Our Present Object:
Dynamic and Powerful Eschatology Alongside Dynamic and Powerful Political Ideology in the Historical Work of Eusebius and His Continuators

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Abstract
This study identifies and expounds upon two key constituent elements in the work of the historians of the Eusebian tradition; eschatology and political ideology. Using the ecclesiastical histories of Eusebius, Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen and Theodoret as its essential primary documents, the study demonstrates that in the content of each historical work there resides a dynamic and powerful eschatology which is also accompanied by a dynamic and powerful political ideology in every instance. Though it is impossible to objectively prove that such a coincidence is absolutely interrelated, the study suggests in a compelling way, and based on the research, that a causal relationship is very likely.

In a secondary way, the study is also a witness to an emergent understanding that in Late Antiquity there was a revisioning of eschatology among the theologians of the Early Church which turned from a predominantly apocalyptic understanding of eschatology to one more grounded in history and, more importantly, the historiography of Early Christianity. Such a discovery also lends credence to the notion that the historians of the Eusebian school were not only historians, but historical theologians seeking to shape the Church in the context of her new confidence.
Acknowledgements

This project is the completion of a curious quest of my own and the working out, personally, of what the Eusebian tradition has to say about the nexus of Christian thinking and politics. It is my sincere hope that this work is fruitful and establishes a path of further research, as well as piquing the curiosity, of others as well.

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Introduction

Our Present Object

In the twenty-fifth chapter of the second book of his Ecclesiastical History, Eusebius of Caesarea, the originator of a new and Christian kind of historiography, wrote the following in reference to the persecuting Roman emperor Nero: “Nero, now having the government firmly established under him and henceforth plunging into nefarious projects, began to take up arms against that very religion which acknowledges the one Supreme God. To describe, indeed, the greatness of this man’s wickedness is not compatible with our present object...”¹ For most young students of Christianity, Eusebius is presented as the first historian of Christianity: a fact-finder extraordinaire: a first-rate delver into archives. And yet, here in the heart of his monumental historical work he reveals that the basic description of historical facts relating to the emperor Nero, no small character in the early persecution of Christianity, is not related to “our present object.” This, of course, begs the following question: What is Eusebius’ present object after all? The answer to that question, with regard to both Eusebius and his continuators, is the purpose of the research that follows.

The Eusebian tradition of historiography can be found in the work of Eusebius of Caesarea, Socrates of Constantinople, Hermias Salaminius Sozomen, and St. Theodoret of Cyrus. All four of these historians sought to accomplish something new, originally led by the work of Eusebius. Guided by the sources of history, Eusebius set out to create a narrative of the earliest

¹ Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 2.25. (Here using the English translation of Cruse, which is generally not relied upon in the ensuing research but suits our purposes well in this instance.) See Eusebius of Caesarea, Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History, trans. C.F. Cruse, reprint, 1998 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 62.
Christians highlighted by their eventual success and acceptance under the first Christian emperor Constantine. Following in his footsteps, his continuators largely adopted his form and established mold to catalogue their own eras through their own historiographic narratives.

When one investigates them even to the point of simply scratching the surface of their ideas, however, one discovers immediately their preoccupation with two intertwined ideas: eschatology and political ideology. All four of the historians of the Eusebian tradition are deeply invested in the Christian notion of eschatology, that is, God’s ultimate intentions and desires for His creation. Over and over again in their works, one finds an attention to eschatology that is both noteworthy and ever-present.

Additionally, and not surprisingly for historians interested in the rise of Christianity in Late Antiquity, they are also focused not only on the political actors of their age, but betray in their portrayals a deep interest in the political ideology of their eras. All four historians not only reflect upon their own observations of politics, but also seek to define political ideology in subtle but observable ways. From the stories of the rise of Constantine and his sons, the persecutions of heretical emperors, and the struggles of bishops against persecuting and even pious emperors, these historians are deeply invested in the political stories of their age.

Interestingly, it is in both the eschatology and political ideologies of these historians, that we find the most diversity. Though they share a mutual interest in both topics, they also demonstrate a diversity of interests and opinions in both the intentions of God for humanity and the politics of their days. Could there be a connection between these two themes and the variety of opinions expressed by our historians regarding them? That is the question that leads to the thesis of the following research.

Through an examination of the key work of each of these four historians, the project seeks to prove the following thesis: the stronger and more dynamic the relative eschatological outlook of an historian of the Eusebian tradition was, the more dynamic and powerful was his comparative opinion of Roman imperialism. Put another way, in every instance where a dynamic and powerful eschatology is found in Eusebius and his continuators, there exists in concert with such an eschatology a flexible and strong political ideology.

Such a relationship will be proved through an historical, form and textual analysis of four
key texts: the ecclesiastical histories of all four of these historians. Most importantly, we will employ a comparative textual analysis of the texts in order to establish key controls with which to evaluate the relative dynamism and power of the eschatology and political ideology of each of our successive historians. In the end, we will find that in every instance, the historians of the Eusebian tradition display a dynamic and powerful eschatology which coincides with a dynamic and powerful political ideology.

The project must, of course, begin with foundational issues and the definition of terms and boundaries before a close textual analysis begins. Therefore, our first two chapters detail the foundational groundwork of the study including traditional notions of eschatology and political ideology so that an initial assessment of Eusebius’ own work can be successful. Included in chapter two is an overall intellectual framework which provides the context in which assessment of the texts will be accomplished.

Chapters three through six include close textual analysis of the ecclesiastical histories of our four historians. Special emphasis is placed on comparative analysis and includes the opportunity, particularly in our later historians, to compare their accounts of identical historical events. In each instance the dynamism and power of eschatology and political ideology will be demonstrated.

The study concludes with two very short chapters summarizing the conclusions of the research and suggesting the possible implications of stated conclusions. To begin with, then, we turn to the laying of foundations. Chapter one is an overview of traditional biblical eschatology and a summary of classical political ideology in order to form the basis for an analysis of Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* in chapter three.

**A Note on the Primary Manuscript Traditions**

It is worth completing our introduction with a short discussion of the manuscript traditions of each of our key primary texts, before beginning our investigation, so that we can be assured of the accuracy and completeness of our eventual conclusions.

**Eusebius of Caesarea**

The manuscript tradition of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius can be fairly described
as complicated. The working out of a standardized and authoritative text occurred in the early part of the twentieth century and culminated in the critical text constructed by Eduard Schwartz which is universally accepted now as the standard by which all scholarship on the Ecclesiastical History ought to be based.² Shortly before its publication, however, A.C. Headlam admirably laid out the convoluted history of the manuscripts in his article for the Journal of Theological Studies.³ One can sense his opinion that, in his time, the critical work on the Ecclesiastical History was hopelessly muddled and confused when he wrote the following lines: “This review of the existing editions and history of the printed text will make it quite clear that there is no adequate edition, and that almost all the work will have to be done over again. No collations of the MSS can be trusted, and very little attempt has been made to construct a text on principles which have any pretence to be called scientific.” Headlam recognized the ongoing work of Schwartz, which was published within the same year, and while he included some of Schwartz’s preliminary conclusions, he upbraided Schwartz for resetting the cardinal markers of each manuscript in such a way as to make the overall situation even more confusing.

Be that as it may, Professor Lake adequately summarized the conclusions of Schwartz in the introduction to his English translation of the Ecclesiastical History.⁴ Most importantly, he showed how Schwartz identified two primary groupings of manuscripts from which all other primary texts seem to have been derived. The first grouping, which Schwartz labeled BDMΣL, includes five manuscripts and represents the fourth edition of Eusebius. The second grouping, which Schwartz labeled ATER, includes four manuscripts and represents the same text edited through the lens of a copy of Eusebius’ third edition. It is from these two groupings, and an analysis of their differences both internally and externally, that Schwartz constructed his now authoritative text. A recent appraisal by Friedhelm Winkelmann drives home the point that


Schwartz’s edition is to be trusted not the least because of Harnack’s contemporary approval of
Schwartz.5 In his article, Winkelmann is also complimentary towards Schwartz because of his
fine attention to every detail as evidenced by a quotation from Schwartz that Winkelmann
emphasizes more than once in his appraisal: “He [Schwartz] warned, ‘against the fatal mistake
that it is enough to discard them when interpolations within a manuscript or group are proven;
rather one must always be prepared to discover a good option in a remote corner.’”6 This maxim,
about finding a good option even in a remote corner, Winkelmann relates twice more,7 as a way
to demonstrate Schwartz’s hard work. We can be certain we are in good hands with Schwartz.

Though the English translation of Lake is not universally recommended as the very best,8
it is generally well regarded and has the added benefit of Schwartz’s text on each facing page
which recommends it as the best in this author’s estimation. The English used in this study
principally relies on the Lake and Oulton translation with reference to others and some small
modifications of the author’s for clarity.

Socrates Scholasticus and Sozomen

The manuscript traditions of the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates Scholasticus and
Sozomen are also extremely complicated but fortunate enough to have produced modern critical

Theological Studies os-IV, no. 13 (October 1902): 93–102.

4. Eusebius of Caesarea, HE (Lake / Oulton Translation), xxvii-xxxiii.

(GCS IX/1–3, Leipzig 1903–1909),” Zeitschrift Für Antikes Christentum 8, no. 1 (August

Handschrift oder Gruppe Interpolationen nachzuweisen um sie zu verwerfen; man muß vielmehr
immer darauf gefaßt sein, auch in einem abgelegenen Winkel eine gute Variante zu
entdecken....,” Taken from: Friedhelm Winkelmann, “Eduard Schwartz, Eusebius Werke: Die
Kirchengeschichte (GCS IX/1–3, Leipzig 1903–1909),” Zeitschrift Für Antikes Christentum 8,


8. See Barnes on this where he recommends Lawlor and Oulton translation over Lake and
texts as well. The standard critical editions of both the Ecclesiastical History of Socrates and the Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen are the editions by Hansen in the re-launched German series Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftseller [GCS] which themselves are a revision of the seventeenth-century edition of Henri Valois, generally known by his Latinized surname Valesius. This is not unlike the history related to the tradition of Eusebius since Valesius also produced an edition of Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History upon which Schwartz vastly improved in the first generation of the GCS after his analysis of the various texts which were partially reviewed by Valesius himself. We are fortunate that in our times, Hansen has done for Socrates and Sozomen (and as we shall see Theodoret) what Schwartz did a century earlier for Eusebius.

Like most projects, this study has employed the reprint of Valesius found in the volumes of the Patrologia Graeca Cursus Completus edited by J.P. Migne in the nineteenth century9 alongside the edition of Hansen, always deferring to Hansen. In his introductory remarks,10 Valesius himself discussed the complicated textual history of both of the texts of Socrates and Sozomen, admitting that the text of Sozomen was much easier than that of Socrates. For a full discussion of that history see his introduction and the introduction of Hansen in Hansen’s own edition.

