



Rational Piety:
Eusebius' Characterization of the Hebrews in PE VII

In the introduction to his commentary on book 7 of the *Praeparatio Evangelica* (*PE*), Schroeder notes that Eusebius, when he is clearly using a source text but does not quote the text itself, never makes any indication of his source. In these situations, according to Schroeder, one can judge Eusebius' originality by the modifications he brings to the text.¹ Aaron Johnson has shown that Eusebius' narrative of the lives of the Hebrew holy men in *PE* 7.7-8 alludes to Philo's *De Abrahamo*.² Having shown the connections and some differences between the two texts, he concludes that Eusebius has diverged from his source in order to maintain historicity, as opposed to the allegory of Philo, for the sake of his overarching argument, in which Christians are shown to be the true descendants of the Hebrews, while Jews are separated from that heritage.³ While these are valid points, it seems to me that the particular characteristics of Eusebius' divergence from Philo's narrative, especially in the places Johnson sees as most similar, deserve examination, and may shed some light on the nature of Eusebius' larger argument. I will argue that, while Johnson has convincingly shown that the ethnic framework is certainly essential to Eusebius' argument, the particular nature of the

¹ Schroeder (p. 133): "Lorsqu'Eusèbe ne fait pas de citation textuelle, et qu'il utilise manifestement une source, il ne l'indique pourtant jamais ... Il est possible alors de juger de l'originalité d'Eusèbe par les modifications qu'il apporte."

² Johnson, Aaron P. *Philonic Allusions in Eusebius*, *PE* 7.7-8. CQ 56.1 239-248 (2006)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 245. For the argument from ethnicity, see Johnson, Aaron P. *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius' Praeparatio Evangelica*. Oxford University Press: New York, 2006, *passim*.

ethnicities as he narrates them is equally important to his defense of Christianity. In making that examination, this paper will show that Eusebius' divergence from Philo emphasizes the piety of the Hebrew forefathers, a piety which his initial characterization of the Hebrews has defined as being of a rational nature. Though Eusebius' argument operates within a framework of ethnicity, that is not itself the primary focus of the argument. Rather, he aims above all to show that rational piety is true piety – a piety first held by the Hebrews, and passed on to their descendants the Christians. This is achieved in large part in book 7 through the emphatic characterization of the Hebrews as a rational people, who arrive at their worship of God through reason. That characterization in turn allows for the argument made in books 10-15 that Plato is dependent on Moses for what is worthwhile in his philosophy. That this emphasis on rationality is Eusebius' primary focus is seen especially in the originality revealed in his adaptation of Philo in 7.7.

Before looking at book 7 itself, it will be helpful to note the importance of that book in the overall structure of the *PE*. Johnson conceives of that structure as primarily occupied with the narrative of the Greeks, with books 1-6 and 9-15 under that heading, and only 7-8 dedicated to the narrative of Hebrew descent.⁴ Schroeder differs from this in that he groups 7-9 as a single unit, seeing the overall structure of the *PE* as consisting of three parts: books 1-6 are a refutation of Greek and Barbarian polytheism, 7-9 show the Hebrews as the initiators of true philosophy, and 10-15 confirm the choice in favor of the Hebrews, who prevail over all Greek philosophy.⁵ It seems to me that Schroeder's structure fits Eusebius' argument better, as book 10 begins with a brief recapitulation of

⁴ See the outline of this structure in Johnson, *Ethnicity*, pp. 237-238.

⁵ Schroeder, p. 14.

the arguments made in 7-9 and introduces his new subject⁶, and books 10-15 are unified by their treatment of Greek philosophy as dependent on that of the Hebrews. That argument is dependent on a characterization of the Hebrews as possessors of philosophy, which is achieved in book 7. In either structural framework, that book holds a central place and is key to understanding Eusebius' overall argument.

Let us begin our examination of book 7 with a consideration of Eusebius' dependence on Philo in *PE* 7.7-8. Johnson rightly points to connections between Philo's *De Abrahamo* 3-5 and Eusebius' introduction to his survey of the lives of the Hebrew forefathers in *PE* 7.7.⁷ According to Eusebius, Moses is said to hand down the lives of the Hebrew forefathers with indelible memorials (μνήμιας ἀνεξαλείπτους), a lesson for those who were going to learn his laws, and as an encouragement to the life the pious (εἰς προτροπὴν τοῦ τῶν εὐσεβῶν βίου).⁸ Eusebius notes that "it was necessary [for them] not to be ignorant that already, even before his written laws, many of the forefathers, by right reason, had been adorned with excellence of god-piety."⁹ These men, called 'φίλοι

⁶ *PE* 10.1.1: "We have previously explained for what reasons we (Christians) have preferred the philosophy of the Hebrews to that of the Greeks, and on what kind of considerations we accepted the sacred Books current among the former people; and then afterwards we proved that the Greeks themselves were not ignorant of that people, but mentioned them by name, and greatly admired their mode of life... Now then let us go on to observe how they not only deemed the record of these things worthy to be written, but also became zealous imitators of the like teaching and instruction in some of the doctrines pertaining to the improvement of the soul." (Gifford, trans.)

⁷ For Johnson's concise examination of these connections, see his *Allusions*, p. 241.

⁸ *PE* 7.7.1

⁹ All translations of *PE* 7.7-8 are mine unless otherwise noted. *PE* 7.7.2: Χρῆν δὲ καὶ ἄλλως μὴ ἀγνοιεῖν ὅτι δὴ φθάσαντες, καὶ πρὸ τῶν ἐγγράφων νόμων, πλείους ἢ δὴ τῶν προπατόρων ὀρθοῖς λογισμοῖς θεοσεβείας ἀρετῇ κατεκοσμήθησαν. Gifford translates "had already been honourably distinguished for excellence in religion", Schroeder "avaient joui...d'une remarquable piété". It seems best to keep the sense of adornment inherent in κατεκοσμήθησαν. I am more inclined to translate θεοσεβείας as 'piety' than 'religion', but the distinction from εὐσεβεία is important.

