

Universalism in Eusebius of Caesarea: The Soteriological Use of ܩܘܘܡܘܣܘܠܘܬܐ ܕܥܡܘܣܐ ܕܥܘܣܒܝܘܣ ܐܦܘܣܬܘܣ ܐܘܣܩܘܣܐ in Book III of the *Theophany*

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ABSTRACT

This paper complements recent articles on Eusebian universalism.¹ Since 1842 when the first Syriac edition was published, until the present time, very little has been written about the *Theophany* of Eusebius of Caesarea, making it one of the most neglected works in the history of Patristic scholarship.² There are two reasons for this neglect. First, only seventeen fragments of the original Greek text survive, and the entire work is extant only in a Syriac translation.³ Second, scholars have often made the erroneous conclusion that the work is simply the result of material reworked from the earlier PE, DE, VC, LC, and SC, and, thus, it contains nothing original.⁴ The following three objectives of this paper will hopefully begin to correct these errors and create new avenues of exploration: (1) to briefly address some of the major chronological issues in dating the text;⁵ (2) analyze how the phrase ܩܘܘܡܘܣܘܠܘܬܐ ܕܥܡܘܣܐ ܕܥܘܣܒܝܘܣ (*the divine power of the Saviour of us all*) and cognate terminology in Book III soteriologically function within a paradigm of universalism; and (3) argue that although the universalism argument in the *Theophany* is indebted to the earlier works noted, it nevertheless contains its own distinct features, and the major adversary is Porphyry of Tyre.

¹ See Michael Bland Simmons, 'Porphyrian Universalism: A Tripartite Soteriology and Eusebius' Response', *HThR* 102 (2009), 169-92; *id.*, 'Universalism in the *Demonstratio evangelica* of Eusebius of Caesarea', *SP* 46 (2010), 319-24; *id.*, 'The Emperor Julian's Order to Rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem: A Connection with Oracles?', *ANES* 43 (2006), 68-117; *id.*, 'Via universalis salutis animae liberandae: The Pagan-Christian Debate on Universalism in the Later Roman Empire (A.D. 260-325)', *SP* 40 (2006), 245-51.

² See Samuel 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* (London, 1842); *id.*, *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); Hugo Gressmann (ed.), *Eusebius Werke. Dritter Band. Zweiter Teil. Die Theophanie. Die Griechischen Bruchstücke und Übersetzung der Syrischen Überlieferung* (Berlin, 1992). The latter originally was published in GCS 1904, *Eusebius Werke Band 3*. The 1992 ed. includes at pp. 1-37, Gressmann's 'Studien zu Eusebs Theophanie', TU (Leipzig, 1903).

³ See the works by S. Lee and H. Gressmann cited in the preceding note.

⁴ See See Aryeh Kovsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea Against Paganism* (Leiden, 2002), 279, referring to Angelo Mai, *Novae Patrum Bibliothecae. Tomus Quartus* (Rome, 1847); S. Lee, and H. Gressmann as the only scholars who have studied the contents of the work in any detail.

⁵ A more detailed publication on dating the *Theoph.* is forthcoming.

Eusebius in *VC* III 58 should be considered with caution,²¹ and several later writers indisputably attest to the continuation of paganism, along with the temple of Zeus at Heliopolis, well into the late 6th century A.D.²²

Two passages (*IV* 6; *V* 49) refer to the construction of churches in Antioch²³ and Alexandria. The former certainly describes the great octagonal cathedral begun by Constantine in 327, dedicated in 341, and mentioned in some detail in the *VC* and *LC*.²⁴ The reference to Alexandria undoubtedly refers to the large metropolitan church which was completed in 328.²⁵ The references to the church in Antioch fit much better in the late 330's than in the late 320's. The composite picture that can be deduced from the data just now surveyed would lead me to the conclusion that Eusebius wrote the *Theophany* most likely in the years 337-8.

II. Soteriological Formulae in *Theophany*, Book III

The *Theophany* contains 336 universalism passages, and each book has a distinct soteriological theme. Book I concerns the transcendence of God the Father and the

²¹ See Averil Cameron and Stuart Hall, *Eusebius Life of Constantine* (Oxford, 1999), 305 (on Eus., *VC* III 58): "He gives few specific examples, twists his material to give it an apologetic meaning, and embeds his statements within a context of highly coloured and tendentious rhetoric."