The English translation used for both Socrates and Sozomen’s historical works comes from the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers series of Phillip Schaff with Zenos the translator of the Socrates volume11 and the Sozomen section of the same volume translated by Hartranft.12 These,


though showing their age, are still considered the standard English translations for the church histories of Socrates and Sozomen.

Theodoret of Cyrus

The critical edition of Theodoret is to be found firstly in the edition of Hansen, once again in the GCS series, but secondarily one should always consult the edition of Leon Parmentier\textsuperscript{13} which itself is built upon the work of Valesius\textsuperscript{14} as in the case of our earlier Eusebian historians. It is especially worth looking at both the Hansen and the Parmentier editions since Hansen’s was essentially a reprint of Parmentier with not very many revisions according to Michael Whitby.\textsuperscript{15} Parmentier’s introduction, which can be found in both the first edition of Parmentier’s critical edition, itself a part of the first GCS series, as well as Hansen’s (though mystifyingly not in the second which was also in the GCS series!), speaks a great deal to the manuscript history of the text and its many convolutions.


CHAPTER 1
Foundations:
Apocalyptic Literature, Classical Political Ideology, and Late Antique Rhetoric

Judeo-Christian Apocalyptic Literature and the Eusebian Tradition
Perhaps the most important preliminary matter to clarify when evaluating the interplay of eschatology and the political orientation of Eusebius and his continuators is the primary milieu in which these early historians accessed contemporary eschatological ideas. There can be little doubt that eschatology during the era of the early church was firmly embedded in the literary genre of apocalyptic, a category reaching an ebb in its life cycle during the late third and early fourth centuries. In fact, the associations of apocalyptic literature and eschatological ideas were so strongly enmeshed from the fifth century B.C. to the second century A.D. that modern popular commentary on eschatology often conflates the terms apocalyptic and eschatology.¹ On the theological front, it was not uncommon during the mid-twentieth century for theologians to simply assume that the sole concern of the Judeo-Christian apocalypticist was the hope of a future dispensation.²

1. See, for instance, the description under the heading “Apocalypticism” on Wikipedia, which begins: “Apocalypticism is the religious belief that there will be an apocalypse, a term which originally referred to a revelation of God's will, but now usually refers to belief that the world will come to an end time very soon, even within one's own lifetime.” www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocalyptic. Accessed 29/10/2012. See also Frances Young, “Christianity,” in The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought, ed. Christopher Rowe and Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 635–60. Indeed if one looks in the index to Pelikan’s monumental first volume of his The Christian Tradition under “Apocalypticism” one finds the rather stark “See Eschatology”? See Jaroslav Pelikan, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600), vol. 1 of The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, reprint, 1971 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 380.

2. Ernst Käsemann, “On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic,” in New
Much of this thinking, however, was radically changed with the intense study of the apocalyptic genre undertaken by biblical scholars mid-century and beyond.\textsuperscript{3} Far from understanding apocalyptic literature as simply a cipher for eschatology, scholars began to identify the fact that the prime characteristic of apocalyptic literature was not hope for a transformed future, but rather a visionary quality in which the diverse mysteries of God, both presentist and future-oriented, were revealed to the apocalypticist. In their quest to discover the essential literary quality of apocalyptic literature, biblical scholars coincidentally uncovered the rich multivalency of eschatology in the process. Instead of being a field of inquiry confined to the renderings of the apocalypticist, eschatology was found to have a long history extending back to the era of the Jewish prophets and beyond. Nowhere was this new understanding more carefully systematized than in Christopher Rowland’s groundbreaking study of apocalyptic literature entitled \textit{The Open Heaven}.\textsuperscript{4} In his study, Rowland clearly identified the fact that eschatology, a major though not foundational feature of apocalyptic literature, had a long history in the literature of early Judaism. From the prophetic tradition to the rabbinic legacy, Rowland demonstrated the ways in which eschatology was not always something associated with extra-worldly revelation, and in his defense of a refined definition of apocalyptic, Rowland was able to show the diversity of genres and eras in which eschatology was a major feature.

Such a broadened understanding of the topic is essential to the study of how eschatology became foundational for the political ideology of Eusebius and his continuators. It has sometimes been assumed by scholars that the generation in which Eusebius was writing was inherently anti-eschatological. For instance, A.J. Visser wrote that “the intensity of


\textsuperscript{4} Christopher Rowland, \textit{The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity} (New York: Crossroad, 1982).
eschatological hope slackened very soon both in East and West, [sic] the more dynamic approach of western Christianity, however, was more favorable to revivals of those expectations than the comparatively static and mystic spirituality of the East.”5 Tillich felt that “the receding of the eschatological consciousness of early Christianity led to an almost exclusive emphasis on individual salvation.”6 Even the great theologian and linguist G.W.H. Lampe wrote that “as the Parousia was delayed, and the primitive Church’s sense of urgent and immediate crisis began to fade in the minds of many believers, eschatology began to be replaced, according to one line of thought, by mysticism, or, as we might perhaps more accurately say, by pneumatology.”7 Such musings can be forgiven if they are evaluated in light of a mistaken crasis of the words apocalyptic and eschatological. There can be little doubt that Eusebius (and to a greater extent Origen and Clement before him8) was deeply ambivalent regarding the dark content and visionary themes of late Jewish apocalyptic literature, and also outwardly critical of chiliast or millenialist thinking.9 This in no way however, can be justification for suggesting that either


the Alexandrians or Eusebius and his continuators represent an ebb in eschatological thinking or expectation; or that mysticism (pneumatological or otherwise) is in any way inconsistent with eschatology. On the contrary, the Eusebian historiographical tradition, as will be argued later in the next chapter, represents the ever-constant meandering reflection on the significance of eschatology which flows throughout the whole history of Christian theology. When one no longer considers eschatology and apocalyptic synonymous, it is easy to fathom how Eusebius and his followers can often be silent about or even openly critical of apocalyptic literature or millennialist thinking while at the same time deeply influenced by and reinterpreting the eschatological themes embedded in such literature.

Nevertheless, regardless of their often ambivalent feelings regarding Judeo-Christian apocalyptic literature, it is often in the Eusebians’ reflections upon such literature that modern interpreters discover a developing eschatology planted. Therefore, a primary concern of the current study will be to demonstrate the ways in which Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret are influenced by the Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature of their time even if they do not value all of its many facets.

In order to achieve this goal, a brief overview of the Judeo-Christian apocalyptic literature to which Eusebius and his continuators refer is in order. Just as we will spend the next chapter more carefully defining eschatology as a primary foundation for our work, at least a simple discussion of the definition of apocalyptic is in order in this instance if we are to fully appreciate the ways in which the Eusebians utilize this genre even in their criticism of it.

There are certainly a great many places to which one might turn for a clear definition of the apocalyptic genre. Daniélou argues that “the very word apocalyptic denotes the unveiling by which for the seer the veil that covers the supernal or infernal realities is drawn aside, and he is enabled to contemplate the secrets of the cosmos and of history.” Michael Stone is more illustrative when he writes:

The apocalypses, as the title indicates, are primarily books of revelations typified by the vision form. The visions experienced by the seer are usually symbolic, particularly when

they bear the character of political prediction. In any case, the vision typically bears a mystifying veneer and most often an *angelus interpres* appears to explicate to the seer the interpretation of the symbols or the meaning and implication of the vision.\(^\text{11}\)

As we have already mentioned above, Rowland and Hanson define apocalyptic as a way of thinking and kind of literature which outlines the secrets of God as they have been demonstrated through divine and extra-sensual revelation. The key characteristic in all of these is revelation. Apocalyptic literature, in every case, describes a supernatural revelation given by God to some kind of interpreter, and the consequences and results that occur from that visionary revelation. According to Rowland, apocalyptic “is concerned with knowledge of God and the secrets of the world above, revealed in a direct way by dreams, visions or angelic pronouncements.”\(^\text{12}\)

Perhaps the most representative work of apocalyptic literature amongst the canonical tradition is the book of Daniel. In its visions, dreams and direct angelic interventions, particularly in chapters 7–12, Daniel possesses all of the hallmarks of apocalyptic literature. Along with defining the marks of apocalyptic, Daniel proved to be highly influential to early Christian writing and theology. Though modern Christian eyes often have trouble identifying its impress on Christian literature, one need only pick out key literary tropes from Daniel to tease out its impact on later writers. One such example is the appellation “son of man” used several times in the visionary chapters of Daniel. While the term “son of man” \([^\text{son of man} \text{قانون}\] was not uncommon in the Hebrew canon, Daniel, along with other apocalyptic literature of its day, innovates this phrase to denote a heavenly figure who ushers in a new way of being. One cannot overstate the importance of this term for the Christian evangelists. All four gospels employ the title “son of man” in a variety of ways to designate Christ and his soteriological mission.\(^\text{13}\)


\(^\text{13}\). The title “Son of Man” presents all kinds of complications in the history of biblical interpretation, but one could do worse than consult the recent article of Di Luccio on the topic which argues for the traditional connection between the use of “Son of Man” in the canonical gospels and in the book of Daniel. Di Luccio also provide an updated and exhaustive bibliography on the topic. See Pino Di Luccio, “Son of Man, Sons of the Woman, and Teachers of the Law: Eschatological Features of the Gospel Beatitudes, With a Selected Bibliography on the Son of Man,” *Estudios Eclesiasticos* 84, no. 329 (2009): 337–53.
Similarly, Daniel proves to be foundational for St. John in his writing of Revelation. Particularly in the opening chapters of Revelation, one can see clearly the parallels between the description of the divine mediator in Daniel 10 and the intermediary who reveals heavenly secrets to John in Revelation 1:12.14 Again and again John turns to imagery of Daniel as foundational to the unique apocalyptic revelation disclosed in his own writing.

It should come as no surprise then that Daniel proves to be influential and important to Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret in their work. In the early chapters of his Ecclesiastical History, Eusebius proves this point when he highlights the most memorable vision of Daniel, the ancient of days,15 as the key prophecy for Christ.16 Socrates connects the inability of the Jews to rebuild their temple during St. Cyril of Jerusalem’s episcopate with the prophecy of Daniel regarding the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.17 Theodoret uses Daniel in stories condemning poor emperors through comparison of emperors such as Constantius and Julian the Apostate to King Nebuchadnezzar.18 In fact, its influence is so strong that Eusebius

14. Note the appellation “one like the son of man,” the golden belt, flaming eyes, and hair as white as wool.


17. Socrates Scholasticus, H.E. 3.20. [All English translations of Socrates’ Ecclesiastical History are taken from Socrates Scholasticus, “NPNF 2, 2”. Some small translation additions or emphases are added by the author. The primary text consulted comes from: Socrates Scholasticus, PG 67. Some reference is made to: Socrates Scholasticus, Sokratous Scholastikou Ekklesiastike Istoria, vol. 1–3, trans. R. Hussey (Oxford: E Typographeo Academico, 1853) References to Socrates’ Ecclesiastical History will simply use the normal convention of H.E., followed by the pertinent book and chapter. For a more complete discussion of the manuscript history of Socrates’ Ecclesiastical History please see the section above with the heading “A Note on the Primary Manuscript Traditions.”]

and his continuators feel no need to reference it clearly for their contemporary readers. One of the key tasks of the current study, therefore, will be to carefully tease out the ways in which Daniel is referenced by Eusebius and his continuators as a repository of eschatological reflection.

