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Scope

Church History and Religious Culture (formerly: *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*) is a long-established, peer-reviewed periodical, primarily devoted to the history of Christianity. It contains articles in this field as well as in other specialised related areas.

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Does It Make Sense to Speak about a “Hellenization of Christianity” in Antiquity?¹

Christoph Markschieß

Abstract

In this paper, delivered as the First Annual Lecture in Patristics of the Centre for Patristic Research (CPO), the author poses the question whether it still makes sense to speak about a Hellenization of Christianity in Antiquity. In contrast to the nineteenth-century understanding, it is shown that many of today’s authors claim that we need to avoid any intellectual and ideological narrow-mindedness. The author pleads for a precise manner in defining the term “Hellenization” much more than the scholars of the nineteenth century did. Against the background of these thoughts he refines his own definition of the

¹ A first version of this paper was given at a conference in Jerusalem at the Academy of Sciences and Humanities, January 2009, which was organized by my colleague and friend Guy Stroumsa. When Peter Schäfer invited me as Visiting Scholar to the Department of Religious Studies of Princeton University two months later, I had the opportunity to discuss the problems with some colleagues over there. I would like to thank warmly especially Peter Schäfer but also Glen Bowersock and Peter Brown for friendly advice and fruitful discussions. Hagit Amirav, Paul van Geest, and Bas ter Haar Romeny organized a deeply impressive First Annual Lecture [in Patristics] in Amsterdam, which I remember with gratitude.

The following pages contain the text of the lecture as given in Amsterdam with the addition only of some footnotes; a longer version of the paper will be published soon in German. I would like to thank my assistant, Henrik Hildebrandt, for kindly helping me with literature research and two former personnel assistants of Humboldt University’s President, Dr. Christiane Wienand and Judith Wellen, for helping me with the translation of an originally German paper. Many thanks to Dr. Nelly Stienstra and to Dr. Maria Sherwood-Smith for their diligent work on the English style of the text. In some passages I have drawn on formulations in a paper I presented to a conference ‘The Reception of Antique Religion and Culture in Judaism and Christianity’ in Århus, in January 2005. The paper was published in the proceedings of the conference: Ch. Markschieß, ‘Antiquity and Christianity or: The Unavoidability of False Questions,’ in *Beyond Reception. Mutual Influences between Antique Religion, Judaism, and Early Christianity*, ed. D. Brakke, A.-Ch. Jacobsen, and J. Ulrich [Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 1] (Frankfurt am Main, 2006), pp. 17–34.

Hellenization of Christianity as a specific transformation of the Alexandrian educational institutions and of the academic culture that was developed in these institutions in the theological reflection of Early Christianity.

Keywords

Early Christianity; Hellenization of Early Christianity; antiquity

The question I would like to pose and answer in my paper is simple, but at the same time quite radical: Does it still make sense to apply the traditional term or category of “Hellenization” in order to explore certain transformation processes of ancient Christianity? Or are we using a category which can never be pure and unbiased, but is always deeply connected with the great academic thoughts and ideas in whose context it has been and still is used. To frame the problem to be explored here, it will suffice to mention the names of two Germans, both very well-known outside of Germany: Adolf Harnack and Joseph Ratzinger.

I am naturally aware that it is quite easily possible to cleverly avoid discussing this question in the first place. Glen Bowersock, for instance, at the very outset of his lecture series, replaced the modern term “Hellenization” with the ancient term “Hellenism” in order to continue his investigations. As Bowersock concisely explained, “It seemed to me that Hellenization was a modern idea, reflecting modern forms of cultural domination.”²

And of course I know that there are no “pure” and unbiased academic categories and notions to describe historical movements and transformations. It would be naïve indeed, or at least entirely ahistorical, to hope for the existence of such a terminology. Yet we should also take into account, from a more pragmatic perspective, that we cannot undertake research without modern terms, and that there are categories for historical and religious research which are more useful and applicable and others that are less so.

So the question here is: is it possible to transform the category of “Hellenization” into a useful one in this pragmatic sense, or must it always carry with it an entire and all-encompassing academic concept (*Großkonzept*)—or sometimes even more than one concept? Currently, the answers to my question are manifold. Glen Bowersock, like several of his colleagues, elegantly circumvents the category of “Hellenization.” Many others, on the other hand, still use it in a

² G.W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, 1990), p. XI.

self-evident way: to mention just two of many publications, *L'hellénisation en méditerranée occidentale* is the title of a collected volume published in 2006; 2007 saw the publication of *Hellenisierung, Romanisierung, Orientalisierung. Akkulturation in antiken Kulturen des Mittelmeerraumes*.³ To answer the question of whether it is possible to adapt a controversial category, or whether we would do better to abandon it completely, it is necessary to examine the history of this category and its changing significance over time.

Here, I would like first to examine the history of the term “Hellenization” in the nineteenth century; second, to reflect on its application in the twentieth century; and third, to provide a final answer to the question of whether this category can be adapted and turned into a useful category for historical and religious research in the twenty-first century. More precisely, I would like to propose an idea of what kind of transformation processes we can analyze using this controversial term.

Let me conclude my introductory remarks by briefly pointing out that the questions raised above have not only been under discussion by scholars for a very long time, but have also concerned me personally for quite a while. When I graduated from the University of Tübingen in December 1988, Martin Hengel, the famous New Testament scholar (1926–2009), asked me to add the footnotes to one of his papers, a paper he had given for the first time in 1976 under the title “Zum Problem der Hellenisierung Judäas im 1. Jahrhundert nach Christus”/“On the Hellenisation of Judaea in the first century AD,” and which he had amended several times afterwards. As an enthusiastic and eager young academic, over the following weeks I created 292 footnotes, using references from sources and the secondary literature. In the process, I often found myself wondering whether I had used the correct references, yet Martin Hengel always commented on my drafts by adding even more sources and allusions to the secondary literature.

I was frankly and deeply amazed when in 1989 Hengel’s paper, which had in the meantime doubled in size, was published in an English version with the title ‘The “Hellenization” of Judaea in the First Century after Christ.’ Martin

³) H. Guiraud, ed., ‘L'hellénisation en méditerranée occidentale au temps des guerres puniques (260–180 av. J.-C.),’ in *Actes du Colloque international de Toulouse 31 mars–2 avril 2005*, ed. P. François, P. Moret, and S. Péré-Noguès (Toulouse, 2006); U. Gotter, K. Trampedach, and D. Wannagat (eds.), *Hellenisierung, Romanisierung, Orientalisierung. Akkulturation in antiken Kulturen des Mittelmeerraumes* (Stuttgart, 2007).

Hengel had added to his own name as author of the text the small phrase “in collaboration with Christoph Markschiefs.”⁴ At that time in Germany, it was by no means self evident to refer to the collaboration of an academic assistant, as I was. The amended German version of this English translation was subsequently published seven years later in the first volume of Hengel’s “Kleine Schriften” (Small Papers) as a programmatic opening paper.⁵

Over the past twenty years, I have further explored the question of how the developing Jesus movement was transformed in the context of its integration into the globalized culture of the *Imperium Romanum*,⁶ and this in turn led me to revisit and further develop my observations regarding the history of the analytic category of “Hellenization.”⁷ Therefore, I was delighted when the conveners of the Dutch Annual Lectures in Patristics asked me to present an overview of my research in this field as the first lecture in their new series. Let me now go *medias in res*.

I would like to start with a detailed reminder about the history of the notion of “Hellenization”; in my remarks, I will focus mainly on a selected number of important German academics, while largely leaving aside the equally interest-

⁴ M. Hengel (in collaboration with Ch. Markschiefs), *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (London-Philadelphia, 1989).

⁵ M. Hengel (in collaboration with Ch. Markschiefs), ‘Zum Problem der “Hellenisierung” Judäas im 1. Jahrhundert nach Christus,’ in *Judaica et Hellenistica. Kleine Schriften*, ed. M. Hengel, 3 vols. [WUNT 90] (Tübingen, 1996), 1: 1–90.

⁶ I am thinking of my studies on Gnosis, on the one hand (cf. e.g. Ch. Markschiefs, *Die Gnosis* [Beck’sche Reihe 2173] (Munich, 2006); or *ibid.*, *Gnosis und Christentum* (Berlin, 2009)), on the other hand also of categories used often in research in the area of the history of ideas (cf. e.g. Ch. Markschiefs, ‘Synkretismus V. Kirchengeschichtlich,’ *TRE XXXII* (Berlin-New York, 2001), cols. 538–552, or *ibid.*, *Kaiserzeitliche christliche Theologie und ihre Institutionen. Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte der antiken christlichen Theologie* (Tübingen, 2007), pp. 337–383 (with respect to concepts such as “identity” or “inculturation”).

⁷ See, for instance, my contributions on Adolf von Harnack: Ch. Markschiefs, ‘Adolf von Harnack als Neutestamentler,’ in *Adolf von Harnack. Theologe, Historiker, Wissenschaftspolitiker*, ed. K. Nowak, O.G. Oexle [Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 161] (Göttingen, 2001), pp. 365–395; *ibid.*, ‘Adolf Harnack,’ in *Religionsstifter der Moderne. Von Karl Marx bis Johannes Paul II*, ed. A. Christophersen and F. Voigt (Munich, 2009), pp. 138–149, pp. 296–298 and also *ibid.*, ‘Adolf von Harnack. Vom Großbetrieb der Wissenschaft,’ in *Die modernen Väter der Antike. Die Entwicklung der Altertumswissenschaften an Akademie und Universität im Berlin des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. A.M. Baertschi and C.G. King [Transformationen der Antike 3] (Berlin-New York, 2009), pp. 529–552.

ing Anglo-American scholarship about the notion and its evolution. Therefore, my remarks by no means claim to reflect the full scope of the existing scholarship on the issue.