θεοῦ καὶ προφήται’ received from Moses an eternal memorial (αἰωνίας μνήμης), and those to whom the law was constituted were ‘not foreign with respect to race (γένος)’. This genetic relationship is the basis, in 7.7.3, for the necessity that the descendants of these holy men “show themselves to be emulators of the piety of their forefathers, and seek to receive from God just what their progenitors had, but not become sluggish nor shrink as if from impossibilities, despairing of the hope of good things”¹⁰. Far from impossible, they were “possible and had been perfectly achieved by their own forefathers, whose images [Moses] passed on to those being taught divine things, going through the lives of the ancients and molding the individual virtue of each one as though in a portrait of writing.”¹¹

In this chapter, Moses is said to have composed memorials (μνήμεις/μνήμης) of the lives of the Hebrew forefathers, which are images or portraits (τὰς εἰκόνας/εἰκόνι), and serve as an exhortation (προτροπήν) to the life of piety they had achieved, a piety which their descendants should seek to emulate (ζηλωτάς). We find much of this same language in Philo’s *De Abrahamo*. For Philo, it is the particular laws which are ὡς ἂν εἰκόνων, while the ἀρχετύπους προτέρους of these images are the men themselves who “lived good and blameless lives, whose virtues stand permanently recorded in the most holy scriptures, not merely to sound their praises but for the instruction of the reader and

¹⁰ PE 7.7.3: Διὸ καὶ μᾶλλον χρῆναι αὐτούς, ἀπογόνους θεοφιλῶν καὶ δικαίων ἀνδρῶν φύντας, τῆς τῶν προπατόρων εὐσεβείας ζηλωτάς ἀναδειχθῆναι σπεισαί τε τῶν ἴσων τοῖς γεννήσασι παρὰ θεοῦ τυχεῖν, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀποναρκῆσαι μηδ’ ἀποκνήσαι ὡς ἐπ’ ἀδυνάτοις τῆς τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐλπίδος ἑαυτοὺς ἀπογόνοντας.

¹¹ PE 7.7.4: δυνατὰ γὰρ εἶναι καὶ τοῖς οἰκείοις αὐτῶν προπάτορσιν ἐντελῶς κατωρθωμένα· ὧν καὶ τὰς εἰκόνας τοῖς τὰ θεῖα παιδευομένοις παρεδίδου, τοὺς βίους καταλέγων τῶν παλαιῶν καὶ τὴν ἰδιάζουσαν ἐνὸς ἡκάστου ἔρετην ὡσπερ ἐν εἰκόνι γραφῆς διατυπούμενος.

as an inducement to him to aspire to the same”.¹² Here we find several points of contact with the text of Eusebius. While the reference of εἰκόνων is different in the two authors, both employ the concept of men who lived before the existence of law as models and encouragement for later readers of scripture. Philo claims that the virtues of these men are recorded in the scriptures ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας προτρέψασθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ὅμοιον ζῆλον ἀγαγεῖν.¹³ This language is reflected first in Eusebius in 7.7.1, where Moses transmits the lives considering εἰς προτροπὴν τοῦ τῶν εὐσεβῶν βίου. The language of the second part of Philo’s claim (καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ὅμοιον ζῆλον ἀγαγεῖν) is seen in *PE* 7.7.3, in τῶν προπατόρων εὐσεβείας ζηλωτάς.

Eusebius’ use of μνήμη at 7.7.1 and 7.7.2 to refer to the lives of the Hebrews is comparable to Philo’s statement that “one might properly say that the enacted laws are nothing else than memorials (ὑπομνήματα) of the life of the ancients.”¹⁴ Again, the exact reference differs in the two authors: for Eusebius, the written lives in Moses’ introduction to the laws are an indelible memorial (7.7.1) and image (7.7.4) of the actual lives, whereas for Philo the laws themselves are that memorial (5) and are as images (3). The linguistic connections here are clear; their differences will be discussed below.

The final connection Johnson points to in the two texts is the claim that “the life ‘according to nature’ was practicable”.¹⁵ The basis for this claim is found in Eusebius at 7.7.3-4, where he states that it is necessary for the descendants of the Hebrews not to

¹² F. H. Colson, trans., Philo *Abr.* 3-4 (LCL). Thus for all references to Philo.

¹³ Philo, *Abr.* 4

¹⁴ Philo, *Abr.* 5: ὡς δεόντως ἄν τινα φάναι, τοὺς τεθέντας νόμους μηδὲν ἄλλ’ ἢ ὑπομνήματα εἶναι βίου τῶν παλαιῶν.

¹⁵ Johnson, *Allusions*, p. 241. He also draws a connection here between Eus. *PE* 7.6.4, in which the Hebrews live κατὰ φύσιν, and Philo *Abr.* 6, in which they ἀκολουθίαν φύσεως ἀσπασάμενοι.

shrink “as if at something impossible” (ὡς ἐπ’ ἀδυνάτοις). He follows this with the positive statement “for they are possible and had been perfectly achieved by their own forefathers” (δυνατὰ γὰρ εἶναι καὶ τοῖς οἰκείοις αὐτῶν προπάτορσιν ἐντελῶς κατορθωμένα). Philo makes a similar claim, stating Moses’ purpose to be, in part, to show “that those who wish to live in accordance with the laws as they stand have no difficult task, seeing that the first generations before any at all of the particular statutes was set in writing followed the unwritten law with perfect ease.”¹⁶ The linguistic connection here is lacking, but both convey a similar idea.