Daniel, however, is by no means the sole or even primary source of apocalyptic eschatology for the historians of the Eusebian school. While Daniel may represent the apogee of Judeo-Christian apocalyptic eschatology, other works are referenced by our historians as well. Eusebius, for instance, leads his readers, in several passages of the *Ecclesiastical History*, on an odyssey of his opinion of the book of Revelation.\(^\text{19}\) In his most eschatological book of the *Ecclesiastical History*, book ten, Eusebius introduces his famous eulogy on the restoration of the churches by quoting several apocalyptic psalms\(^\text{20}\) and refers to the valley of the dry bones from Ezekiel 37. Though Socrates seems to be the least eschatological of the historians of the Eusebian tradition, even he shows clear evidence of having been influenced by Judeo-Christian apocalyptic literature. At the climax of his work, when he is focusing on the feats of the monks of Egypt, Socrates references Hebrews 11:36-40.\(^\text{21}\) While Hebrews 11 itself shows little evidence of apocalyptic thought, it is the beginning of a series of arguments that St. Paul makes in buttressing his apocalyptic vision at the end of Hebrews 12. Near the end of his work,\(^\text{22}\) Socrates argues that Rougas’ battle with Theodosius is clearly prefigured by the apocalyptic battle in Ezekiel 38, one of the classic early examples of apocalyptic literature. Sozomen also demonstrates the way in which the historians of the Eusebian tradition are influenced by apocalyptic literature. In a section of his *Ecclesiastical History* which outlines the finding of the True Cross and the activities of Constantine and his mother Helena,\(^\text{23}\) Sozomen refers to Zechariah, an important apocalyptic work of the prophetic tradition. In this section, Sozomen

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20. Ps. 98:1-2; Ps. 46:8-9; Ps. 37:35.


writes of how Constantine used the nails of the True Cross in the bit of his horse, thus fulfilling the eschatological prophecy of Zechariah. Again a mere two chapters later, Sozomen details the healing miracles associated with the Michaelion in Constantinople, a temple created by Constantine honoring the Archangel Michael, whose major scriptural appearances happen only in apocalyptic literature. Finally, the Ecclesiastical History of Theodoret demonstrates the literary influence of apocalyptic literature as well. One example is when Theodoret relates Isaiah 8:9, a clearly apocalyptic passage in which God speaks to Isaiah through possession, to the rise of the Arians and the trouble they brought to the Church. Another is the repetition of the Zechariah prophecy relayed in Sozomen’s history. Yet a third is when Theodoret compares the hardening of Julian the Apostate’s heart to the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart in Exodus.

All of these examples demonstrate the way in which apocalyptic literature played a constructive, though not always a conclusive, role in the eschatology of the historians of the Eusebian school, an eschatology we shall define much more fully in our next chapter. Though the tradition of apocalyptic literature that was handed down to these writers proved to be one container of eschatological thinking in and around the New Testamental period, in their work, the

24. Sozomen, H.E. 2.3.

25. The Archangel Michael definitively appears in Daniel, Revelation, and the short letter of Jude. Jude, though not an apocalyptic work, refers to extra-canonical literature regarding Michael’s dispute with the Devil upon the burying of Moses’ body. The phrase with which Michael dismisses the Devil, “The Lord rebuke you!” is reminiscent of Zechariah 3.2, a deeply apocalyptic work.


27. Theodoret, H.E. 1.17. See above.

Eusebian historians, as will be argued more definitively later, provided a diversification of the eschatological genre. In their efforts to catalogue and form the historical narrative of the early Church, they concurrently diversified the way in which the eschatological imperative of nascent Christianity was delivered.

**An Overview of Classical Political Ideology**

As we have mentioned at the outset, one of the key concerns of this study will be to identify the dynamism of the historians of the Eusebian tradition in regard to their political ideologies. In order to accomplish such a task, it is imperative that we establish a primary control to which the political ideas of these early historians can be reliably compared. Such a control can be broadly established by taking into account the political ideology of the Greeks in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, an ideology, which we shall see, is foundational to the political ideology of Eusebius. It must be stated clearly at the outset, however, that the ancient world, as is true with any period of human history, is a testament to the diversity of opinion regarding both political ideology and the organization of society, as contemporary scholarship on the topic of classical political ideology is only too quick to point out.\(^{29}\) Regardless of this fact, however, there can be little doubt that key elements of classical political thought over time became hallmarks and indeed foundations for all further Western political ideology right up until modern times. Such elements, once established, will create for us the litmus test that will establish whether, and to what extent, the early Christian historians of the Eusebian tradition, especially Eusebius himself since he was the originator and earliest writer, were dynamic in their political thinking.

Naturally, an exhaustive review of the entire tradition of classical political thought is not possible in this context. For the purposes of argumentation, however, our position, based upon an analysis of the politics of both Plato and Aristotle, will be that classical political thought can

be broadly characterized as local, anthropocentric, and grounded in a kind of rational positivism.
This is to say that classical political theory (1) was primarily focused on a relatively small social unit, (2) was essentially interested in human concerns and human flourishing, and (3) sought to justify its sociological outlook primarily through observation of the political world in situ.
Focusing primarily on Plato and Aristotle who were the two pillars of classical Greek philosophy and, as we shall see, were also clearly influential for the Eusebian tradition, one can begin to see these three characteristics of classical political ideology more clearly. Such an investigation, while necessarily brief in the current context, is also especially useful due to the fact that Aristotle was often critical of Plato’s conception of politics and thus any deep similarities they shared further emphasize the way in which these three characteristics are foundational for classical political theory in general.

The beginnings of Western political thinking are essentially grounded in local political organization focused on the simple unit of the city-state, or πολίς. In discussing classical Greek politics Paul Cartledge writes that

it is unarguable that their [ancient Greek] politics and ours differ sharply from each other, both theoretically and practically. This is partly, but not only nor primarily, because they mainly operated within the framework of the polis, with a radically different conception of the nature of the citizen, and on a very much smaller and more intimately personal scale (the average polis of the Classical period is thought to have numbered no more than 500 to 2,000 adult male citizens; fifth-century Athens’ figure of 40,000 or more was hugely exceptional). 30

This emphasis on the πολίς is something which is deeply ingrained in the political mind of the ancient Greek world. In fact, the presupposition that the πολίς is the only unit of consideration when discussing the implications of human society is so endemic to the Greek mind that in The Republic, Plato introduces the concept that a πολίς can be a cipher for understanding justice in the individual,

Socrates: ‘We say that there is justice in an individual; but also, I take it, justice in a whole city?’
Adeimantus: ‘Yes.’
Socrates: ‘And a city is something bigger than an individual?’
Adeimantus: ‘Yes, it is.’

Socrates: ‘In that case, maybe justice will be on a larger scale in what is larger, and easier to find out about. So if you approve, why don’t we start by finding out what sort of thing it is in cities? After that we can make a similar inquiry into the individual, trying to find the likeness of the larger version in the form the smaller takes.’

Again and again Plato returns to this theme throughout the *The Republic*, from his analogy comparing Athens in his time to a ship at sea led by an unruly crew, to the iconic allegory of the cave. In fact, though *The Republic* is a work which expostulates a great deal about political theory, it largely assumes the reader to understand that political ideology resides only in the realm of the πόλις, so that Plato can focus his treatise on the idea of justice.

The primacy of the πόλις is also apparent in the political ideology of Aristotle. In the *Politics*, Aristotle focuses his first book on analyzing human society from the specific to the general, beginning with the individual, moving up to the household, and finishing with the πόλις. In doing so, he betrays the unique Greek bias that the πόλις, in its particular classical Greek iteration, is the largest civic unit representative of political ideology. In fact, later on in the *Politics*, Aristotle commences an argument detailing his supposition that the πόλις must be large enough to be self-sufficient, but not too large. He writes: ‘It is evident, then, that this is the best limit for a city: it is the most extensive multitude that serves self-sufficiency of life that can easily be surveyed as whole. Let the size of the city be determined in this way.’

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idea of an actual number that Aristotle had in mind when determining such an ideal size, one need only look to the second book of the Politics in which Aristotle criticizes Plato’s concept of an ideal city, presented in Plato’s Laws, containing 5,000 guardians who must be supported by a larger population of farmers and craftsmen. Aristotle mockingly writes:

Now all the Socratic dialogues display extravagance, brilliance, originality, and a spirit of inquiry; but it is perhaps hard to succeed in everything — witness the number just mentioned: we must not forget that so many people will require the territory of a Babylon or some other infinitely large territory to support 5,000 in idleness, with a further crowd around them, many times as great, of women and servants. We ought to postulate any ideal conditions, but nothing that is impossible.\(^{36}\)

What we can see is that in both the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophic traditions, the largest unit which could be used as a foundation for speaking about politics was the πόλις; and this was the traditional Greek city-state of a much smaller size than the aberration that was Athens, which, it should be emphasized, was often criticized by political theorists of the day partly because of its magnificent size.

A second significant characteristic of classical political ideology was its anthropology, or more specifically the notion by classical political theorists that the object of politics was earthly human flourishing. Such a notion tended to make politics anthropocentric. Martha Nussbaum writes: “Greek and Roman political theory is distinctive in its focus on the soul. All the major thinkers hold that one cannot reflect well about political institutions without reflecting, first, about human flourishing, and about the psychological structures that facilitate or impede it.”\(^{37}\) Cartledge puts it more succinctly: “not some abstraction but men—citizen men—were the polis.”\(^{38}\) For classical political theorists, the success of human society in the here and now was the primary focus of the science of politics. Thus, much as was seen above with the focus of Plato and Aristotle on the comparison between the individual and the πόλις, when Greek thinkers began to consider what the ideal society and government might look like, their primary interest

\(^{36}\) Pol., 2.6.3, 1265¹10-18.


\(^{38}\) Cartledge, “Greek Political Thought,” 21.
was in seeing that male citizens flourished by standards which could be easily measured and quantified.