1. The History of the Notion of “Hellenization” in the Nineteenth Century

We all know that the history of the modern concept and the modern understanding of Hellenization did not begin in the nineteenth century. It is part of our basic knowledge that this term had a prior history, and that the modern conception of Hellenization integrated and modified the ancient term ἑλληνίζειν and the associated, yet much more rarely used term Ἑλληνισμός. It seems to me that Hengel’s words—quoted in the relevant textbooks, even after twenty years of ongoing research—are still the best way to describe this basic knowledge: “‘Hellenism’ (and the adjective formed from it) as it is now understood is a relatively recent term; the great scholar Droysen was the first to attach its present significance to it about 150 years ago in connection with II Macc. 4.13.” According to Hengel “that new civilisation furthered above all by the expedition of Alexander the Great and the Graeco-Macedonian ‘colonial rule’ which followed, a civilisation which was shaped by the gradual spread of the Greek language and of Greek forms of life and thought.”⁸

In other words, “Hellenization” is to be understood as a transformation towards this civilization or a transformation emanating from this civilization. Alternatively, one could say, with Bowersock, that “Hellenization” is “a barometer for assessing Greek culture.”⁹ A barometer, I may add, which has a relatively roughly defined scale. Another part of our basic knowledge is to know that in antiquity the term ἑλληνίζειν was at first only used to describe proper usage of the Greek language and was probably initially a technical term used by specialists in rhetorics and grammar.¹⁰ Compared to that usage, there are only

⁸) Hengel (in collaboration with Ch. Markschiefs), *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judaea in the First Century after Christ*, p. 1 = *ibid.*, ‘Zum Problem der “Hellenisierung” Judäas’ (see above, n. 5), p. 2.

⁹) Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (see above, n. 2), p. 7: “The problem lies in the very notion of Hellenization. It is a useless barometer for assessing Greek culture.”

¹⁰) W. Jaeger, *Das frühe Christentum und die griechische Bildung* (Berlin, 1963), p. 81, n. 6 refers to Theophrast and J. Stroux, *De Theophrasti virtutibus dicendi* (Leipzig, 1912), p. 13 (on the basis of evidence from Cic., *Orat.* 79, ed. R. Westman [*Bi Teu Cic.* 5] (Leipzig, 1980), p. 24,6–8); cf. also R. Bichler, *Hellenismus. Geschichte und Problematik eines Epochenbegriffs* [Impulse der Forschung 41] (Darmstadt, 1983), pp. 6–12. Hengel has dealt more elaborately with the Greek concept in his ‘Zwischen Jesus und Paulus. Die “Hellenisten,” die “Sieben”

a few examples of a broader understanding of the term. With the exception of the above-mentioned verse from the Second Book of the Maccabees, that speaks of ἀκριή τις ἑλληνισμοῦ, as the “heyday of adapting Greek customs and institutions,”¹¹ these few examples were developed during the time of the Roman monarchy by authors such as Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius, Eusebius, and Libanius. These authors testify that even in antiquity, people increasingly understood the term ἑλληνισμός in the sense of the German “Griechentum,” which roughly translates as “Greekness.” I will return to this point at the end of my paper.

According to most scholars—Hengel and Markschiefs among them—the modern concept of Hellenization was coined by the historian and politician Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–1884), who adhered to an understanding of the term that was rooted in the Book of the Maccabees, yet was in fact an all-encompassing notion during imperial times. Is this at all true?

When one looks more closely at Droysen’s *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, or “History of Hellenistic Civilization,”¹² it soon becomes apparent that Droysen, who worked at the universities of Berlin, Kiel, and Jena, did not develop a precise term for describing a historical period. Thus, he did not use the term “Hellenism” in the sense in which it is used today. Droysen, who was the son of a Protestant pastor and superintendent from Pomerania, initially used the term “Hellenism” in order to create a kind of historical-theological vestibule for his historical narrative. What do I mean by this? Droysen used the term in the historical-theological parts of his introduction and for the concluding chapters of the three volumes of his *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, yet these parts had only a marginal impact on the empirical historical description, with the result that they could easily be drastically reduced in the second edition of his trilogy, published in 1977/1978.¹³

und Stephanus (Apg 6,1–15; 7,54–8,3),’ *ZThK* 72 (1975), 151–206, esp. 166–169 (= *ibid.*, *Paulus und Jakobus. Kleine Schriften*, vol. III [WUNT 141] (Tübingen, 2002), pp. 1–56 (with a supplement, pp. 57–67)), esp. pp. 16–19.

¹¹ M. Hengel, *Juden, Griechen und Barbaren. Aspekte der Hellenisierung des Judentums in vorchristlicher Zeit* [SBSB 76] (Stuttgart, 1976), pp. 108–115.

¹² With respect to Droysen, see especially: W. Nippel, *Johann Gustav Droysen. Ein Leben zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik* (Munich, 2008), esp. pp. 34–40, but also Bichler, ‘Hellenismus’ (see above, n. 10). His main work in this area has recently been reprinted: J.G. Droysen, *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, vol. I *Geschichte Alexanders des Großen* (Darmstadt, 1998); vol. II *Geschichte der Diadochen* (Darmstadt, 1998); and vol. III *Geschichte der Epigonen* (Darmstadt, 1998).

¹³ The preface to the first edition of the third volume, dated 9 May 1843, was first only

In later editions of the work, Droysen left out the introductory historical-theological remarks about Hellenism as an era of reconciliation between occident and orient. Tying in with the thoughts of his former teacher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Droysen classified this era as being part of an eternal, divine succession of “eternal enmity and the eternal longing for reconciliation.” Furthermore, he stylized the era of Hellenism as satisfying the natural human longing for the lost paradise.¹⁴

Otherwise than is commonly believed, the term Hellenism is not a central component of the historical architecture of Droysen’s *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, because—as demonstrated—there are only rare relations between the aforementioned vestibule and the main building of Droysen’s opus. This was shown by my Berlin colleague Wilfried Nippel, who therefore calls Droysen a “Vorwothistoriker”—a preface historian. In the first five hundred pages of the first volume of Droysen’s *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, he used the term Hellenism only six times; it occurs eight times in volume two, and roughly fifty times in the third and final volume, published in 1843.¹⁵ Droysen uses the term “Hellenization” even more rarely, only six times in total.¹⁶

In none of the three volumes does Droysen ever actually explain clearly what he means by “Hellenism” and how this era is to be chronologically framed. I only mention this aspect briefly here, as I have examined it in more detail elsewhere:¹⁷ According to Droysen, Hellenism is first a historical-theological

disseminated as a private edition and did not become known to a wider public till 1893 (now in Droysen, *Geschichte der Epigonen* (see above, n. 12), pp. IX–XXIII).

¹⁴ J.G. Droysen, *Geschichte Alexanders des Großen* [Kröner’s paperback edition 87] (1833; repr. Leipzig, 1931), p. 1. Already in his Berlin Ph.D. thesis from 1831, Droysen viewed the “westöstliche Völkermischung” (mixing of the peoples of the west and the east) of “Hellenism” as a central condition for the development of Christianity; he saw the new religion, rather than Judaism, as the old reconciliation of evening (occident) and morning (orient) “a doctrina Christiana Graecorum quam Iudaeorum religio proprius abest,” quoted by K. Christ, *Von Gibbon zu Rostovtzeff. Leben und Werk führender Althistoriker der Neuzeit* (Darmstadt, 1972), p. 58 (= Johann Gustav Droysen, *Erster Teil: Bis zum Beginn der Frankfurter Tätigkeit* (Leipzig, 1910), p. 69).

¹⁵ This count was carried out using the digitized version of the 1877 edition with the page numbering of the editions from 1952/1953 and 1998 in the “Digitale Bibliothek” (Digital Library), Nr. 55, *Geschichte des Altertums* (Berlin, 2001).

¹⁶ Droysen, *Geschichte Alexanders des Großen* (see above, n. 12), p. 16 (zu Zypern); *Geschichte der Diadochen* (see above, n. 12), p. 4 (von den Mittelmeerküsten); *Geschichte der Epigonen* (see above, n. 12), pp. 179, 425 f., 428, 431.

¹⁷ Ch. Markschiefs, ‘“Hellenisierung des Christentums”?—die ersten Konzilien,’ in *Die Anfänge des Christentums*, ed. F.W. Graf and K. Wiegandt [Forum für Verantwortung, Fischer Taschenbuch 18277] (Frankfurt am Main, 2009), pp. 397–436; esp. pp. 402–408.

synthesis of orient and occident; second, it is the political system of the so-called Diadochi states; and third, Hellenism is, according to him, a “higher unity of education, of taste and of fashion, or whatever one would like to call this always altering level of human society.”¹⁸ In 1867, Droysen’s Hellenism extends from Alexander the Great to Gaius Julius Caesar; in 1836, Droysen views Hellenism as commencing with the death of Alexander and extending right up to the Byzantine era.¹⁹

It is possible that the lack of precision which characterizes Droysen’s use of the term “Hellenism,” and the consequent diversity of the concept of Hellenization, even fostered the triumph and the attractiveness of this concept in the nineteenth and particularly the twentieth century. This is argued by the Berlin ancient historian Wilfried Nippel and his colleague in Marburg, Karl Christ.²⁰ On the basis of my own analyses, I can only affirm their argument. In fact, various scholars have used the same term to describe different things—or even nothing at all: when Marcus Niebuhr (1817–1860), son of the ancient historian in Berlin and Bonn Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776–1831), published the third volume of his father’s lectures on ancient history in 1851, he simply

¹⁸ Only in *Geschichte Alexanders des Großen* (see above, n. 12), p. 442 is the concept of “Hellenism” used on one page, without further specification, as having a political meaning (“als der Hellenismus seine politische Selbständigkeit dem römischen Staate gegenüber verlor”) and a cultural meaning (“die höhere Einheit der Bildung, des Geschmacks, der Mode, oder wie man sonst dies stets wechselnde Niveau der menschlichen Gesellschaft nennen will”). Droysen is more specific in the second volume ((see above, n. 12), p. 304): “Jetzt (sc. in den Jahren 305/304 v.Chr., C.M.) in der Tat hat das einige Reich, das Alexander gegründet, ein Ende. Lag es im Wesen des Hellenismus, auf den er es hatte stellen wollen, des mit dem Barbarischen zu gegenseitiger Ausgleichung und Durchgärung verbundenen Griechentums, je nach dem Maß der Verbindung und den Unterschieden der asiatischen Elemente sich in sich zu differenzieren, so konnte dieser Hellenismus, je weiter er sich entwickelte, desto weniger als politisch einiger Körper bestehen; er mußte zerfallen nach den neu werdenden ethnographischen Typen, deren Unterschiede die barbarischen Substrate der Mischung bestimmten.”

