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TIME, HISTORY, AND ETERNITY
IN THE *THEOPHANY*
OF EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA

THE *THEOPHANY* OF EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA :
HISTORIOGRAPHY AND STRUCTURE¹

The *Theophany* of Eusebius of Caesarea is certainly one of the most neglected works in the history of Patristic scholarship². For example, a recent Patrology omits mentioning the work all together in the section devoted to a discussion of Eusebius' apologetic works³, and modern studies on Eusebius often either gloss over the significance of the *Theoph.* or completely ignore it and its place in the Eusebian corpus⁴. One should not

1. Most of the material in this section was originally published in M. B. SIMMONS, *Universal Salvation in Late Antiquity. Porphyry of Tyre and the Pagan-Christian Debate*, Oxford, 2015, and has been reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press. It is a distinct honor that I have been invited to contribute to a *Festschrift* in honor of Fr. Cantalamessa's life achievement in both Church and Academy.

2. See M. B. SIMMONS, *Universal Salvation in Late Antiquity*, pp. 92-104 ; ID., « Universalism in Eusebius of Caesarea: The Soteriological Use of the *Divine Power of the Universal Savior* in Book III of the *Theophany* », *Studia Patristica* 66, 2013, pp. 125-133, giving two major reasons for the neglect: The entire work is extant only in a Syriac translation, and modern scholars have made the erroneous conclusion that because it is simply a reworking of (e.g.) the *PE* and *DE* it thus contains nothing original. See also A. KOFISKY, *Eusebius of Caesarea Against Paganism*, Leiden and Boston, 2002, pp. 279-280.

3. H. R. DROBNER, *The Fathers of the Church. A Comprehensive Introduction*, Engl. tr. S. S. Schatzmann, Peabody, Mass., 2007, pp. 233-35. Only Gressmann's 1904 essay is listed in the notes on p. 235 without mentioning the *Theoph.* in the section « C. Apologetic Works », pp. 233-238.

4. See, e.g., A. CARRIKER, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 67, Leiden and Boston, 2003 ; M. FREDE, « Eusebius' Apologetic Writings »,

be too critical here, however, especially taking into account that only seventeen fragments remain from the original Greek text, and the work survives *in toto* solely in a Syriac translation dated to the early fifth century A.D.⁵ Owing to the fact that very little has ever been written on the work in any language, it is first necessary to give a brief overview of the history, purpose, and structure of this last « apology » written by the bishop of Caesarea before introducing the details of the argument developed herein.

Samuel Lee published the first edition of the Syriac text of the *Theoph.* in 1842⁶. In the following year an English translation with notes by the same author appeared⁷. According to Lee, in 1839 during a visit in Egypt at the Monastery of the Blessed Virgin in the desert of Nitria (the *Coenobium Scetense Asseman*), the Revd. Henry Tattam of Bedford procured a number of Coptic and Syriac manuscripts, and sent them to Lee with the request that he examine them and give an account of their contents⁸. After looking over the manuscripts Lee « had the extreme pleasure of discovering that of which the following Work is a translation⁹ ». The work noted was first mentioned by Jerome who, after naming some of Eusebius' writings, adds *θεοφανείας libri quinque*¹⁰, followed by Suidas¹¹,

Apologetics in the Roman Empire (ed. M. Goodman *et al.*), Oxford, 1999, pp. 223-250, 230, only noting that the *PE* (I, 3,12) refers to an earlier work on fulfilled prophecies which may have been reworked to form Bk. IV of the *Theoph.*; B. ALTANER, A. STUIBER, *Parologie. Leben, Schriften und Lehre der Kirkeväter*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1978⁹, p. 221, simply stating that the *Theoph.* « ist eine populäre, stark rhetorische Apologetik (fünf Bücher), die aus der Praeparatio und Demonstratio schöpft. » More substantial assessments can be found in (e.g.) T. D. BARNES, *Constantine and Eusebius*, Cambridge, Mass., 1981, pp. 187-188, and J. M. SCHOTT, *Christianity, Empire, and the Making of Religion in Late Antiquity*, Philadelphia, 2008, pp. 155-156.

5. The original manuscript in *Estrangelo* is located in the British Library in the third of six works included in the ms. @shelfmark Add.12150, according to the entry of W. WRIGHT, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 2, London, 1871, repr. Piscataway NJ, 2004, pp. 631-633. The Greek fragments are found in H. GRESSMANN, *Eusebius Werke. Die Theophanie. Die Griechischen Bruchstücke und Übersetzung der Syrischen Überlieferung*, GCS, Eusebius Werke III, 2, Berlin, 1992, pp. 3-35. The reverse of the 4th folio at the end of the Syriac ms. states it was written by a certain Jacob in Edessa and finished in February A.D. 411 (LEE, 1843, pp. xi-xii).

6. S. LEE, *Eusebius Bishop of Caesarea, on The Theophania or Divine Manifestation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. A Syriac Version, Edited from an Ancient Manuscript recently Discovered*, Cambridge, 1842.

7. S. LEE, *Eusebius Bishop of Caesarea on The Theophania or Divine Manifestation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Translated into English with notes, from an ancient Syriac Version of the Greek Original now Lost*, Cambridge, 1843.

8. S. LEE, 1843, pp. viii-ix.

9. *Ibid.*, p. ix.

10. Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 81.

11. Closely following Jerome : *θεοφανείας λόγοι ε'*.