This meant that ethics, that is the study of value-laden and measurable human behavior governed by a series of established norms meant to lead citizens to earthly success, became central to the political ideology of classical philosophers. As Ryan Balot has written: “Ancient thinkers believed that the polis should provide for the ethical and emotional education, character development, and appropriate religious participation of its citizens. Such provisions, properly established, would not only make the citizens better off as individuals, but also establish justice, stability, and concord (homonoia) for the community as a whole.”39 Over and over the classical Greek philosophers focus their discussions of politics squarely in the realm of ethics with an end towards human flourishing. This is especially true of Plato in The Republic. As Malcolm Schofield writes, The Republic is nothing more nor less than a treatise primarily about ethics despite its somewhat misleading title. “It quickly becomes apparent that the dialogue is primarily an inquiry into justice (dikaiosune), conceived as a virtue or moral excellence of individual persons: the disposition to do what is right or fair, or more broadly to act morally. Thus Republic carries forward the thinking about justice begun in earlier writings of Plato such as Apology, Crito and Gorgias.”40 One section of The Republic which perfectly demonstrates Plato’s focus on human flourishing through ethics as the goal of politics is in Socrates’ discussion with Glaucon of the tripartite soul and the need for balance in the soul to produce a just individual.41 The entire goal of this conversation is to eventually create definitively the link between justice in the individual and justice in the πόλις so that Socrates can theorize the government that best facilitates human flourishing. When Glaucon and Socrates have established the principle that


balance between the three constituent elements of the soul produces justice in the individual, Socrates ensures its strength by saying: “If there is anything in our soul which is still inclined to dispute this . . . we can appeal to everyday life for confirmation.” Socrates then goes on to use the example of a just man (that is a man in which the three parts of the soul are balanced) embezzling money, and he asks Glaucon if this could be possible, to which Glaucon responds in the negative. Socrates then elaborates, asking if it would be possible for the just man to commit theft, adultery, the neglect of parents and other such crimes. Once again Glaucon responds negatively. Therefore, declares Socrates, such evidence proves that balance within the soul produces justice in the individual. This exchange within The Republic characteristically demonstrates the Socratic anthropocentric bias of understanding politics to be primarily about earthly human flourishing through ethical behavior which is determined by observable and measurable results.

The same anthropocentric view can also be found in Aristotle’s writings on politics, even given his strong criticism of Platonic political ideology. As Nussbaum writes: “Aristotle justifies the polis as essential to the complete realization of human ends . . .” Much as is true with other classical political theorists when writing about politics, Aristotle is essentially concerned with discussing the ethics of the individual and how such behavior impacts society as a whole resulting in earthly human flourishing. In his discussion about the best forms of government in book three of the Politics, Aristotle writes: "Mankind, even when they need no help from each other, none the less seek companionship. At the same time their common interest brings them together, in so far as there falls to each of them some part of the good life. This, then, is the chief end, both of each individual and of them all in common." It is to this assertion, that the goal of politics is the good life, that Aristotle returns continuously in his work.

42. Rep., 4.442e.

43. Nussbaum, “Political Theory,” 1207 See also Balot, Greek, 13.

44. Pol., 3.6, 1278b20-1278b29.

45. See, for instance, Pol., 7.1, 1323a14-1323a19, where Aristotle tries to ascertain which life is most choiceworthy, and, in turn, which political system best accomplishes the
definitive in chapter thirteen of book seven of the Politics when he writes:

> Since the matter before us is to know what the best political system is, and this is the one by which a city would be best governed, and it would be best governed by a political system that makes it possible for the city to be happy, evidently we must not overlook the question: what is happiness? We say . . . that it is the actualization and complete enjoyment of virtue—not conditionally, but absolutely.\(^{46}\)

Aristotle’s notion that absolute virtue in the individual leads to individual happiness, and that absolute virtue is established within the context of a particular political system demonstrates his principal notion that classical Greek political ideology is intrinsically anthropocentric because of its concern with human flourishing and happiness.

Finally, it can be said that classical political ideology is essentially based on an epistemology that one might coin rational positivism. To be sure, this term is fraught with difficulty given the modern twentieth-century debate on knowledge and knowing and its inapplicability to ancient thought.\(^{47}\) However, within the context of this study, rational positivism will be clearly defined as a theory of knowledge which begins with an abstract view of reality and then seeks, through earthly sensual means, to verify or undermine that abstraction. In the case of classical political theory, the first two characteristics listed above, namely that classical political ideology is marked by the focus on the local political unit of the πολις, and that it is anthropocentric in that it is concerned with human flourishing and happiness, might be considered the abstraction in a rational positivistic epistemology, while the methods used by Plato and Aristotle in their philosophical inquiries represent the sensible test of that abstraction.

Throughout their work on politics, Plato and Aristotle, even given their differences, ground their conclusions through an appeal to the sensible world around them, Plato in a more choiceworthy life.

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\(^{46}\) Pol., 7.13, 1332a3-1332a10.

\(^{47}\) Note the words of John North: “One of the obstacles De Rijk has to clear out of the way is the historian's habit of applying to ancient Greek philosophers the sort of distinctions between empiricism and rationalism that have been current since Locke and Hume, with all their anachronistic baggage in regard to innate ideas and the various meanings of empiricism.” Though this historian attempts to make no such mistake, North’s comment is a propos. See John North, “Review: Aristotle’s Empiricism,” review of De Rol van de Taal in het Empirisme van Aristotele, Early Science and Medicine 10, no. 1 (2005): 93.
dialectical way through the questioning and conversation of set characters, and Aristotle in a
more scientific way through observation and argumentation. Even though Plato is known
primarily for his theory of the apprehension of the Forms, a topic which seems non-sensual and
purely esoteric, it is possible to demonstrate that Plato seeks to justify his theories through appeal
to everyday sensual life. In her article arguing that Plato is no moral intuitionist as some have
suggested,48 Jyl Gentzler discovers in Plato an appeal, particularly in The Republic, to observable
evidence in his discussion about the nature of justice. She writes: “How does Socrates discover
justice? Not by attempting to perceive directly through the mind’s eye the Form itself, but
through a complicated process of inductive and deductive reasoning that is very familiar to us
from our own philosophical and scientific practice.”49 Particularly in The Republic, the reader
gets the sense that Plato’s epistemology, expounded in the character of Socrates, is grounded in
the world of human reason influenced by observable process and deeply suspicious of anything
beyond such a world. One example has already been observed above when Socrates and
Glaucon are discussing the tripartite soul.50 Having established his theory that the soul is
composed of three parts which must be in balance to produce justice in the individual, Socrates
suggests the following to Glaucon: “If there is anything in our soul which is still inclined to
dispute this . . . we can appeal to everyday life for confirmation.” This appeal to everyday life
for confirmation of theory is common throughout The Republic. Equally common are Plato’s
suspicions regarding the nature of ecstatic or revelatory knowledge. One can see this clearly in
Socrates’ discussion of storytelling and poetry in his ideal city.51 Socrates consistently condemns
the poets for telling stories about the gods which are false and persuades Adeimantus that the
ideal city would have no place for poets who tell false stories about gods. One illustrative


50. See p. 12 above.

passage is when Socrates discusses the nature of the gods. Socrates is utterly opposed to any poet or storyteller who suggests that the gods can change in relation to an external cause in any way on the grounds that gods are perfect and things that are perfect are least vulnerable to change from outside influences. To justify his thinking to Adeimantus, Socrates says: “The same, presumably, goes for anything manufactured—furniture, houses and clothes. What is well made and in good condition is least affected by time and other influences.”\(^{52}\) Further on, Socrates argues that gods would not change of their own volition either, because of the fact that no human is “prepared to make himself worse in any way at all.”\(^{53}\) Throughout books two and three of *The Republic*, Socrates rails repeatedly against poets and their stories because they do not ground themselves in rational thought supported by human observation. Such reasoning, on the part of Socrates, demonstrates the Platonic penchant for justifying ideas and ideology through an appeal to the sensible world which buttresses human reasoning.

This epistemological predilection plays an important role in Plato’s formulation of political theory specifically. The entire premise of *The Republic* is to characterize the perfect city-state, *Kallipolis*, through discovering what creates such a *πολίς*. Socrates’ main conclusion is that the best city-state is that one which creates the most happiness for its citizens. Happiness occurs when the human soul composed of three parts, the appetitive, spirited and rational, is in balance, with the rational ordering them all. How does Socrates know this? From clear observation of the sensible world around him. Take the following discussion in which Glaucon and Socrates discuss how one knows that a tyrant is unhappy, and thus by extension a tyranny is an unhappy form of government:

Socrates: ‘The tyrannical man, I believe, is not yet the unhappiest.’
Glaucon: ‘Who is, then?’
Socrates: ‘There is someone else you may think unhappier still.’
Glaucon: ‘Who?’
Socrates: ‘The tyrannical man who does not live the life of a private individual, but is unfortunate enough to be given the opportunity, by some mischance, of actually becoming a tyrant.’
Glaucon: ‘From what we have said already, I take it you must be right.’

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Socrates: ‘Yes. All the same, claims like this should not be a matter of belief. We should use careful argument in examining an individual of this sort. After all, the object of our enquiry—the good life and the bad life—is of the highest importance.’

Glaucon: ‘Precisely,’ he said.  

Socrates then goes on to use the example of a wealthy individual who owns many slaves, suggesting that a true political tyrant is exactly the same kind of person, and that such a person is unhappy, generally, because he himself becomes a slave to those to whom he issues orders. While one might quibble with his argument, there can be no doubt that a kind of rational positivistic epistemology, as defined above, is displayed here. Clearly stating that such conclusions cannot be based on “a matter of belief,” Socrates goes on to use everyday life to justify his understanding of happiness and unhappiness which then forms the basis for his conclusions regarding political ideology. Ultimately, what one discovers is that Platonic epistemology in relation to political ideology is based on beliefs justified through argumentation using everyday observational data as evidence.

Much the same process is in evidence in Aristotle’s political thinking. It is common knowledge that Aristotle, particularly in his biological, physical and zoological studies, was much more of an empiricist, epistemologically speaking, than his teacher Plato had been, and this is indeed one of the main reasons why we find a general revision of Plato’s philosophical agenda in the work of Aristotle. Aristotle often grounded anything he claimed to know in the observable phenomenon of the particulars displayed all around him, and this is also true of his work on political ideology. Edward Sankowski writes: “Aristotle is often said to be more empirically minded than Plato. His aversion to utopianism, his classification of different sorts of constitutions and states, and other points are often adduced to show that Aristotle emphasizes


55. See the comment of D.W. Hamlyn: “It is often said that Aristotle thought that all the materials of knowledge, all the concepts which it involves, are derived from experience. In my opinion, there is some doubt about that, although he did think that the acquisition of knowledge depended in one way or another on experience.” D.W. Hamlyn, “Epistemology, History Of,” in The Oxford Companion to Philosophy, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 261.
more than his teacher the descriptive-explanatory component of political philosophy.”56 One place where the reader can especially note this fondness for empiricism is in books 4–6 of the *Politics*. It is in these sections that Aristotle lays out his evidence proving which constitutions are the worst, which the best, how factionalism overthrows constitutions, and other such concerns which provide the evidence that can enable the political theorist to determine which constitution is the best political system to bring about human happiness. One small example will suffice to demonstrate Aristotle’s reliance upon empirical facts:

> Men also form a faction and make attacks because of contempt. For example, they form a faction in oligarchies when those who do not share in the constitution are more numerous than those who do (for they think they are stronger), and they form a faction in democracies when the prosperous are contemptuous of the disorder and unruliness. Thus at Thebes, after the battle of Oenophyta, the democracy was destroyed because they were badly governed; and the democracy of the Megarians was destroyed when they were defeated because of disorder and unruliness; and at Syracuse before the tyranny of Gelona and at Rhodes before the uprising the people <similarly aroused contempt by its disorder and unruliness>.57

Throughout the *Politics*, and even his other works, Aristotle’s understanding of knowledge always relies on some kind of experiential instance which is grounded in the sensual.