¹⁹ W. Nippel, “‘Hellenismus’—von Droysen bis Harnack—oder: Interdisziplinäre Mißverständnisse,” in *Adolf von Harnack. Christentum, Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft. Wissenschaftliches Symposium aus Anlaß des 150. Geburtstages*, ed. K. Nowak et al. [Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 204] (Göttingen, 2003), pp. 15–28; on the question of a possible change in Droysen’s conception, see Bichler, *Hellenismus* (see above, n. 10), pp. 60–63, for the chronological inconsistencies see *ibid.*, pp. 90–94.

²⁰ K. Christ, *Von Gibbon zu Rostovtzeff* (see above, n. 14), p. 62.

gave one section the title *die Hellenisierung des Orients*, or *the Hellenization of the Orient*, although his father did not use the notion in this specific section at all. Niebuhr, the son, even used the term Hellenization as the subtitle of the entire volume.²¹

The fact that the notion was used in a vague and undefined way already during the nineteenth century becomes abundantly apparent when we turn to the work of the patristics scholar Adolf Harnack (1851–1930). Harnack, who worked in Berlin for a long time, can rightly be labelled the champion of the triumphal impact of the concept of Hellenization, at least in the German-speaking academic sphere. Harnack never explicitly referred to Droysen, which may be for biographical reasons: when Harnack moved to Berlin in 1888, Droysen had already been replaced by the now relatively unknown historian Ulrich Köhler (1838–1903), in the context of the establishment of a new institute for the study of the ancient world in Berlin.²² It is perhaps for this reason that Harnack refers rather to the theologian Ferdinand Christian Baur (1762–1860), a New Testament scholar at the University of Tübingen. Baur was a student of Hegel, whose philosophy influenced Baur's dual architecture of Judaism and Hellenism. In a dedication, Harnack in turn explicitly indicated that his own concept of "Hellenization" could be related back to Baur, and thus indirectly to Hegel.²³ Like Droysen, Harnack too remains

²¹ B.G. Niebuhr, *Die makedonischen Reiche, Hellenisierung des Orients, Untergang des alten Griechenlands, die römische Weltherrschaft*, ed. M. Niebuhr [Vorträge über alte Geschichte, an der Universität Bonn gehalten, vol. III] (Berlin, 1851), pp. 341; 359–363.

²² Cf. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, in Max Lenz, *Wissenschaftliche Anstalten, Spruchkollegium, Statistik* [Geschichte der königlichen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin, vol. III] (Halle, 1910), pp. 216–218. It would be more interesting to analyse the parallels between Harnack's position and the traditional historical line in the English speaking world, which leads from John Priestly and John Adams back to Thomas Jefferson, cf. J.Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine. On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* [Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion XIV] (London, 1990), pp. 1–35.

²³ E. Troeltsch, Adolf v. Harnack, and Ferd. Christ. v. Baur, in *Festgabe von Fachgenossen und Freunden A. von Harnack zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag dargebracht*, ed. K. Holl et al. (Tübingen, 1921), pp. 282–291. Harnack explicitly approved this representation by a handwritten dedication: cf. the reference by W. Elliger that we should regard a "handschriftliche Widmung des dem kirchengeschichtlichen Seminar der Theol. Fak. Berlin geschenkten Exemplars der 'Festgabe'" as an "ausdrückliches Bekenntnis" to this effect (W. Elliger, 'Adolf Harnack als Kirchengeschichtler,' in *Adolf Harnack in memoriam. Reden zum 100. Geburtstag am 7. Mai 1951 gehalten bei der Gedenkfeier der Theologischen Fakultät der Humboldt-Universität Berlin* (Berlin, 1951), pp. 19–30; esp. p. 21, n. 1).

rather imprecise when defining the terms “Hellenization” and “Hellenism” in terms of their content and their exact chronology.

It is evident that for Harnack the “Hellenization of Christianity” transformed or even distorted the original “essence of Christianity.”²⁴ In his famous Berlin lectures in the winter of 1899/1900, Harnack spoke “on the essence of Christianity,” which for him could be distilled from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. More precisely, Harnack posed three perspectives from this sermon, which he laid out in his lectures: “First, the kingdom of God and the coming of this kingdom; second, God the father and the endless value of the human soul; and third, better justice and the commandment of love.”²⁵ The terminology used by Harnack reveals that his writings were influenced by the Pietistic piety of Baltic Lutheranism and by the liberal Protestant theology of the turn of the century.

Harnack remains quite unclear in describing to what extent this original nature of Christianity was transformed and altered through “Hellenization.” One can identify three meanings of the notion of Hellenization in his works:

1. In his lectures he describes the process of Hellenization as the “influx of ‘Greekness,’ of the Greek spirit,” and he calls these observations, “the greatest fact of the church history of the second century AD.”²⁶ According to Harnack’s

²⁴ E.P. Meijering, *Die Hellenisierung des Christentums im Urteil Adolf von Harnacks* [Verhandlungen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks 128] (Amsterdam, 1985), pp. 68–72; J. Jantsch, *Die Entstehung des Christentums bei Adolf von Harnack und Eduard Meyer* [Habelts Dissertationsdrucke. Reihe Alte Geschichte Heft 28] (Bonn, 1990), pp. 134–139. For the previous history, cf. also E.P. Meijering, ‘Adolf von Harnack und das Problem des Platonismus,’ in *Patristique et antiquité tardive en France et Allemagne de 1870 à 1930: Influences et Changes*, ed. J. Fontaine, R. Herzog, and K. Pollmann [Actes du colloque franco-allemand de Chantilly (25–27 octobre 1991)] (Paris, 1993), pp. 155–164.

²⁵ ‘Überschauen wir aber die Predigt Jesu, so können wir drei Kreise aus ihr gestalten. Jeder Kreis ist so geartet, daß er die ganze Verkündigung enthält; in jedem kann sie daher vollständig zur Darstellung gebracht werden:

Erstlich, das Reich Gottes und sein Kommen,
Zweitens, Gott der Vater und der unendliche Wert der Menschenseele,
Drittens, die bessere Gerechtigkeit und das Gebot der Liebe.’

A. von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, ed. T. Rendtorff (Gütersloh, 1999), p. 87 (= Leipzig, 1929, p. 33).

²⁶ A. von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums. Sechzehn Vorlesungen vor Studierenden aller Fakultäten im Wintersemester 1899/1900 an der Universität Berlin gehalten*, ed. C.-D. Osthövener (Tübingen, 2007), p. 115.

Dogmengeschichte (“History of Dogma”), however, it seems as if he regards the “Hellenization of Christianity” as Christians’ reception of the standards of rational argumentation in Greek philosophy, and as the development of church sanctioned dogmatics of rationally explainable doctrines.

2. Harnack’s description of Gnosis, or as he puts it, Christian “Gnosticism” as an “acute Hellenization of Christianity” is a well known part of his *History of Dogma*. In an unpublished postcard written by Harnack to the Classicist Paul Wendland (1864–1915) in 1910, Harnack claims that this would not be a “Realdefinition” (material definition) of Gnosticism but “only a description of its success.”²⁷ In this sense, “Hellenization” refers to a specific form of globalization.

3. In his book *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (“The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries”) Harnack develops yet another understanding of the results of the “Hellenization of the orient and partly also the occident.” According to Harnack, Hellenization means “relative unity in terms of language (the *koine*) and the world views that are created through language,”²⁸ an understanding that is in line with the original ancient meaning of the Greek verb ἑλληνίζειν. Harnack’s chronological concepts are similarly confused. Like Droysen, Harnack does not establish a clear beginning or end of the processes which he calls “Hellenization” either. I have collected further details about this lack of chronological precision in Harnack’s thought elsewhere.²⁹

Despite these similarities in their lack of precise definition of content and chronology of the term “Hellenization,” there are also differences between Droysen and Harnack. Let me elaborate on two examples. First Droysen, particularly in the early stages of his career, portrayed “Hellenism” and “Hellenization” as some sort of messianic era of a superficially secularized salvation history. Harnack, however, following his systematic-theological teacher Albrecht

²⁷ Letter from Harnack to Wendland, dated 19.9.1910, SUB Göttingen, Ms. Philos. 206:79. Some time ago Harnack’s main theme with respect to gnosis was again examined in a series of contributions: W.E. Helleman, ed., *Hellenization Revisited. Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World* (Lanham-Maryland, 1994).

²⁸ A. von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Wiesbaden, 1981), p. 23 (= Leipzig, 1924).

²⁹ Markschie, ‘Hellenisierung des Christentums?’ (see above, n. 17), pp. 412 f.

