

The Hellenization of Christianity: A Historiographical Study¹

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EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION of the problem of the hellenization of Christianity belongs to modern times, particularly to the past four centuries. The question had, indeed, been raised in earlier days, from the time of Justin Martyr on, whenever it seemed necessary to explain parallels, or apparent parallels, between Christian doctrine and the philosophy of the Platonists, or between Christian sacraments and the practices of hellenistic cults. And it was in fact an inevitable question whenever, as in the spiritualist-rigorist tradition, from Montanism to Joachim of Fiore, there was an interest in showing a contrast between the pure religion of Apostolic times and the perversions of Churchly Christianity. One recalls Tertullian's remarks about the influence of Aristotle, the "father of all heresies."

But the possibility of systematic and critical discussion of this problem, and the use of the concept of hellenization as a fundamental theme in the explication of the history of dogma, depended upon the circumstances of the Reformation. The rise of humanism, bringing a closer acquaintance with classical antiquity, together with the critical attitude of the Reformers towards the mediaeval theological tradition, and particularly their criticism of the impact of Aristotle in the scholastic age, planted the seed of the theory of hellenization. Never before in the history of the Church had the desire to demonstrate the contrast between primitive Christianity and developed ecclesiastical tradition been so widespread and intense; and all parties in the Reformation, from the Anabaptists and Spirituals to the more conservative Protestants, found in the concept of hellenization a ready weapon in their rebellion against the mediaeval Church.²

Prior to that time, such extensive criticism of theological tradition as the concept of hellenization implied seemed impossible. While influences of Platonism in the formulation of Christian doctrine had often been noticed and variously explained, the question of a radical dependence of developed Christianity upon hellenism was avoided. As in the case of biblical criticism, so too in the case of the history of dogma, the sacred character of Christian doctrine, hallowed by centuries of tradition, made such an enterprise seem impious. This attitude made it inevitable that the development of the theory of hellenization should be slow and halting.

1. An abbreviated version of a paper presented to the American Society of Church History, at Emmanuel College, Toronto, in May, 1961.

2. Typical of radical criticism is the remark of Sebastian Franck, in a letter to John Campanus: "Right after (the Apostles) everything unfolded in a contrary fashion." Printed in G. H. Williams and A. M. Mergal (eds.), *Anabaptist and Spiritual Writers*, Vol. XXV of the *Library of Christian Classics* (London and Philadelphia, 1957), p. 148.

If we ask how it came about that Roman Catholic authors (for instance, the Jesuit scholar Dionysius Petavius, to whom we shall devote some attention later on) could be in the forefront of the development of the concept of hellenization, our answer is that Petavius and his friends were not mediaeval Catholics, but had been affected by the critical spirit of their age. Furthermore, their notion of the dogmatic authority of the Church left some room for the criticism of the Fathers. Pierre Jurieu, indefatigable Protestant controversialist, in his *Le tableau du Socinianisme*, suggests that part of Petavius' interest in criticizing the Fathers of the first three centuries, and pointing to their Platonist errors, was to establish the hypothesis of his Church with regard to the necessity and infallibility of Pope or councils.³

The roots of the theory of hellenization lie in the Reformation era. But while several of the major figures associated with the Reformation, most notably Erasmus and Melancthon,⁴ commented on the problem of the influence of Greek philosophy on the development of Christian doctrine, it was several generations later that the concept of hellenization came into prominence. It was in the Protestant-Roman Catholic and Trinitarian-Socinian debates of the seventeenth century that this became a major issue, and the brief compass of this paper demands that we turn our attention immediately to that period.

I. THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY CONTROVERSIES

The most interesting and most important figure in the early development of the idea of the hellenizing of Christianity is Isaac Casaubonus, a reformed divine, described by Leighton Pullan as "one of the most learned men in France,"⁵ who became, at the end of his life, a close friend of Bishop Andrewes, and a member of the Church of England. His work, *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes xvi*, directed against the *Annales ecclesiastici* of the learned Oratorian, Caesar Baronius, appeared in 1614.