²² See Soz., *HE* VII 15; Theodoret, *HE* IV 19; John of Ephesus (d. c. A.D. 586), *HE* III 27-34. The latter says that the Christians in Heliopolis were a small and oppressed minority. See also A. Cameron and S. Hall, *Eusebius Life of Constantine* (1999), 304f. (on Eus., *VC* III 58); G. Clarke, 'Third Century Christianity', *CAH* 12 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2005), 589-671, 602; H. Kennedy, 'Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia', *CAH* XIV (Cambridge, 2000), 588-611, 597.

²³ For the octagonal church in Antioch see Eus., *VC* III 50 and *LC* IX 15, and Ramsay MacMullen, *The Second Church. Popular Christianity A.D. 200-400* (Atlanta, 2009), 118; A. Cameron and S. Hall, *Eusebius Life of Constantine* (1999), 299; R. Krautheimer, 'The Ecclesiastical Building Policy of Constantine', in *Costantino il Grande. Dall'antichità all'Umanesimo. Colloquio sul Cristianesimo nel mondo antico* (Macerate, 1993), 509-52, 537, 547; *id.*, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Harmondsworth, 3rd ed. 1979), 79; S.S. Alexander, 'Studies in Constantinian Church Architecture II. Topographical Aspects of Constantinian Church Architecture', *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 49 (1973), 33-44, 41; W.E. Kleinbauer, 'The Origin and Functions of the Aisled Tetraconch Churches in Syria and Northern Mesopotamia', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 27 (1973), 89-114, 111-4; Frans van de Paverd, 'Zur Geschichte der Messliturgie in Antiocheia und Konstantinopel gegen Ende des vierten Jahrhunderts. Analyse der Quellen bei Johannes Chrysostomos', *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 187 (Rome, 1970), 3-7; G. Bovinni, *Edifici cristiani di culto d'età costantiniana a Roma* (Bologna, 1968), 348; G. Downey, *Ancient Antioch* (Princeton, 1963), 144, n. 3; W. Eltester, 'Die Kirchen Antiochias im IV. Jahrhundert', *ZNW* 36 (1937), 251-86, 254, 260. For the dates given see Jer., *Chron. Olymp.* 276.3 (PL 27,498) and Philos., *HE* (212 Bidez); and for the time required for construction see *Chron. Miscall.* (CSCO, Script. Syr., ser. 3 & 4, 130, z. 21ff., text, Brooks), and cited in de F. v. d. Paverd, 'Zur Geschichte der Messliturgie' (1970), 7: *Antiochia Syriae, ecclesia sphericae formae completa est intra 15 annos.*

²⁴ Eus., *VC* III 50 and *LC* IX 15.

²⁵ See R. MacMullen, *The Second Church* (2009), 117.

immanence of God the Son, whom Eusebius throughout the work calls “the universal Saviour” (ܘܨܘܠܡܢܘܨܘܬܐ),²⁶ and their interrelationship to the providential design of, and care for, the universe. The Saviour of all creation who came to earth for the salvation of all races and to destroy the error of polytheism is the theme of Book II. Book III posits that universal salvation is available only through Christ. Citing 166 biblical passages mostly from the NT, Book IV argues that Christ’s foreknowledge of events now being fulfilled in Eusebius’ time indisputably prove his divinity.²⁷ The final Book develops an argument based primarily upon the universal dissemination of the Gospel to all nations which, again, proves Christ’s divinity, the truth of scripture, the trustworthiness of the Apostles’ witness, and thus dismantles the pagan accusation that Christ and his disciples were deceivers. Hence universalism is the cornerstone of Eusebius’ soteriological paradigm in the *Theophany*.