Ritschl (1822–1889),³⁰ understood these terms as referring to an inevitable, yet ultimately rather problematic development of the new religion towards a “catholic church,” a development which, in his opinion, needed to be revised.³¹ These divergent estimations by Droysen and Harnack demonstrate that two historians, despite the fact that they both built their arguments on Protestant theologoumena, could end up with two completely diverse positions.

Turning to our second example, Harnack develops a much more precise understanding of Judaism than Droysen, even if Harnack’s remarks cannot satisfy us today. Thus with regard to Hellenization, Harnack’s *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* as well as his later book *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums* succinctly describe and appreciate the “religious views and the religious philosophy of the Hellenistic Jews and their importance for the transformation of the Gospel which later followed.”³² This once again differentiates Harnack from Droysen, who does not provide a comparable account.

Alluding to the monumental oeuvre of his friend, the theologian Emil Schürer from Göttingen (1844–1910), Harnack called Judaism during the Christian era a “syncretic religion.”³³ According to him, the Hellenization of Judaism entailed its transformation into “some kind of cosmopolitanism” and into a “rational religion” under the “rather superficial, yet important influence of Greek culture.” This can be demonstrated by closely examining Harnack’s section about the Jewish-Hellenistic religious philosopher Philo of Alexandria. Harnack relied on the secondary literature in writing this section and did not take into account the contemporary critical edition by Leopold Cohn and

³⁰ Thus W. Pannenberg, ‘Die Aufnahme des philosophischen Gottesbegriffs als dogmatisches Problem der frühchristlichen Theologie,’ in his *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Göttingen, 1979), pp. 296–346; esp. pp. 296 f.

³¹ A. Harnack, *Die Entstehung des kirchlichen Dogmas* [Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, vol. I] (Tübingen, 1886), pp. 253 f. (= 1909, p. 349). In the immediate context, Harnack speaks of “dem Bunde, der zwischen Christenthum und Antike so geschlossen worden ist, dass Keines das Andere hat überwinden können.”

³² Harnack, *Die Entstehung des kirchlichen Dogmas* (see above, n. 31), pp. 121–132; see also W. Kinzig, *Harnack, Marcion und das Judentum. Nebst einer kommentierten Edition des Briefwechsels Adolf von Harnacks mit Houston Stewart Chamberlain* [Arbeiten zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte 13] (Leipzig, 2004), pp. 162–182.

³³ Harnack, *Die Entstehung des kirchlichen Dogmas* (see above, n. 31), pp. 121; cf. Marksches, ‘Synkretismus V. Kirchengeschichtlich’ (see above, n. 6), cols. 540–543, with an excursus on the history of the significance of ancient Judaism and Christianity as “syncretistic religions.”

Paul Wendland.³⁴ His description carries—at least implicitly—the antisemitic prejudice, which was widespread at the time, that Judaism had to cast off its Semitic roots in order to act in the world.

It would be wrong to assume that the usage and application of the term “Hellenization” as a guiding category was limited to the speculative ancient historian Droysen and the liberal theologian Harnack. Let me provide you with just one further example: The New Testament scholar Adolf Schlatter (1852–1932) worked at the Friedrich Wilhelm Universität in Berlin as a conservative “Strafprofessor” (a professor who was appointed alongside and in opposition to Harnack). Shortly after Schlatter left Berlin, he wrote to a colleague:

“Alles im N(euen) T(estament) hat den Hellenismus mit zur Voraussetzung. Ich leugne rundweg, daß es eine einzige Silbe im N(euen) T(estament) gebe, für die die *drei* Jahrhunderte während deren Jerusalem Provinzialstadt eines griechischen Staates war, bedeutungslos blieben,” roughly translated into English as “Hellenism is the precondition for everything in the New Testament. I flatly deny that there is even a single syllable in the New Testament that remained untouched by the three centuries during which Jerusalem was the provincial city of a Greek state.”³⁵

At first sight, this may sound like the direct antithesis of Harnack’s ideas, since Harnack (like the classicists and philologists Paul Wendland and Eduard Norden) challenged the idea “that in the oldest papers, notwithstanding in the Gospel, there can be found any Greek element to a considerable extent.”³⁶

Yet, a close reading of Schlatter’s quotation reveals that he used the category “Hellenization” in a different way from his former colleague and friend Harnack. Harnack’s ideas about the nature of Christianity, which he developed in his Berlin lectures, referred to an original and basic Christianity, which was

³⁴ Harnack, *Die Entstehung des kirchlichen Dogmas* (see above, n. 31), pp. 11–23. Still Harnack insists in his “Missionsgeschichte” that there is scarcely any matter “die des Nachdenkens so würdig ist, wie die, daß die Religion Jesu auf jüdischem und auch auf semitischem Boden keine Wurzeln hat fassen können. Es muß doch etwas in dieser Religion gelegen haben und liegen, was dem freieren griechischen Geist verwandt ist” (in Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums* (see above, n. 28), pp. 71 f.). This is a reavowal of the contrast between Greek individual freedom and oriental religious absolutism, as found in Droysen, *Geschichte Alexanders des Großen* (see above, n. 12), p. 444.

³⁵ From an unpublished letter by Schlatter to Wilhelm Lüttger dated 31.12.1899 (Schlatterarchiv Inventarnr. 1228; quoted by Hengel, ‘Zum Problem der “Hellenisierung” Judäas’ (see above, n. 5), p. 1, n. 1).

³⁶ Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (see above, n. 26), p. 116.

then “hellenized” in the second century AD by way of reception and interaction with Greek philosophy. In contrast to Harnack, Schlatter assumed that the Judaic roots of the Jesus movement had already been “hellenized,” just like the movement itself.

According to Schlatter, there is no nature of Christianity that is free of Hellenization, and my scholarly mentor in Tübingen, the New Testament scholar Martin Hengel, stood firmly in this tradition of thought. This is apparent from Hengel’s *Habilitation* (his “second book”) *Judentum und Hellenismus* (“Judaism and Hellenism”), published in 1966. In this book, he argues that the Hellenization of Judaism started with the Greek inscriptions that appeared from the third century BC onwards in the regions of Syria and Phoenicia, regions that were under Ptolemaic administration.³⁷

Mentioning Martin Hengel means that in terms of chronology we have already stepped right into the time-frame of the next part of my paper, which concerns a selection of German works written in the twentieth century, in which the category of the “Hellenization of Christianity” is used. I once again focus on German studies, in this way largely, if not completely, leaving aside the Anglo Saxon discussion.

2. The History of the Application of the Term “Hellenization” in the Twentieth Century

At one point in his “Jerome Lectures,” delivered in 1989 and entitled *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, Glen Bowersock called the notion of Hellenization “a useless barometer for assessing Greek culture.”³⁸ As far as I am aware, such a bold statement about the redundancy of the term is rather exceptional, both among ancient historians and theologians. Due to the limited scope of this paper, I shall have to refrain for the moment from offering a detailed analysis of the history of the application of the term in the twentieth century. I will

³⁷ M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus. Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jhs v.Chr* [WUNT 10] (Tübingen, 1988), pp. 108–120. Arnaldo Momigliano rather viciously referred to the magnum opus as “eine aktuelle Zusammenfassung” of E. Bickerman, *Four Strange Books of the Bible. Jonah, Daniel, Koboeth, Esther* (New York, 1967); Arnaldo Momigliano, ‘Johann Gustav Droysen zwischen Juden und Griechen,’ in *ibid.*, *Die moderne Geschichtsschreibung der Alten Welt* [Ausgewählte Schriften zur Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung, vol. III] (Stuttgart-Weimar, 2000), pp. 144–160; esp. p. 159.

³⁸ Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (see above, n. 2), p. 7.

therefore focus on some selected ancient historians and theologians in order to demonstrate that in the twentieth century, as in the nineteenth, the term “Hellenization” was not conceptualized very precisely, either with regard to its precise content or in respect of its chronological dimensions.

Once again, let me start with an example from Berlin. In 1925, Victor Tcherikover (1894–1958)³⁹ published his Ph.D. dissertation entitled *Die hellenistischen Städtegründungen von Alexander dem Großen bis auf die Römerzeit* (roughly translated into English as “The Hellenistic Foundations of Cities from Alexander the Great up to the Roman Times”).⁴⁰ The dissertation was supervised by Ulrich Wilcken and Eduard Meyer in Berlin. Tcherikover was born in St Petersburg in 1894 and—like Elias Bickerman—was one of the Jewish Russian ancient historians who fled to Berlin (in 1921) in the face of the Russian revolution, and who studied with Wilcken. Tcherikover left Berlin for Jerusalem after finishing his dissertation (1925), and established the field of Ancient History at the Hebrew University. In his Berlin dissertation, which is approximately two hundred pages long, he used the term “Hellenization” exactly fourteen times. Yet he leaves quite nebulous what he means by phrases such as: “Hellenization of Pella, Dion, Skythopolis, perhaps also Gerasa,” which he dates to the times of Antigonos I Monophthalmos.⁴¹ Admittedly, the great excavations at this site (Gerasa) by the University of Yale only began in 1928; and in the case of Pella it took the publication of the results of the most recent excavations to confirm Thomas Weber’s view that “as for Hellenization, the high expectations did not match the material remains.”⁴²

Reading Tcherikover’s dissertation, the impression swiftly emerges that for the author “Hellenization” consists, first and foremost, of the formal foundation of a city by a Hellenistic emperor.⁴³ However, it is not until the middle

³⁹ Cf. A. Fuks, ‘Tcherikover, Victor (Avigdor),’ *EncJud* XIX (Detroit, 2007), col. 562.

⁴⁰ V. Tcherikower, *Die hellenistischen Städtegründungen von Alexander dem Großen bis auf die Römerzeit* [Phil.S 19/1] (Leipzig, 1927 = New York, 1973). In the spelling of the name I follow the form on the title page in the footnotes, the later normalized form in the body of the text.