There is, however, a significant difference when these ideas are looked at more closely, and in their respective contexts. The first clue to this difference is to be found in the referent of Eusebius’ δυνατά. Considering Philo as the source of this sentiment, one would naturally assume that life as lived by the fathers is what is possible. If that is the case, however, then the statement τοῖς οἰκείοις αὐτῶν προπάτορσιν ἐντελῶς κατορθωμένα is tautologous. Of course the fathers were able to perfectly achieve a life as lived by the fathers. This cannot have been their achievement; we must look elsewhere for the referent of δυνατά. This is to be found in the closest preceding neuter plural, namely the object of hope of which one must not despair: τῆς τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐλπίδος [μὴ] ἑαυτοὺς ἀπογνόντας. That these ‘good things’ had been achieved by the fathers is stated in 7.7.1, where Moses composed the lives of the Hebrew forefathers “and the good things of which these men were deemed worthy by God.”¹⁷ The precise nature of these good things is not given, but can be inferred from the statement that “already,

¹⁶ Philo, *Abr.* 5: ὅτι οὐ πολὺς πόνος τοῖς ἐθέλουσι κατὰ τοὺς κειμένους νόμους ζῆν, ὅποτε καὶ ἀγράφῳ τῇ νομοθεσίᾳ, πρὶν τι τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀναγραφῆναι τῶν ἐν μέρει, ῥαδίως καὶ εὐπετῶς ἐχρήσαντο οἱ πρῶτοι.

¹⁷ *PE* 7.7.1: ὧν τε ἀγαθῶν οὗτοι παρὰ θεοῦ ἠξιώθησαν

even before his written laws, many of the forefathers, by right reason, had been adorned with the virtue of god-piety” and “were called friends of God and prophets”.¹⁸ This is confirmed by the coordination of the need “to show [themselves to be] emulators of the piety of the forefathers” with the need “to seek to receive from God just the same as the forefathers”.¹⁹

Beyond this distinction in what precisely is possible or easily achieved, that Eusebius’ emphasis in this chapter on the piety of the forefathers and its achievement before the laws, can be seen in the purpose for which Moses is said to have written their lives. Moses composed the lives of the fathers εἰς προτροπὴν τοῦ τῶν εὐσεβῶν βίου, particularly because it was necessary that those who would study his laws not be unaware that these εὐσεβοί were adorned with θεοσεβείας ἀρετῆ, by means of ὀρθοῖς λογισμοῖς in a time καὶ πρὸ τῶν ἐγγράφων νόμων. What the fathers achieved before the written law, namely adornment θεοσεβείας ἀρετῆ, so also could their descendants, and for this purpose Moses transmitted the written portraits and memorials of their lives.

For Philo, in contrast, the laws themselves are the portraits and memorials. Where Eusebius emphasizes the piety of the fathers, achieved by right reason before the law existed, and thus denies the necessity of the law for a life of piety in accordance with the Hebrew forefathers, Philo’s framework is a justification of observance of the laws. He claims that the fathers were extolled to show that the laws themselves are not out of

¹⁸ PE 7.7.2: φθάσαντες, καὶ πρὸ τῶν ἐγγράφων νόμων, πλείους ἤδη τῶν προπατόρων ὀρθοῖς λογισμοῖς θεοσεβείας ἀρετῆ κατεκοσμήθησαν· οἱ καὶ φίλοι θεοῦ καὶ προφήται χρηματίσαντες.

¹⁹ PE 7.7.3: χρῆναι αὐτούς ... τῆς τῶν προπατόρων εὐσεβείας ζηλωτὰς ἀναδειχθῆναι σπείσαι τε τῶν ἴσων τοῖς γεννήσασι παρὰ θεοῦ τυχεῖν...

tune with nature²⁰, and that, for those who want to live in accordance with them, there is not much labor, since the first men lived by the unwritten law easily and fortunately (ῥαδίως καὶ εὐπετῶς²¹). Because the laws themselves are like copies of the originals, with the lives of the fathers as the originals, to follow the law is to live as the fathers lived, and vice versa. The fathers and the laws are inextricably intertwined, as is vividly expressed in *Abr.* 5: οἱ γὰρ ἔμψυχοι καὶ λογικοὶ νόμοι ἄνδρες ἐκεῖνοι γεγόνασιν.

That Philo seeks to encourage living in accordance with the law is clear. Eusebius' adaptation of Philo's text for his own specific purpose can finally be most clearly seen in his use of 'exhortation' and 'emulation'. For Philo, the purpose of the virtues of the fathers being written in scripture was to encourage the reader, and to lead him to a similar zeal.²² We have seen that Eusebius' text has close connections to this particular phrase. In Philo, there is no object of zeal, nor of exhortation. The purpose is simple encouragement, and guidance toward τὸν ὅμοιον ζῆλον. In Eusebius, προτροπὴν and τῆς ζηλωτᾶς have as their respective objects τοῦ τῶν εὐσεβῶν βίου and τῶν προπατόρων εὐσεβείας. This shows quite clearly that Eusebius had a specific object in mind in his adaptation of Philo's text. He diminishes the connection between law and the fathers, putting the emphasis instead on their piety, which he characterizes as being achieved through right reason.

While Johnson's examination of these texts certainly makes some valid points, his cursory treatment of the differences between them, especially where they are most

²⁰ Philo, *Abr.* 5: τὰ τεθειμένα διατάγματα τῆς φύσεως οὐκ ἀπάδει

²¹ Philo, *Abr.* 5: καὶ ἀγράφῳ τῇ νομοθεσίᾳ, πρὶν τι τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀναγραφῆναι τῶν ἐν μέρει, ῥαδίως καὶ εὐπετῶς ἐχρήσαντο οἱ πρῶτοι.

