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# THE PLATONIC-CHRISTIAN TRINITY: USE AND INVERSION OF EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA'S APOLOGETIC STRATEGY IN RALPH CUDWORTH

GABRIELA MÜLLER · NATALIA STROK\*

ABSTRACT · Ralph Cudworth explicitly mentions Eusebius of Caesarea in many instances throughout par. xxxvi of ch. 4 of *The True Intellectual System* and almost all references belong to book xi of *Praeparatio Evangelica*, especially the section comprising chs. 9 to 20. In the present paper we analyze these references in order to show that the Cambridge professor considers these chapters when discussing the Trinitarian theme, because he intends to argue in favour of the continuity between Christianity and Platonism, like Eusebius, but reversing the apologetic strategy that the Caesarean author uses in his work. This difference is due to the particular historical contexts of each author: Eusebius makes an apology for Christianity, showing its agreement with Platonism, while Cudworth makes an apology for Platonism, presenting its affinity with Christianity.

KEYWORDS · Trinity, apology, Christianity, Platonism, Eusebius, Cudworth.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

RALPH CUDWORTH explicitly mentions Eusebius of Caesarea on several occasions throughout par. xxxvi of ch. 4 of *The True Intellectual System* (from now on *TIS*)<sup>1</sup> and almost all references belong to book xi of *Praeparatio Evangelica* (from now on *PE*). This fact lets us postulate that this book, and especially the section comprising chs. 9 to 20, is a reference text for Cudworth, who bears it in mind when discussing the Trinitarian theme.

Our hypothesis holds that Cudworth has these chapters of *PE* in sight because he intends to argue in favour of the continuity between Christianity and Platonism, like Eusebius, but reversing the apologetic strategy that the Caesarean author uses in his work. This difference is due to the particular historical contexts of each author: Eusebius makes an apology for Christianity, showing its agreement with Platonism, while Cudworth makes an apology for Platonism, presenting its affinity with Christianity.

This article begins with a brief presentation of the problem addressed, the authors, their works and historical contexts, and then proceeds to the analysis of the sources. This analysis is divided into two principal parts. In the first part, we examine what we have named 'peripheral references', that is, implicit or explicit references to *PE* in which Cudworth refers to certain authors and texts or some particular vocabulary that is present in that work, but in which Eusebius' voice is not crucial. In the second part, we study the two main references to *PE* in *TIS*, in which Eusebius is directly presented as an

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<sup>1</sup> We use *TIS* edition of 1845, which includes J. L. Mosheim's notes and comments. Mosheim (1693-1755) is a German theologian who translated *TIS* into Latin in 1733, and added to the text notes and comments, which were translated into English and incorporated into the edition of 1845.

authority that Cudworth follows in order to make his apology for Platonism. In other words, whereas in the peripheral references Eusebius appears only in an incidental way, in the main ones he is a key part of Cudworth's argumentation. Despite this differentiation, which allows us to give some structure to the analysis, the sum of these two kinds of references shows the importance of Eusebius' work in this section of *TIS* and gives us the chance to contemplate the nature of its use, its continuity, and its variation.

## 2. EUSEBIUS OF CESAREA AND RALPH CUDWORTH: TWO APOLOGETIC THINKERS

As a first step, this paper deals principally with what we refer to, in a general sense, as the Trinitarian problem. Since antiquity, the triads have occupied an important place in Greek thought, especially in the Pythagorean tradition resumed and transmitted by Plato and latter Platonism. The Christian Trinitarian doctrine is a crucial point in the development of this concept, of which it is an heir. Nevertheless, the history of the reception and harmonization of the rising Christianity and the pagan philosophy concerning this theme, among others, shows very different variations: from the absolute rejection to the full integration.<sup>1</sup> All this variety of possibilities is present in the literature of the first centuries of the imperial age, with its strong apologetic character, but it continued, even reaching modern times.

Therefore, as a second step, our analysis focuses on the apologetic strategies over this Trinitarian theme. The Greek concept of apology (*ἀπολογία*), originally forensic, was quickly adopted by the Greek philosophical tradition. Although the first philosophical apologies were on particular characters, such as Plato's *Apology of Socrates* or Gorgias' *Apology of Palamedes*, according to its judicial origin, with the beginnings of Christianity this limited purpose soon extended to a wider one, which can be defined essentially as «the defence of a cause or party supposed to be of paramount importance to the speaker». <sup>2</sup> Given that Jews and pagans adopted this defensive strategy as well, Christians were not the only ones who used it, even though, it was them that benefited from it the most. Indeed, the Christian apologetic literature flourished from the end of the second century thanks to authors like Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Clemens of Alexandria, among others, who defended the Christian doctrine not only against pagans but also against some doctrines born in the Church itself while its orthodoxy was still in formation.

Our first author, Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 263-339), belongs to this apologetic trend. Known as 'the father of Church history' for his *Historia Ecclesiae*, a principal source of the later fifth-century Church histories, Eusebius was a prolific author: he wrote historical, exegetical, dogmatic, and apologetic works. <sup>3</sup> Among them, *Praeparatio Evangelica* has a particular place. It is, on the one hand, a collection of other authors' quotations (pagans, Jews, and Christians) gathered for apologetic purposes and presented in fifteen books; for that reason, it can be regarded as a kind of library, <sup>4</sup> and it is representative of

<sup>1</sup> M. HILLAR, *From Logos to Trinity. The Evolution of Religious Beliefs from Pythagoras to Tertullian*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> M. EDWARDS, M. GOODMAN, S. PRICE (eds), *Apologetics in the Roman Empire. Pagans Jews and Christians*, New York, Clarendon Press, 1999, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> M. FREDE, *Eusebius' Apologetic Writings*, in Edwards et alii (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 223-250.

<sup>4</sup> S. INOWLOCK, *Eusebius' Construction of a Christian Culture in an Apologetic Context: Reading the Praeparatio Evangelica as a Library*, in S. Inowlocki, C. Zamagni (eds), *Reconsidering Eusebius. Collected Papers on Literary, Historical and Theological Issues*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2011, pp. 199-223.

the library available at Caesarea.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, on the other hand, although Eusebius' voice is only present in little introductions and transitions among the quoted passages, the inclusion of each text, as a piece of a wider work, has a meaningful purpose. In this sense, the principal objective of *PE* is to show and make comprehensible the strength of Christian truth present in the Holy Bible to those pagans in origin and formation. Therefore, Eusebius builds the category of 'Hebrew', on which the Greeks will depend and which the Christians will legitimately continue.<sup>2</sup> This movement can be seen partly in book XI, whose principal aim is «to show the agreement between the Greek philosophers and the Hebrew oracles» (πρὸς τὰ Ἑβραίων λόγια συμφωνίαν τῶν παρ' Ἑλλησι φιλοσόφων ἐκφᾶναι).<sup>3</sup> Among the Greeks, Plato is the most important thinker, and Moses represents the Hebrews. This is why Eusebius' method is forced to draw a parallel between Plato's and Moses' thought, by quoting the Scriptures, Platonic dialogues and letters, and also completing those references with some Platonic authors that, according to Eusebius, understood Plato's texts correctly.

In book XI the Trinitarian theme that concerns us is present, especially in chs. 9 to 20. Chs. 9, 10 and 11 deal with the ontology: the first one compares Plato and Moses, and the latter quote Numenius and Plutarch to reinforce this comparison. Chs. 12 and 13 treat the themes of ineffability and unity of God, and ch. 14 initiates the section «On the Second Cause», which goes up to ch. 19; in this section Eusebius quotes the Holy Scripture (ch. 14), Philo's *Confusione Linguarum* (ch. 15), Plato's *Epinomis* and *Sixth Letter* (ch. 16), Plotinus' *Ennead* v.1 (ch. 17), and fragments of Numenius (ch. 18) and Amelius (ch. 19). Finally, ch. 20, entitled *On the Three Principal Hypostases*, adds the third element of the triad; here Eusebius not only quotes Plato's *Second Letter* but also presents important considerations, which Cudworth appreciates, as we will show.