Casaubonus sees the problem of hellenization in much wider terms than merely the influence of Greek philosophy. Turning his attention to the New Testament itself, he sees the root of the problem in the missionary methods of St. Paul, as represented specifically in the speech on Mars Hill, where the Apostle, aware that nothing would be more detrimental to the conversion of the Athenians than the radical novelty of Christian faith, suggested to

3. Part I, p. 297, quoted by W. Glawe, *Die Hellenisierung des Christentums in der Geschichte der Theologie von Luther bis auf die Gegenwart*, Vol. 15 of *Neue Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Kirche*, edited by N. Bonwetsch and R. Seeberg (Berlin, 1912), p. 14, n. 1.

4. On the views of Erasmus and Melancthon, see W. Glawe, *Die Hellenisierung des Christentums*, pp. 16-20, and A. Grillmeier, "Hellenisierung-Judaisierung des Christentums als Deutprinzipien der Geschichte des Kirchlichen Dogmas" (*Scholastik*, Vol. 33 [1958], pp. 321-355, 528-558), p. 324f. We are heavily indebted to the studies of both Glawe and Grillmeier; also, for generous guidance, to Fr. Georges Florovsky, of Harvard University, whose article on "Hellenismus: Hellenisierung (des Christentums)" appears in the new *Weltkirchen Lexicon*, edited by F. H. Littell and H. H. Walz (Stuttgart, 1960), p. 540f.

5. L. Pullan, *Religion Since the Reformation* (Oxford, 1924), p. 90f. See also Glawe, pp. 21-24, and Grillmeier, p. 325f.

them that he was preaching a God whom they already worshipped. The Church Fathers, according to Casaubonus, simply followed St. Paul's example. In his treatment of this development, the author's emphasis is not at all on the philosophical side, but rather on the side of the sacramental theory and practice of the early Church, where he sees a strong, even determining, influence of hellenistic religion, particularly in connection with baptism and the Eucharist. All the terms that the Church Fathers used, he points out, belonged to heathen religion; in particular, *mysterion* and *sacramentum*, and the whole complex of related terms, were taken over from the Greek mysteries. Furthermore, he sees in the creed, as a secret known only to believing Christians, a clear parallel to the practices of the pagan cults. Thus he calls seriously into question the integrity of the earliest Christian traditions.

Not only Protestant, but also Roman Catholic, divines of this period turned their efforts vigorously towards the assessment of the integrity of primitive tradition. An interesting feature of the seventeenth-century development is the important role played by Roman Catholic scholars in the elaboration of the idea of hellenization: especially the work of the Jesuits, Johannes Baptista Crispus, Dionysius Petavius, and their disciple, Petrus Huetius.⁶ Most important of this group is Petavius, who had come under the influence of Casaubonus, and whose work *Opus de theologicis dogmatibus* appeared in the years 1644–50. Especially important is his second volume, where he treats the teaching of the Church Fathers on the Trinity, with special reference to the influence of the Platonic trinities (of Plato, Philo, Pseudo-Mercurius) upon the pre-Nicene Fathers: Justin, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria, and others. This influence was, according to Petavius, the whole ground of the Arian perfidy. Part of the reason for the influence, he suspects, was the fact that many Christians had been before their conversion disciples of Platonic philosophical sects. Chiefly Plato, but also Aristotle (specifically in the case of Sabellianism), is to blame.

Thus the whole of patristic theology seemed placed in jeopardy, and Petavius' only recourse was to the infallibility of the papacy or of conciliar definition. Such a presentation of the history of doctrine, needless to say, placed Petavius in a somewhat painful position, in view of the rising tide of Unitarianism and Socinianism, whose proponents sought to make capital of the notion of the corruption of Christian belief under the impact of Platonism. It is significant that it was Jean le Clerc, a Unitarian, who published the second edition of Petavius' work, at Antwerp in 1700, under the pseudonym "Theophilus Alethinus."⁷

While it was the impact of the Trinitarian controversies that was to give the theory of the hellenization of Christianity its greatest boost, the concerns of these controversies were by no means the only factors making for this

6. Cf. Glawe, pp. 24ff., 26ff., 33ff.; Grillmeier, p. 326f.; and the extremely interesting and useful work by O. Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman: the Idea of Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 58ff.

