Jew nor Greek by birth, we know them to have been conspicuously pious, holy, and just. This compels us to conceive some other ideal of religion, by which they must have guided their lives. Would not this be exactly that third form of religion midway between Judaism and Hellenism, which I have already deduced as the most ancient and venerable of all religions, and which has been preached of late to all nations through our Saviour.<sup>61</sup>

In indicating that Christians are a "third race" whose religion, in addition to whose doctrine or philosophy is both prior to and the successor of both Jew and Greek, Eusebius also drew together the "third race" theme with the parallel theme of a race of God-fearers. The key to the Eusebius' proof of his claim is the agreement of Hebrew

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58. Droge, *Homer or Moses*, p. 171; on Porphyry's attack on Christianity, see Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 126–163.

59. Eusebius, *Demonstratio*, I.i (p. 7); also Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, I.ii; XV.lxii (pp. 5c–d, 855d–856); and cf. Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea*, pp. 100–102.

60. Eusebius, *Demonstratio*, I.ii (p. 7); cf. Iricinschi, "Good Hebrew, Bad Hebrew," p. 85.

61. Eusebius, *Demonstratio*, I.ii (p. 9).

thought with the best and highest manifestations of Greek philosophy coupled with the historical priority of the Hebrew over the Greek.<sup>62</sup> One wonders whether Tertullian's riposte that Christians should not be called the "third race" but the "first" was known to Eusebius. If this pattern of argumentation appears fairly unsophisticated in its early form in such works as Justin's *First Apology*, and perhaps more allegation than contention, it rises to a considerably higher level in Eusebius, who gathered a large collection of citations from Greek authors which prove interest, even fascination, with Jewish theology and ethics,<sup>63</sup> together with lengthy documentation of similarities between Greek religion and the other religions of the ancient world.<sup>64</sup>

By way of example, a fragment from the Peripatetic, Clearchos of Soli (third century B.C.) argues that Aristotle, a century before, had known a Syrian Jew and had viewed the Jews as philosophers descended from the Hindus.<sup>65</sup> Another fragment, from Theophrastus (ca. 370–285 B.C.), a significant pupil of Aristotle, refers to the Jews as "a nation of philosophers" who "converse with one another about the Deity."<sup>66</sup> Eusebius also knew of the interest of Hecataeus of Abdera (ca. 300 B.C.) in Jewish life and morality.<sup>67</sup> Collateral evidence, now simply of oriental influence on Greek thought, is drawn from (Pseudo) Plato and Democritus—and the oriental ties of Pythagoras and Thales are noted as common knowledge.<sup>68</sup>

Eusebius also argued the early indebtedness of the Greeks to oriental and, specifically, Hebrew culture—citing Numenius of Apamea as saying, "what else is Plato than Moses speaking Attic Greek."<sup>69</sup> Most interesting to Eusebius—and obviously significant to the development of his own trinitarian theology—are the parallels between Johannine language of God and the Logos and the Platonic conceptions, drawn largely from Pseudo-Plato, Plotinus, and Numenius, of a "first" and "second God."

So too, does Eusebius note the parallel between the vision of future judgement in Daniel where the Ancient of Days sat in judgment and a "river of fire flowed before him" and the eschatological vision of judgement in Plato's *Phaedo*, where the great river of Tartarus flows into a region of fire and the dead are judged and the evil ones cast into Tartarus.<sup>70</sup> Of course, Eusebius understood Plato as derivative and, therefore, as prone to err in some points. Thus, citing the *Timaeus* and Pseudo-Plato, he comments:

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62. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, X.xiv (p. 505b).

63. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, IX (p. 401ff).

64. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, II, III.

65. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, IX.vi (p. 409b, d).

66. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, IX.ii (p. 403b–c).

67. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, IX.xvi; XIII.xiii (p. 417–18, 680b).

68. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, X.iv (pp. 470–472).

69. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, X.xiv (p. 505b–c); XI.i–xiv (especially p. 527a, citing Numenius); which may also have influenced Justin: cf. Droge, *Homer or Moses*, pp. 64–65, 71.

70. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, XI.38 (p. 567b), citing Dan. 7:9–10 and Plato, *Phaedo*, 113A.

Plato agrees with the Hebrews in the account which he gives of the heaven and its phenomena, according to which it was settled that they have had a beginning, as having been made by the Author of the universe, and that they partake of the corporeal and perishable substance; but he no longer agrees with the Hebrews when he enacts a law that men should worship them and believe them to be gods.<sup>71</sup>

In this assumption, Eusebius reflected the aetiological interests of the Greeks, as identifiable in ancient Greek theories of the Zoroastrian and Chaldaean origins of Pythagoreanism. Guthrie traces this theory back “almost certainly to Aristotle.”<sup>72</sup> As Daniélou has noted, the Aristotelian theory of the origins of philosophy, which Aristotle himself traced to Thales, had been, by Eusebius’ time, modified and to an extent superseded even among the Greeks by an attempt to ground philosophy in the ancient wisdom of the “barbarians.”<sup>73</sup> This claim of a “primitive tradition” had been used, early on, by such authors as Antiochus of Ascalon, Clearchus of Soli, and Posidonius as a basis for their critique of the tendencies of philosophy after Aristotle.<sup>74</sup>

Clement of Alexandria seems to have utilized the arguments of these philosophers to claim the divine origins both of Greek philosophy and of Hebrew theology and to demonstrate the value for the Greeks of such “barbarian” wisdom as Christian doctrine. Such arguments were quite potent in Clement’s time, inasmuch as the Roman world was increasingly attracted to the philosophies and theologies of the orient and to the claims of ancient wisdom or of primitive barbarian philosophy.<sup>75</sup>

Whereas Clement merely sketched the argument, Eusebius documented it copiously with citations both from Clement and from the pagan philosophers themselves. This theme was of such importance to Eusebius that he devoted the entire second half of his *Praeparatio evangelica* to it: he argued first, the preferability of Hebraic revelation to Greek philosophy and the interest of the Greeks in oriental thought—now he argues at length the origins of wisdom in the east and the historical dependence of the Greeks on the Jews.<sup>76</sup> The argument is considerably more sophisticated than that of either Justin or Clement in view of the wealth and the depth of the pagan sources cited and in view of Eusebius’ ability to argue that, in addition to the basic indebtedness, there were differences in expression between the Greeks and the Jews and, still more important, an inconsistent monotheism among the Greeks in

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71. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, XIII.18 (p. 702b).

72. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962–1981), I, p. 254.

73. Daniélou, *History*, II, pp. 57–58.

74. Cf. Daniélou, *History*, II, pp. 57–58 with Hans Lewy, “Aristotle and the Jewish Sage According to Clearchus of Soli,” in *Harvard Theological Review*, 31/3 (1938), pp. 205–235.

75. Clement, *Stromata*, I.29, 66, 68, 71; cf. Daniélou, *History*, I, pp. 56–57; and Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought*, pp. 14–15, 43–49.

76. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, X.

contrast to the higher monotheism of Israel.<sup>77</sup> The Greeks, according to Eusebius, wandered throughout the ancient world, collecting wisdom in various “branches of learning” from the Barbarian nations, but the belief found among the Greek philosophers concerning “the knowledge and worship of the One Supreme God, and of the doctrines most in request for the benefit of the soul,” they could only have learned from the Hebrews.<sup>78</sup> There are, then, two sides to the Greek heritage—first the deeply erroneous views of religion and the gods that Eusebius collects and repudiates in the first six book of the *Praeparatio* and, second, the truths ensconced in Greek philosophy, reflective of Hebrew theology, and found largely in Plato’s works, in books eleven, twelve, and part of book thirteen of the *Praeparatio*. Hebrew truth delivered the Greeks from utter error and delivers Christianity from the errors of the Greeks.