Although the Reformation brings back theological controversies and the use of apologetic strategies, the seventeenth century shows that the objective of these defences is not only the Christian doctrine but also theism<sup>4</sup> in general, including some pagan trends, such as Platonism, which helped to fight atheism. In England, new forms of religion and new lines of thought arise, causing upheavals, which have been so strong

<sup>1</sup> A. CARRIKER, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> E. IRICINSCHI, *Good Hebrew, Bad Hebrew: Christians as Triton Genos in Eusebius' Apologetic Writings*, in Inowlocki, Zamagni (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 69-86 argues that Eusebius «includes two more categories ('Hebrews' and 'Christian') into pre-existent taxonomies such as Greek/Barbarian, a cultural dichotomy intensely politicized by the opposition Empire/its borderlines, or Greek/Jewish, an ethnical dichotomy utilized by previous Greek Christian apologists. In his new fourfold design, the Hebrew prophets stand in stark opposition to the Jews and in direct connection to the Christians. These new Hebrews supersede the Jews and recover the older, higher moral standards of the ancient Hebrews, while the Jews diverged from these, and having ignored their own prophets, put Jesus to death. On the other hand, the *nations* displace the older dichotomy Greek/Barbarian, breaking the borders of the Roman Empire to create a new *ethnos*» (pp. 77-78). This identification of Hebrews as proto-Christians and the discourse on *triton genos*, between two constructed ethnical categories, 'Greek' and 'Jew', enabled Eusebius to employ the rhetoric of appropriation and displacement of Jewish past. According to this author, «Eusebius appropriated Jewish past through his usage of the Hebrew Bible, and displaced the Jewish claims to use it accordingly. For the fourth-century Christian writer, the category of 'Hebrews' opened the possibility to authenticate Christian social formations and situated them with full civic rights in the Greco-Roman οἰκουμένη» (p. 86).

<sup>3</sup> *PE*, XI, pr., 3. For *PE*, XI we follow the Greek text of Favrelle (1982). In our translation we partly use the one made by E. H. GIFFORD, *Eusebii Pamphili. Evangelicae Praeparationis, tomus III, Pars Posterior*, ed. and trans by E. H. Gifford, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1903, with some important modifications.

<sup>4</sup> Edwards *et alii* (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 11.

and crucial in history.<sup>1</sup> In this context, reactions against the rigidity of Calvinist orthodoxy surface, producing a profound movement of liberals, the Latitudinarians. This group is associated to the Cambridge Platonists,<sup>2</sup> who appeared at Emmanuel College, known as a Puritan institution. They do not follow the Roman Church, but the Church of England.<sup>3</sup>

Our second author, Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688), member of the Cambridge Platonists group, has published only one work in his lifetime, which is a first part of a huge project never accomplished. Nevertheless, this first book, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe: All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted and its Impossibility Demonstrated* (London, 1678), has its own unity. It is a monumental piece of writing that has more than nine hundred pages *in folio*, where everything is related to the ancient world, although the author is arguing with contemporary philosophers, such as Hobbes, Descartes and Spinoza.<sup>4</sup> In this work, Cudworth offers a profound reading of the history of philosophy, in which he displays his huge erudition on classic thought. He argues with the new forms of atheism and the intolerance of Calvinism.

In the long ch. iv of *TIS*, Cudworth examines various conceptions of God throughout the history of philosophy, and in par. xxxvi he focuses on the problem of the Platonic trinity, with the intention of presenting a defence against the accusation of Arianism, imparted by Denys Pétau (1583-1652) in his *Theologica Dogmata* (1644-1650).<sup>5</sup> Cudworth's interest in this paragraph can be clearly seen as apologetic. Nevertheless, his defence of Platonism is not free of criticism of some developments in this tradition, especially to the so-called latter or younger Platonists. There is some variation within this extensive tradition, in which it is possible to discover some 'degenerations' that should never be attributed to Plato himself. Cudworth intends to be orthodox in his defence of the genuine Platonic trinity, different from the pseudo-trinity of the latter Platonists, and thus he offers in this section a development of the Christian doctrine throughout history.<sup>6</sup>

When *TIS* was published, it received criticism not only among the Roman Christians but also among the Protestants. The latter accused Cudworth of being a tritheist, an Arian, a Socinian, and a deist. What is written in that digression caused such a stir in its own time that it is impossible not to find Cudworth in every writing concerning the Trinitarian theme, especially in England, where he was associated with heterodoxy – even though this was not his intention – and his doctrine denounced as mere fabri-

<sup>1</sup> J. TULLOCH, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century*, Edinburgh-London, William Blackwood and sons, vol. II, 1874, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> G. ROGERS, *The Other-Worldly Philosophers and the Real World: The Cambridge Platonists, Theology and Politics*, in G. Rogers, J. M. Vienne, Y. C. Zarka (eds), *The Cambridge Platonists in Philosophical Context: Politics, Metaphysics and Religion*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1997, pp. 3-15; 6-7. On Cudworth, see B. CARTER, *The Starving of Ralph Cudworth as a Philosopher*, in G. Rogers, T. Sorell, J. Krayer (eds), *Insiders and Outsiders in Seventeenth Century Philosophy*, New York, Routledge, 2010, pp. 99-123; 100-102.

<sup>3</sup> TULLOCH, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>4</sup> D. LEVITIN, *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of the New Science Histories of Philosophy in England, c. 1640-1700*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 539, and B. CARTER, 'The Little Commonwealth of Man': *The Trinitarian Origins of the Ethical and Political Philosophy of Ralph Cudworth*, Leuven-Paris, Peeters Publishers, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> See D. HEDLEY, *The Platonic Trinity: Philology and Divinity in Cudworth's Philosophy of Religion*, in R. HÄFNER, *Philologie und Erkenntnis, Beiträge zu Begriff und Problem frühneuzeitlicher Philologie*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 2001, pp. 247-263; 250, and C. TAGLIAFERRO, *The Trinity and Natural Reason: Lessons from Cambridge Platonism*, in M. Y. Stewart (ed.), *The Trinity. Studies in Philosophy and Religion*, vol. 24, Dordrecht, Springer, 2003, pp. 167-178; 169-170.

<sup>6</sup> TULLOCH, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-278.



cation.<sup>1</sup> His reflections are an antecedent of the Trinitarian discussions, which have arisen in Europe since 1790. After reading these pages, it is not surprising to know that Cudworth has been accused of subordinating the second and third persons of the trinity, as well as of being a tritheist.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. 1. *Peripheral References*

The first text that Cudworth refers to in this paragraph is the famous passage from Plotinus' *Ennead* v.1 ch. 8 (ll. 10-15), in which this author asserts that his theory of the three hypostases<sup>3</sup> has its origin in Plato's doctrine (*Second Letter* and *Sixth Letter*) which Parmenides had previously upheld. Cudworth translates the passage in this way:

That these doctrines are not new, nor of yesterday, but have been very anciently delivered, though obscurely (the discourses now extant being but explications of them) appears from Plato's own writings; Parmenides before him having insisted on them.

(*TIS*, II, 312)

Cudworth explains that Parmenides had been recognised as close to the Pythagorean sect and for that reason it was affirmed that this doctrine of the triad was a fundamental lesson from that school.

This same passage of Plotinus' *Ennead* v.1 is quoted by Eusebius<sup>4</sup> in ch. 17 of *PE*, which belongs to the section entitled «On the Second Cause», and in which several passages of former chapters of this same Plotinian treatise are also presented.<sup>5</sup> However, even though the text is the same, Eusebius and Cudworth do not use it in the same way: Cudworth uses it to discuss the Trinity in general, whereas Eusebius refers to it in a more specific way in order to explain the second cause.

This use of Plotinus' text presents the first peripheral reference of Eusebius in Cudworth, although it is not an explicit mention. This could be complemented by the fact that he refers to Numenius immediately after this quotation of Plotinus. According to Cudworth, Parmenides was a Pythagorean and this doctrine was part of that school. This is confirmed, as he explains, by Numenius, among others, who has sustained such a doctrine as a famous Pythagorean. Cudworth affirms:

Now it is well known that Parmenides was addicted to the Pythagoric sect, and therefore probable that this doctrine of a divine triad was one of the arcanus of that school also. Which is further confirmed from hence, because Numenius a famous Pythagorean entertained it as such.