7. On the Socinian use of Petavius, see Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman*, p. 215f.

development. There were, for instance, many Trinitarians (e.g., Dallaeus, Hornius, Pearson, Pfanner) who were not so much concerned with the controversies as with Church-historical studies as such. Others, like Vossius, Thomasius, and Gale, were more interested in the idea of hellenization as a critique of Roman Catholicism. Gerhardus Vossius, friend of Hugo Grotius, was, for instance, particularly concerned with the hellenistic sources of individual Romish doctrines, especially those of purgatory and the invocation of saints, while Jacob Thomasius (father of the better-known Christian Thomasius) was interested in elucidating the Platonic background of the Catholic mystical tradition, which he saw as a grievous corruption of primitive Christian purity.⁸

Most violent of this group of anti-Roman critics was Theophilus Gale, whose work *The Court of the Gentiles* appeared in four parts between 1672 and 1677. Gale has a quite amazing facility for tracing all the supposed corruptions of Romanism to heathen philosophy, and especially to the hellenistic cult of demons. Thus the commemoration of martyrs, the feasts, hymns, and passion plays, the invocation of saints, the practice of exorcism, the practice of fasting, and many other rites and ceremonies, such as holy water, holy fire, blessed branches, turning to the east, and so on, come directly from the cult of demons. Similarly the sacrifice of the mass is an imitation of demon sacrifices, and the ideal of the monastic life, and even the teaching of the primacy of the Pope, and of tradition, come from the same source. "Indeed," he concludes, "the whole of this Mystic Monkish Divinitie seems to be but a mere Pythagorean and Platonic fable."⁹

While these and other interests contributed to the theory of hellenization, it was in the area of Trinitarian-Unitarian discussion that contention about the theory chiefly flourished; and it was in this area that the theory found one of its most stalwart adversaries, in the person of George Bull, an English priest who in 1705 became Bishop of St. David's. Because of some comments on the Lutheran doctrine of justification, Bull was accused of Socinianism, and in proof of his orthodoxy he published, in 1685, his great *Defensio Fidei Nicaenae*, supplemented later, in 1694, by his *Judicium Ecclesiae*. A copy of this latter work, sent to Bossuet, procured for its author "the unfeigned congratulations of the whole clergy of France, assembled at St. Germain's, for the great service he had done to the Catholic Church."¹⁰

In criticism levelled mainly against Petavius, Bull's tactic consisted chiefly in the negation of the whole idea of development and corruption, and an insistence upon the immutability of doctrine—a tactic that was ultimately ineffective, although it was advanced with remarkable erudition and ingenuity. Bull did, indeed, win the applause of the Gallican Bossuet, as against the apparent infidelity of the latter's fellow-countrymen and fellow-Churchmen; but both Bull and Bossuet, in maintaining that Christian

8. On Vossius, Thomasius, and Gale, see Glawe, pp. 87ff.

9. *The Court of the Gentiles*, Vol. III, pp. 151ff., quoted by Glawe, p. 96.

10. P. E. More and F. L. Cross (eds.), *Anglicanism* (London and Milwaukee, 1935), p. 248; cf. Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman*, p. 60. On Bossuet's position, see *ibid.*, ch. 1, "Semper Eadem."

doctrine is in the obvious sense *semper eadem*, were holding a position that could not for long withstand the increasing onslaughts of historical criticism.