The specific example of universalism to be analyzed is ܘܨܘܠܡܢܘܨܘܬܐ *the divine power of the Saviour of us all* and cognate soteriological formulae which occur fifteen times in Book III,²⁸ a vast majority of which demonstrate that Eusebius made significant modifications to the earlier works from which they derive.²⁹ These can be divided into three sub-categories. All six passages in the first group (III 33(b); 38; 39(a); 39(b); 40(a); 71) contain the term ܘܨܘܠܡܢܘܨܘܬܐ, *the Saviour of all*. In three of these Eusebius has changed *our Saviour* of the LC to *Saviour of all*:

Theoph. III 33 (b): ܘܨܘܠܡܢܘܨܘܬܐ; parallel text: LC XVII 12: ὁ σωτήρ ὁ ἡμέτερος;
Theoph. III 38: ܘܨܘܠܡܢܘܨܘܬܐ; parallel text: LC XVI 9: τοῦ ἡμετέρου σωτήρος; and
Theoph. III 71: ܘܨܘܠܡܢܘܨܘܬܐ; parallel text: LC XVI 9-10: μόνος ὁ ἡμέτερος σωτήρ

Two of the remaining three passages are not exact parallels. The *Incorporeal Word of God*, ὁ ἀσώματος τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος (LC XIV 1); and the phrase *the salvation and benefaction for all*; σωτήριον τε ὅμου καὶ εὐεργετικὸν τοῖς πᾶσιν (165b Heikel); are again changed to ܘܨܘܠܡܢܘܨܘܬܐ, *the Saviour of all*, in *Theoph.* III 39 (a) and III 40 (a), respectively. Finally, III 39 (b), in which occurs ܘܨܘܠܡܢܘܨܘܬܐ, should be compared with ὁ κοινὸς ἀπάντων σωτήρ of LC XIV 5, which is Eusebius’ preferred epithet, best translated *the Universal Saviour*, with an exact Syriac parallel ܘܨܘܠܡܢܘܨܘܬܐ at *Theoph.* III 1, and found in all five books. Compare

²⁶ E.g., *Theoph.* I 23, 25, 35, 68, 72; II 1, 2, 20, 94, 95, 97; III 1; IV.1, 8; V.1, 8, 14, 16, 34, 46.

²⁷ Michael Frede, ‘Eusebius’ Apologetic Writings’, in M. Goodman *et al.* (eds), *Apologetics in the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1999), 223-50, 230, suggests that *PE* I 3.12 refers to an earlier work on fulfilled prophecies of Christ now lost which may have been reworked to form Bk. IV of the *Theoph.*

²⁸ Twelve derive from the *LC*: XIV 1; XIV 5; XVI 6; XVI 9 (three); XVI 11; XVI 12 (three); XVII 15; XVI 9-10; two from the *DE*: III 4 (108a Heikel); IV 10 (165b Heikel); and one comes from a fragment of the original Greek text of the *Theophany*: Gressmann (1903, 8); Bruchstück no. 3 = *Theoph.* III 41-62, pp. 4-15, and the section of the *Theophany* is S 109.20-21 (Gressmann [1903], 152).

²⁹ For the following citations from the *Theophany*, I sometimes give letters after numbers (e.g., III.39[a]) indicating the sequential order of the terminology found in the same section of Book III.

Both offer *small proofs* of Christ's deity either by stressing his post-crucifixion life (LC), or the revelation of the Godhead of *the Saviour of us all* (*Theoph.*); the key difference, again, being the all-encompassing **ⲛⲟⲩ** which indicates a wider audience for this last apologetic work than that for either the PE or the DE.³³ It should also be added here that the changes we have noted are not restricted to Book III of the *Theophany*. For example, Book V contains five passages which derive from the DE,³⁴ and in each one Eusebius has inserted his favorite soteriological formula, **ⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲟⲩ** which is absent from the parallel Greek passages.³⁵

Of the fifteen passages analyzed, only two have an exact parallels with **ⲛⲟⲩ**³⁶ and one with **ⲛⲟⲩ**.³⁷ Both **ⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲟⲩ**, *Saviour of all*, and **ⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲟⲩ**, *Saviour of us all*, occur more frequently in the *Theophany* than in the PE, DE, VC, or LC.³⁸ Also, since about 70% of the work derives from the PE and the DE,³⁹ and both of these larger works aimed much of their arsenal at Porphyry,⁴⁰ it should not surprise us that the great Neoplatonic philosopher was the main adversary of the *Theophany* as well.⁴¹ The claims found in his Prologue to his *De philosophia*

³³ A. Kovsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea Against Paganism* (2002), 278.

³⁴ A forthcoming publication will provide an analysis of these five passages and parallel Greek texts.