(*TIS*, II, 312)

<sup>1</sup> D. HEDLEY, *The Cambridge Platonists and the Miracle of the Christian World*, in A. Fürst, Chr. Hengstermann (hrsg. von), *Autonomie und Menschenwürde: Origenes in der Philosophie der Neuzeit*, Münster, Aschendorf, 2012, pp. 185-197: 192-193.

<sup>2</sup> L. ARMOUR, *Trinity, Community and Love: Cudworth's Platonism and the Idea of God*, in S. Hutton, D. Hedley (eds), *Platonism at the Origin of Modernity*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2008, pp. 113-130: 120-121.

<sup>3</sup> Plotinus never uses the word *ὑπόστασις* as a reference to these three levels of reality (One, Intellect, and Soul), but it appears in the title of this treatise, which we could attribute to Porphyrius.

<sup>4</sup> Cudworth does not take this Plotinian quote from *PE*, as he has Plotinus' work separately and it is not necessary to consult secondary sources for it, which occurs in the case of Numenius, Amelius, and other Platonic philosophers. Indeed, the quotation in ch. 17 of *PE* ends in l. 14, whereas in *TIS* continues to l. 15.

<sup>5</sup> One of these quoted passages (v, 1, 6, 27-44) finds an echo in Cudworth's text as well, where he first quotes ll. 38-45 and then 27-30. *TIS*, II, 311-312.

Cudworth follows the tradition that presents Numenius as a famous Pythagorean<sup>1</sup> and his intention here is to show that this Trinitarian doctrine, known as Platonic-Parmenidean in Plotinus' quotation, is actually Pythagorean. Although Cudworth does not quote Numenius here – and later those quotations concerning the Numenian triad will be taken from Proclus –,<sup>2</sup> this combined mention of Plotinus and Numenius, in this order, which is non-chronological, might have been taken from Eusebius, who quotes passages from both authors in chs. 17 and 18.<sup>3</sup> This implicit use of Eusebius in Cudworth is a first peripheral reference of *PE* book XI at the beginning of par. xxxiv of *TIS*, ch. 4.

After Pythagorism, Cudworth refers to the Orphic Mysteries, from which Pythagoras might have learnt. Nevertheless, Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato would have taken this triad from Egypt and the ancient Hebrew theology, according to the English author. He adds that some traces of this trinity can also be found in the Persian Mithraic mysteries and the Chaldaic Oracles, as well as in the Samothracians, from which the Roman Capitoline trinity of gods is derived. Cudworth explains that even Aristotle affirms that the number three is important not only for the Pythagoreans, but also for other Greek rites.<sup>4</sup> In this path, the most important fact for the English philosopher is the ancient Hebrew theology that passed to Egypt: it is evident that this cabala, which was first an oral tradition among Hebrews, spreads through the rest of the world and finally becoming established in Christianity.<sup>5</sup> Actually, even among the orthodox it was not an easy task to agree on the significance of the term *ὁμούσιος* (coessential or consubstantial), which means that this trinity could have been «depraved and adulterated».<sup>6</sup> In order to show this, Cudworth presents the different expressions for the trinity: «the first, the second, and the third god», «trinity of causes», «trinity of principles», and «trinity of opificers». His conclusion is that Platonic philosophers affirm a trinity of gods, in which the second and third god are subordinated to the first one. In this manner, these three are not three independent gods and hence they cannot be considered as polytheists.

After these remarks, comparing differences in vocabulary between pagan and Hebrew traditions and the Christian one, we recognize the first explicit mention of Eusebius, concerning Philo of Alexandria. Cudworth affirms:

And we think it highly probable that this was the true reason why Philo, though he admitted the second hypostasis of the Platonic and Pythagoric (if not the Egyptian) Trinity, called by him *θεῖος λόγος δεύτερος* *θεός* and as Eusebius adds, *δευτερον αλτιον*, 'the second cause.'

(*TIS*, II, 320)

<sup>1</sup> Although most of the authors that refer to Numenius characterized him as a Pythagorean (EUSEBIUS in fr. 1a, ORIGEN in fr. 1b and 1c, NEMESIUS in fr. 4b, Calcidius in fr. 52, and CLEMENS OF ALEXANDRIA in *Stromata* I, 22), some others named him in doxographical sections, where Platonic doctrines are listed (for example, JAMBLICUS in fr. 43). Furthermore, Numenius considered that Plato only followed Pythagorean doctrines (frs. 1c; 24, 57, and 52, 1-5), which blurs the distinction between both author's doctrines: see B. CENTRONE, *Cosa significa essere pitagorico in età imperiale. Per una riconsiderazione della categoria storiografica del neopitagorismo*, in A. Brancacci (a cura di), *La filosofia di età imperiale*, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 1999, pp. 137-168. In all cases the references of Numenius' extracts follow the numeration of De Places' edition (1973).

<sup>2</sup> PROCLUS, *In Timaeum*, I, 303, 27-304, 3 = NUMENIUS, fr. 21, 1-7 (Des Places). *TIS*, II, 314.

<sup>3</sup> Cudworth will soon quote (*TIS*, II, 394) a Numenian extract taken from book XI, ch. 18 of *PE*: fr. 12, 2-4 y 12-13. <sup>4</sup> *TIS*, II, 313.

<sup>5</sup> See HEDLEY, *The Platonic Trinity: Philology and Divinity in Cudworth's Philosophy of Religion*, cit., p. 248. He affirms that the origin of this interpretation is found in Ficinus and his *Prisca Theologia*.

<sup>6</sup> *TIS*, II, 313-314.

Cudworth understands that Philo maintains the Trinitarian doctrine, although he uses a different vocabulary in comparison to what would fit in with the Christian orthodoxy; because of this, he stands closer to the pagan Platonic vocabulary. Though Mosheim points to ch. 13 of *PE* book XIII for this reference to Philo, and indeed chs. 12 to 14 are entitled «On the Theology of the Second Cause» (Περὶ τῆς τοῦ δευτέρου αἰτίου θεολογίας), we think that an even more explicit reference of Philo's second cause is found in ch. 15 of book XI, which is entitled «On Philo, about the Second Cause» (Φίλωνος περὶ τοῦ δευτέρου αἰτίου).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Cudworth does not present Philo's texts quoted in this chapter of *PE*,<sup>2</sup> but only the vocabulary of the «second cause», which appears in the title of *PE* and is not Philo's vocabulary, as Cudworth notes. This first explicit mention of Eusebius, related to Philo and the second cause, can be considered as a second peripheral reference to *PE* book XI in *TIS*.

Finally, it is possible to consider as a third peripheral reference the implicit use that Cudworth makes of ch. 9 of Eusebius' *PE* book XI, concerning a link between some passages of Plato's *Timaeus* and *Exodus*, 3.14. The first peripheral reference deals with the triad and the second one with the second cause; now this third one treats the first item identified as «what it is» (τὸ ὄν) in *Timaeus* and «he who is» (ὁ ὢν) in *Exodus*.

Indeed, in ch. 9 of his book Eusebius begins his study of the ontology, trying to show the accordance between Plato's and Moses' conceptions of 'being'.<sup>3</sup> He starts with Moses' words in the famous passage of *Exodus*, 3.14 (Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν) and explains that this text reveals that only God is, strictly speaking, «He who is» (ὁ ὢν) and that He above all is worthy of that denomination.<sup>4</sup> In this way, Eusebius makes a kind of fusion between ontology and theology. Next, there are quotes of Salomon's *Ecclesiastes*, 1, 9-10, addressing the questions «what is generated?» (τί τὸ γεγονός;) and «what is produced?» (τί τὸ πεποιημένον;), which are related, according to Eusebius, to «the birth and corruption of sensible and corporeal things».<sup>5</sup> Although this second quote does not appear in Cudworth's text, it helps to show the continuity between Moses and Plato in a more accurate way and this proximity favours Eusebius' apologetic purpose: the defence of Christianity.