So far as the concept of hellenization is concerned, such controversies solved very little. Most Trinitarians as well as Unitarians were inclined to accept the idea; and the Unitarian le Clerc, and the Trinitarian Vossius, for instance, found themselves in agreement on the influence of Platonic philosophy and hellenistic cultus on the rise of the ascetical ideal and certain institutions of the Catholic Church. Scholars on both sides of the controversy could, and for the most part did, accept the fact of hellenic or hellenistic influence in the history of doctrine. The idea had come to maturity. The real problem remaining was just how this fact of hellenization was to be evaluated; and it was widely supposed that "hellenization" must be synonymous with "deterioration." The pietist historian Gottfrid Arnold, whose *Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie* was published in Frankfurt in 1699-1700, was first to make fully explicit the notion that development is more or less equivalent to corruption, and that *Abfall*, decline, is the key to the interpretation of Church history.¹¹

II. SOUVERAIN AND HIS CRITICS

Matthieu Souverain's work, *Le Platonisme dévoilé ou essai touchant le verbe Platonicien*, which first appeared in the year 1700, and is significant as the first monographic treatment of the problem of hellenization, presented a bolder and more thorough criticism of all the fundamental elements of Christian doctrine than had any of the earlier discussions. The volume was published as a posthumous work of anonymous authorship, bearing on its title page a false indication of the place of publication, which was not in fact Cologne ("Chez Pierre Marteau"), but Amsterdam. A number of scholars, both Unitarian and Jesuit, were accused of authorship; but within a few years it became clear that the work had been that of a Reformed divine of the Province of Poitou, who two or three years before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes had been dispossessed of his living, because of Arminian tendencies, and had repaired to Holland, where he had become leader of a gathering of French exiles, centred in the Hauptkirche of Rotterdam. After a short time there, he had moved, with five sympathizers, to England, where he had become a leader of Socinian tendencies, and where he had died almost at the end of the seventeenth century. The editor of his work characterizes him as "an excellent man, of great piety and profundity, who counted the study of Scripture his greatest pleasure. He had no other intention than to seek out the Truth: and having found it, he embraced it with all his heart, equally incapable of betraying it, or of disguising it for any mundane interest." The editor notes, in conclusion, that "this frankness won for him a number of enemies!"¹²

The book is divided into two parts: the first contains an examination of

11. On Arnold's "Abfallsidee," see Grillmeier, pp. 332ff.

12. M. Souverain, *Le Platonisme dévoilé* (Cologne, 1700), "Avertissement" (without pagination). On Souverain, see P. Bayle, *Oeuvres diverses* (laHaye, 1737), Vol. III, p.

the concept of the *logos*, while the second deals with the mind of the earliest not-yet-Platonized Christians on the subject of the Divinity of Christ. Souverain looks to the second century as the point at which the Church lost her integrity.¹³ The Fathers of the second and third centuries, Justin, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian—indeed, everyone after Ignatius—were guilty of hellenizing. They breathed hellenism; in fact, they were all semi-pagans.

While the Fathers of the second and third centuries were chiefly to blame, the ground of hellenization goes back, according to Souverain, to the first century, when the gentile bishops first began to corrupt the pure tradition of the Apostolic community represented by St. James at Jerusalem. The bridge by which this corruption entered was above all the method of exegesis and catechism employed by the Fathers who, themselves products of Platonic schools, sought to make Scripture at home in the context of Platonic thought. All the earliest teachers of the Church (Souverain mentions Dionysius the Areopagite and Clement of Rome) were devoted to the most refined and subtle books of philosophy. Justin Martyr is singled out, however, as the first who seriously Platonized the fundamental articles of the creed, a process that was never reversed and grew more and more intense with the development of controversies and definitions.

Souverain's criticism of the early tradition of the Church, the most radical and thorough that had so far been advanced, represents, in the view of Walther Glawe, a quantitative high-point in the history of the theory of hellenization.¹⁴ Such criticism did not, however, pass unnoticed.

One of the most violent opponents of Souverain's view of hellenization was the pietist professor and pastor of Stargard, Johann Wilhelm Zierold, whose *Gründliche Kirchen-Historie* was published in two parts, at Leipzig and Stargard in 1700, and at Frankfurt in 1703. Zierold regards as the work of the devil himself any effort to establish a parallelism between the pure evangelical teaching and the philosophy of Plato and Pythagoras. To explain obvious similarities, he has recourse to the time-honoured argument that the heathen folk had learned much from the Hebrews. Not only did Greek and Jew have a common parentage in Noah, but they had often, from time to time, come into contact. Pythagoras and Plato were dependent upon Jewry, and had learned not a little from Moses.¹⁵ Other doughty opponents of the position of Souverain were the Jesuit Balthus, who found

629; also Glawe, pp. 115–132, and Grillmeier, p. 328. An English translation of Souverain's work, now very rare, appeared in London in 1700.