The argument is made, then, that both Plato and Aristotle, the two preeminent classical political theorists who influenced later generations, grounded their theory of knowledge in a kind of rational positivist mold, simply defined as an understanding that political theorizing must be rooted in the observable phenomena of everyday life as accessed through the human senses. Though it is easy to recognize that both Plato and Aristotle were interested in metaphysical concerns that reached beyond the sensible world, they always apprehended such knowledge through human experience.

Establishing the πόλις as a foundational unit within which to envision politics while at the


same time postulating that the end of political ideology was earthly human flourishing, and asserting that political ideology was grounded in a rational positivistic epistemology had immediate and binding consequences for the development of political ideology in the Greek world. One such consequence was the prevalence of an overriding philosophy of individualistic and rational anthropocentrism in Greek political thought. As Barker writes: “A sense of the value of the individual was thus the primary condition of the development of political thought in Greece.”58 Of necessity, using the πόλις as a political bedrock opened political theory to the great variety of characteristic city-states about which to criticize and theorize leading to a general acceptance of diversity as a rule of thumb when it came to practicing and thinking about politics. Additionally, accepting sensual historical phenomena as the basis of knowledge about politics generated a great variety of ways in which to envision human flourishing, the end goal of classical political thought. As a result, individualism and human-centeredness became hallmarks of Hellenistic culture.

A second, and associated, consequence was that classical political thought took it for granted that factionalism was a necessary and unavoidable outcome of any constitution or political agreement. If individualism and variety were key characteristics of political humanity, then a multivarious amount of groups in the body politic was the natural result. The key for classical Greek political thinkers was to manage such factionalism through a concept Gregory Vlastos has identified as ἴσονομία, which could be translated loosely to mean equilibrium.59 Vlastos has argued that such an understanding undergirds all of Greek political thinking, even when an author is resistant to it. As an example, take Vlastos’ observation that ἴσονομία is

58. Barker continues: “Whatever may be said of the 'sacrifice' of the individual to the State in Greek politics or in Greek theory, the fact remains that in Greece, as contrasted with the rest of the ancient world, man was less sacrificed to the whole to which he belonged than he was elsewhere. The Greeks were never tired of telling themselves that while in their communities each man counted for what he was worth, and exercised his share of influence in the common life, in the despotisms of the East nothing counted but the despot, nor was there any common principle at all.” Ernest Barker, The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle (New York: Russel & Russel, Inc., 1959), 2.

59. Or more strictly, “equality of political rights,” the second definition given in LSJ.
evident in Plato when one would not expect it. He argues that although Plato demonstrates clear anti-democratic tendencies in The Republic 8.561e, 563b, his Seventh Letter clearly supports the notion that ἴσονομία is an unavoidable characteristic of healthy political life if factions are to be managed.\(^{60}\) This was not the least reason why ethical education was important to ancient Greek political thinkers as Ryan Balot notes in the following: “ancient thinkers believed that the polis should provide for the ethical and emotional education, character development, and appropriate religious participation of its citizens. Such provisions, properly established, would not only make the citizens better off as individuals, but also establish justice, stability, and concord (homoioia) for the community as a whole.”\(^{61}\)

This key concept of ἴσονομία is present both in Plato and Aristotle. For instance, when discussing with Glaucon the essential character of justice in his ideal republic Socrates asserts the following:

Socrates: 'Here's another way of looking at it. See if you still agree. Will you give the rulers in your city the task of hearing cases in the law courts?'
Glaucon: 'Of course.'
Socrates: 'When they hear cases, will their main aim be to make sure no class either takes what belongs to another, or has what belongs to it taken away by someone else?'
Glaucon: 'Yes, that will be their main aim.'
Socrates: 'Because this is just?'
Glaucon: 'Yes.'\(^{62}\)

The essential character of justice established by Plato here, then, is something deeply foreign to modern Western ears. Instead of appealing to an abstract code, Socrates appeals to ἴσονομία which forms the bedrock of justice in the perfect polis.

Aristotle asserts much the same thinking in his Politics when he writes:

But obviously a state which becomes progressively more and more one will not be a state at all. For a state is by nature a plurality of some sort, and the more it becomes one, it will turn from a state into a household, and from a household into an individual person. For we would say that the household is more one than the state, and the single individual than the household. So, even if someone proved able to achieve this, it ought not be


\(^{61}\) Balot, Greek, 4.

\(^{62}\) Rep., 4.433e.
These two consequences of the three characteristics of Greek political thought will become important indicators further on when compared to the historical work of the Eusebian tradition. Where diversity and the assumption of the necessity of ἴσονομία are present, there we shall expect to find static Christian political ideology alongside a weak and static eschatology while displaying all of the conservative elements of classical political thought. Conversely, the absence of such thought will demonstrate a political dynamism paired with an eschatology not present in the political work of ancient Greek thinkers.

There are two objections that immediately come to mind after establishing the control we have just observed above. Firstly, one must finally ask the simple question of whether or not it could be said that the Eusebian tradition, and in particular its originator Eusebius himself, was in any meaningful way influenced by the classical, and especially in this case, Platonic political tradition? It would be foolish indeed to argue that such a control established above is normative if, in fact, our historians are little influenced by its foundations. Secondly, given the fact that Platonism in the time of Eusebius was largely seen through the lens of the Neoplatonic thinkers of Late Antiquity, can it be argued that Eusebius himself had any sense of a classical Platonic political ideology given the generally-held opinion that the Neoplatonists were apolitical?64

At first glance, the conclusion that Eusebius and his continuators had no interest in Platonic political philosophy might be defensible. After one reads through the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, while political ideas are prevalent throughout, one can find little evidence that his work was at all interested in a dialogue with the classical political ideology we have established above. However, such an observation does not, in fact, mean that Eusebius is not influenced by the classical political tradition. The only fact that one can establish from this state of affairs is that Eusebius is silent about the classical tradition in his historiographical work; and indeed, when we consider the larger corpus of his work, such silence does not, in fact, truly

63. Pol., 2.2.1, 1261a16-21.

indicate ignorance or ambivalence.

To begin with, the idea that Eusebius was uninterested in the work of Plato has already been challenged by many authors. Les Places took a strong stand on the issue, arguing that Plato appeared as a major source for Patristic Christian writers, second only to Scripture, and that Eusebius himself constituted the primary author of antiquity that used Plato’s *Laws* in his work. Farina, as well, has expounded upon the influence of Plato on Eusebius quoting both Dempf and Morisi about Plato’s influence specifically on Eusebius’ political thinking.

However, it is not necessary to simply take the word of scholars on the issue. Eusebius himself demonstrates a wide-ranging understanding of Plato in his famous work *Preparation for the Gospel*, in which he argues, against the Neoplatonist Porphyry, that the primary influence for Christian theology is ancient Hebrew theology, which itself reflects all of the erudition of classical Greek philosophy without its errors and heresies. Perhaps the most revealing passage for our purposes is early in book eleven where Eusebius discusses the overall scheme of Plato’s philosophical programme and then, through reference to Atticus, who happens to be a later


68. Farina quotes an especially long selection from Morisi in which he argues that Eusebius’ famous *Laus Constantini* or *Triakonterikos* is a strong reflection of Platonic notions of politics. See Anna Morisi, “Ricerche Sull’ideologia Imperiale a Bisanzio,” *Acme: Annali Della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia Dell’Università Degli Studi di Milano* 16 (1963): 130–33.
Platonist, buttresses his understanding. According to Eusebius, the point of his eleventh book is to exhibit the agreement of the Greek philosophers with the Hebrew Oracles in some if not in all of their doctrinal theories. Dismissing therefore those of whom it is superfluous to speak, we call up the leader of the whole band, deeming it right to adopt as umpire of the question Plato alone as equivalent to all: since it is likely that as he surpassed all in reputation he will be sufficient by himself for the settlement of our question. But if at any point it should be necessary, for the sake of giving clearness to his thought, I shall also make use of the testimony of those who have studied his philosophy, and shall set forth their own words for the settlement of the question before us. Let me, however, make this reservation, that not every matter has been successfully stated by the master, although he has expressed most things in accordance with truth. And this very point also we shall prove at the proper season, not in order to disparage him, but in defence of the reason for which we confess that we have welcomed the Barbarian philosophy in preference to the Greek.

This quite dense quotation is full of insights when it comes to Eusebius’ understanding of Plato. First of all, Eusebius clearly sees Plato as the chief authority amongst all the ancient philosophers. Additionally, when he feels the need, he will appropriately use the interpreters of Plato, that is the later Platonists, as a guide for understanding Plato’s thinking. Such a recognition lends credence to our argument that understanding Plato’s conception of political ideology is a valid method for establishing a control by which to measure Eusebius’ fidelity to classical political ideology, since, as Eusebius himself admits, Plato is the master of classical philosophy. Additionally, we should note the way in which Eusebius is quick to use the later Platonists as a guide to Plato’s thinking. This proves that he was well aware of Plato in addition to the later Platonists and did not confuse the two. What remains is to reveal whether or not the later Platonists to whom Eusebius refers are in any way interested in political ideology, and particularly our baseline outlined above.

In the very next chapter of book eleven, Eusebius follows his own guidelines and turns to Atticus, a later Platonist, as a way to explain the general structure of Plato’s philosophy. He writes, quoting Atticus:


Since therefore the entire system of philosophy is divided into three parts, the so-called Ethical topic, and the Physical, and also the Logical; and whereas the aim of the first is to make each one of us honourable and virtuous, and to bring entire households to the highest state of improvement, and finally to furnish the whole commonality [πολιτεία] with the most excellent civil polity and the most exact laws...