After some reflections concerning these passages, which we will not analyse here, Eusebius explicitly declares that Plato appropriates (ἐξοικειοῦται) this doctrine of the Hebrews not only in his thought but also in his expressions.<sup>6</sup> In order to show this appropriation, Eusebius quotes *Timaeus*, 27d6-28a4, where Plato distinguishes between «that which always is and has no genesis» and «that which always is becoming and never truly is» on an ontological level, and two different kinds of comprehension for each kind of reality on the epistemological level: «the former is that which may be compre-

<sup>1</sup> Mosheim's note gives ch. 13 a title slightly different from that of the critical editions: Φίλωνος περὶ τοῦ δευτέρου αἰτίου [sic]. As that is the title of book XI, ch. 15 in the critical edition, we can presume either that Mosheim finds a different title in the text of Eusebius' that he is using, or that he makes a mistake when identifying the title «On Philo, about the Second Cause» for this chapter. This second possibility would be reinforced by his words: «which title Dr. Cudworth was thinking of when he wrote this, for in no other place does Eusebius either himself say or prove by any passage of Philo's that the Word was called by this Jewish philosopher δεύτερον αἶτιον» (*TIS*, II, 320, n. 4).

<sup>2</sup> These texts are: *De confusione linguarum*, 97, 146-147 γ 62-63.

<sup>3</sup> The title of this chapter is Περὶ τοῦ ὄντος Μωσέως καὶ Πλάτωνος.

<sup>4</sup> *PE*, XI, 9, 1. For interpretations of the *Exodus* and the novelty of this treatment of Eusebius in his *PE*, see G. FAVRELLE, *Eusèbe de Césarée. La préparation évangélique. Livre XI*, intro., trans. and commentary by G. Favrelle, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1982, pp. 299-304.

<sup>5</sup> *PE*, XI, 9, 2.

<sup>6</sup> *PE*, XI, 9, 4, 1-4.

hended by intelligence combined with reason, being always in the same conditions. The latter is that which may be conjectured by opinion with the help of unreasoning sensation, becoming and perishing but never really being». <sup>1</sup> Eusebius does not deal with the problem of the eternity of the world, maybe because it is not a problem for him, but he immediately matches this quote of *Timaeus* with those two biblical passages: according to Eusebius, Plato makes a «transference» or «reformulation» (μεταποίησας) of the biblical words in his text. <sup>2</sup>

Next, Eusebius skips some pages of the Platonic dialogue and quotes the other passage of *Timaeus* (37e3-38b2), which adds the contrast between time and eternity to the contrast between τὸ ὄν (that which is) and τὸ γιγνόμενον (that which becomes) from the former quote. Eusebius quotes a large part of that text, but does not compare this new text of *Timaeus* with the biblical passages; instead, he presents some Numenius' fragments in ch. 10.

This same transition between *Timaeus* and *Exodus* 3.14 is found in *TIS*, but with some differences. To begin with, it is important to be aware of Cudworth's concern about the variety of possible interpretations that can be made of the Platonic text. This is a problem that compels him to follow Plato's words closely. First, Cudworth explicitly separates Plato and some Platonists from those interpreters that corrupted the Divine Trinity Cabala, which allows the differentiation between a Platonic Trinity and a Christian one. He says:

But, on the contrary, we shall now make it appear, that Plato and some of the Platonists retained much of the ancient genuine Cabala, and made a very near approach to the true Christian Trinity; forasmuch as their three hypostases, distinguished from all their other gods, seem to have been none of them accounted creatures, but all other things whatsoever the creatures of them.

(*TIS*, II, 364)

Plato's three hypostases are distinguished from the other gods and cannot be understood as creatures, because, in fact, they are those who create them. As a demonstration, Cudworth shows that Plato has not made the mistake of mixing up God and creatures, because this distinction is what he presents at the beginning of his *Timaeus*. Then he quotes *Timaeus*, 27d5-28a5 in Greek, followed by his English translation:

We being here to treat concerning the universe, judge it necessary to begin with a distinction, betwixt that which always is, and hath no *ortus* or generation; and that which is made, but never truly is. <sup>3</sup> The former of which, being always like itself and the same, is comprehensible by intellection with reason, or is the object of knowledge; the latter of them, that which is made and perisheth, but never truly is, is not properly knowable, but opinable only, or the object of opinion, together with irrational sense. Now, every thing that is made, must of necessity be made by some cause.

(*TIS*, II, 364)

This passage of *Timaeus* presents a distinction between «that which always is» and «that which is made», the latter truly not being, as only that which always is can be said to be.

<sup>1</sup> «Τί τὸ ὄν αἰεί, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχον; καὶ τί τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν αἰεί, ὄν δὲ οὐδέποτε; τὸ μὲν δὴ νοήσει μετὰ λόγου περιληπτὸν αἰεὶ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ ὄν, τὸ δ' αἰσθήσει ἀλόγῳ δοξαστὸν γιγνόμενον καὶ ἀπολλύμενον, ὅντως δὲ οὐδέποτε ὄν» (*PE*, XI, 9, 4, 5-8). We quote Plato's text as appears in *PE*. On the problem of the second αἰεὶ see J. WHITTAKER, *Timaeus* 27d5 ff., «Phoenix», 23, 1969, pp. 181-185, and *Textual Comments on Timaeus* 27d-c, «Phoenix», 27, 1973, pp. 387-391.

<sup>2</sup> *PE*, XI, 9, 5 and 6.

<sup>3</sup> Although this sentence seems strange, this is exactly how it appears in Cudworth's text.

Because of this, there are two kinds of object of knowledge proposed: one for reason, and the other for opinion; but also the needs for a cause for everything that is made. Cudworth justifies this with some words of Proclus' *Commentary on Timaeus*, book 1, where it is said that it is a common notion or something mathematically demonstrable that something eternal, which is not made and has no beginning, has to exist as the first step of the causal chain. Here there are some assumptions that will be crucial in Cudworth's argumentation in favour of the existence of God, not only against atheism but also against some false beliefs in God.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, explains Cudworth, «the latter Platonists», who had the prejudice of the world's eternity, violated Plato's text:

Now, the latter Platonists, being strongly possessed with a prejudice of the world's eternity, or that it had no beginning, have offered strange violence to Plato's text in this place, and wrested his words to quite a different sense from what he intended: as if by his τὸ γιγνόμενον, 'that which is made,' he did not at all mean that which had a beginning, but only that whose duration is flowing and successive, or temporary, which might notwithstanding be without beginning; and as if he supposed the whole corporeal world to be such, which, though it hath a successive and temporary duration, yet was without any beginning.

(TIS, II, 364-365)

By understanding τὸ γιγνόμενον as «that which is made», Cudworth follows the literal interpretation of *Timaeus*, for that which is made has to have a beginning in time and cannot be eternal, in opposition to the interpretation of the latter Platonists, who, according to him, consider τὸ γιγνόμενον as a succession without temporal beginning.<sup>2</sup> In this way, Cudworth distinguishes between that which is successive and temporal and has a beginning, which is made, and that which simply is eternal and out of any succession or temporality, which of course is not created nor made. Nevertheless, the confusion of interpreting in Plato himself that the world has no beginning was so strong that even Boethius came to consider that this could be found in *Timaeus*.<sup>3</sup> Through this explanation, Cudworth underlines the importance of distinguishing between Plato's own thought and his followers' interpretations: those interpretations that consider the world as having no beginning are totally wrong. According to Cudworth, there is a difference between the eternal without beginning, on the one hand, and the successive, temporal, and with a beginning, that which is made, on the other hand, and there is no place for a perpetual existence without beginning. For that reason, Cudworth insists on his criticism of the latter Platonists:

But this doctrine of the latter Platonists quite frustrates Plato's design in this place, which was to prove or assert a God, because if the world had no beginning, though its duration be never so

<sup>1</sup> TIS, III, 29-39. See R. POPKIN, *The Crisis of Polytheism and the Answer of Vossius, Cudworth and Newton*, in J. FORCE, R. POPKIN, *Essays on the Context, Nature and Influence of Isaac Newton's Theology*, Dordrecht-Boston-London, Kluwer, 1990, pp. 9-26: 15, and J. MACINTOSH, *Theological and Scientific Applications of the Notion of Necessity in the Mediaeval and Early Modern Periods*, in M. CRESSWELL, E. MARES, A. RINI, *Logical Modalities from Aristotle to Carnap: the Story of Necessity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 154-173.