13. See Souverain, *Le Platonisme dévoilé*, Part II, ch. II.

14. Glawe, p. 115.

15. This argument, which was popular with the Church Fathers (see our note in E. R. Fairweather (ed.), *A Scholastic Miscellany*, Vol. X of the *Library of Christian Classics* [London and Philadelphia, 1956], p. 424, n. 98), was abandoned by St. Augustine on grounds of historical improbability (*De civ. dei.*, VIII, 11, 12; *CSEL*, 40/1, 371–373; and *Retract.*, II, 30; *CSEL*, 36, 136–137), but was passed on to the Middle Ages by Cassiodorus (*Inst. div. litt.*, I, 17; cf. P. deLabriolle, *Histoire de la littérature latine chrétienne*, 3d. ed. [Paris, 1947], Vol. I, p. 25, n. 2). It appears in Bossuet's *Discours sur la histoire universelle*, II, 15. On Zierold, see Glawe, pp. 133ff., and on Zierold, Balthus, and Ceillier, see Grillmeier, p. 329.

the theory incredible, and the learned Benedictine Remy Ceillier, who laboured to defend the tradition of the Fathers as reliable and authoritative.

For both its critics and its supporters, Souverain's work constituted a landmark in the development of the idea of the hellenization of Christianity, and all later work on the subject is dependent upon it. Thus Walther Glawe quotes with approval the remark of Theodor Kolde that Harnack's view that dogma "in its conception and completion is a work of the Greek mind on the material of the Gospel" represents nothing new, but goes right back to Souverain.¹⁶

III. THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The story of the development of the idea of hellenization does not end with Souverain, and we pass on to find another landmark in the work of the "Father of Church History," Johann Lorenz Mosheim.¹⁷ At first sight, Mosheim's view seems to differ little from previous treatments of the subject: the hellenization of Christianity began in the time of Marcus Aurelius, in Asia and Africa, and became established chiefly through the work of Justin Martyr and of the teachers in the catechetical school at Alexandria, Athenagoras, Pantaenus, and Clement. It was still more strongly developed in the continuation of the Alexandrian tradition, especially in Origen.

The entry into Christianity of elements of a Platonic eclecticism, Neoplatonism, was accomplished mainly by means of allegorical exegesis of Scripture and philosophical explanations of the creed. This influence affected the whole range of theology: not only the Trinity and Christology, but ideas of human freedom, the survival of the soul after death, the nature of the Christian mysteries, and the pattern of Christian life, particularly in its mystical and ascetical aspects. The net result was a corruption of the simple Christianity of the earliest times.

Familiar as this pattern of thought has become, there are several significant features in Mosheim's presentation. On the basis of a more thorough scientific knowledge of Greek philosophy than his predecessors had possessed, he was able to see that the hellenization of Christianity resulted not so much from the direct influence of Plato and Aristotle, as from the impact of a Neoplatonic eclecticism, involving strong orientalizing elements. Thus he focused the centres of influence in Asia Minor and Egypt.

Not only Mosheim's superior information, but also the circumstances of his writing, were conducive to a more scientific treatment of the problem of hellenization, in that he was a little bit removed from the Trinitarian controversies, and was trying to write history rather than straightforward polemic. He does indeed conclude by assessing the hellenization of Christianity as a

16. T. Kolde, "Dogma und Dogmengeschichte," in *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, Vol. 19. (1908), p. 495f., quoted by Glawe, p. 151.