²² Philo, *Abr.* 4: ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας προτρέψασθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ὅμοιον ζῆλον ἀγαγεῖν.

similar, denies the importance of those differences. His conclusion, that Eusebius diverged from his source primarily to satisfy the needs of his argument from ethnicity, diminishes the importance of the particular content of that argument. A closer analysis of Eusebius' divergence from Philo has shown that he is especially concerned to show the piety of the Hebrew fathers as their primary characteristic, and as that which is to be emulated by their descendants. Their piety, then, holds a central place in the characterization of the Hebrews, which in turn holds a central place in Eusebius' overall argument. The specific nature of that piety, modified in chapter 7.7 only once by ὀρθοῖς λογισμοῖς, is made quite clear in the chapters of book 7 that precede it. Let us now turn to those chapters, and their characterization of both the Hebrews and their piety.

As noted above, this book begins what Johnson identifies as the 'narrative of descent' of the Hebrews. The first sentence of that narrative puts its emphasis on the philosophy and piety of the Hebrews²³: "Next as to the Hebrews, and their philosophy and religion which we have preferred above all our ancestral system, it is time to describe their mode of life."²⁴ In the remainder of the first chapter, the overarching argument of the entire work is summarized in a few statements: it has been proved that Christians abandoned the theology of the Hellenes with reason; the 'second charge'²⁵ is now taken

²³ Gifford translates εὐσέβεια as "religion". Lampe's first two definitions are "*devotion, sense of duty*", and "*devotion to God, piety*". "Religion" is one of the translations offered, but it should be understood with the sense of the primary meaning of the word in mind. I leave Gifford's translations as they are, but myself have used "piety", in hopes of maintaining a distinction from the modern sense(s) of the word "religion".

²⁴ Gifford's translation, as for all further translations of *PE*, unless otherwise noted. *PE* 7.1.1: Ἐβραίων περὶ λοιπὸν καὶ τῆς κατὰ τούτους φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ εὐσεβείας, ἣν τῶν πατρίων ἀπάντων προτετιμήκαμεν, τὸν τοῦ βίου τρόπον ὑπογράψαι καιρός.

²⁵ Schroeder notes (*ad loc*) that τὴν δευτέραν means τὴν δευτέραν κατηγορίαν. The first was taken up at 1.5.10, and the second alludes to the "second grief des Grecs contre

up, namely the reason for adopting Hebrew doctrines; it will, in time, be proved that borrowing useful things from the barbarians should bring no censure; the following chapter will show that no good has been found in any nation like that provided by the Hebrews.²⁶

In this brief chapter, at the beginning of the central segment of the entire work, the most basic structure of Eusebius' entire argument is laid out: 1) The primary characteristics of the Hebrews are their philosophy and piety – this is the topic at hand, and will be shown in books 7-9; 2) the theology (i.e. polytheism/anthropomorphism) of the Greeks has been reasonably abandoned, as has been shown in books 1-6; 3) Greek philosophers have also adopted barbarian knowledge, as will be shown in books 10-15; 4) a similar good has been found among no other nation like that furnished by the Hebrews – this is the primary conclusion to be drawn from the following chapters of book 7: first the vices of all other peoples will be summarized, and the remainder of the book will show the virtues of the Hebrews, which will support statement 1).

Following this summary, Eusebius reviews the theology of the other nations, in view of the evils it brings in life. It will be useful to go through this section briefly, in order to note the contrast between this and the characterization of the Hebrews further on.

les chrétiens, c'est-à-dire, après le rejet des doctrines ancestrales, l'adoption des «fables étrangères et universellement décriées des Juifs» (PE 1.2.3)

²⁶ PE 7.1.2: Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ οὐκ ἀλόγῳ, κεκριμένῳ δὲ καὶ σώφρονι λογισμῷ τῆς διεψευσμένης ὁμοῦ πάντων Ἑλλήνων τε καὶ βαρβάρων θεολογίας τὴν ἀπόλειψιν πεποιημένοι συνέστημεν, ὥρα λοιπὸν τὴν δευτέραν ἐπιλύσασθαι, τὴν αἰτίαν ἀποδιδόντας τῆς τῶν ἑβραϊκῶν λόγων μεταποιήσεως. Τὸ μὲν οὖν μὴ φέρειν τινα μέμψιν ἡμῖν τὴν ἀπὸ βαρβάρων τοῦ συμφέροντος μετάληψιν ἐπὶ τῆς δεούσης σχολῆς παραστήσομεν, πάντα τοῖς Ἑλλησι καὶ αὐτοῖς γε τοῖς βοωμένοις αὐτῶν φιλοσόφοις τὰ φιλόσοφα μαθήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλως κοινὰ καὶ ταῖς πολιτικαῖς λυσιτελοῦντα χρεῖαις παρὰ βαρβάρων ἐσκευωρησθαι ἐπιδείξοντες· τὸ δὲ μηδὲν πω μὴδ' ὅλως παρὰ τισιν εὐρησθαι τῶν ἔθνῶν οἷον τὸ παρ' Ἑβραίων ἡμῖν ἀγαθὸν πεπορισμένον ὧδε ἂν γένοιτα πρόδηλον.

The initial sentence of this section stands, as we will see, in stark contrast to the introduction of the Hebrews in ch. 7:

All the rest of mankind, from the very first establishment of social life and for all subsequent time, persisted in attending to bodily sense only, because they had formed no clear conception concerning the soul within them, and believed that nothing more than what was seen had any real subsistence; they therefore referred beauty and utility and the sole good to bodily pleasure.²⁷

Of note in this segment is the emphasis that ‘all the rest of mankind’ had ‘no clear conception of the soul within them’ and ‘referred beauty and utility and the sole good to bodily pleasure’. The remainder of chapter two describes the descent into evils caused by this elevation of bodily pleasure as the sole good, and he concludes:

When therefore they had entrenched themselves in so great an error, naturally in their service of the goddess and evil daemon, pleasure, evils upon evils gathered round them, while they defiled the whole of life with mad passions for women and outrages on men, marriages with mothers, and incest with daughters, and had surpassed in their excess of wickedness the savage nature of wild beasts. Such then was the character of the ancient nations, and of their false theology...²⁸

The rest of humanity, then, considered only what was visible to be real, had no conception of the soul, and elevated bodily pleasure as the sole good, which led to their false theology, which worshipped Pleasure, and its consequent evils.