<sup>2</sup> We are not able to deal with the topic of the literal and non-literal interpretations of PLATO's *Timaeus* here. It is enough to say that both Eusebius and Cudworth read the Platonic dialogue literally, because they interpret that the generation of the world implies a beginning in time. For an overview on *Timaeus* interpretations see D. ZEYL, *Plato. Timaeus*, Indianapolis-Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. xx-xxi.

<sup>3</sup> *Consolatio philosophorum*, v, pro 6. Boethius makes a distinction between the perpetual world, as a succession without beginning or end, and the eternal God, who embraces an unlimited life at once. This can be found in Plato. Nevertheless, not only for Boethius but also for Cudworth, the world has a beginning.

much successive, yet would it not follow from thence, that therefore it must needs have been made by some other cause; so is it directly contrary to that philosopher's own words, himself there declaring, that by his τὸ γιγνόμενον, 'ortum', or 'that which is made,' he did not understand only that whose duration is successive, but also τὸ γενέσεως ἀρχὴν ἔχον, 'that which had a beginning of its generation,' and τὸ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς τινος ἀρξάμενον, 'that which began from a certain epoch of time;' or that which once was not, and therefore must needs be brought into being by some other cause.

(TIS, II, 365)

According to the Cambridge philosopher, the latter Platonists do not follow Plato's design because they eliminate the distinction between God and the world, as they remove the beginning of the world and so its cause. Because of that, Cudworth adds two more short passages of *Timaeus*, 28b6-7, which he understands as opposite to what these latter Platonists affirm: that which is successive, has a beginning and occurs in time.

Afterwards, Cudworth continues with the distinction between time and eternity, by making a reference to *Timaeus*, 37c-38c but without quoting the Greek text, contrary to what he usually does. He says:

So that Plato there plainly supposed all temporary beings once to have had a beginning of their duration, as he declareth in that very *Timaeus* of his, that 'Time itself was not eternal or without beginning, but made together with the heaven or world;' and from thence does he infer, that there must of necessity be another eternal being, viz., such as hath both a permanent duration, and was without beginning, and was the cause both of time and the world: forasmuch as nothing can possibly be made without a cause; that is, nothing which once was not, could of itself come into being, but must be produced by some other thing; and so at last we must needs come to something which had no beginning.

(TIS, II, 365-366)

The quotation marks do not present a quote but a summary in which Cudworth's interpretation of this section of *Timaeus* is expressed. Cudworth follows the ancient thought principle 'nothing comes from nothing' and because of that he understands the need to postulate a first principle that is not created, which begins the causal chain. Without a doubt, he maintains that the only eternal God created everything.

Finally, Cudworth associates this distinction between time and eternity and the first passage of *Timaeus*, which distinguishes between «that which is» and «that which is made», with the ὁ Ὄν of *Exodus*, 3.14. This link, as we have seen, has already been established by Eusebius, among others.<sup>1</sup> Cudworth says:

Wherefore Plato, thus taking it for granted, that whatsoever hath a temporary and flowing duration, was not without beginning; as also, that whatsoever was without beginning, hath a 'permanent duration or standing eternity;' does thus state the difference betwixt uncreated and created beings, or betwixt God and creature; namely, that creature is that, whose duration being temporary or successive, once had a beginning; and this is his τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν, ὃν δὲ οὐδέποτε, 'that which is made, but never truly is,' and that which ὑπ' αἰτίον τινός ἐξ ἀνάγκης γίγνεται, 'must of necessity be produced by some cause;' but that whatsoever is without beginning, and hath a permanent duration, is uncreated or divine; which is his τὸ ὄν μὲν ἀεί, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχον, 'that which always is, and hath no generation, nor was ever made.' Accordingly, as God is styled in the Septuagint translation of the Mosaic writings, ὁ Ὄν, 'He that truly is.'

(TIS, II, 366)

<sup>1</sup> HEDLEY, *The Platonick Trinity: Philology and Divinity in Cudworth's Philosophy of Religion*, cit., p. 252.



He clearly outlines his Christian reading of the Platonic text, by finding here the difference between creator and creature, which is important so as not to be accused of what later will be known as Pantheism. This reference of *Exodus* closes the circle outlined in the first place, which explains that the triad, known as the trinity, can be traced in the history of philosophy back to Plato, Pythagoras, Parmenides, Orpheus, who took this teaching from Egypt and ancient Hebrew theology.

This third peripheral reference to Eusebius in Cudworth, which shows the corresponding use of these passages from *Timaeus* and *Exodus*, allows us to see some important differences between the authors. Although the transition from *Timaeus*, 27d5-28a5 to 37c-38c, which links the notions of τὸ ἕν and τὸ γιγνόμενον to those of eternity and time, is the same in both authors, we do not find in Eusebius the insistence on the problem of the world's eternity. On the other hand, the order of the Platonic and Biblical quotations is the opposite: Eusebius first quotes Moses and then Plato, but Cudworth starts with Plato and then continues with *Exodus*. This inversion reveals a difference in the purpose of these authors: the first one pretends to defend Christianity and the second one makes a defence of Platonism, and as a result, the transition from one text to the other goes in opposite ways, according to these different intentions. Nevertheless, this difference also shows a correspondence in the apologetic strategy that both authors follow, because they first quote the doctrine they are defending (the Bible in Eusebius' case and Plato in Cudworth's) and secondly they present the doctrine accepted in their own time (Plato in Eusebius' case and the Bible in Cudworth's case), which is cited in order to defend the first reference.

Thus, these peripheral references show us that *PE* is a work that Cudworth bears in mind when writing this section of *TIS*, either explicitly using the same vocabulary or by referring to the same authors and texts. Next, we will analyse the main references to Eusebius' *PE* in *TIS*, where Cudworth not only takes some vocabulary or structures from Eusebius' work, but also directly uses *PE* and Eusebius' words themselves as part of his argumentation for the correspondence between Platonism and Christianity in his defence of Platonism.

### 3. 2. Two Main References

The two main references to *PE* in *TIS* are both quotations of book XI, ch. 20, as they have Eusebius' words concerning the similarity and the difference between Platonic and Christian trinity. Both passages of *PE* in *TIS* are also related to themes, authors, and texts on the Trinitarian theme that can also be found in book XI (Chapters 9 to 20). The first one (pp. 364-367) comes after a reference to Plato's *Second Letter*, like in *PE* ch. 20, just after the passages of *Timaeus* (27d5-28a5 and 37-38) mentioned in the previous section of this paper. The second one (pp. 458-461) contains a quotation of Amelius, taken from Eusebius' previous chapter (19). We will now analyse this *PE* ch. 20 in relation to Cudworth's references to Eusebius.

As we have already stated, ch. 20, of *PE* book XI is entitled Περὶ τῶν τριῶν ἀρχικῶν ὑποστάσεως, like Plotinus' *Ennead* v.1, which Eusebius has quoted in ch. 17. In that ch. 20 Eusebius matches the Christian Trinity with Plato's *Second Letter*. He quotes passage 312d7-e6, which Plotinus has also quoted in his treatise v.1.8, replicated by Eusebius and by Cudworth, as already stated.

Eusebius starts this chapter, in part, resuming what he has affirmed in previous chap-

ters, as regards the first and second cause, but adding here the third element to complete the trinity. He says:

Whereas next to the doctrine of Father and Son the Hebrew oracles rank the Holy Spirit in the third place, and conceive the Holy and Blessed Trinity in such a manner as that the third Power surpasses every created nature, and that it is the first of the intellectual essences constituted through the Son, and third from the First Cause, observe how Plato also explains enigmatically some such thoughts, speaking thus in his *Epistle to Dionysus*...

(PE, XI, 20,1, 1-8)

Eusebius explicitly comes back to the Christian Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) here, which, according to him, goes back to the Hebrews. And then he links this Trinitarian doctrine to Plato's *Second Letter*. There, Plato says the following to Dionysus, as an explanation about the nature of the first (πρώτου φύσις: 312d5):

I must explain it to you then in riddles, that if the letter suffers any harm in the remote parts of sea or land, the reader may learn nothing. For the matter is thus: Around the king of the universe are all things, and all are for his sake, and that is the cause of all things beautiful: and the second is around the second things, and the third around the third. The soul of man therefore strains after them to learn what sort of things they are, looking upon the things akin to its own nature.