³⁵ Cf. *Theoph.* V.8 (DE III.6 [Heikel, 126f.]); *Theoph.* V.14 (DE III.6 [Heikel, 129f.]); *Theoph.* V.16 (DE III.6 [Heikel, 131b-c]); *Theoph.* V.34 (DE III.5 [Heikel, 117c]); and *Theoph.* V.46 (DE III.7 [Heikel, 137a]).

³⁶ *Theoph.* III.39(b); parallel: LC XIV.5; and *Theoph.* III.40(a); parallel: DE IV.10 (Heikel, 165b).

³⁷ *Theoph.* III.57; parallel: Gressmann [1903, p. 8]; Bruchstück no. 3 = *Theoph.* III.41-62, pp. 4-15, and the section

of the *Theophany* is Σ 109.20-21 (Gressmann [1903]: 152).

³⁸ I here refer to the LC, though technically all the parallel passages under that designation derive from *De sepulchro Christi* or SC, which covers Chapters 11-18 of the LC, on which see Drake (1976): 30-45. For **κοινὸς ἀπάντων σωτήρ** in the LC see (e.g.) VI.8; XII.4; XII.6; XIV.4; cf. LC II.2, 3, 4: **ὁ μὲν τῶν ὅλων σωτήρ** (cf. DE IV.6, 10, 12); XI.1: **τοῦ κοινοῦ σωτήρος**; XII.1: **πάντων σωτήρ** (cf. DE IV.13); and XV.13: **τῆς κοινῆς ἡμῶν σωτηρίας** (cf. DE III.1: **περὶ τοῦ σωτήρος τοῦ κόσμου**). The preferred formula in the DE is the simple **ὁ σωτήρ ἡμῶν**: cf. DE I.4, 10; II.3; III.2, 5, 6, 7; IV.16; V.3, 5; VI.13, 17; IX.1, 17; X.7, 8.

³⁹ A. Kovsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea Against Paganism* (2002), 278.

⁴⁰ For the fragments of *Contra Christianos* see: Adolf von Harnack, *Porphyrius „Gegen die Christen“ 15 Bücher: Zeugnisse, Fragmente und Referate* (Berlin, 1916); Robert M. Berchman, *Porphyry Against the Christians*, AMMTC I (Leiden and Boston, 2005); Enrique A. Ramos Jurado et al. (eds), *Porfirio de Tiro. Contra los Cristianos. Recopilación de fragmentos, traducción, introducción y notas* (Cádiz, 2006).

⁴¹ *Theoph.* III 3, 19, 40 (Christians cannot offer proof for their beliefs: see Michael Bland Simmons, *Arnobius of Sicca*. (Oxford, 1995): App. III-IV, 332-7); III 4, 6 (Christ is only a mortal: *Civ. Dei* XIX 23; see M.B. Simmons [1995], 216-42); III 7 (Christ civilized the barbarians: see *Theoph.* II 54-6; Eus., *PE* IV 16; *LC* XIII; Porph., *Abst.* II 54ff.); III 13 (Christ implicated in error: *Civ. Dei* XIX 23); III 15f. (superiority of bloodless sacrifices: Porph., *Abst.* II 34); III 21 (women in Christian ministry: Jurado [2006]: CC 27 [Harn. 97; Berchman 66]); III.23, 28, 38 (Christian rustics were taught virtue and temperance: cf. Simmons [2009], on Porphyry's

*ex oraculis*⁴² to what appears to be Porphyry's answer to Christian universalism⁴³ which, in the words of Peter Brown, was 'open to the mass of men',⁴⁴ were still haunting the Bishop in his final years.⁴⁵ Many of the universalism passages of Book III⁴⁶ were undoubtedly aimed at Porphyry's rejection of Christ as the *via universalis salutis animae*.⁴⁷ The great reverence accorded to the apostles Peter and Paul in *Theoph.* IV 7, with an emphasis upon the Constantinian churches built in their memory, is a response to Porphyry's attack upon them in a number of fragments of the *Contra Christianos*.⁴⁸

In conclusion, the changes made to the soteriological formulae analyzed in this paper were intentionally designed, strategically located,⁴⁹ and served an anti-Porphyrian purpose in Eusebius' apologetic argument. A soteriological universalism, undergirded by a heightened triumphalism, helps to explain the attitude of confidence which exudes the *Theophany* expressed in the changes