²⁷ PE 7.2.1: Οἱ μὲν δὴ λοιποὶ πάντες ἄνθρωποι ἄνωθεν ἐκ πρώτης τοῦ βίου συστάσεως καὶ εἰς τὸν μετέπειτα χρόνον μόνῃ τῇ τῶν σωμάτων προσανασξόντες αἰσθήσει τῷ μηδὲν περὶ τῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς ψυχῆς διειληφέναι πλέον τε οὐδὲν τῶν ὀρωμένων ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν ὑπάρχειν ἠγησάμενοι, τὸ καλὸν καὶ συμφέρον καὶ μόνον ἀγαθὸν τῇ τῶν σωμάτων ἀνέθηκαν ἡδονῇ.

²⁸ PE 7.2.6: Ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν τοσαύτην ἔτυχον προβεβλημένοι τὴν πλάνην, εἰκότα δὴ αὐτοῖς ἡδονῇ θεῷ καὶ κακῷ δαίμονι χρωμένοις ἐπὶ κακοῖς κακα συνηγείρετο, γυναιμανίαις καὶ ἀρρένων φθοραῖς μητρογαμίαις τε καὶ θυγατρομιξίαις τὸν πάντα καταφυρομένοις βίον καὶ τὴν ἄγριον καὶ θηριώδη φύσιν ὑπερβολῇ φαυλότητος νενικηκόσι. Τοιοῦτος μὲν οὖν ὁ τρόπος τῶν παλαιῶν ἔθνων καὶ τῆς διεψευσμένης αὐτῶν θεολογίας διὰ τῶν συνηγμένων ἡμῖν ἑλληνικῶν λογογράφων τε καὶ φιλοσόφων ἐν τοῖς πρόσθεν ἀποδέδεκται.

After this lambast against ‘all the rest of mankind’, the Hebrews are finally introduced in stark contrast²⁹, who “alone among so many go off on the opposite course”³⁰. This divergence is specified by their characterization as “the first and sole people who from the very first foundation of social life devoted their thought to rational speculation” and “set themselves to study reverently the physical laws of the universe”.³¹ Here the Hebrews alone begin social life with their mind devoted to rational observance (λογικῆ θεωρία) and consider the nature of everything (τῆ περι τοῦ παντός φυσιολογία). It is noteworthy that this introduction of the rational consideration of nature is characterized as εὐσεβῶς. The implication is that to ‘study the physical laws of the universe’ is in itself to act with piety. Thus from the very first introduction of the character of the Hebrews, they are associated with rationality, and their rational inquiry is itself pious.

The chapter continues, describing the rational process by which the Hebrews came to their worship of the one God, beginning with the elements of corporeal substances the Hebrews perceived, and their determination that such things were not

²⁹ Schroeder (p. 42) outlines the point-by-point parallels between the chapter describing the vices of οἱ λοιποὶ πάντες ἄνθρωποι (7.2.1) and the virtues of the Hebrews. The Hebrews alone stand in contrast to the rest of humanity, as does their reasoned piety, which, as Eusebius will show, is the inheritance of Christianity.

³⁰ *PE* 7.3.1: ...ἄθρει δὴ λοιπὸν τῆ διανοίᾳ μόνους παίδας Ἑβραίων ἐν τοσοῦτοις τὴν ἐναντίαν ἀπιόντας. Schroeder translates “...fixe désormais ta pensée sur les enfants des Hébreux qui, seuls, ont pris une voie différente en des choses si importantes.” In view of the importance of the notion that the Hebrews are different from all the rest of mankind, it seems that Gifford’s understanding of ἐν τοσοῦτοις is probably correct. However, as this same concept is conveyed in the following sentence (πρῶτοι καὶ μόνοι πάντων ἀνθρώπων), it is possible that Schroeder has the better reading, which emphasizes the importance of the correct approach to matters of theology, which Eusebius shows in what follows to be a rational approach.

³¹ *PE* 7.3.2: Οἶδε γὰρ πρῶτοι καὶ μόνοι πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἄνωθεν ἐκ πρώτης τοῦ βίου καταβολῆς λογικῆ θεωρία τὴν διάνοιαν ἀναθέντες καὶ τῆ περι τοῦ παντός φυσιολογία εὐσεβῶς ἐπιστήσαντες...

gods, but the work of God.³² The remainder of 7.3 is occupied with a further delineation of the natural philosophy³³ of the Hebrews. It is unnecessary to go through this chapter in great detail, other than to note the mode of thought attributed to the Hebrews. They are said to ‘perceive’ (κατεμάνθανον) the corporeal elements of which everything consists, and to ‘determine’ (διελογίσαντο) that these are the works of a god. They ‘comprehend’ (συννοήσαντες) that the nature of bodily substance is ἄλογον καὶ ἄψυχον, and ‘reason’ (λογισάμενοι) that it is impossible that the arrangement of the cosmos be ascribed to a spontaneous cause, and neither could something inanimate (ἄψυχον) be the creative cause of animate beings (ἐμψύχων), nor something irrational (ἄλογον) the creator (δημιουργόν) of rational beings (λογικῶν). This reasoning, by comparison with the need of a carpenter to build a house, a weaver to weave clothes, government to order a city, a pilot to sail a ship, and an artificer for even the smallest instrument³⁴, leads to the conclusion: “neither can the nature of the universal elements, lifeless and irrational as it is, ever by its own law apart from the supreme wisdom of God attain to reason and life”³⁵. This rational observation (λογικῆ θεωρίᾳ) of the universe, then, leads them to worship τὸν πάντων γενεσιουργόν³⁶ θεὸν with a pure mind (νῶ κεκαθαμένῳ) and the clear eyes of the soul (ψυχῆς διαυγέσιν ὄμμασι).