17. Mosheim was strongly influenced by the Cambridge Platonists, and published at Jena in 1733 a Latin translation of R. Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe*, to which he appended an article, "De turbata per recentiores Platonicos Ecclesia commentatio." On Mosheim's work and influence, see Glawe, pp. 150-176, and Grillmeier, p. 335f.

corruption of the simple evangelical religion, but his tone in doing so is different from that of Souverain. If Souverain's monograph is regarded as a *quantitative* high-point in the development of the theory of hellenization, this more scientific, more balanced, and at the same time more thorough treatment of the problem may be regarded, if we may borrow once again from Glawe's terminology, as a *qualitative* high-point in the history of the idea. The subsequent history is largely a matter of the acceptance and working out of Mosheim's view, although sometimes more in the spirit of Souverain.

An interesting variation of this treatment is to be found in the work of the English deists, especially of Joseph Priestley, whose *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* appeared in 1782. He is strongly dependent upon Mosheim, yet has much more the flavour of Souverain. According to Priestley:

To consider the system (if it may be called a system) of Christianity *a priori*, one would think it very little liable to corruption, or abuse. The great outline of it is, that the universal parent of mankind commissioned Jesus Christ to invite men to the practice of virtue, by assurance of his mercy to the penitent, and of his purpose to raise to immortal life all the virtuous and the good, but to inflict an adequate punishment on the wicked. In proof of this he wrought many miracles, and after a public execution, he rose again from the dead. He also directed that proselytes to his religion should be admitted by baptism, and that his disciples should eat bread and drink wine in commemoration of his death.¹⁸

Unlikely as it might seem, this system did get corrupted, mainly through the application of the *logos* doctrine to Christ. The Apostle John is not really to blame, because he used the word *logos* only as a figure of speech. It was through the influence of Platonism, or rather, of a degenerate Platonism, that the divinity of Christ, the immortality of the soul, and many other doctrines were introduced. At the same time, the simple ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper were transformed into Christian mysteries.

Edward Gibbon, like Priestley, follows in the steps of both Mosheim and Souverain. He too has a vision of the sublime and simple theology of the primitive Christians, which was gradually corrupted. But to a much greater extent than his predecessors had done, Gibbon traces the seeds of corruption to the Jewish background, with its acceptance of Greek or Chaldean philosophy, with ideas of pre-existence, transmigration, and immortality of souls. "The seeds of faith, which had slowly arisen in the rocky and ungrateful soil of Judea, were transplanted in full maturity to the happier climes of the Gentiles; and the strangers of Rome and Asia, who had never beheld the manhood, were the more readily disposed to embrace the divinity of Christ." And a doctrine that "the eloquence of Plato, the name of Solomon, the authority of the school of Alexandria, and the consent of Jews and Greeks were insufficient to establish," was finally "confirmed by the identification

18. J. Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 2 vols. (Birmingham, 1782), Vol. II, p. 440; cf. Glawe, p. 236, n. 2.

of the divine *logos* by the celestial pen of the last and most sublime of the evangelists."¹⁹

Despite the great influence of both Souverain and Mosheim during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were still a few who held the line against the theory of hellenization. Notable among these is the anonymous Catholic author of the *Histoire critique de l'éclecticisme*, published in 1766.²⁰ The purpose of the author is to justify the Catholic Church against the accusation of having allowed its theology to be altered by the doctrine of the Neoplatonists. His fundamental position is that theology is not exposed to any variation. The proposition that Christians, who were in Apostolic times arch-enemies of philosophy, reached the point where they might themselves be called Platonists is to him simply an incredible paradox, however great might be the erudition of Huetius in support of the notion. However much Christians might have been tempted to show the similarity of their teaching to that of the Platonists, on this or that issue, they never abandoned the fundamental canon of Christianity, that no doctrine should be admitted that had not the guarantee of revelation.

Not only from the Catholic side, but also by Protestants, Mosheim was opposed; perhaps most notably by Karl August Gottlieb Keil, an early nineteenth-century Leipzig theologian,²¹ who approached the matter from the standpoint of New Testament exegesis. He found that the Church Fathers had never accepted Platonism in such a way as to contradict the authority of Holy Scripture, which had always remained for them normative. The supposedly Platonic elements in their teaching can be traced to biblical sources.