If one of the foundations of Eusebius’ argument for a Christian “third race” is incorporating the heritage of both Hebrew religion and elements of Greek philosophy, the other foundation of his argument is a reading of the book of Genesis and the Abrahamic promise. The argument begins in the *Praeparatio* with a massive attestation of the truths of ancient Hebrew theology and a heavily documented description of the unique religion of the Jews, beginning with Moses.<sup>79</sup> For Eusebius, however, the Jewish truth is not the ultimate ancestor of Christianity. The ancient patriarchal roots of true religion, in the beliefs of Enoch, Noah, Shem, and Japheth, in Job, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all of whom lived before Moses, testify to a pre-Jewish, Hebraic faith, the religion of the promise to Abraham, in which God’s blessing is extended to “all nations and families of the earth.”<sup>80</sup> The Jewish religion, as established by Moses, did become a source of the truth concerning God known to the Greeks, but the Jewish religion, as such, was not suitable for all nations—indeed, Moses himself taught that those who did not follow the law were under a curse. How then, Eusebius asks, was it possible for “future disciples” of Moses to “escape the curse and receive the blessing promised to Abraham?” His answer is that disciples of Moses cannot fulfill the promise, whereas disciples of Jesus are enabled by the commandment to teach all nations, not the law of Moses, but “the contents of the Gospels,” namely, the new covenant.<sup>81</sup> The Hebrew source of true religion is the pre-Mosaic patriarchal religion, unfettered by the Mosaic law that is the true ancient ancestor of Christianity.<sup>82</sup> The Jewish heritage belongs to Christianity because Jesus did not rescind the law of Moses, but fulfilled it and in so doing brought the prophecies of the Old Testament to their fulfillment. Christ both corresponds with Moses and supersedes him as “the second Lawgiver after Moses” who gave “the Law of the

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77. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, III.vi (pp. 96a–97d); III.ix–x (pp. 103b–108a).

78. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, X.ii (p. 460d).

79. Eusebius, *Praeparatio*, VII (on Hebrew theology); VIII (on the religion of the Jews).

80. Eusebius, *Demonstratio*, I.ii (p. 10); on Eusebius distinction between the Hebrews and the Jews, see Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea*, pp. 103–106.

81. Eusebius, *Demonstratio*, L.iii, v (pp. 19, 23, 24–25).

82. Cf. Droge, *Homer or Moses*, pp. 186–187.

Supreme God's true holiness" to all nations.<sup>83</sup> The remainder of Eusebius' *Demonstratio* consists largely in a massive christological reading of the Old Testament.

### Eusebius vs. Harnack

Eusebius of Caesarea, from the perspective of the early fourth century, looked over much the same sources and patterns of development that Adolf von Harnack examined toward the close of the nineteenth century. Both had to hand the major writings of the Christian apologetic and doctrinal tradition, both knew the ancient classical tradition and the Judaeo-Christian Scripture—and both were well aware of the trajectories of argument concerning Christianity as a “race,” and specifically as the “third race.” Eusebius and Harnack both understood their interpretive task as explaining the development of Christianity as a Hellenistic phenomenon that drew together the Jewish Scriptures, the proclamation of Jesus Christ that became the New Testament, and aspects of the philosophical learning of Mediterranean world. They interpreted those materials, however, in radically different ways: in shortest form, for Eusebius this development of Christian teaching was an elaboration of the truth that drew on all of its sources, for Harnack the same development was a declension from the truth of the Gospel, by way of Hellenization. For Eusebius, Christianity was a wisdom that both preceded and succeeded Judaic and Greek thought as well as amalgamating the two, albeit on the assumption of Hebraic truth as the primary ground of Christianity—for Harnack the amalgamation spelled a disaster for Christian truth.