⁴¹ Tcherikower, *Die hellenistischen Städtegründungen* (see above, n. 40), p. 159.

⁴² Th. Weber, *Pella Decapolitana. Studien zur Geschichte, Architektur und bildenden Kunst einer hellenisierten Stadt des nördlichen Ostjordanlandes* [ADPV 18] (Wiesbaden, 1993), p. 85.

⁴³ Similarly Damascus is presented as an exception in being a “hellenized” city without an act of foundation: Tcherikower, *Die hellenistischen Städtegründungen* (see above, n. 40), p. 65.

of his book that we find a sentence to the effect that the foundation of a city may be not only the beginning, but occasionally also the end of a “process of Hellenization.” In this context it becomes apparent that Tcherikover equates Hellenization with the settlement of a Greek population in a well constructed new city complex, possibly planned according to the Hippodamic system.⁴⁴ In Tcherikover’s dissertation there are no further specifications, either with respect to the history of ideas or to cultural history, even though such specifications could easily have been provided for the examples of Damascus or Gerasa. However, they can be found in Tcherikover’s great standard work *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, which was originally written in Hebrew and was later published in an English translation by Shim’on Applebaum (Philadelphia, 1959).⁴⁵ There, Tcherikover repeatedly points to the “cultural question.”⁴⁶

It would be an exaggeration, however, to say that in the work mentioned above, Tcherikover started to use the term “Hellenization” more frequently. In fact, he did so exactly three times, or six times, if the use of the corresponding verb “to hellenize” is taken into account; again, he does not provide a precise definition. At most, one could say that the term “Hellenization” becomes limited as another concept, “Orientalization,” is introduced in addition to the idea of “Hellenization.” Droysen’s successful model of “Hellenization” results in the dualism of “Hellenization” and “Orientalization.” This dualism also put an end to the superficially secularized model of Messianic salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*) as a reconciliation of Orient and Occident during Hellenism.

To return to Tcherikover, it does not make much sense to speculate about the Zionist background of this scholar, as he may have adopted his dualist understanding of “Hellenization” and “Orientalization” already during his time in Berlin. It is indisputable, in any case, that this dualism was already evident in the writings of Tcherikover’s teacher Ulrich Wilcken,⁴⁷ who understood Hellenization as “Ausbreitung des griechischen Wesens,” “dissemination of a Greek character” or a “Greek nature,” whatever this may really mean.⁴⁸ This

⁴⁴ Tcherikover, *Die hellenistischen Städtegründungen* (see above, n. 40), pp. 130–137.

⁴⁵ V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. S. Applebaum (Philadelphia, 1959); cf. the sharply critical review by E.R. Goodenough in *Jewish Social Studies* 22 (1960), 105–108.

⁴⁶ Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (see above, n. 45), pp. 31, 114f., 334.

⁴⁷ U. Wilcken, *Griechische Geschichte im Rahmen der Altertumsgeschichte* (Munich, 1973), p. 301.

⁴⁸ Wilcken, *Griechische Geschichte* (see above, n. 47), p. 227.

demonstrates that Tcherikover, after his move to Jerusalem, simply accentuated more sharply what he had already learned in Berlin. Once again, as in the case of Droysen, but also of Harnack, the term “Hellenization” is not precisely defined, either with respect to content or chronology.

The second half of the twentieth century did not witness particular attempts to provide a more precise definition of the term either. Ancient historians remain, by and large, quite elusive when it comes to this task. However, there are a few exceptions. In the introduction to his paper entitled “The Phoenician Cities: A Case-Study of Hellenisation” (published in 1983), Fergus Millar wonders whether one could talk about “Hellenization” in the case of the Phoenician coastal cities of Palestine (such as Tyrus, Sidon, Berytus et cetera), even if no Greek colonist living in a Hellenistic city “sought a *Verschmelzung* in Droysen’s sense.”⁴⁹ Without providing any reasons, Millar simply chooses one of Droysen’s three possible meanings of the term “Hellenization,” i.e. *Verschmelzung*, fusion, and uses this term to analyze those findings, which actually cannot be understood as “Hellenization” according to the underlying premises of Tcherikover’s dissertation. In the cited paper, Fergus Millar further asks what—given these conditions—“Hellenization” could be, if there are no Hellenistic foundations of cities in a specific region and moreover hardly any remains of a “Phoenician” material culture. Millar provides three answers: “fusion of Greek and non-Greek deities,” “bilingual Greek-Phoenician inscriptions” and “acceptance of a fully Greek constitution” by retaining specific traditional Phoenician offices, such as the office of a judge.⁵⁰

Tcherikover and Millar are two nice examples to illustrate the different ways in which scholars in the twentieth century still follow Droysen, even though they do so in two completely different manners. On the one hand, one can follow Droysen by applying the term “Hellenization” purely as an emblem of historical narrative, which does not have any consequences; on the other hand, one can attach to the term a meaning in the sense of “*Verschmelzung*,” thereby identifying certain phenomena of hybridization which result almost inevitably from cultural contacts.

My remarks about Tcherikover and Millar might give you the wrong impression: you might be led to think that the term “Hellenization” played a key

⁴⁹ F. Millar, ‘The Phoenician Cities: A Case-Study of Hellenisation,’ *PCPhS* 209 = N.S. 29 (1983), 55–71.

⁵⁰ Millar, ‘The Phoenician Cities’ (see above, n. 49), 58–60; 62.

role in the writings of twentieth-century ancient historians. Thanks to the new electronic research tools—thanks to Google Books, to be more precise—it is possible to confirm that a maximum of one tenth of all records for the term can be found in writings of ancient historians, while nine tenths are found in works by theologians (more rarely in works by scholars of religion). Viewed from the perspective of the ancient historian, this is a somewhat irritating observation: in the twentieth century the term “Hellenization” appears to have been subsumed into a theological special language. A term that was originally established and coined by a “theologizing” ancient historian has now reached the theologians who seek to graze in the pastures of ancient history. And indeed it is possible to trace this phenomenon even more precisely: most of the recent German scholarly contributions which apply the category of “Hellenization” to describe and evaluate the transformation processes of ancient Christianity stem from—and this is highly remarkable—Roman-Catholic theologians.

One could suppose that Protestant theology is already “done” with this category; this might be a result of the attempts by the systematic theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg of Munich (born in 1928), who, when he was a lecturer in Wuppertal, tried to rehabilitate the concept of the “Hellenization of Christianity” with reference to the *Gotteslehre* (Doctrine of God). It should be added that more than ten years ago, Adolf Martin Ritter, who was my predecessor as professor at the University of Heidelberg, carefully explored the ways in which Pannenberg’s ideas were discussed within the academic community.⁵¹

There is no need to provide detailed evidence here for the fact that this rehabilitation, as well as the negative judgement by Harnack, was strongly moulded by systematic-theological premises. What is relevant for Pannenberg’s ideas is his rather broad understanding of revelation (cf. his well-known manifesto “Offenbarung als Geschichte,” “revelation as history”).

⁵¹ Pannenberg, ‘Die Aufnahme des philosophischen Gottesbegriffs’ (see above, n. 30), pp. 296–346; cf. also A.M. Ritter, ‘Ulrich Wickert, Wolfhart Pannenberg und das Problem der Hellenisierung des Christentums,’ in *Die Weltlichkeit des Glaubens in der Alten Kirche. FS für Ulrich Wickert zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. D. Wyrwa [BZNW 85] (Berlin-New York, 1997), pp. 303–317 and G.Chr. Stead, ‘Die Aufnahme des philosophischen Gottesbegriffs in der frühchristlichen Theologie: W. Pannenberg’s These neu bedacht,’ *ThR* 51 (1986), 349–371 as well as U. Wickert, ‘Apologetarum Apologeta. Zur Anknüpfung frühchristlicher Theologie an den philosophischen Gottesgedanken bei Wolfhart Pannenberg,’ in *Belehrter Glaube. FS für Johannes Wirsching zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. E. Axmacher and K. Schwarzwäller (Frankfurt am Main, 1994), pp. 359–372.

The contributions by Roman-Catholic church historians and systematic theologians which I have mentioned above were all—like Pannenberg—influenced by Harnack’s negative judgement of the process of the “Hellenization of Christianity.” As this process was identified with the central characteristics of the “Catholic Church,” applying the notion of “Hellenization” for the transformation processes of Christianity was, and still is, a special challenge to Catholic theologians. The first relevant publications by Roman Catholic scholars after the Second World War partly concurred with Harnack in terms of the historical implications, describing the impact of Greek philosophy on the establishment of a Christian doctrine (*christliche Glaubenslehre*) in antiquity as it was understood by Harnack. Since for theological (or rather: Catholic) reasons, Roman Catholic scholars are not able to accept Harnack’s negative judgement of this process. These scholars assess the development of the dogma of ancient Christianity as “Enthellenisierung,” as “de-hellenization,” and as such as a conscious renunciation of the reception of Greek *Philosophumena*.

It was Alois Cardinal Grillmeier (1910–1998), a Catholic historian of dogma who died just over ten years ago, who first proposed applying the category of “Enthellenisierung” (“de-Hellenization”) to characterize a synthesis of “Greek” (*griechischem*) and “biblical thinking,” which in his view was apparent in ancient Christian theology.⁵² Grillmeier put forward this view in his broad analysis of the Hellenization of Christianity published in 1958, i.e. one year before Pannenberg’s great paper.

Grillmeier introduced the category of “Enthellenisierung” in a very general way, which did not determine the content of the term in detail. In contrast, the Jesuit Friedo Ricken (*1934) from Munich used the category to characterize the normative agreements of the first ancient assembly of all bishops of the Roman empire, summoned by the emperor Constantine at his summer residence in Nicaea in 325 AD.