(PE, XI, 20, 2)

In spite of the possible interpretations of these lines and the problem of the authenticity of this Letter, which Eusebius and Cudworth consider as Platonic, we want to point out the words of Eusebius that follow this quotation, which Cudworth will quote in his section. Although he quotes this passage in order to show that Plato has also affirmed a trinity, Eusebius makes an important clarification. He says:

These statements are referred, by those who attempt to explain Plato, to the first god, and to the second cause, and thirdly to the soul of the universe, defining it also as a third god. But the Sacred Scriptures place in the condition of principle the Holy and Blessed Trinity of Father and Son and Holy Ghost, according to the passages already set forth.

(PE, XI, 20, 3)

On the one hand, this passage presents a difference between the Christian and the Platonic doctrines regarding each item of the triad (the particle δὲ, «but», in the middle of the passage has a strong adversative value). On the other hand, it emphasizes that this doctrinal difference is not attributed to Plato himself but only to his interpreters. And even though there are no names mentioned, we think it is possible that «those who attempt to explain Plato» are the authors quoted by Eusebius in the previous chapters, that is, Plotinus (ch. 17), Numenius (ch. 18), and Amelius (ch. 19).<sup>1</sup> As we will see in what follows, Cudworth leaves out this last part of Eusebius' reflection, as he wants to defend Platonism by showing its agreement with Christianity. The difference that Eusebius presents does not serve this purpose and, hence, is omitted.

After showing the relationship between Plato's *Timaeus* and *Exodus* 3.14, Cudworth refers to the *Second Letter*. The transition from one text to the other is given by a mention in the dialogue to the world as τῶν αἰδίων θεῶν γεγονός ἀγαλμα (*Timaeus*, 37c-6-7). He says:

<sup>1</sup> Before quoting Plotinus' treatise v 1, Eusebius uses the same verb διασαφεῖν (cf. PE, XI, 16, 4) and says that he explained Plato's just like he did with Numenius (τὰ δὲ Πλάτωνι δοκοῦντα διεσαφεῖ: PE, XI, 18, 26).



Now as for this ἀίδιος οὐσία or φύσις, 'this eternal nature,' which always is, and was never made, Plato speaks of it, not singularly only, as we Christians now do, but often in the pagan way plurally also; as when, in this very *Timaeus*, he calls the world τῶν ἀίδιων θεῶν γεγονὸς ἄγαλμα, 'a made or created image of the eternal gods.'

(TIS, II, 366)

Cudworth affirms that this «eternal nature» was expressed in the plural way by the pagans, and not the singular as Christians do. Once again, in his defence of Platonism, the English Professor remarks that the difference in vocabulary between Platonists and Christians not only is an insufficient reason for accusing Platonism, but also shows a point of agreement between them. Indeed, he explains that this plural reference to «the eternal gods» refers to the first, the second, and the third of the *Second Letter*, which will agree with the Christian Trinity.

Cudworth does not quote the relevant passage from the *Second Letter* (312d6-e5),<sup>1</sup> instead he reuses that vocabulary alternating the Greek words with his own explanation of what is said in the text as a commentary of *Timaeus*:

By which eternal gods he there meant doubtless that τὸ πρῶτον, and τὸ δεύτερον, and τὸ τρίτον, 'that first,' and 'second,' and 'third,' which, in his second epistle to Dionysius, he makes to be the principles of all things; that is, his trinity of divine hypostases, by whose concurrent efficiency, and according to whose image and likeness, the whole was made.

(TIS, II, 366)

For the English professor there is no doubt that what Plato expresses in this letter is that the universe has been created in image and likeness of that Trinity of divine hypostases that are efficient cause and principle of all things. This is something that can also be found in Plotinus, as he has already said, and in Eusebius, who, in his opinion, offers a correct explanation of what Plato's ancient interpreters understood of those words. He affirms:

For thus Eusebius records, that the ancient interpreters of Plato expounded this first, second, and third of his in the forementioned epistle, of a 'trinity of Gods.'

(TIS, II, 366-367)

Cudworth omits Eusebius' final words, which mentioned a «discordance» between Platonism and Christianity that Eusebius would be alluding to in this passage. Cudworth attempts to show the affinity that Platonism has with Christianity, while Eusebius, although having the same intention, is not defending Platonism as the Cambridge professor does. This is the reason why Cudworth chooses what to present and what to omit of Eusebius' text.

Cudworth's conclusion is that, according to this, it is possible to maintain that the eternal gods of *Timaeus* are this Trinity of divine hypostases that are described in the *Second Letter*. He says:

Wherefore we think there is good reason to conclude, that those eternal or uncreated gods of Plato in his *Timaeus*, whose image or statue this whole generated or created and created world is said by him to be, were no other than his trinity of divine hypostases, the makers or creators thereof.

(TIS, II, 367)

<sup>1</sup> Cudworth has already quoted this passage (pp. 361 and 363), but in a partial and untidy way.

Here Cudworth explains that these Platonic gods, from which is generated or created this whole that is the world, cannot be anything but the Trinity of hypostases, the creative Trinity, which, according to what he has been maintained until here, can only be differentiated from the Christian one by some nuances in the vocabulary.

The second main reference to Eusebius is found where Cudworth explicitly mentions once again ch. 20 of *PE* book IX after a quotation of Amelius, which is taken from the previous chapter of *PE*.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, as we have said, ch. 19 finishes a section that starts at ch. 14 and is «about the second cause» (περὶ τοῦ δευτέρου αἰτίου). Eusebius finishes ch. 18 explaining that Plato was not the first to present this doctrine that differentiates between a first and a second cause, but that the Hebrew sages anticipated this:

Enough, however, has been said by Numenius on this subject: and there is no need to add anything to his own words to show that he was explaining not his own opinions but Plato's. And that Plato is not the first who has made these attempts, but has been anticipated by the Hebrew sages, has been proved by the examples already set forth. Naturally therefore Amelius also, who was distinguished among recent philosophers, and above all others an admirer of Plato's philosophy, who moreover called the Hebrew theologian a Barbarian, even though he did not deign to mention John the Evangelist by name, nevertheless bears witness to his statements writing exactly what follows word for word.

(*PE*, XI, 18, 26, 10)

This assertion is emphatic and leaves no doubt concerning Eusebius' purpose: he intends to show the agreement between the Platonic and the Hebrew doctrine, and to conclude with the dependence of the former on the latter. Paradoxically, in order to present this, Eusebius uses the voice of someone «distinguished among recent philosophers» (τῶν νέων φιλοσόφων διαφανήσ): Amelius, who is «an admirer of Plato's philosophy» (τῆς Πλάτωνος ... ζηλωτῆς φιλοσοφίας). The identification of this «Barbarian» with John the Evangelist mentioned by Amelius is doubly interesting: on the one hand, he criticizes Amelius for not naming him; on the other hand, he chooses to point out that this «Barbarian», that is, an other, a non-Greek, for Amelius, is «John the Evangelist» and, for Eusebius, a «Hebrew theologian» and hence someone who belongs to his own Christian tradition, which has its roots in the Hebrew theology. This is confirmed by the title of ch. 19 «Amelius on the Theology of our Evangelist John» (Ἀμελίου περὶ τῆς Ἰωάννου τοῦ παρ' ἡμῶν εὐαγγελιστοῦ θεολογίας).<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of ch. 19, Eusebius quotes this passage of Amelius:

And this then was the *lógos*, by whom as being eternal are generated the things that are generated, as Heraclitus also would maintain, and the same of whom, as set in the rank and dignity of principle, the barbarian maintains that he was with god and was god: through whom absolutely all things were generated; in whom the generated was born as living, and life, and being; and that he came down into bodies, and clothed himself in flesh appeared as

<sup>1</sup> On this text see H. DÖRRIE, *Une exégèse néoplatonicienne du Prologue de l'Évangile selon Saint Jean. Amélius chez Eusèbe, Prép. év. 11, 19, 1-4*, in J. Fontaine J., Ch. Kannengiesser (éds), *Epektasis. Mélanges Patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou*, Paris, 1972, pp. 75-87. On Amelius see L. BRISSON, *Amélius: Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa doctrine, son style*, in W. Haase, H. Temporini (hrsg. von), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, II, 36.2, Berlin-New York, 1987, pp. 793-860.