IV. RECENT TRENDS

Although the history of the concept of hellenization in the nineteenth century is mainly a matter of the continual restatement of the views of Souverain and Mosheim, towards the end of the century important new developments, to which we can make only passing reference, made their appearance.

Whereas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries discussions of the hellenization of Christianity had found their place in the context of rationalism and deism, with the Trinitarian controversies in a prominent position, in the nineteenth century, largely under the influence of Hegel, discussion moved into the context of the history of Christianity treated in the manner of the history of religions. Up to that time, with a few important exceptions that we have noted, attention had been focused on the side of the history of doctrine, rather narrowly understood, while matters of religion and cultus, and the whole *Umwelt* of Christianity, had been neglected. A change in

19. E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 12 vols. (London, 1776-88), Vol. III, pp. 265, 317; cf. Glawe, p. 248.

20. Cf. Glawe, pp. 254ff.

21. K. A. G. Keil, *Opuscula academica ad N. T. interpretationem grammatico-historicam et theologiae christianae origines pertinentia*, edited by J. D. Goldhorn (Leipzig, 1821); cf. Glawe, pp. 278ff.

perspective came out most clearly in the work of the *Religionsgeschichtliche* school, with its emphasis upon the early Christian *Religiosität*, and its paramount concern with the *Sitz im Leben* of the primitive Church in the stream of late Jewish and Hellenistic religion and cultus. In this context, the method shifted from literary criticism to form criticism, and a new emphasis on *Kerygma* emerged.

One recent historian of this development, Aloys Grillmeier, finds a synthesis of this school of thought in Wilhelm Bousset's *Kyrios Christos*, first published in 1913.²² In this work, attention was called strongly to the religious life of Palestinian Judaism. Jesus was interpreted mainly on the basis of the Synoptic Gospels, as the prophetic Jewish wandering preacher, related by his disciples to ideas of the Messiah, elevated in their minds by the Easter visions, and subsequently awaited by them as the "Son of Man" of Jewish Apocalyptic. But the picture changed considerably, in Bousset's view, when the Jewish disciples attempted to explain Jesus to the hellenistic world, and sought to work in terms of religious parallels. The Jesus-picture became altered in this context into a *Kyrioskult*, developed first around Antioch, and represented by John, Paul, Clement, Ignatius, and others. Thus hellenistic Christianity developed quite differently from Jewish Christianity, although they had a common basis in the idea of the Messiah.

There soon arose protests against the position of this school of thought, from people who were themselves products of the school—most notably Dibelius, Otto, Bultmann, and Barth. They recognized the danger that such a complete historicizing of Christianity left little room for the transcendence of God and Christ, and in fact catered to theological liberalism. Theology had become anthropology; the history of Christian revelation had become a history of ethics. Radically opposed to the *Leben-Jesu* theology because of its historicism, they developed *Kerygma* theology, in a very Churchly and very radical direction. This effort to free the Word of God from the *Umwelt* of primitive Christianity is the basis of Bultmann's *Entmythologisierung* ideal.

Other new developments of interest from the standpoint of our study have taken place in the area of the assessment of the importance of Jewish Christianity in the dialectic of *Dogmengeschichte*. While a few of the historians from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries to whom we have made reference paid particular attention to the Jewish side of things, for the influential work of Adolf von Harnack, Judaism, after the Fall of Jerusalem, had no further significance for the history of dogma. Recent studies of the Intertestamental period, of early Christian literature, and especially the *Qumran* discoveries, have changed this picture markedly. Among representatives of a new trend we may mention particularly Schoeps, Brandon, Reicke, Dix, Peterson, and Daniélou.

22. Grillmeier, p. 530f. W. Bousset's *Kyrios Christos*, first published in *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, edited by W. Bousset and H. Gunkel, N. F. 4 (Göttingen, 1913), appeared in a 4th edition in 1935.