The concept of Christianity as the “third race,” from its very beginnings in Paul, the *Kerygma Petrou*, and Aristides' *Apology*, argues against a process of Hellenizing a Jewish or Hebraic gospel and toward the conscious development of a teaching that was the successor of both Hellenistic and Hebraic, Graeco-Roman and Jewish religion. The “third race” theory, particularly in its Eusebian form, does not oblige the notion of a simple dichotomy between Greek and Hebrew thought, nor does it oblige the historical claim of a process by which a fundamentally Hebraic Gospel was progressively Hellenized—instead, it argues as a conscious mingling of Hebraic and Greek elements, resting in part on their common Eastern foundations, assumes a basic compatibility of the truths in Greek philosophy with Hebrew thought; and argues the higher truth of a third form of religion, theology, and philosophy built on the two predecessor forms, but also reaching back into the roots of both in an ancient theology and philosophy—to borrow Renaissance terms, a *prisca theologia* or *prisca philosophia*—that has access to the originally delivered truths of God.<sup>84</sup> Eusebius

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83. Eusebius, *Demonstratio*, I.vii (pp. 44–45); on Eusebius' Moses-Christ comparison, see J. Edgar Bruns, “The ‘Agreement of Moses and Jesus in the ‘*Demonstratio Evangelica*’ of Eusebius,” in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 31/2 (1977), pp. 117–125.

84. Note Daniel P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (London: Duckworth, 1972).

could declare, “If any one should assert that all those who have enjoyed the testimony of righteousness, from Abraham himself back to the first man, were Christians in fact if not in name, he would not go beyond the truth. . . . So that it is clearly necessary to consider that religion, which has lately been preached to all nations through the teaching of Christ, the first and most ancient of all religions, and the one discovered by those divinely favored men in the age of Abraham.”<sup>85</sup> In Eusebius’ argument, Christianity’s right of access to both traditions, Hebrew and Greek, arose from the antiquity of true religion as known to the patriarchal predecessors of Abraham. The ancient Hebrew truth, moreover, provided Christianity with the basis for sorting out the truths found in Greek philosophy and casting out the errors.

In an intellectual milieu in which the Hebraic and the Hellenic had already been blended for over a millennium, Eusebius’ teaching occupies a point on the cultural continuum at which the two already interrelated strands draw together and interpret one another. Harnack was, after all, correct in his interpretation of early Christianity as a Judaeo-Hellenistic religion—what he failed to acknowledge was the early Christian self-understanding, rooted in aspects of the earliest Christian preaching, of Christianity as intentionally neither Jewish nor Graeco-Roman, but a third kind of religion, more rooted than the Jewish and Greek alternatives and, given their derivative character, capable equally of critiquing and drawing on both. He failed, in other words, to develop the theme of the third race and to trace out its implications, despite identifying it as a significant theme in his *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*. It is not as if the Judaism of the era, whether pre-Christian or contemporaneous with Christianity, was a hermetically-sealed religious container—or that Greek philosophy, born in the Ionic colonies of Asia Minor, lacked an Eastern background. There was considerable cultural interpenetration. Nor is it the case that the apologetic writers of the early church understood Christianity as an originally purely Hebraic religion and that this original understanding was gradually eroded in a process of Hellenization.

The forging of early Christian theology and philosophy as neither Jewish nor Greek was a self-conscious development that involved both rejection and critical appropriation, as is most evident in the apologetic argumentation of Eusebius of Caesarea, grounded in the early identification of Christianity as the “third race.” Eusebius’ work was surely the crowning achievement of this argument—in fact, the merger of two trajectories of early Christian argument. In his *Praeparatio Evangelica*, he responded to Porphyry’s critique of Christianity by drawing out in massive, erudite detail the long-held Judaeo-Christian argument of the dependence of Greek philosophy on the Mosaic revelation and the remnant-character of theistic truths embedded in the Greek tradition. In the *Demonstratio Evangelica*, the second portion of his major work, he argued both the Jewish inheritance of Christianity and the pre-Mosaic rootage of Christian truth on the basis of the theme of Christianity as the third race. The structural or argumentative achievement of Eusebius, then was the merger of the two trajectories—the apologetics of a Christian superiority to Hellenism and

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85. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, I.iv.6, 10, in *NPNF*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, I, pp. 87–88.