Here we see the characteristics we identified so clearly above, namely the fact that classical politics was local, anthropocentric and in a rational positivistic mode. In his definition of the ethical facet of philosophy, Atticus outlines something we so clearly identified in both Plato and Aristotle above. Namely, politics is essentially concerned with human flourishing, is contained within intensely local communities (and here we note the use of the term politeia a direct derivative of polis), and can be measured by observable sensual means in the concrete objective reality of laws and functional government. Once again, it is worth pointing out that Eusebius chooses to clarify his understanding of Plato through the use of a later Platonist, who, at least in this case, demonstrates an interest in politics which is both consistent with classical Platonic thinking and clearly reflects Eusebius’ own opinion since Eusebius is using Atticus to clarify his own estimation of Platonic classical philosophy.

Furthermore, if one were to complain that there is little evidence in the Ecclesiastical History that Eusebius even knows of Plato’s political ideology because of the fact that no attention is paid to Plato’s key works on the subject and therefore suggesting that classical political ideology ought to be a yardstick by which to measure the dynamism of Eusebius’ political ideology is suspect, one would only need to point out the fact that in the Preparation for the Gospel, Eusebius does, in fact refer to The Republic and the Laws so frequently that a cataloguing of it would be far beyond the scope of this work.


to an analysis of the form of the *Ecclesiastical History* and how that form relates to the form of the *Preparation for the Gospel*, the work in which we find so much of his familiarity with classical philosophy.

In his breakdown of Eusebius’ many works, Timothy Barnes classifies them into many categories. What is noteworthy is the fact that the *Ecclesiastical History* and the *Preparation of the Gospel* are placed into two different categories. The first is obviously a part of Eusebius’ historical works in the estimation of Barnes, and few could disagree with him. The *Preparation for the Gospel*, according to Barnes, falls within the purview of Eusebius’ apologetic works. This judgment makes clear sense when one considers the fact that at the beginning of the *Preparation for the Gospel* Eusebius states the following: “With good reason therefore, in setting myself down to this treatise on the *Demonstration of the Gospel*, I think that I ought, as a preparation for the whole subject, to give brief explanations beforehand concerning the questions which may reasonably be put to us both by Greeks and by those of the Circumcision [Jews], and by every one who searches with exact inquiry into the opinions held among us.”

It seems clear, then, that in an apologetic work which attempts to argue in favor of one’s own position and against that of another, direct quotation from one’s adversary is extremely important. The *Ecclesiastical History*, however, makes no such formulaic claims. Instead, as is well known, Eusebius states that his interest in writing the *Ecclesiastical History*, is to give a succession of the holy apostles, the events of the earliest Church, the names and errors of the heretics who tried to subvert the Church, and the succession of the holy bishops. In short, Eusebius intends to tell the history of the Church. Herein we find a solution to the problem of why, in a work that clearly has political ideology in mind, there is no reference made in the *Ecclesiastical History* to the normative political ideology of the day, a political ideology clearly familiar to our author when we consider his more apologetic work. Eusebius makes this editorial


choice based upon the form of his work. As an historical work, not an apologetic one, he chooses not to sully purity with quotation from adversaries unseen.

This should, however, in no way give us the impression that Eusebius is not self-consciously constructing a political ideology in conversation with the prevailing ideas of his time. Nothing could be further from the truth! Eusebius, and, one should add, those who follow him, are well aware of the intellectual context of their age and the fact that what they are writing is in conversation with such a context. The fact is, Eusebius is extremely true to his era. Late Antiquity, as we shall see, was a time in which the intelligentsia were particularly fixated on meaning through form. For Eusebius, the form of his *Ecclesiastical History* was just as important as its content. This insight provides us the perfect segue through which to transition into the very important discussion of rhetoric in Late Antiquity and its impact on Eusebius and his continuators.

**Late Antique Rhetoric**

The final consideration when undertaking an examination of the influence of eschatology on the political ideology of the early Christian historians is the very nature of the kind of work produced by them. Perhaps one of the most unhelpful boxes into which Eusebius’ legacy has been pigeonholed throughout the centuries is the cubby labeled “antiquarian,” as if Eusebius was a member of a 19th-century German school of historical research. The following examples will suffice to prove the point. “Although not an eloquent writer or original thinker, he [Eusebius] preserved precious documents and valuable reflections on Christian life and thought in a transitional period.” “It is still true that the chief value of the work [of Eusebius] is to be found in its largely nontheological handling of the material.” Perhaps the most blatant modern


78. L.G. Patterson, *God and History in Early Christian Thought* (New York: The Seabury
example of this can be found in the work of Timothy Barnes where Barnes dismisses Eusebius as not the slightest bit theologically or philosophically inclined and claims that he meditated on the sacred Scriptures, though not profoundly.\textsuperscript{79} Such sentiments ironically betray a kind of unsophisticated modern commentary on the nature of historical writing in Late Antiquity. In order to understand the deeper interconnectedness of political ideology and eschatological thinking in Eusebius and his continuators, however, one must begin from the perspective that the work of these historians was not simply archival work but, in fact, theological insight in its own right.

Such a perspective is not difficult to accept if one begins by framing the work of the early ecclesiastical historians as a kind of emerging rhetoric common to the era in which they lived. The work of Averil Cameron and her insights into the nature of rhetoric in Late Antiquity easily open the door to such an understanding. In her book \textit{Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire}, Cameron argues that one of the strategies that furthered Christian success in Late Antiquity was the way in which it repossessed the fading imperial rhetoric of the time. Due to the fact that the empire was becoming more aloof and elitist,\textsuperscript{80} Christian orators filled the vacuum and substituted the typical figural and imperial rhetoric familiar with the masses of the late classical world with a new kind of representational language which used verbal figures dominated by the paradoxical\textsuperscript{81} and narrative quality\textsuperscript{82} of Christian themes to support the societal needs of unity, stability and consensus in the face of a crumbling social order and economy.

Though Cameron only focuses marginally on Eusebius’ \textit{Life of Constantine} and much of

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her evidence seems not to be supported by traditional historical works, her theory can easily
apply to the work of our historians. Cameron sums up more clearly her theory in relation to
historical work in the introduction to *History as Text* when she writes:

> But, lest anyone should be thinking otherwise, literature and history must go together. History is not just rhetoric, it is true, even those types of history least amenable to direct falsification by the appearance for instance of new evidence. But rhetoric in the wide sense, that is, all that is implied by textuality, is as much a part of all but the most technical historical writing as it is of literature itself. The ancients knew that history was not the same as poetry, a judgment which modern critics have tended to disdain as self-evident or trivial. Now it does not seem so pointless after all. Poetry and history are distinguished, it may now seem, far less by any appeal for verification to the facts 'out there' than by scope and arrangement of material, by author's intention, if that be still allowed, and by capacity to persuade their audience that that is what they are.83

If, instead of simplistically assuming that Eusebius and his continuators are nothing more than compilers of facts, scholars recognize that the shaping of historical truth is, in fact, rhetorical, then we can begin to see the way in which such Late Antique rhetoric, as Cameron discovered, is theological work in its own right. That is to say that the work of history in the Church is a theological enterprise in that reflection upon the events of the past, when such reflection is accomplished within the ever-present milieu of an eschatological worldview initiated in Jesus Christ, means to assert something substantial about God and God’s purposes in creation. Such an understanding undergirds the entire premise of the current study and without it the foundational argument that the early historians’ political ideology was influenced by their eschatology is groundless. It is this author’s firm belief that Eusebius and his continuators were consciously shaping the theological outlook of the Christian world through the historical enterprise.

All that remains, then, is to delve into the works of our four historians with abandon, hoping to uncover the depth, or lack thereof, of their eschatological insights, their relative fidelity to standard political ideology, as established through the analysis above, while always keeping in mind the fact that Eusebius and his continuators worked within the literary tradition of an emerging Christian rhetoric intent on remaking the world in a Christian mold through the power

of language. Before doing so, however, we will define eschatology even more clearly just as has
been done regarding classical politics. In this way, we can have no doubt when we encounter it
in the work of our historians.
CHAPTER 2
Emerging Patristic Eschatology

Before turning to the essential research of this study, which will be a close textual analysis of the key historical work of Eusebius and his continuators, we are left with the important task of defining eschatology so that it might be easily discovered wherever it exists in the writings of our historians. As demonstrated in the above, eschatology, though often linked closely to apocalyptic literature, was not entirely defined by such literature. Perhaps Brian Daley’s definition provides the most insight in relation to the Eusebian historians. “Eschatology, in Christian terms, is theological reflection on the hope of believers: hope in God’s final resolution of the ambiguities of history and in the final salvation of both individual and community from death and sin, rooted in the conviction that this final resolution and salvation have already begun in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus.”¹ This emphasis on the embodied Jesus is an important point when discussing the process through which the Patristic tradition modified and adjusted the goals and outlook of traditional apocalyptic eschatology.

In his book on the Christian mystical tradition, Andrew Louth has this to say about the way in which the mysticism of the early Fathers drifted from the Middle and neo-Platonism of the day:

Philo’s concern is to show that pagan philosophy could discover nothing not already, for the Jew, a matter of revelation—and the revelation of God, moreover, not simply of the divine. This trend assumes even greater importance in the Christian Fathers. Whatever the influence of Platonism, they were concerned with God and not with the divine. Philo’s idea of a God who speaks, who declares Himself, is given a sharper edge and more immediacy when, with the Fathers, he becomes the God who speaks and declares Himself in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.²


What Louth applies here to the mystical tradition could just as easily be applied to the Christian eschatological tradition. While the authors of apocalyptic eschatology envisioned the working out of God’s plan for creation in visionary and often dramatically violent terms, the early historians of the Church, beginning with Eusebius, understood eschatology as embedded within the historical Christian narrative of Christ’s incarnation, life, death, resurrection and the ultimate historical consequences that proceeded from them. Such a development would seem perfectly natural.

In fact, one cannot help but feel that Eusebius may have developed his innovative eschatological outlook while studying with his teacher Pamphilus, a great admirer and compiler of the works of Origen. Both Pamphilus and Eusebius worked together on Pamphilus’ *Apology for Origen*, and we hear echoes of Louth’s assertions above when Brian Daley comments in relation to the eschatology of Origen: “This knowledge of God [eschatological knowledge] will also include a thorough understanding of ‘the reasons for all things that happen on the earth,’ an understanding of God’s motives for creation and of the benign working of providence in history (*PArchi* 2.11.5).”3 By virtue of the fact that Christian faith understood God as now not only transcendent but also immanent, the eschatology of the Christian historians, of necessity, grappled with the notion that the end of creation must be embedded within the very stuff of history. Origen clearly understood this, but his penchant for speculative reasoning and his mystical demeanor left him simply at the doorstep of the archives. Eusebius, however, dove into the stacks with abandon, tossing up the dust of scrolls in an attempt to work out a new emerging historical eschatology.