Jean Daniélou, in his recent work, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*,²³ emphasizes the "semitic structure" of primitive Christianity; and while he admits, of course, hellenistic literary influence, he insists that the basic structure is always fundamentally Jewish. He identifies movements often regarded as hellenistic as being in fact Judaic. Both Gnosticism and the mystical-ascetical development are traced back to Jewish or Jewish-Christian sources, especially to extratestamental books, such as the *Ascension of Isaiah*, *II Enoch*, *Odes of Solomon*, and the *Sibylline Books*. While Daniélou's presentation is regarded by many as something of a *tour de force*, yet it is clear that we now both can and must think of a deeper, more far-reaching Judaizing tendency in early Christianity than has heretofore been generally recognized.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The critique of Churchly theology began first as a criticism of the "Aristotelian" character of Scholasticism, moved on to the Platonism of the Fathers, thence to the problem of the form of the New Testament tradition, and thus to the discussions of the Jesus of history and to *Kerygma* theology. Perhaps the most important thing that has happened in the course of this long development is that the problem of hellenizing (to which we may now perhaps add, as Grillmeier does, the problem of Judaizing) has taken on an unmistakably theological character, recognized as early as Petavius, but undeveloped.

The theological question is the fundamentally important one—it is a question as to the very essence of Christianity, and can only be solved satisfactorily in a theological way. The heart of the problem has now become clear: what is the relationship between supernatural revelation and the human forms in which it is expressed? In the history of human thought, form and content are so intimately and inextricably bound together that no pure "idea" exists, and no pure "revelation" exists. "Demythologizing" will not help very much; what we have always to deal with is the historical, the "enfleshed" idea or revelation.

For this reason, problems of language and forms of thought—which the Germans call *Sprachphilosophie*—have become of paramount importance. As Thorlief Boman has observed, in his important recent book *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*:

The question of a formal and real relationship between Israelite-Jewish and Greek-Hellenistic thinking became for Christianity and the Church a live problem, and the occasion of penetrating theological investigations, only after Adolf Harnack had called attention to its great importance for the development of dogma in the early Christian Church, a Church endowed with Greek thinking and mental life, and after he had maintained that the Gospel was hellenized and that dogma was a product of the Greek intellect in the soil of the Gospel.²⁴

23. J. Daniélou, *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme* (Tournai, 1958).

24. T. Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (Eng. trans. of *Das hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem Griechischen*, 2d ed. [Göttingen, 1954]) (London, 1960), p. 17f.

Harnack, like his predecessors in hellenization theory, was inclined to regard this relationship as one of radical opposition between the evangelical Christianity of the earliest days in Palestine, and the later hellenized development of dogma.

Philological studies have advanced greatly on both semitic and hellenistic sides since Harnack's time, and it has become possible to classify language structures, modes of thought and expression, on both sides. However, the resulting contrasts are often treated very much in the spirit of Harnack, and we find ourselves faced with what Professor Frederick Grant once referred to as an "inverted Marcionism." As throughout the long history of the theory of hellenization, there is still a tendency to think of "hellenization" and "deterioration" as almost equivalent terms.

While schematizations of contrasts between Hebrew and Greek modes of thought and expression are useful, it is dangerous, as Boman in particular has pointed out,²⁵ to regard them as in any sense absolute. The real distinctions are much more subtle. To say that Greek thought about God is static, for instance, is untrue; for the Greeks, God is full of active power. And it is similarly wrong to suppose that the Hebrews have no concept of the being of God. The real distinctions here, as elsewhere, are rather a matter of emphasis on different aspects of the same concept. Thus Boman suggests that Hebrew and Greek ways of thinking should be regarded as complementary rather than opposed.²⁶

It is perhaps along such lines as these that there is now promise of some solution to the hellenization dilemma. Perhaps it is no longer necessary to think of hellenization in terms of deterioration. The issue has in some respects been the same, whether related to the Enlightenment or to nineteenth-century liberalism; but the properly theological significance of the historical question, and its methodological importance, have become clearer. The problem of the hellenization of Christianity is implicit in the historicity of Christianity itself—in the enfleshment of revelation, and the translation of the Gospel from place to place, and from generation to generation.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 19ff.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 205ff.