⁵² A. Grillmeier, ‘Hellenisierung-Judaisierung des Christentums als Deutepinzipien der Geschichte des kirchlichen Dogmas,’ in *ibid.*, *Mit ihm und in ihm. Christologische Forschungen und Perspektiven* (Freiburg etc., 1978), pp. 423–488 (= *Scholastik* 33 (1958), 321–355, 528–558 revised and with extended notes), cf. in particular the epilogue in *o.c.*, pp. 487f. as well as *ibid.*, ‘Christus licet uobis inuitis deus.’ Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion über die Hellenisierung der christlichen Botschaft,’ in *Kerygma und Logos. Beiträge zu den geistesgeschichtlichen Beziehungen zwischen Antike und Christentum, FS für Carl Andresen zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. A.M. Ritter (Göttingen, 1979), pp. 226–257 (= A. Grillmeier and T. Hainthaler, *Fragmente zur Christologie. Studien zum altkirchlichen Christusbild* (Freiburg etc., 1997), pp. 81–111) and L. Scheffczyk, *Tendenzen und Brennpunkte der neueren Problematik um die Hellenisierung des Christentums* [SBAW.PH 3] (Munich, 1982).

This first imperial synod brought about a radical break with the doctrine of *Subordinatianismus* (subordinationism), which was seen by contemporary philosophers adhering to middle Platonism and Neo-Platonism as responsible for creating and maintaining the order of divine principles. With reference to this synod, Friedo Ricken speaks about the “crisis of early Christian Platonism” (*Krisis des altchristlichen Platonismus*): Ricken argues that due to the synod’s decision in favour of the “homoousios of Nikaia,” meaning the incisive denial of subordination, Christianity abandoned contemporary Platonism and therefore a core element of the “Hellenization of Christianity.”⁵³

Comparing the contributions written by theologians about the “de-Hellenization” of Christianity with those written by ancient historians about the “Hellenization of the Orient,” we can note an analogy that the theologians are not aware of: an analogy to the efforts of Wilcken and Tcherikover to explore not only “Hellenization,” but also successful resistance to Hellenization and the conscious countermovement (under the catchword “Orientalization”).

The most recent academic discourse about the “Hellenization of Christianity” among theologians illustrates how an imprecise term such as “Hellenization,” which is vague in terms of content and open in terms of chronology, is prone to become the object of more or less ideological debates. Over the past few decades, Roman Catholic theologians have adopted not only Harnack’s historical perspectives, but also his rather negative theological evaluation of the process, an evaluation that diametrically opposes Droysen’s quasi salvation-historical (“*heils geschichtlich*”) understanding. In a way, these Roman Catholic theologians have “protestantized” Roman Catholic basic premises. A characteristic example for this development is the inaugural lecture of the Roman Catholic patristic scholar Reinhard M. Hübner (*1937), delivered at the Catholic University of Eichstätt in 1979 under the title “Der Gott der Kirchenväter und der Gott der Bibel. Zur Frage der Hellenisierung des Christentums” (“The God of the Church Fathers and the God of the Bible. About the Hellenization of Christianity”). Hübner undertook the endeavour to reestablish Harnack’s view, claiming that “the encounter [of Christianity] with

⁵³) F. Ricken, ‘Das Homoousios von Nikaia als Krisis des altchristlichen Platonismus,’ in *Zur Frühgeschichte der Christologie. Ihre biblischen Anfänge und die Lehrformel von Nikaia*, ed. B. Welte [Quaestiones Disputatae 51] (Freiburg etc., 1971), pp. 74–99; esp. pp. 75–79 (= *ThPh* 44 (1969), 321–341), and *ibid.*, ‘Zur Rezeption der platonischen Ontologie bei Eusebios von Kaisareia, Areios und Athanasios,’ *ThPh* 53 (1978), 321–351.

philosophy not only made it possible to express the content of the biblical message in Greek terms, but also led to a complete amalgamation of Christian thought with the Greek way of thinking.”⁵⁴

Such “protestantization” of the Roman Catholic perspective, based on the Harnackian understanding of the “Hellenization of Christianity” as a “Verschmelzung” (fusion) of biblical Christianity with the categories of Greek philosophy, was bound to provoke counter reactions. The most prominent counter reaction was publicly expressed almost four years ago by Pope Benedict XVI, who returned to his former university in Regensburg where he gave a widely recognized, yet controversial lecture on 12 September 2006.

Benedict XVI explained the relationship between the origins of Christianity and its evolution during Late Antiquity, at the time of the imperial church system (*Reichskirche*), by using the example of the belief in God. Even if Benedict’s analysis is quite similar to that of Reinhard Hübner, his analysis reveals a contrasting tendency: “I believe that here we can see the profound harmony between what is Greek in the best sense of the word and the biblical understanding of faith in God.”⁵⁵

Concentrating on the encounter of a “biblical belief in God” with Greek thinking, the Pope actually follows the simple, yet historically highly problematical dualism that Harnack tore open between the Palestinian beginnings of Christianity and its inculturation in the Graeco-Roman world, which allegedly followed in a second step. Nevertheless, it is the Berlin church historian Harnack who is the real opponent of the Regensburg lecture given by Pope Benedict XVI. The Pope sharply criticizes all negative evaluations of the inculturation of Christianity into the ancient world, an inculturation which is for him—

⁵⁴) R.M. Hübner, *Der Gott der Kirchenväter und der Gott der Bibel. Zur Frage der Hellenisierung des Christentums* [Eichstätter Hochschulreden 16] (Munich, 1979), pp. 6f. Also cf. the succinct history of research by M. Lutz-Bachmann, ‘Hellenisierung des Christentums?’, in *Spätantike und Christentum. Beiträge zur Religions- und Geistesgeschichte der griechisch-römischen Kultur und Zivilisation der Kaiserzeit*, ed. C. Colpe, L. Honnefelder, and M. Lutz-Bachmann (Berlin, 1992), pp. 77–98.

⁵⁵) Benedict XVI, *Glaube und Vernunft. Die Regensburger Vorlesung*, comm. G. Schwan, A.Th. Khoury, and K. Cardinal Lehmann (Freiburg, 2006), pp. 17f.; for the discussion generated by this speech in the meantime with respect to this point, see D. Schneider-Stengel, *Das Kreuz der Hellenisierung. Zu Josef Ratzingers Konzeption von Kreuzestheologie und Vollendung des Christentums* (Berlin-Münster, 2006), pp. 83–122. English translation: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html (consulted 3 January 2011).

as it is, in principle, also for Droysen—a core part of God’s salvation history. In the course of this critique, Benedict also starts to suspect the category of “Hellenization” itself; according to the Pope, it is not possible to purify this category of the critical undertones which were attached to it by Harnack.

However, these critical undertones stand for a modern, individualistic tendency to diminish the witness of the faith (*Glaubenszeugnis*) of the church; Harnack is only one exponent of a traditional tendency that can first be observed in the Catholic theology of the late Middle Ages, a tendency which insists on a “reformation” of theology and the church, based on a return to its pre-Hellenistic, and not yet Hellenized origins. This reformation is required because these people cannot accept the transformation of ancient Christianity, which, according to the Pope, is both given and wrought by God, as a salutary development.

This most recent discussion, mainly within the Catholic church itself, reveals that the problems that were attached to the modern concept of “Hellenization” from its emergence in Droysen’s work’s, and the problems which accompanied its application in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, still persist in the more recent scholarly contributions. In this respect, there are no differences between works written by ancient historians or theologians in this respect. For the most part, the contributions do not specify the term “Hellenization” in terms of content and chronology, and they apply it in a rather diffuse manner; often, they focus on an almost randomly chosen specific phenomenon of cultural contact: Tcherikover focuses on Greek colonist cities; Millar on theocracy, bilingual inscriptions, and mixed constitutions; Grillmeier, Ricken, Hübner, and Ratzinger on the reception of Greek philosophy in Christian theology. In the light of this problematical application of the term, the academic evaluations and results are shaped by theological premises and even prejudices. This means that only limited historical insights can be gained on this basis.⁵⁶

Of course, we need to exclude from this judgement those contributions in which “Hellenization” or “Hellenism” are used in a general way to describe the “inculturation” of ancient Christianity into Graeco-Roman culture. One

⁵⁶ Another example is P.S. Alexander, ‘Hellenism and Hellenization as Problematic Historiographical Categories,’ in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen (Westminster, 2001), pp. 63–80. One example of the necessity for such criticism is provided by A. Piñero, ‘On the Hellenization of Christianity. One Example: The Salvation of Gentiles in Paul,’ in *Flores Florentino. Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of F. Gracia Martínéz*, ed. A. Hilhorst et al. [JSJS 122] (Leiden, 2007), pp. 667–683, esp. pp. 682 f. (summarising theses).

such example is the study by Gilles Dorival, who starts from an analysis of pagan quotations in the Pauline Epistles and enriches the discussion with a very helpful survey of quotations in the writings of the apologists.⁵⁷ In addition, there are a number of contributions which explore the “Hellenization” of Judaism in the three centuries BC.⁵⁸ However, these studies further remain outside the scope of this paper.

Let us proceed further to the third and the final section of my paper, and to the question of whether a category which was used in the described ways up to the present can at all be adequately used for the precise historical analysis of ancient Christianity and for the entire ancient history of religion.

3. Is It Possible to Adapt the Term “Hellenization” to Describe the Transformation Processes of Ancient Christianity?

In this final section, I would like to return to the initial question: is it possible to adapt a term such as “Hellenization,” a term that has been highly problematic from its first emergence in the nineteenth century, and to use it for precise historical and religious scholarly work? Or do we, the experts of various disciplines, need rather to bid farewell to this concept, as Glen Bowersock did at the very beginning of his Jerome Lectures of 1989?