Judaism and the third race theme—using the concept of the third but more ancient race as the heuristic device to explain the right of Christianity to the best in the heritage of both cultures, the Jewish and the Greek.

These different understandings of the nature of the early Christian philosophical and theological project—identifiable in short form as “Eusebian” and “Harnackian”—have a particular relevance to more modern patterns of Christian formulation. A brief excursion into early modern histories of philosophy and a cursory reading of Reformation and post-Reformation comments on the origins and history of natural theology reveals an indebtedness to the Eusebian model, whether in the assumption of a Mosaic background to Greek philosophy or in a theory of the origins of philosophy and natural theology in an original Adamic knowledge communicated in altered forms after the Fall. In accepting this narrative not only from Eusebius but also from the long tradition of Christian theology and philosophy, early modern Protestant theologians and philosophers were able to reflect on the heritage of ancient philosophy, to appropriate critically what they viewed as both valuable and in accord with Scripture, and, in the wake of their critical reading of the ancients, to develop Christian forms of natural theology. Early modern Protestant writers also distinguished between philosophy, generally understood as a pursuit of wisdom, and philosophy in particular forms.

By contrast, the Harnackian model had the effect, in much twentieth-century theology, of stifling interest in the ancient philosophical tradition, of largely eradicating the tradition of a Reformed Protestant natural theology, and of inspiring a large-scale critique of what has come to be called “classical theism” on the ground that it was “Greek.” Needless to say, Eusebius, could he have seen this development, would have been shocked and dismayed. Of course, Harnack was not singlehandedly to blame or credit with the shift away from a more or less Eusebian approach to the history of philosophy. That had already occurred largely in nineteenth century histories of philosophy. Discussions of Adamic and Noahic philosophy, of Chaldaic, Egyptian, and Zoroastrian backgrounds, and of the proto-philosophies of the Phoenician sage Sanchuniathon or the Greek poets Orpheus and Hesiod, often found in seventeenth-century histories,<sup>86</sup> were either minimized or rejected by nineteenth-century historians and the beginnings of philosophy-proper assigned to the Pre-Socratics.<sup>87</sup>

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86. Cf. e.g., Georg Hornius, *Historiae philosophicae libri septem. Quibus de origine, successione, sectis & vita philosophorum ab orbe condito ad nostram aetatem agitur* (Leiden: Johannes Elsevir, 1655), I.ii (pp. 6–14; with Abraham Gravius, *Historia philosophica, continens verum philosophorum qui quidem praeciupi fuerunt, studia ac dogmata, modernorum quaestionibus in primis exagitata* (Franeker: Johannes Wellens, 1674), I.i–iii (pp. 4–25); and Theophilus Gale, *The Court of the Gentiles [Part I], or, A discourse touching the original of human literature, both philologie and philosophie, from the Scriptures and Jewish church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: W. Hall for Tho. Gilbert, 1672), I.i–iv (pp. 1–26).

87. Cf. e.g., Friedrich Ueberweg, *A History of Philosophy, from Thales to the Present Time*, trans. from the fourth German edition by George S. Morris, with additions, by Noah Porter, 2