'Second Way of Virtue'; and Jurado [2006]: CC 26, Jer., *In Psalm*. LXXXI [Harn. 4; Berchman 93]; and 52, Jer., *Tract. in Marc.* 29-35, *De principio Marci*, I:1-12 [Harn. 9a; Berchman: no listing]; III 25, 54 (Christ fulfilled OT prophecies: e.g., Jurado [2006]: 21, Eus., *DE VI* 18.11.1 [Harn. 47; Berchman 19]); 22, Eus., *Chron. fr. Apud Hier., Chron. a. Abr., praef.* (Helm, 8.1-7; Harn. 40; Berchman 21); 23, Eus., *C. Porph.* VI and VII apud Cod. Lau. (Athos) 184.B64 Saec. X (Goltz, TU 17.4, 41ff.) fol.17: *Schol. Act.* 15.20 (Harn. 8; Berchman 24): 30a, Jer., *In Dan. Prolog.* 1-32 (Harn. 43A; Berchman 70); III 63 (the whole race of humanity has been changed by Christian virtue: a critique of Porphyry's "Second Way" [see Simmons (1995)]; Jurado [2006]: CC 20, Eus., *DE III* 5.95.1-100.1 (Harn. 7; Berchman 17), where Porph. accuses the disciples of mendacity, self-love, blasphemy, etc.; III 71, 78 (God does not need blood and smoke; offering hymns to God, etc.; cf. Porph., *Abst.* II 34.

⁴² Andrew Smith, *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta* (Stuttgart, 1993): 303 F (Eus., *PE IV* 6.2-7.2 = Porph., *Phil. or.*, Prolog).

⁴³ See the works by the present author noted above and *Arnobius of Sicca* (Oxford, 1995), 264-303.

⁴⁴ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. New Edition (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000), 98.

⁴⁵ See Simmons (2009). No one to my knowledge has ever done a study on the presence of universalism in the *Contra Christianos*.

⁴⁶ There are 336 universalism passages in the *Theophany* (5 bks.), 471 in the *DE* (10 bks.) (Simmons, 2010), and 187 in the *PE* (15 bks.) (Simmons, SP XL [2006]), revealing that there is a higher proportion of these passages in the *Theoph.*

⁴⁷ See Simmons (2009) and (e.g.) Aug., *Civ. Dei* X 32; *Phil. or.*, Prolog. (Eus., *PE IV* 7); Jurado (2006): CC 4, Aug., *Ep.* 102 (Harn. 81; Berchman 112); CC 17, Eus., *PE V* 1.9f. (Harn. 80; Berchman 15); CC 24, Eus., *HE VI* 19.2-9 (Harn. 39; Berchman 20); CC 26, Jer., *In Psalm*. LXXXI (Harn. 4; Berchman 93); CC 30 D, Jer., in Dan. I, 2:31-5 (Harn. 43D; Berchman 74), interpreting תלמו תלמו אצרא לך at the end of Dan. 2:35 as applying to the eternal (and universal) rule of the people of Israel; CC 34, Jer., *In Math.* I, 9:9 (Harn. 6; Berchman 95); CC 48, Jer., *Ep.* 133 (Harn. 82; Berchman 106); CC 105, Methodius, *C. Porph.* (Bonwetsch, 345f.; Harn. 84; Berchman 10). There are 88 universalism passages in *Theoph.* III.

⁴⁸ See (e.g.) Jurado (2006): CC 39, Jer., *In Gal. prolog.* (Harn. 21a; Berchman 100); CC 42, Jer., *In Gal.* 2:11ff. (Harn. 21c; Berchman 103); CC 43, Jer., *In Gal.* 5:10 (Harn. 22; Berchman 104); CC 46, Jer., *Ep.* 112.6 (Harn. 21b; Berchman: no listing); CC 47, Jer., *EP* 130.14 (Harn. 25b; Berchman 105).

⁴⁹ See n. 38 above.

we have noted. Although Augustine could years later more accurately reflect upon the marriage of Church and Empire and conclude that 'having a Christian emperor had not made the empire Christian'.⁵⁰ The optimism of Eusebius during its honeymoon, expressed in the *Theophany*, was flying quite high.

⁵⁰ Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2001), 478.