<sup>2</sup> In the index at the beginning of book XI, the title of ch. 19 is only Ἀμελίου περὶ τῆς τοῦ Ἑβραίου θεολογίας («On Amelius about the Hebrew's Theology»).

man, yet showing withal even then the majesty of his nature; indeed, even after dissolution he was restored to deity, and is god, such as he was before he came down to the body, and the flesh, and man.

(PE, XI, 19, 1)

Amelius speaks about the λόγος that always is and because of which generated things are generated, and attributes this doctrine to Heraclitus and even more (it is emphasized by the expression νῆ Δία) to a Barbarian that gives the λόγος the rank and dignity of principle (ἀρχή). Amelius gives an interpretation of the word ἀρχή that does not refer to a temporal principle but to a casual one, and because of that it has a privileged place in the hierarchy. And concerning this λόγος the Barbarian says that it is akin to god and that it is god (πρὸς θεὸν εἶναι καὶ θεὸν εἶναι). The several ways in which this casual principle operates are explained by Amelius through the use of two prepositions: through δι' οὗ he explains the instrumental character of this λόγος, as it is through it that god generates all, and through ἐν ᾧ he explains that it is the substratum on which life and the being develop. Amelius continues with a short exposition of the λόγος incarnation (a doctrine he may not accept, although here nothing is said about that), which goes down to a body and takes human appearance, but, once dead, is deified and becomes god again, such as it was before going down and becoming a man. Incarnation, death, and resurrection of the λόγος are pillars of the Christology that Amelius attributes here to this anonymous Barbarian, whom Eusebius has already named as John the Evangelist.<sup>1</sup>

Eusebius immediately insists on identifying this Barbarian with John:

This, it must be evident, is paraphrased from the Barbarian's theology, no longer under any veil but openly at last and 'with forehead bold and bare.' And who was this Barbarian of his but our Saviour's Evangelist John, a Hebrew son of the Hebrews? Who in the beginning of his own Scripture states the doctrine of the deity thus...

(PE, XI, 19, 2)

In this new reference to the Barbarian's name, Eusebius again takes the former double characterization: on the one hand, he is «our Saviour's Evangelist John», linking him to the Christian tradition, but on the other hand, he is «a Hebrew of the Hebrews», associating his doctrine with the Hebrew tradition as its continuity. This is an important issue because the parallelism, which guides this section, is that between Plato and Moses and emphasizes the dependence of the Greek philosophy on the Hebrew theology. Curiously, here Eusebius resorts to two 'latter' representatives of those traditions: Amelius (a recent Platonic philosopher: νέος) and John (a Hebrew that transmits the Gospel).<sup>2</sup>

Next, in order to emphasize the dependence of Amelius' text on John the Evangelist's Gospel, Eusebius quotes the first lines (1, 1-4.14), containing the famous words «In the beginning was the λόγος, and the λόγος was with God, and the λόγος was God». This text presents the causal perspective that Amelius mentions, when he says «all things were made by Him [δι' αὐτόν]», and the idea of substratum of life (Ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν). Finally, the doctrine of the incarnation of the λόγος is present (Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν), although not referring to death and resurrection, and ending

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed analysis of this text, see DÖRRIE, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> See C. MORESCHINI, E. NORELLI, *Manuale di letteratura cristiana antica greca e latina*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 1999, pp. 41-44.

with the notion of this λόγος as the only son (μονογενής), who obtains his glory (δόξα) from the father (παρὰ πατρός).<sup>1</sup>

Even though we do not know Amelius' objective in commenting this text, we do know what Eusebius wants by quoting it: to identify this Barbarian with John, to show the agreement between Platonism and Christianity concerning the doctrine of the λόγος, in order to establish the dependence of the Platonic philosophy on the Hebrew theology that Christianity continues, a tradition that Eusebius is trying to defend. Cudworth takes Eusebius' words on Amelius with a similar objective, but as a defence of Platonism.

For Cudworth, like for Eusebius, the Trinity has its roots in Moses' teachings, even though there is a lack of correction in the vocabulary used in some descriptions of this Trinity, especially among the Platonists, in comparison with the Christian orthodoxy. Cudworth affirms:

Moreover, since all these three, Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato, travelling into Egypt, were there initiated in that arcane theology of the Egyptians (called Hermaical), it seemeth probable (as was before observed) that this doctrine of a divine triad was also part of the arcane theology of the Egyptians. [...] 'a theology of divine tradition or revelation,' or a divine cabala, viz. amongst the Hebrews first, and from them afterwards communicated to the Egyptians and other nations.

(TIS, II, 313-314)

Here Cudworth presents an interesting continuity in which Orphism, Pythagorism, and Platonism begin in the Egyptian theology, known as hermetical, which also contains a divine triad that originated in the Hebrews. This means that Hebrew Divine Cabala is found in Egypt and that Egyptian Hermetism accepts its trinity, with which the Greeks get acquainted during their travels and which they spread to the rest of the nations. This trinity, Hebraic in its origins, has its best expression in Christianity, but it is a doctrine shared with other traditions.<sup>2</sup>

As we have already stated, Cudworth defends Platonism from the accusation of Arianism by showing the agreement of the Platonic trinity with that of Christian orthodoxy. At the end of par. xxxvi of TIS, he mentions Amelius,<sup>3</sup> while presenting his apology of a supposed Christian Platonist. Here there is another reason for the defence of the Platonic trinity:

Besides which, another reason for this apology of the Christian Platonist was, because as the Platonic Pagans after Christianity did approve of the Christian doctrine concerning the Logos, as that which was exactly agreeable with their own; so did the generality of the Christian fathers, before and after the Nicene council, represent the genuine Platonic trinity as really the same thing with the Christian, or as approaching so near to it, that they differed chiefly in circumstances, or the manner of expression. The former of these is evident from that famous passage of Amelius, contemporary with Plotinus, recorded by Eusebius, St. Cyril, and Theodoret.

(TIS, II, 458)

<sup>1</sup> PE, XI, 19, 3. Eusebius closes ch. 19 with a new biblical quotation (Colossians, 1, 15-17), where there are several elements of John's Gospel, which were glossed by Amelius.

<sup>2</sup> See N. STROK, *Ralph Cudworth y la recepción del Asclepius en el siglo XVII*, in C. D'AMICO, V. BUFFON, *Hermes Platonicus: Hermetismo y platonismo en el Medioevo y la Modernidad Temprana*, Santa Fe, Ediciones UNL, 2016, pp. 221-235.

<sup>3</sup> Cudworth has already quoted a part of this extract by Amelius, as a reference to the notions of life and living, which appear in the text: ἐν ᾧ τὸ γενόμενον ζῶν καὶ ζῶν καὶ ὄν πεφυκέναι. (TIS, II, 351).

Cudworth says clearly that he takes Amelius' words from Eusebius, St. Cyril, and Theodoret, and indeed these three authors transmit Amelius' extract although with some variation.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding, the most similar text to Cudworth's quotation is Eusebius' one,<sup>2</sup> and this reinforces our hypothesis on the closeness to the chapters of *PE* book XI, in the English author composition of this section of his *TIS*. Nevertheless, Cudworth can quote Eusebius and give other possible sources as a sample of his erudition.

The Cambridge professor points out that it is a famous text that shows the Christian doctrine of the *λόγος* agrees with the Platonic one. The historical proof is that the Christians understood the Platonic trinity as conforming their own, showing only some vocabulary differences, which is understandable given that the correction in the vocabulary appears during the Nicaea Council. This is demonstrated by the testimony of Amelius, who is contemporary to Plotinus and, according to Cudworth, an author that deserves attention. Indeed, when the problem was the third hypostasis of Platonism, the soul, Amelius was among the «more refined Platonists».<sup>3</sup> The translation of Amelius' fragment, following the Greek text, is this one:

And this was the Logos or Word, by whom existing from eternity, according to Heraclitus, all things were made, and whom that barbarian also placeth in the rank and dignity of a principle, affirming him to have been with God, and to be God: and that all things were made by him, and that whatsoever was made, was life and being in him. As also that he descended into a body, and being clothed in flesh, appeared as a man, though not without demonstration of the divinity of his nature. But that afterwards being loosed or separated from the same, he was deified, and became God again, such as he was before he came down into a mortal body.