³² *PE* 7.3.2: πρῶτα μὲν τὰ τῶν σωμάτων στοιχεῖα, γῆν, ὕδωρ, ἀέρα, πῦρ, ἐξ ὧν τόδε τὸ πᾶν συνεστῶς κατεμάνθανον, ἥλιόν τε καὶ σελήνην καὶ ἀστέρας οὐ θεοῦς, ἔργα δὲ εἶναι θεοῦ διελογίσαντο.

³³ Note the similarities to stoic and Platonic language throughout the introduction of the Hebrews; particularly (n. 3, p 162) “L’homme intérieur: notion héritée du stoïcisme par l’intermédiaire de Philon et de Clément d’Alexandrie.”

³⁴ *PE* 7.3.3.

³⁵ *PE* 7.3.3: οὐδ’ ἢ τῶν καθόλου στοιχείων ἄρα φύσις, ἄψυχος οὐσα καὶ ἄλογος, τῷ καθ’ ἑαυτὴν λόγου ποτὲ καὶ ζωῆς ἀνθέξεται.

³⁶ Schroeder notes that this is an expression from Wisdom 13.5, the only positively biblical reference in the entire chapter.

The following chapter explains the Hebrews' reasoned distinction between the soul, which is the true man, and the body, leading them to concentrate "their whole thought and diligence upon the life of the inner man"³⁷, reasoning that this will be pleasing to God the δημιουργός of all things. They therefore considered bodies and their pleasures as worth no more than the creatures of earth, but held in esteem only the internal guide (τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς ἄρχον), the rational and intellectual principle of the soul, being divine and capable of knowledge, and bearing a resemblance to the god of all (7.4.3). Thus, considering there to be no other good than God the provider of all goods (τοῦ πάντων ἀγαθῶν χορηγοῦ θεοῦ), they determined that knowledge and friendship³⁸ of him were the end (τέλος) of all happiness (εὐδαιμονίας). Thus devoting their whole selves, body and soul, to God, they are shown to be φιλόθεοι ὁμοῦ καὶ θεοφιλεῖς, servants and priests of the Most High, who bequeathed the σπέρμα τῆς ἀληθοῦς ταύτης εὐσεβείας to their descendants. The conclusion drawn from this exposition of the reasoned piety of the Hebrews is that the choice of Christians to prefer these men (i.e. the Hebrews) above Hellenes, and to accept the statements of the Hebrews concerning pious men rather than Phoenician and Egyptian gods and their slanderous absurdities concerning the gods, is λογισμῶ.³⁹

The result of that rational piety is explained in chapter five, which describes the granting of divine revelations to the Hebrews, and thus the divine approval of their form

³⁷ PE 7.4.1: καὶ δὴ τοῦτον διελόμενοι τὸν τρόπον, τὴν πᾶσαν περὶ τῆς τοῦ ἔνδον ἀνθρώπου ζωῆς φροντίδα καὶ σπουδὴν εἰσηνέγκαντο

³⁸ Schroeder (p. 165, n. 3) notes: "Selon Eusèbe, connaissance et amour, de meme que philosophie et piété, sont indissociables chez les Hébreux."

³⁹ PE 7.4.7: Ἐπεὶ οὖν λογισμῶ σοι δοκοῦμεν τούσδε τῶν ἑλληνικῶν προτετιμηκέναι καὶ μᾶλλον τῶν Φοινίκων τε καὶ Αἰγυπτίων θεῶν τῶν τε περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς δυσφήμων ἀτοπημάτων τὰς παρ' Ἑβραίοις περὶ εὐσεβῶν ἀνδρῶν διηγήσεις ἀποδέξασθαι;

of piety: the divinity, having accepted/approved the piety and philosophy of their life (τοῦ βίου εὐσεβείας καὶ φιλοσοφίας) and their service to it (the divinity), deemed them worthy of oracles, theophanies, and angelic visions. Chapter six distinguishes between Jews and Hebrews, the former being those for whom Moses established the law, the latter described thus:

But the Hebrews who were earlier in time than Moses, having never heard of all the Mosaic legislation, enjoyed a free and unfettered mode of religion, being regulated by the manner of life which is in accordance with nature, so that they had no need of laws to rule them, because of the extreme freedom of their soul from passions, but had received true knowledge of the doctrines concerning God.⁴⁰

The final statement of this characterization of the rational piety of the Hebrews is that they lived according to their nature, with no need of the law, and in accordance with their logically derived theology. When we saw in 7.7 that Eusebius diverged from his source text to place emphasis on the piety of the Hebrews, the particular nature of that piety was not entirely clear. In 7.3-6, the primary theme is the rationality by which the Hebrews arrived at that piety. The heavy emphasis on the rational process by which they came to their worship of God, especially considering the location of book seven in the overarching structure of the work, indicates that precisely the rational nature of true piety is Eusebius' primary concern, not ethnicity per se. That said, the overarching argument is made, as Johnson has shown, in terms of ethnicity. This can be seen especially clearly in Eusebius' initial statement of the questions which will be addressed to Christians.

⁴⁰ *PE* 7.6.4: Ἑβραῖοι δὲ πρεσβύτεροι Μωσέως γενόμενοι τοῖς χρόνοις, πάσης τῆς διὰ Μωσέως νομοθεσίας ἀνεπήκοοι ὄντες, βίω μὲν τῷ κατὰ φύσιν κεκοσμημένοι, ὡς μηδὲν νόμων δεῖσθαι τῶν ἀρξόντων αὐτῶν δι' ἄκραν ψυχῆς ἀπάθειαν, γνῶσιν δὲ ἀληθῆ τῶν περὶ θεοῦ δγματῶν ἀνείληφέναι.