When thinking about terms and their possible adaptations, it always makes sense to start from an exploration of the basic meaning of the term. In our case, this is the Greek term ἑλληνισμός, a term from late Roman imperial times and late antiquity. Before we can delve into an analysis of this term, it is important to recall that the ancient Christians increasingly transformed the basic term Ἕλληνας, the corresponding adjective ἑλληνικός, and the verb ἑλληνίζειν. Thus, this term forms part of what Christine Mohrmann has called “christliche Sondersprache,” “a Christian special language.” The process in

⁵⁷ G. Dorival, ‘Les Chrétiens dans l’ Antiquité face à la Culture classique et à l’ Hellénisme,’ *RevSR* 74 (2000), 419–436.

⁵⁸ J.J. Collins and G.E. Sterling, eds., *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* [Christianity and Judaism Antiquity Series 13] (Notre Dame, Indiana, 2001). With the review by L.H. Feldman, ‘How much Hellenism in the Land of Israel?’, *JSJ* 33 (2002), 290–313; cf. for instance also P.W. van der Horst, ‘Greek in Jewish Palestine in Light of Jewish Epigraphy,’ in *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (see above), pp. 154–174 or J.C. VanderKam, ‘Greek at Qumran,’ in *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (see above), pp. 175–181 and the collected essays of editor J.J. Collins, *Jewish Cult and Hellenistic Culture. Essays on the Jewish Encounter with Hellenism and Roman Rule* [JSJS 100] (Leiden, 2005).

which the Christians usurped the term can be dated to the third century AD, i.e. the century during which Christianity increasingly advanced into the public sphere.⁵⁹ As we all know, Christians did not use the Greek term to describe the positive effects of the cultural contact with Greek civilization, culture, and philosophy in Droysen's sense. Rather the opposite: in the title of the chastisement speech (*Scheltrede*) λόγος πρὸς Ἑλληνας written by the Syrian author Tatianus in the mid second century AD, the term Ἑλληγν referred to a well-educated Greek man, or a Greek educated man, and was not generally understood as “non-Christian”—this was similar to the understanding of the term in the lost five books πρὸς Ἑλληνας, written by the apologist Apollinarius of Hierapolis in 170 AD.⁶⁰ In contrast to Tatianus, the Alexandrian Christian scholar Origen identified οἱ Ἑλληγνες with “pagans” in his pamphlet against the Middle-Platonic philosopher Celsus.⁶¹

At the beginning of the fourth century AD, Eusebius of Caesarea already used the verb ἔλληγνιζειν as an equivalent of the term “pagan”: Eusebius writes that the emperor Constantine enacted a ban on sacrifice which was applied to ὅσοι δ' ἔλληγνιζειν ἐδόξουν, “all of those who (still) seemed to be pagans.”⁶² This observation is rather astonishing, as Eusebius of Caesarea was one of the church authors who liked to draw on Greek literature and philosophy, presenting them as *praeparatio evangelica*. Only seldom does Eusebius associate pagans with the biblical term “peoples,” τὰ ἔθνη; usually he employs Ἑλληγνες, and θεολογία ἔλληγνική, or simply ἔλληγνισμός⁶³ to denominate their religion. Eusebius writes the following at the outset of his book *Demonstratio evangelica*: “to sum up, ἔλληγνισμός should correctly be understood as worship of multiple

⁵⁹ Some details are also provided by Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (see above, n. 2), p. 10 with notes; S. Vassilaki, “Ἑλληγνισμός,” in *A History of Ancient Greek. From the Beginnings to Late Antiquity*, ed. A.-F. Christidis (Cambridge, 2007), cols. 1118–1129.

⁶⁰ Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* IV 27,1, ed. E. Schwartz and Th. Mommsen [*GCS* 9/2] (Leipzig, 1903–1909), p. 388,10–12.

⁶¹ Origen, *Contra Celsum* V 7 and V 10, ed. P. Koetschau [*GCS* 3] (Leipzig, 1897–1899), p. 7,8. 17. 20 and p. 9,24; cf. I. Opelt, ‘Griechische und lateinische Bezeichnungen der Nichtchristen. Ein terminologischer Versuch,’ *Vig Chr* 19 (1965), 1–22, esp. 5–9; A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium. The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 121–131.

⁶² Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* II 44, ed. F. Winkelmann [*FChr* 83] (Berlin, 1903–1908) pp. 272,10f. The laws in question have not come down to us, however.

⁶³ References in J. Ulrich, *Eusebius von Caesarea und die Juden. Studien zur Rolle der Juden in der Theologie des Eusebius von Caesarea* [PTS 49] (Berlin-New York, 1999), pp. 68–73, here pp. 68f.

gods in the traditional manner of all peoples.”⁶⁴ In other words: ἑλληνισμός means polytheism, and is referred to as “Greek,” even if Eusebius clearly states that the Greeks adopted the term from the Egyptians and the Phoenicians.⁶⁵ At the same time, Eusebius senses the discrepancy between “being Greek by ancestry, and being Greek by culture”: τὸ γένος Ἑλληνες ὄντες καὶ τὰ Ἑλλήνων φρονοῦντες.⁶⁶

Further evidence for the Christian usurpation of the term can be found in the following century, for instance in the works by Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa.⁶⁷ Most interesting are those texts in which the authors use the verb ἑλληνίζειν to describe the relapse (from a Christian perspective) into pagan practices during the period of the persecution of Christians. The homoian historian Philostorgius and Socrates, his rival within the majority church, use the term as a synonym for pagan sacrifice.⁶⁸ It is possible that especially Christians who were particularly engaged with the Graeco-Roman educational world had to incriminate and usurp the core terms of this world, such as Ἕλληνας, ἑλληνικός, and the verb ἑλληνίζειν.

In the light of these attempts on the part of Christians to appropriate the term ἑλληνισμός, it is not surprising that the Emperor Julian attempted to regain it, and to redefine it once again to describe the content of his reforms. Thus Julian the Apostate wrote to the Galatean High Priest Arsacius in 362 AD: “ὁ ἑλληνισμὸς οὐπὼν πρῶτατε κατὰ λόγον”; “re-Hellenization, the reestablishment of the Greek language, Greek customs, and the Greek religion

⁶⁴ Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica* I 2,2, ed. I.A. Heikel [GCS 23] (Leipzig, 1913), pp. 7,29 f.

⁶⁵ References in Ulrich, *Eusebius von Caesarea und die Juden* (see above, n. 63), pp. 70 f.

⁶⁶ Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica* I 5, 10, ed. I.A. Heikel (see above, n. 64); cf. J. Stenger, *Hellenische Identität in der Spätantike. Pagane Autoren und ihr Unbehagen an der eigenen Zeit* [UaLG 97] (Berlin-New York, 2009), pp. 24 f.

⁶⁷ *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G.W.H. Lampe (Oxford, 1987), 451 s.v. ἑλληνίζω 2 *practise paganism*; also cf. s.v. *Lexicon Gregorianum. Wörterbuch zu den Schriften Gregors von Nyssa*, vol. III (Leiden, 2001), 160 and *Lexicon Athanasianum digessit et illustravit G. Müller* (Berlin, 1952), 462.

⁶⁸ Philostorgius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* II 14, ed. J. Bidez and F. Winkelmann [GCS 21] (Berlin, 1974); concerning the author H. Leppin, ‘Heretical Historiography: Philostorgius,’ *StPatr* 34 (2001), 111–124. The church historian Socrates, who represented the majority position in Christianity and handed down the letter of Emperor Julian quoted in the next footnote, also understands ἑλληνισμός as a reference to pagan sacrificial practices; he writes about the emperor τὸν μέντοι Ἑλληνισμὸν συνεχρότει: Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* III 11,4, ed. G.C. Hansen [GCS NF 1] (Berlin, 1995), p. 206,11.

is not yet progressing as expected.”⁶⁹ Well-educated Christian intellectuals, such as Gregory of Nazianzus, picked up on his intention to attempt to wrest back the term and sharply attacked him in their treatises.⁷⁰

We can thus maintain that, when applied to ancient Christianity, the term “Hellenization” is not only used—as in historiography and theology—in an imprecise and undetermined manner. Droysen, for his part, used it virtually in direct contrast to its original ancient sense: well-educated ancient Christians, particularly, were not able to regard ἑλληνισμός as part of salvation history and a positive development. It is Harnack’s critical stance towards “Hellenization” that most closely approaches the attitude of the ancient Christians. It is deeply ironic that the Church Fathers, whom Harnack held responsible for the “Hellenization” of the primordial Christian message, were the ones who redefined the term ἑλληνισμός and other terms in the most critical manner.

To conclude, let me return to the title of my paper: ‘Does it make sense to speak about the “Hellenization of Christianity” in Antiquity?’ In light of the problems I have sketched above, particularly the lack of accuracy and the danger of oversimplifying and creating simple dualisms such as “Hellenism/Greekness” vs. “Judaism” and “Christianity,” we may well ask whether the term “Hellenization” as discussed above should be used in the history of religion at all. And the question also arises of whether we are thus moving far away from the way this term was used in antiquity, particularly among ancient Christians.

Jonathan Z. Smith, the scholar of religions from Chicago, once delivered a series of lectures in London, under the title “Drudgery Divine,” about the comparison of various religions during ancient Roman imperial times. In his lectures, Smith argued that all research on religious relationships in antiquity had been contaminated through the Protestant hegemony in research and that what was called for was a “radical reformulation” of the basic research questions and a full revision of all results that had been produced until now.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Julian, *Epistula* 84, ed. J. Bidez and F. Cumont [CUFr I/2] (Paris, 1922), p. 144,7.

⁷⁰ Details in Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (see above, n. 2), p. 12 (Greg. Naz., *or.* 4 (ctr. Iul.) 5, 79–81).