(*TIS*, II, 459)

Cudworth quotes Amelius' word but not Eusebius' before and after this text. In particular, he finds that not only the second person of the Trinity is present but also the incarnation of the *λόγος*, which favours the reading of an agreement between Platonism and Christianity. Because of this, although Cudworth only quotes Amelius' extract, it is possible to think that he bears in mind Eusebius' opinion. This means that, according to Cudworth, Amelius' words – which refer to the Gospel of John, although he does not mention this – perfectly agree with the Christian doctrine, which is derived from the ancient Hebrew theology, as Eusebius affirms as well.

Cudworth does not mention the Barbarian's identity in Amelius' text, as Eusebius does, probably because it is not necessary for his defence of Platonism. Nevertheless, he immediately presents a quotation of Augustine's *De civitate dei*, x (29), where he refers to the beginning of John's Gospel that leaves no doubt concerning the identification of this Barbarian as John the Evangelist. The translation of Augustine's text, which Cudworth presents first in Latin, is this:

We have often heard from that holy man Simplicianus, afterward bishop of Milan, that a certain

<sup>1</sup> See CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, *Against Julian*, VIII (P.G., 76, 936 a-b) and THEODORET OF CYRUS, *A Cure for Pagan Maladies*, II, 87-89 (ed. Canivet).

<sup>2</sup> There are only some variations in punctuation, which in any case belong to the editors of both texts, and *καὶ τὴν σάρκα* is omitted in the last part of the passage.

<sup>3</sup> *TIS*, II, 349: Cudworth presents Plotinus, Amelius, and Porphyry as the more refined Platonists.

Platonist affirmed the beginning of St. John's gospel deserved to be writ in letters of gold, and to be set up in all the most eminent places throughout the Christian churches.

(TIS, II, 459)<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting that Augustine refers to Simplicianus' testimony, in which a Platonist affirmed that the beginning of John's Gospel deserved to be written in gold letters. As we have said, Eusebius has quoted the beginning of this Gospel immediately after presenting Amelius' text, in this case in order to reinforce the dependence of Amelius on the Evangelist's words. Cudworth points out this dependence as well, as a way of emphasizing the agreement between Platonism and Christianity.

In addition to Augustine, Cudworth quotes other Christian authors (Justin Martyr's *Apologia*; Clemens of Alexandria's *Stromata*, lib. 5; Origen's *Contra Celso*, lib. 6, and Saint Cyprian's *De Spiritu Sancto*), in order to show the correspondence between Christian and Platonic trinity, showing a special interest in Plato's *Timaeus*, *Second Letter* and *Sixth Letter*. As a closure to this section, Cudworth refers to ch. 20 of *PE* book XI and holds that Eusebius gives evidence of the agreement of the Platonic and Christian trinity, which have to come from an ancient Hebrew Cabala, the ancient theology.<sup>2</sup> Thus Cudworth introduces Eusebius' voice:

In the next place Eusebius Caesariensis gives a full and clear testimony of the concordance and agreement of the Platonic, at least as to the main, with the Christian trinity, which he will have to have been the Cabala of the ancient Hebrews.

(TIS, II, 460-461)

According to Cudworth, Eusebius presents this agreement fully and clearly, and because of that he considers it as key evidence for his argument. Nevertheless, the difference between these authors lies in that the common intention of showing the agreement of Platonism and Christianity has opposite points of departure: Eusebius defends Christianity as being similar to Platonism, while Cudworth defends Platonism as being similar to Christianity. For this reason, the English professor, unlike Eusebius, presents various interpretations within the Platonic tradition, including some that twist Plato's words, so that he can save the real Platonism from the accusation of Arianism.

After this, Cudworth quotes Chapter 20 and gives his translation:

The oracles of the Hebrews, placing the Holy Ghost after the Father and the Son, in the third rank, and acknowledging a holy and blessed trinity after this manner, so as that this third power does also transcend all created nature, and is the first of those intellectual substances, which proceed from the Son, and the third from the first cause: see how Plato enigmatically declareth the same things in his epistle to Dionysius, in these words, &c. These things the interpreters of Plato refer to a first God, and to a second cause, and to a third the soul of the world, which they call also the third God. And the divine Scriptures in like manner rank the holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the place or degree of a principle.

(TIS, II, 461)

<sup>1</sup> DÖRRIE, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76 mentions this same passage of Augustine at the beginning of his paper about Amelius' text and we believe that it is possible that he took this idea from Cudworth's text, although he does not mention him.

<sup>2</sup> TIS, II, 460-461. See D. HEDLEY, *Gods and Giants: Cudworth's Platonic Metaphysics and his Ancient Theology*, «British Journal of the History of Philosophy», 25, 5, 2017, DOI: 10.1080/09608788.2017.1336702.



Cudworth does not quote the part where Eusebius reproduces the passage of Plato's *Second Letter*, as he has already quoted it two pages before and is interested here in Eusebius' words before and after this text, where he matches what the Platonists say with the Christian doctrine. As Cudworth gives much importance to Eusebius' words, we present this reference as a main one, as opposed to the peripherals, where the voice of the author of *PE* did not have enough weight.

Notwithstanding, it is important to note that Cudworth does not reproduce the contrast that Eusebius makes between the Platonic and the Christian doctrine; instead, he says «in like manner» as a way of showing a continuity that does not represent what Eusebius emphasizes. This might explain why he only presents the beginning of Eusebius' text in Greek and interrupts it before the *Second Letter*, not only omitting the Platonic text but also translating Eusebius' words though in a 'partial' way.

After quoting Eusebius, Cudworth shows this is also present in Atanasius' words on the theme, who is the representative of Christian orthodoxy in *TIS*, and who at this point surprisingly distinguishes Platonism from Arianism.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Cudworth assimilates Eusebius' words as if they were those of a Christian orthodox and dismisses the accusation of Arianism for the Platonic trinity. This means that, according to the Cambridge professor, the Christian doctrine of the trinity has its roots in Hebrew theology and is manifest in Platonism as well, and several others answer to one and the same truth, although they use different forms of expression.<sup>2</sup>

These two main references to ch. 20 of *PE* book XI reveal, even more deeply than the peripheral ones, Cudworth's uses of Eusebius in this paragraph of his work. The English professor reproduces the Caesarean bishop's words in a context that agrees with Eusebius' own text: the references to Plato's *Second Letter* and Amelius' interpretation of the Prologue of John's Gospel. Nevertheless, the analysis of these references also shows some omissions and Cudworth's selective and even partial use of Eusebius, perhaps explained by the difference in their intentions.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, these two main references, along with the peripheral ones presented in the first section, allow us to evaluate the importance of Eusebius' *PE*, especially chs. 9-20 of book XI, in this paragraph of Cudworth's *TIS*. Nevertheless, our analysis reveals important differences between both authors as well, explained by their different proposals. Although both of them make apologies, based on the agreement of Platonists and Christians by pointing out the dependence of the former on the Hebrews, which the latter continue, in Eusebius' case there is an apology for Christianity, which is trying to prevail in his time, in a context where Platonism is the most important expression of Greek pagan philosophy. In Cudworth's case, he makes an apology for Platonism, in a context where, on the one hand, the Christians, through their multiple post-Reformation arguments, accuse the Cambridge Professor of, among other things, Arianism and on the other hand, the philosophical trends of Early Modern time begin to lean towards materialist and atheist positions, which move the philosophical reflection away from theological themes that Cudworth considers crucial.

<sup>1</sup> See HEDLEY, *The Platonic Trinity: Philology and Divinity in Cudworth's Philosophy of Religion*, cit., p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> ARMOUR, *Trinity, Community and Love: Cudworth's Platonism and the Idea of God*, cit., pp. 120-121.

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