In the preliminary exposition of his work, Eusebius summarizes the questions that may be put to Christians by Hellenes and by ‘those of the circumcision’⁴¹. These questions are fundamentally accusations, by the former, that Christians have abandoned their inherited traditions, adopting something foreign and ‘new-fangled’⁴², not even honoring their adopted god with the customs of the Jews, but cut a new path, and neither keep the ways of the Hellenes nor of the Jews⁴³. The accusations by the latter are that, being foreign,⁴⁴ “we misuse their books, and [...] try violently to thrust out the true family and kindred from their own ancestral rights”⁴⁵, and, “the most unreasonable thing of all is, that though we do not observe the customs of their Law as they do, but openly break the Law, we assume to ourselves the better rewards which have been promised to those who keep the Law.”⁴⁶ The answers to all of these questions will allow for the creation of an identity for Christianity as a separate race from both its Hellenic and Jewish accusers, but one that has neither committed apostasy nor infringed on the hereditary rights of a foreign people.⁴⁷ Christians will be shown to be the true

⁴¹ *PE* 1.1.11,13; Schroeder (p. 14) summarizes this section nicely: “Les Gentils formulaient en effet contre les chrétiens la double accusation d’avoir abandonnée les coutumes ancestrales pour adopter celles des Juifs; or ces derniers les accusaient déjà de leur avoir dérobé les Écritures et de détourner à leur avantage les promesses qu’elles contenaient.”

⁴² *PE* 1.2.2: Τί οὖν ἂν γένοιτο τὸ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ξένον καὶ τίς ὁ νεωτερισμὸς τοῦ βίου; Gifford translates “What then may the strangeness in us be, and what the new-fangled manner of our life?”

⁴³ *PE* 1.2.4

⁴⁴ *PE* 1.2.5: ἀλλόφυλοι ὄντες καὶ ἀλλογενεῖς

⁴⁵ *PE* 1.2.5, Gifford, v. 1, p. 6.

⁴⁶ Gifford, v. 1, p. 7; *PE* 1.2.8: Τὸ δ’ οὖν ἀπάντων παραλογώτατον, ὅτι μηδὲ τὰ νόμιμα παραπλησίως αὐτοῖς περιέποντες, ἀλλὰ προφανῶς παρανομοῦντες, τὰς ἐπηγγελμένας τοῖς τῶν νόμων φύλαξι χρηστοτέρας ἀμοιβὰς εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἐπισπώμεθα.

⁴⁷ See Johnson, *Ethnicity*, pp. 227-230, for Eusebius’ portrayal of Christians as the descendants of the Hebrews: “The Christians formed a new people, drawn out from the

descendants of the Hebrews, who passed on to them the seeds of the true piety, which will be shown to be rational. Based on this summary alone, we can already see the relevance of Johnson's insights into the *PE* as an argument of ethnicity. These accusations are all couched in ethnic terms: the Hellenes accuse Christians of apostasy from national tradition on two counts, the Jews accuse them of being foreigners and depriving the true family of their ancestral rights. These are not, however, the only accusations Eusebius addresses, and his response to the other primary critique of Christianity is equally important as his response to these.

Beyond these questions hypothetically posed by Jews and Hellenes, the accusation of irrationality, and reaction against it, is a consistent theme. At 1.1.11, Eusebius mentions the accusation that "Christianity has no reason to support it", that they "confirm their opinion by an unreasoning faith and an assent without examination", and "require their converts to adhere to faith only, and therefore they are called 'the Faithful', because of their uncritical and untested faith."⁴⁸ At the beginning of 1.3, he proposes "to clear away the first of the objections put forward, by proving at the outset that they were false accusers who declared that we can establish nothing by demonstration, but hold to an unreasoning faith."⁴⁹ And again at 1.5:

But why need I spend time in endeavouring to show that we have not devoted ourselves to an unreasoning faith, but to wise and profitable doctrines which

nations to form themselves around the way of life and theological clear-sightedness of the ancient friends of God." (227); "Eusebius locates Christianity in a direct line with both these pre-Mosaic and post-Mosaic Hebrews..." (229). cf. *PE* 14.3.1-4.

⁴⁸ Gifford, v. 1., p 4. Key phrases are: χριστιανισμόν...οὐδένα λόγον ἀποσώζειν, ἀλόγῳ δὲ πίστει καὶ ἀνεξετάστῳ συγκαταθέσι...τὸ δόξαν κυροῦν... πίστει δὲ μόνη προσέχειν ἀξιοῦν τοὺς προσιόντας, παρ' ὃ καὶ πιστοὺς χρηματίζειν, τῆς ἀκρίτου χάριν καὶ ἀβασανίστου πίστεως.

⁴⁹ Gifford, v.1., p. 7; *PE* 1.3.1

contain the way of true religion, as the present work is the be a complete treatise on this very subject?⁵⁰

It seems to me that, while his argument is organized in terms of ethnicities, and this framework allows him to answer the charges of both Greeks and Jews (of apostasy, and of illegitimate usurpation of a foreign God and his blessings), the overemphasis of that framework runs the risk of overshadowing the importance of the primary claim, which is emphatically that Christianity is rational piety. This is unquestionably the main focus of the characterization of the Hebrews in book 7, which Johnson recognizes as central to the entire *PE*.⁵¹

Having established that this is Eusebius' primary focus, one might ask why rationality is so important to him. The heavy emphasis on rationality can be explained in part by the simple fact that Porphyry, Eusebius' main target in composing his apology⁵², claimed in his *Against the Christians* that Christianity was an irrational faith.⁵³ This conception of Christianity reached further back than Porphyry. Galen, for instance, speaks of the followers of Moses and Christ as though of philosophical schools, but ones which he sees as not basing their doctrines on reason, but on faith: "If I had in mind

⁵⁰ Gifford, v.1., p. 16; *PE* 1.5.2. I have adjusted the punctuation to reflect that of the Greek in Schroeder's edition. Gifford places the question mark after "true religion".