Such an understanding brings us much further towards discovering why scholars have often misinterpreted Eusebius’ open disdain in the *Ecclesiastical History* for millennialism and his ambivalence regarding Revelation as antipathy toward eschatology in general.4 Instead we

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4. See the comment of Visser above in chapter one. More on this, as well, in the next
see in Eusebius and his continuators the working out of eschatology in relation to a growing awareness in the Christian tradition of the importance of history. As Christians became more and more aware of the consequences of having an embodied God who enters into and changes human destiny, they had to grapple with the consequences such a situation created in relation to their ideologies. This was certainly true when it comes to the field of historiography.

Additionally, there is in the Eusebian school an inherited disdain for elitism and a concurrent unease with simple literalism. Therefore, Eusebius’ criticism of the biblical book of Revelation, for instance, can be viewed as his discomfort with individually negotiated revelation while at the same time a refusal to simply view the events of history as objective via a simple and plain reading of text. It is an inherited trait, one might argue, because the same can be seen in the theological inquiry of Origen. In fact, if we return to Daley once more, his following comment regarding Origen’s eschatology could equally be applied to Eusebius: “...Origen remains concerned to oppose both the thoroughgoing ‘realized eschatology’ of the Valentinians—the assumption that resurrection and eternal life essentially refer to present gnostic enlightenment—and the more materialistic expectations of many Christians who take the biblical promises literally.”

The same trend can be seen in Eusebius’ continuators. Though Theodoret is less a universal historian than Eusebius and more focused on the local and heroic histories of Syria, his work shies away from seeing individual saints as sole arbiters of eschatological truth. Their stories are meant for mass consumption, not individual vignettes of elitist theology. At the same time, Theodoret understands the events of his history, and especially, as we shall see, his unique shaping of those events, as shedding light on deeper truths not evident to the simple surface level observer. History, and especially constructed history for Theodoret, is a cipher for God’s deeper intentions for all of creation.

Precisely because of their Christian historiographical outlook which produced critical attitudes in relation to apocalyptic eschatology, Eusebius and his continuators concerned

chapter dedicated to Eusebius.

themselves with championing eschatology in a different way. This new eschatology was focused on the visible events of history moderated through the eyes of humanity. Such an historical eschatology, which henceforth one might call iconic, originates in the Christian historiographical tradition with Eusebius. It is an iconic eschatology because it seeks the meaning of God’s ultimate aims through observation of the actual events of history, themselves collectively an icon, which are revelatory for the Eusebian tradition but also require interpretation. Ultimately such interpretation is the nature of the Christian historiographical enterprise.

The whole Christian drama points to the importance of imagery, historical or otherwise, as soon as the incarnation of Christ takes place. As Robin Jensen has recently argued with relation to early Christian art on sarcophagi⁶ or Ouspensky argued in his important work on the convergence of iconography and theology,⁷ the notion of the image as a window through which one might view God has been central to Christianity from its origins. If God chose to become visible to humanity, it only makes sense that Christian theologians began to view visible historical events as essential to understanding the deeper intentions of God.

All of this coincides nicely with Cameron’s thesis already mentioned above. Cameron argues that Christian leaders in Late Antiquity were successful in gaining the reins of persuasive societal power precisely because they repossessed the tool of rhetoric abandoned by Hellenistic elites during this period. Their innovation, however, was the way in which they tied their rhetoric to an emphasis on imagery.⁸ This was a broad Patristic movement which can be easily identified in the writings of Fathers often characterized as more theological than the early

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6. Her article “considers how early Christians might have regarded their visual art and proposes that the act of viewing generated a certain kind of subjective epiphanic experience—one that was cognitively different from hearing a sermon or reading Scripture and more like having an eyewitness encounter with the holy.” Robin M. Jensen, “Early Christian Art and Divine Epiphany,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 127.

7. “This Tradition attests that within the Church there was from the beginning a clear understanding of the meaning and scope of the image, and that the attitude of the Church towards the image is invariably the same, since this attitude derives from its teaching on the Incarnation of Christ.” Leonid Ouspensky, *The Theology of the Icon* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992), 41.

historians. For instance, Gregory of Nyssa displays this kind of image-conscious rhetoric throughout his commentary on the life of Moses. One such example is when he uses the burning bush in the story of Moses’ rise to leadership as a multifaceted image meant to guide humanity toward God:

It is upon us who continue in this quiet and peaceful course of life that the truth will shine, illuminating the eyes of our soul with its own rays. This truth, which was then manifested by the ineffable and mysterious illumination which came to Moses, is God. And if the flame by which the soul of the prophet was illuminated was kindled from a thorny bush, even this fact will not be useless for our inquiry. For if truth is God and truth is light—the Gospel testifies by these sublime and divine names to the God who made himself visible to us in the flesh—such guidance of virtue leads us to know that light which has reached down even to human nature. Lest one think that the radiance did not come from a material substance, this light did not shine from some luminary among the stars but came from an earthly bush and surpassed the heavenly luminaries in brilliance. From this we learn also the mystery of the Virgin: The light of divinity which through birth shone from her into human life did not consume the burning bush, even as the flower of her virginity was not withered by giving birth.9

In this short passage we see two images being presented by Gregory iconically; light and the bush itself. The light, for Gregory, is an icon of God Who reaches even human nature. The bush, being unconsumed, is of course an icon of the Virgin Mary or Theotokos. One can see this same iconic tendency in many of the Fathers. Gregory the Theologian begins his poem on the angels by writing: “Now as, amidst a clearing, rain-laden air, meeting the clouds with circulating reflection, the sun’s ray unwinds a many-colored rainbow, while, from above, all the ethereal element gleams with manifold circles, which break up further out: such also is the nature of the lights which radiate always from the highest light, illuminating lesser intellects with their beams. And truly he is the fountain of lights, the Light which cannot be named . . .”10 Here Gregory also uses the image of light, particularly in reference to the creation of a rainbow, to demonstrate how the angels are related to God their creator. Methodius, incidentally one of Origen’s strongest


critics, also uses such iconic rhetoric in his famous Symposium. In the fictional dialogue created by Methodius, he puts into the mouth of one of his characters his clear opinion concerning the use of history. His character states that

it would have been pointless for that wise man who wrote under inspiration—I mean Paul—to apply the union of the first man and woman to Christ and the Church, if holy Scripture were referring to nothing loftier than the literal meaning of the words and to actual history. For if we are really to take Scripture merely as giving a representation of the union of man and woman, why then does Paul, in referring to it and, as I think, guiding us into the way of the Spirit, allegorize the story of Adam and Eve and apply it to Christ and the Church?11

What is clearly implied in this passage from Methodius is that Scripture, as a catalogue of history, provides for the theologian the building blocks of a deeper understanding of God’s purposes revealed in an iconic way. Therefore, Paul can, in the context of his full revelation of Jesus Christ, understand the Genesis creation story in a revelatory manner. No longer is it only a story about the creation of the world and humanity. It is also an iconic revelation of the deeper relationship between humanity and the Church.

Perhaps Ephrem the Syrian is the most explicit when he describes this iconic narrative tendency in his own work. “In his book Moses described the creation of the natural world, so that both Nature and Scripture might bear witness to the Creator: Nature, through man’s use of it, Scripture, through his reading of it. These are the witnesses which reach everywhere, they are to be found at all times, present at every hour, confuting the unbeliever who defames the Creator.”12 Here we see the explanation for an iconic historical worldview summed up neatly, even in the words of a non-historian! God has created all of creation, regardless of place or time, as a revelation of His presence.

As we shall see, in the historians, this tendency is no less pronounced. Eusebius builds up his entire Ecclesiastical History towards the fever pitch that is book ten. In book ten, Eusebius delivers an oration at the consecration of the church in Tyre and fills his homily with


imagery meant to convince his readers of the eschatological implications of Constantine’s reign. Both Socrates and Sozomen sprinkle throughout their histories the notion, first highlighted by Chesnut,\(^\text{13}\) that the visible events of history demonstrate a kind of cosmic sympathy in which God, through His providence, chastises and rewards humanity. In the emerging hagiographic and miraculous stories of Sozomen and Theodoret, the reader is given visible images of transformed humanity as icons pointing the way towards God’s intentions for creation.

Iconic historical eschatology is the way in which Eusebius and his continuators gently redefine the whole nature of eschatology in the Early Church. If eschatology found its most dramatic home in the visionary and revelatory writing contained in the books of Daniel and Revelation among other such apocalyptic literature, the early historians recover its essence and import it into the fabric of their own theological work. Though Christian historical eschatology still retains its concern for God’s ultimate desires for all of creation in the work of the historians, an idea which remains essential to the Christian kerygma right up to the present day, it is recovered from an arcane and specialist-centered literary tradition and discovered in, and sometimes imposed upon, the very events of history by our historians.

It was noted earlier that this way of thinking about eschatology was not entirely new in relation to other Christian writers of the same and earlier eras because the incarnation of Christ necessitated such a view. However, in a larger historiographical sense, one must note that the discipline of historical investigation had for centuries played a varying role in the work of authors interested in eschatology. Paul Hanson has identified this quite well in his work detailing the rise of apocalyptic eschatology out of the ashes of what he termed prophetic eschatology. Not unlike Eusebius and his continuators, the prophetic tradition, as outlined by Hanson, invested itself in the historical process precisely because the prophets saw in the historical events of their times, the working out of God’s intentions for all creation. Hanson writes:

> In a world which viewed divine activity primarily on the cosmic level, and which looked upon the flux and change of the historical realm as something to be overcome through the

ritual of the cult, prophetic faith began to speak of a God who effected the salvation of his people precisely in the flux and change of history. Thus historical events were not to be denigrated as a threat to the eternal order wherein rested man's hope for salvation, but to be studied and recorded as the context within which and through which the cosmic deity Yahweh was active on behalf of his nation.  

Hanson later notes that in the failed expectation of the Second Isaiah community were the seeds for the growth of the apocalyptic movement precisely because the events of history had not given birth to the fruit intimated in the words of the prophets.

One might justifiably argue that the work of Eusebius and his continuators is simply then a continuation of the prophetic tradition of eschatology outlined by Hanson and represents nothing innovative at all. However, while Hanson’s insights bring clarity to the fact that the Eusebian tradition is neither the first nor the last group of writers interested in both history and eschatology, there are at least two distinctions to be made. First, the prophetic tradition relied upon the personality cult of the prophet who became a strong mediator of the truths that were revealed both in history and supernaturally from God. While there can be no denial that Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret are historical mediators, their imprint upon the historical narrative is certainly less pronounced than that of the prophets. Secondly, as we shall particularly see in the editorial work of Eusebius detailed in chapter three, the historians of the Early Church did not abandon their historical eschatology due to the seeming vagaries of historical events around them. Instead of pivoting into an apocalyptic eschatology that was visionary and perhaps more malleable, the Christian historians reassessed their conclusions and rewrote; or at the very least, they adapted their narrative with the flow of changing events. This is not surprising given their strong devotion to the incarnation of God identified above. If God is present as human in history, there can be little doubt that history is a primary way in which one can learn about God’s ultimate plans. Therefore, though the prophets indeed employed history in their eschatological work, the historians of the Early Church still represent an innovative eschatological shift in that they were less dependent on the charism of one individual and more interested in history in and of itself as a guide to eschatology.