It is of some interest and even irony, then, that at virtually the same time that modern theologians were drawing their conclusions concerning Hebrew and Greek thought from Harnack, historians of ancient cultural and intellectual history were returning to a recognition of the Eastern roots of Greek philosophy and the significant interpenetration of Hebraic and Hellenic cultures in the ancient world. Scholarship has traced ancient connections and interrelationships between Greek and Hebrew cultures and commented on their “common background.”<sup>88</sup> Even the hazy figure of Sanchuniathon, as represented by Philo of Byblos, can be resurrected, not indeed as a clearly historical personage, but as an ancient literary indicator of the Eastern roots of Ionic philosophy.<sup>89</sup> Hesiod’s *Theogony* is recognized to have an Eastern, even a Hittite, background,<sup>90</sup> and Hesiod had a considerable influence on Plato.<sup>91</sup> Examples can easily be multiplied. It is also the case that more recent histories of philosophy have returned to the identification of Near Eastern roots of Greek philosophy.<sup>92</sup> If the historical details of Eusebius’ aetiology of religion—Christianity before Abraham, Mosaic origins of Platonic philosophy, and so forth—do not correspond with the details of modern research into ancient cultural and philosophical developments, his assumptions of a deep interpenetration of Judaic and Hellenic cultures and an ancient Near Eastern background to Greek philosophy are borne out by modern research.

### Concluding Thoughts

The historical-cultural paradigm of the early Christian apologetic tradition, as it culminates in the work of Eusebius of Caesarea, was not the only paradigm for the history of theology and philosophy that arose in the early church. Hippolytus and

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vols. (New York: C. Scribner & Company, 1872–1874), I, pp. 1–32; Johann Eduard Erdmann, *A History of Philosophy*, ed. Williston S. Hough, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 3 vols. (London: S. Sonnenschein & Co.; New York, Macmillan & Co., 1890–1892), I, pp. 13–18; and Eduard Zeller, *A History of Greek Philosophy from the Earliest Period to the Time of Socrates*. 2 vols., trans. S. F. Allyn (London: Longmans, Green, 1883), I, pp. 26–49; and note, more recently, Frederick C. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 9 vols. (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1946–1974), I, pp. 14–15.

88. E.g., Cyrus H. Gordon, *The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations* (London: Collins, 1962); Michael C. Astour, *Hellenosemitica: An Ethnic and Cultural Study in West Semitic Impact on Mycenaean Greece* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965).

89. M. L. West, “*Ab ovo*: Orpheus, Sanchuniathon, and the Origins of the Ionian World Model,” in *Classical Quarterly*, 44/2 (1994), pp. 289–307.

90. Peter Walcot, *Hesiod and the Near East* (Cardiff: Univ. of Wales Press, 1966); also Ian Rutherford, “Hesiod and the Literary Traditions of the Near East,” in Franco Montanari, Antonios Rengakos, and Christos Tsagalis, ed., *Brill’s Companion to Hesiod* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 9–35.

91. Cf. e.g., G. R. Boys-Stones, “Hesiod and Plato’s History of Philosophy,” in G. R. Boys-Stones and J. H. Haubold, ed., *Plato and Hesiod* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 42–51; also David Sedley, “Hesiod’s *Theogony* and Plato’s *Timaeus*,” in *ibid.*, pp. 247–258.

92. E.g., Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, I, pp. 30–38, 251–256.

Irenaeus traced the origins of gnostic heresy to the inroads of philosophy. Tertullian's thought was more antagonistic to the surrounding culture and its philosophy than either the second century apologetics of Justin Martyr or the apologetic argumentation of Eusebius. Augustine's and Orosius' histories set Christianity against the culture, although Augustine, too, argued the Mosaic background to Platonic thought. Still, the apologetic model that culminated in Eusebius had a powerful influence on the history of Christian thought, particularly in the reception of ancient philosophy by Christian theologians and philosophers in a fairly steady stream as far as the seventeenth century. Basic assumptions that Greek philosophy was not utterly isolated from Hebrew or Jewish thought and that a foundational biblical theology understood as a most ancient and foundational monotheism could both critique and elicit the remnants of truth from Greek philosophy, allowed for the use of philosophical terms and arguments in framing of Christian theology and for the development of Christian forms of natural theology. Harnack, by contrast, was fascinated by the notion of Christianity as the third race, but he rejected the theological conclusion that Christians, as neither Jew nor Greek, can be the heirs of both traditions—to the loss of a significant dimension of early Christian belief in his historical account of the history of doctrine, and arguably also to the denigration of the philosophical dimension of Christian thought.