⁵¹ Johnson, *Ethnicity*, p. 96. n. 3.

⁵² See Barnes, pp. 174ff.

⁵³ Barnes, 176: "Porphyry...objected to the elevation of faith above reason. He sneered that Christian teachers inculcated in their followers a blind and unreasoning acceptance of whatever they might say, and he claimed that their inability to provide rational proof of their position betrayed the essential falsity of their beliefs." Also Berchman, 45: "Their *philosophia* stood *in vacuo* because it demanded belief in propositions for which they were unable to furnish rational proof. These included their elevation of faith over reason, their belief in the incarnation, resurrection, and miracles, and their refusal to accept the eternity of the world and the pre-existence of the soul. That both the world order and its designer follow perfectly rational principles was fundamental Hellenic doctrine followed by Porphyry. It was the *alogos* character of Christianity that most repelled him." Both cite *PE* 1.2 (Berchman cites *PE* 1.2.1, Barnes *PE* 1.2.4) and *DE* 1.1.12 as proof-texts.

people who taught their pupils in the same way as the followers of Moses and Christ teach theirs – for they order them to accept everything on faith – I should not have given you a definition.”⁵⁴

In the face of such conceptions, Eusebius’ construction of Christianity as descended from the Hebrews was able to draw on Hellenistic authors to portray those forefathers as a philosophical race. As early as Hecataeus of Abdera (c. 300 BCE), Moses was portrayed in somewhat philosophical terms as not fabricating “any image of the gods because he believed that god was not anthropomorphic; rather the heaven which encompassed the earth was the only god and lord of all.”⁵⁵ Clearchus of Soli is quoted by Josephus as telling an anecdote in which Aristotle says, “The man was a Jew of Coele-Syria. These people are descended from the Indian philosophers. The philosophers, they say, are in India called Calani, in Syria by the territorial name of Jews.”⁵⁶ While these snippets by no means indicate a widespread conception of Hebrews as philosophers, they seem to have paved the way for Hellenistic Jewish apologetic, which Josephus’ use of Clearchus exemplifies, and, in turn for Christian apologetic.

Eusebius’ characterization of the Hebrews in book 7 as primarily rational is essential to the argument made in books 10-15 of the *PE*. In those books, Eusebius

⁵⁴ Gager, p. 89, who notes *ad loc*: “The quotation is preserved only in Arabic and occurred in a lost work entitled *Eis to proton kinoun akineton*.” He cites the translation in R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians* (1949).

⁵⁵ Gager trans., p. 27. ἄγαλμα δὲ θεῶν τὸ σύνολον οὐ κατεσκεύασε διὰ τὸ μὴ νομίζειν ἀνθρωπόμορφον εἶναι τὸν θεόν, ἀλλὰ τὸν περιχόντα τὴν γῆν οὐρανὸν μόνον εἶναι θεὸν καὶ τῶν ὄλων κύριον. (FGH 264 F 6.4) Gager notes that the “justification for Moses’ prohibition of images derives from Greek philosophical traditions in both its denial of anthropomorphism and its identification of the deity with the heavens and the cosmos.” (p. 31) He cites Arist. *Metaph.* 1074a, 38ff as expressing a similar conception. See Gager, pp. 31-34 for further discussion of Hecataeus’ portrayal of Moses in terms of Greek philosophy.

⁵⁶ Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, I, 179. Stern, trans., vol. 1, p. 49-50.

argues that Plato derived his philosophy from barbarians, and shows its near identity with that of the Hebrews. Eusebius is certainly not the first to have conceived of the idea that Plato was dependent on Moses, and he clearly derives it from the sources he cites in making his argument. Among the early Christian apologists, Clement of Alexandria first made this argument⁵⁷, and before that, Hellenistic Jewish apologists had done the same,⁵⁸ and even Hellenic philosophers had made use of the idea.⁵⁹

These prior arguments and characterizations of Jews in philosophical terms help to make Eusebius' characterization of the Hebrews easier to accept, despite the prevailing stereotype, used by his opponents, of Hellenic rationality. Within the framework of ethnicity that Eusebius uses in his argument, however, the rationalization of the Hebrews has more far-reaching consequences than just to answer the criticisms of his opponent. By creating an identity for Christianity that had its roots in the oldest people, and making the identity of that people emphatically rational, Eusebius raises Christianity above reproach. Rather than deny that philosophy has anything to do with faith, or claim that inherited tradition need not be adhered to, Eusebius accepts his accusers' premises as valid, but denies the truth of their accusations. Irrationality, apostasy, and adoption of foreign traditions are all bad things. However, they are not to be predicated of Christianity, but rather of its opponents. Eusebius reverses the traditional concept of the fundamental identities of Hellenes and Hebrews in making the latter the paragon of

⁵⁷ See Ridings, *passim*, for his examination of this motif in Clement, Eusebius, and Theodoret.

⁵⁸ Gruen, pp. 246ff for his discussion of Aristobulus construction of Moses as the "stimulus for Hellenic philosophers and poets", which "asserted that Plato's ideas followed the path laid out by the legislation of Moses."

⁵⁹ Numenius is famously cited as having said: τί γάρ ἐστι Πλάτων ἢ Μωσῆς ἀττικίζων; (des Places Fr. 8 = *PE* 11.10.14)

rationality, and the former worshippers of bodily pleasure. In so doing, he does exactly what he claims to do in the beginning of his work: show that Christianity is not founded on irrational, unexamined faith. Through the arguments from ethnicity, he creates a heritage for Christianity, which places their roots among the oldest nation. That nation, moreover, was philosophical from the outset, arriving at their belief in and worship of the one god through rational observation of nature.

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