⁷¹ Smith, *Drudgery Divine* (see above, n. 22), p. 143: “The Protestant hegemony over the enterprise of comparing the religions of Late Antiquity and early Christianity has been an affair of mythic conception and ritual practice from the outset” Cf. also A. Gerdmar, *Rethinking the Judaism-Hellenism Dichotomy. A Historiographical Case Study of Second Peter and Jude* [Coniectanea Biblica. New Testament Series 36] (Stockholm, 2001),

At first sight, it may look as though my paper could be seen as another chapter in Smith's thin, but pithy book. However, even mentioning just a few of the German scholars who were almost completely ignored by Smith demonstrates that it is short-sighted to talk about a "Protestant hegemony." The history of the usage of the category "Hellenization" has, of course, been profoundly influenced by specific theological premises and preconceptions, especially—as we have seen—in the case of the historian Droysen. Furthermore, we could, in principle, endorse Smith's argument that one could only use these categories if one were neither implicitly nor explicitly a bearer of those theological preconceptions. Yet the considerable differences I have alluded to between the historian Droysen, the son of a Protestant pastor, and the Protestant theologians Harnack and Schlatter, already indicate that it is not so easy to speak of a "Protestant hegemony" as such.

The specific problems attaching to the modern concept of "Hellenism" have become apparent throughout my paper. But would it really be possible to attempt to become a sort of academic "language police," modelled on the Académie française, and to try to withdraw from circulation a term introduced long ago and used repeatedly to the current day? Or would that be a futile exercise? Apart from all problems with the term "Hellenization," we need to acknowledge that there is an existing consensus among ancient historians to use this term to describe, as Martin Hengel put it, "that new civilisation furthered above all by the expedition of Alexander the Great and the Graeco-Macedonian 'colonial rule' which followed, a civilisation which was shaped by the gradual spread of the Greek language and of Greek forms of life and thought."⁷²

However, these days no scholar of the ancient world would agree with the narrow conception of the notion inspired by the nineteenth-century history of ideas and politics, a conception that was self-evident to scholars like Droysen and Harnack. Furthermore, we would disagree with a metahistorical glorification of the concept of Hellenization—apart from such exceptions as the current Pope.

In contrast to this nineteenth-century understanding, many of today's authors claim that we need to avoid any intellectual and ideological narrow-mindedness. To achieve this, we must expand our descriptions of the ancient

pp. 15–29, 244–277 as well as D.B. Martin, 'Paul and the Judaism/Hellenism Dichotomy: Towards a Social History of the Question,' in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen (Louisville, 2001), pp. 29–61.

⁷² Hengel, *The 'Hellenization' of Judaea* (see above, n. 4), p. 1 = *ibid.*, 'Zum Problem der "Hellenisierung" Judäas,' (see above, n. 5), p. 2.

transformation processes which we would like to call “Hellenization,” adding not only an exploration of education, philosophy, and religion, but also an examination of issues relating to every-day life, the economy, and technical advancements.⁷³ However, when applying such a wide notion of Hellenism, which integrates such diverse parts of ancient life and ancient thinking, we must always be aware that a broad analysis of the “Hellenization of Christianity” of this kind is merely in its infancy, and is as yet thus largely a desideratum of current research. We must also be aware that the currently fashionable transformation of the classical research paradigm of “Hellenization” into the up-to-date paradigms of “inculturation” and “acculturation” bears other problems. For these concepts, too, are the products of their own, not unproblematic history, and as such, need to be re-examined and re-assessed in their own right.

Given that we cannot simply censor the term “Hellenization,” particularly when exploring ancient Christianity, we need at least to define it in terms of chronology and content in a much more precise manner than our predecessors did when the term evolved in nineteenth-century academic language. In this context, we may bear in mind that the ideas developed by a German and Russian group of scholars, who held several conferences about “Hellenism” and “Hellenization” in Berlin between 1992 and 1994, remain highly useful in our attempts at formulating such definitions. This group argued for a stricter differentiation of a more general *Gräzisierung* (in English Graecization) and *Hellenisierung*, “Hellenization,” as a development specifically related to the historical period of “Hellenism.”⁷⁴ In the regions of Syria, Phoenicia, Northern Mesopotamia, Judaea-Palaestina, and Arabia, this very complex process only reached its peak in Roman times;⁷⁵ it is therefore also necessary to precisely

⁷³ Again Hengel, *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judaea* (see above, n. 4), p. 5 = *ibid.*, ‘Zum Problem der “Hellenisierung” Judäas,’ (see above, n. 5), p. 11.

⁷⁴ Bernd Funck and Hans-Joachim Gehrke, ‘Akkulturation und politische Ordnung im Hellenismus,’ in *Hellenismus. Beiträge zur Erforschung von Akkulturation und politischer Ordnung in Staaten des hellenistischen Zeitalters. Akten des Internationalen Hellenismus-Kolloquiums 9.-14. März 1994 in Berlin*, ed. Bernd Funck † (Tübingen, 1996), pp. 1–10, esp. p. 7. In his review of M. Hengel, *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judaea*, *ThLZ* 118 (1993), 394–196, my former colleague from Jena, Nikolaus Walter, also calls for a differentiation and suggests that we should only speak of “Hellenisation” where the “Auseinander- und Zusammensetzung mit der hellenistischen Kultur und Bildung” were actively desired and put into practice.

⁷⁵ F. Millar, ‘The Problem of Hellenistic Syria,’ in *Hellenism in the East. The Interaction of Greek and Non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander*, ed. A. Kuhrt

distinguish between *Romanisierung* (Romanization) and *Hellenisierung* (Hellenization), and to speak of an independent process of Hellenization up to Late Antiquity.

Adopting the wording of the late Carsten Colpe (1929–2009), a scholar of religion from Berlin, and referring to the terminology developed among the scholars of the Berlin Special Research Centre *Transformationen der Antike* (“Transformations of Antiquity”), let me first present the following definitions:⁷⁶ *Gräzisierung* / Graecization describes a general transformation of Greek ways of living and thinking; *Romanisierung* / Romanization means a general transformation of Roman ways of living and thinking; *Hellenisierung* / Hellenization is the transformation of those ways of living and thinking that are characteristic for the historical period of Hellenism.

What, we may further ask, were the characteristic forms and ways of living during the period of Hellenism? Should we continue to talk about a “Hellenization of Christianity,” thus admittedly regarding this terminology as ineradicable? If so, we may need to explore the *specific* Hellenistic ways of living and thinking that shaped ancient Christianity. In my view, only this course of action will allow us to attach a valid meaning to the term “Hellenization” and to turn it into a useful analytical term. Posing the question in this way, we must then, first and foremost, examine the Hellenistic educational institutions, particularly in Alexandria, which strongly influenced the development of Christian theology from the second century AD until Late Antiquity and beyond. Furthermore, we must focus our attention on the full picture of Hellenistic scholarly achievements in antiquity, as studied by lecturers and read to students at the private university of the first Christian universal scholar Origen (approx. 185–253 AD).⁷⁷ In order to substantiate such a definition, we can

and S.M. Sherwin-White (London, 1987), pp. 110–184 (with an extensive bibliography); *ibid.*, ‘Empire, Community and Culture in the Roman Near East: Greeks, Syrians, Jews and Arabs,’ *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38 (1987), 143–164. Glen Bowersock in a discussion of this paper at the University of Princeton called attention to the problem of different languages and different concepts of terms, which seems to be pure translations of each other: in the English speaking community of historians the period of Hellenism continues usually to the battle of Actium, in the German speaking world, as we have seen, definitively longer.

⁷⁶ Cf. also C. Colpe, *Griechen-Byzantiner-Semiten-Muslime. Hellenistische Religionen und die west-östliche Enthellenisierung. Phänomenologie und philologische Hauptkapitel* [WUNT 221] (Tübingen, 2008), esp. pp. 17–31.

⁷⁷ See Ch. Markschiefs, *Kaiserzeitliche christliche Theologie und ihre Institutionen. Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte der antiken christlichen Theologie* (Tübingen, 2009) and *ibid.*,

refer back to Emperor Julian, who once defined the “hellenische Identität” (Jan Stenger) as a combination of knowledge—particularly knowledge of philosophy and rhetorics—together with the ethics corresponding to this knowledge, sustained by ethical behaviour.⁷⁸

Against the background of these thoughts, let me refine my definition: *The Hellenization of Christianity is a specific transformation of the Alexandrinic educational institutions and of the academic culture that was developed in these institutions in the theological reflection of ancient Christianity.* In contrast to other processes, Martin Hengel calls this the “*endgültige* Hellenisierung des Christentums,” the “final Hellenizing of Christianity.”⁷⁹ Hengel did so in his paper mentioned above, the paper to which I was allowed to add the footnotes. And this brief interpretation of a footnote to a footnote brings me to the end of my present paper.

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Origenes und sein Erbe. Gesammelte Studien [Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 160] (Berlin-New York, 2007). Finally I.L.E. Ramelli, ‘Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism. Re-Thinking the Christianisation of Hellenism,’ *VigChr* 63 (2009), 217–263.

⁷⁸ Cf. Stenger, *Hellenische Identität in der Spätantike* (see above, n. 66), pp. 28 f.

⁷⁹ Hengel, *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judaea* (see above, n. 4), p. 56 = *ibid.*, ‘Zum Problem der “Hellenisierung” Judäas,’ (see above, n. 5), p. 90 (my emphasis). Cf. also the critical objections by the reviewer Walter (see above, n. 74; cf. also Feldman, ‘How much Hellenism in the Land of Israel?’, *JSJ* 33 (2002), 290–313, esp. pp. 290–297), which I have hopefully been able to clear up with the above reflections.