14. Hanson, Dawn, 18.
It is simplistic as well, however, to suggest that apocalyptic eschatology was deeply antithetical to historical investigation. While it has already been noted that the foundation of apocalyptic theology was the visionary and revelatory character of its message mediated by a unique individual, recent research seeks to show the ways in which the apocalypticist was often interested in the events and thread of history. Davies warns against an overly strong distinction between history and apocalypticism when he writes “the preoccupation of the apocalyptic writers with historiography is a major element of their activity whose neglect leads to a distorted picture of them being drawn.”\(^\text{15}\) As an example of his contention, Davies uses the case of Josephus:

Josephus' adherence to some apocalyptic beliefs may seem surprising, but it should not be so; as he reports in the Life, Josephus professed loyalty to Pharisaic Judaism, and what distinguished Pharisees from Zealots was not a difference of view about the Jews' destiny but one about the means, divine or human, by which it should be brought about. For the purpose of the present discussion, the importance of Josephus is that he is a Pharisee, sharing their apocalyptic hopes, who nevertheless saw a point in writing the nation's history—and doing so at considerable length. Historiography and eschatology are not as incompatible as an overlogical antithesis might suggest.\(^\text{16}\)

While one might reasonably debate Davies’ placing of Josephus in the realm of apocalyptic writing, one cannot deny his worthwhile insight. We would also do well to bear in mind that Josephus was one of Eusebius’ main sources for historical information. Is it a fact that Josephus represents a mid-point between the apocalyptic writers and those of the Eusebian tradition? Such a question is a natural outgrowth of the current project and proves fruitful for future research.

At this point it is also worth noting the conclusions of Christopher Rowland regarding the historical content of much of apocalyptic literature. While Rowland certainly agrees that apocalyptic literature represents a counter to the work of true historiography,\(^\text{17}\) neither does he deny the importance of history in some of the work of the apocalypticists. For instance, Rowland argues in the following that contemporary history is not something foreign to all apocalyptic

\[\text{15. Davies, “Apocalyptic and Historiography,” 15.}\]


\[\text{17. See the following from Rowland: “The retreat from history is said to be one of the marks of the apocalyptic outlook. In the sense that the apocalypticist concerns himself with another world, its inhabitants and its secrets as a way of dealing with the vexing problems presented by history, this analysis is certainly correct.” Rowland, The Open Heaven, 37.}\]
A glance at the contents of the apocalypses reveals that other-worldly eschatology is by no means as typical as is often suggested. Indeed, when it is to be found, it is not usually at the expense of the vindication of God's ways within the fabric of history. The eschatology of the apocalypses may have looked to God at work in history as the only means of final salvation, but their authors expected a vindication of their righteousness within the world of men, not in some intangible existence beyond the sphere of history. 

Rowland is particularly interested in this phenomenon when discussing Daniel. In the book of Daniel, which is often paired with Revelation as the most important work of apocalyptic eschatology, Rowland notes the many nuanced ways that the apocalypticist uses history to bolster his vision of God at work in creation, a theme to which we will return when discussing the use of Daniel in Eusebius and his continuators. Suffice it to say, Rowland is insightful in the way in which he demonstrates the importance of history in the work of the apocalyptic writers.

All of this demonstrates how the emergence of a new Patristic, historical, and iconic eschatology partially revealed in the work of Eusebius and his continuators was not an earth-shattering innovation, but a natural process which developed out of thoroughgoing concerns related to eschatology. In the same breath, however, it can be said that what the Fathers of Late Antiquity were accomplishing in relation to eschatology was still something new which helped to change the character of eschatology permanently.

While the central goal of this study is to demonstrate the ways in which the political ideology and the eschatology of the early historians are deeply interconnected, one of the side effects of the research is the way in which it enlightens this Patristic process of the redefinition of eschatology in Late Antiquity and beyond. Such a process, uncovered in this scholarship, by necessity changes the academic presupposition that the eschatology of the Church is something which pops in and out of history from generation to generation, rearing its ugly head only in times of economic distress or social unrest. Instead, the study demonstrates the way in which


20. See for instance his comments on the “birth pangs” of a new world found in the apocalyptic literature. Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 156.
eschatology is an undeniable and structuring component of what it means to be Christian. The hope in the future, and that God has an ultimate and underlying structural plan for reality, is something not unique to Christian belief, but uniquely prominent because of the incarnation of Christ.

On the micro level of Christian historiography, the emergence of a new kind of eschatology is important as well. The great innovation of Eusebius, and afterwards his continuators, is that they took the traditions out of which they were molded and used them as the foundation for a new way of looking at the eschatology inherent in Christian witness. They took Origen’s mystical and allegorical method of inquiry, applied it to history, and made his unproductive historiographical opinions bear fruit.21 They rejected the elitisist tradition and the necessary charisma of the apocalypticist. They adapted the eschatology of the prophets to be more focused on the importance of God’s revelation within history not without it. They accepted the historiographical notions inherent in the work of the apocalypticists while tempering its esoteric and dramatic revelations.

Finally, recognizing this shift in eschatological thinking is essential to the current study because it sets the conditions by which one calls an element in the writing of the historians eschatological. These conditions are more broadly defined in the historians than in other forms of eschatological expression because of the determinants identified above, and thus, recognizing eschatological ideology in the Eusebian tradition is a different affair from noticing it in earlier or even later eschatological works. Instead of simply focusing on dramatic statements of violence, straightforward narratives discussing the literal end of the world, or mystical interpreters of dreams, as one might do when investigating works of apocalyptic eschatology, our task will be to discover moments in the historical narrative when iconic allusion is made to God’s ultimate plans for humanity, even when such passages are nuanced and less dramatic. We may not encounter fiery chariots or mystical horsemen in the work of the Christian historians of Late Antiquity, but this is not to say that they are not deeply interested in eschatology. Rather, they

are moulding the future of Christianity through historical work which is influenced by eschatology and which is theological work in its own right.
CHAPTER 3
Eusebius of Caesarea
Historical Eschatology and Dynamic Political Ideology Formation

Eschatology in the Ecclesiastical History

Eschatology is ever-present in the mind of the author of the Ecclesiastical History, and discovering and detailing its evidence is no light task. However, it is an essential task in laying the groundwork not only for Eusebius’ eschatological mindset but for that of his continuators as well. Additionally, uncovering the eschatology of Eusebius is the first task for this study which seeks to demonstrate that when there is a strong and dynamic eschatological presence in the histories of Eusebius and his continuators there is a bold and dynamic political ideology present as well, and so, determining the relative strength of eschatology in the main historical work of all four of our authors will be the first goal of each of the next four chapters.

Anti-Millennialism in the Ecclesiastical History

For many historians, the idea that the Ecclesiastical History is eschatological in nature at all might come as a surprise because of the opinions we have briefly outlined in chapter one above. It is no secret that Eusebius openly questioned the authority of the book of Revelation, through questioning its authorship, and condemned millennialist ways of thinking; and for some scholars this has provided justification for their own opinions that Eusebius’ work is anti-eschatological. It would seem advisable, then, to survey this aspect of Eusebius’ eschatology at the outset.

To begin with, it is important to discuss the thorny issue of the authorship of Revelation, a controversy quite dynamic in modern times but in no way confined to contemporary debates. Eusebius makes it clear that there is much confusion regarding who actually composed the Apocalypse of St. John. Of all the sources we have in the Patristic era, Eusebius actually
provides us with the most variety of answers when it comes to this vexing question. He has, in his Ecclesiastical History, no fewer than seven different passages relating to this complicated issue.¹ Within his pages, we see that there are some who clearly believed that Revelation was composed by St. John, the assumed writer of the gospel of John, one of the sons of Zebedee. Others believed that it may have been a different John. Still others argued instead, and this seems to be foremost in Eusebius’ mind at one point, that the book was associated with the great heresiarch Cerinthus. Dionysius of Alexandria’s opinion is given much space in Eusebius’ history. He argues that the “John” of Revelation could not have been the same author of the gospel and thus concludes that the author of Revelation was another John.²

At the heart of this discussion is the issue of millennialism, sometimes called chiliasm, and its appearance in the imagery of Revelation. Revelation 20 reads:

> Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be let out for a little while. Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him a thousand years. [Rev 20:1-6]³

The text of Revelation then goes on to describe a second period of tribulation and violence in which the Devil is loosed and given free reign over all the earth resulting in war and a second death for all of those who are unfaithful. Finally, in Revelation 21, the author describes the falling away of all creation and the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth in which the

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¹ Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.24.18; 3.25.2,4; 3.28.4-5; 3.39.5-6; 7.24; 7.25.


³ Rev 20:1-6 [All biblical references are taken from the NRSV].
new city of Jerusalem, an earthly paradise measured in the thousands of miles and adorned with precious jewels, plays a primary role as the earthly dwelling place of God.

The millennialism portrayed in these passages was a controversial stumbling block for Eusebius and, before him, Origen and Clement. In fact, the millennialist debate within the Early Church was one that was fluid and undetermined regardless of the opinions of modern scholars. This was particularly true, it seems, in the era in which Eusebius was writing. Quite clearly, Eusebius was a staunch advocate of the anti-millennialist opinion in which the idea of an earthly reign of Christ before an ultimate consummation of all things was roundly condemned. In reading Eusebius, one can note that the periodization inherent to millennialism does not constitute the basis of his opposition, but rather, its advocacy of a sensual and earthly reign of Christ. As in most areas, Eusebius stayed true to the teachings of the school of Alexandria in this regard, and a brief overview of Clement and Origen’s position in relation to millennialism is necessary to demonstrate this.

Clement’s own position regarding millennialism cannot be said to be definitive, mostly because of the absence of any millennialist discussion in his surviving texts. However, the spiritualizing tendencies in his theological work have encouraged scholars to contend that Clement’s perspective was opposed to the literalistic leanings of the Apostolic Fathers. For instance, Brian Daley suggests that Clement and Origen represent a new shift away from literalism regarding eschatology and towards spiritual speculation. Chadwick is even more definitive when writing about the difference between Justin Martyr and the Alexandrians. “For his [Justin’s] opposition to Gnosticism leads him to insist not only on a full-blooded and extremely literalistic doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh but also on a strictly earthly hope for a millennial reign of Christ at Jerusalem such as neither Clement nor Origen could possibly have


defended except as poetic and symbolic language.”

It is deeply unfortunate that the commentary on Revelation that Origen promised has not come down to us. However, if we observe Origen’s discussion of eschatology in other works and his general disposition, we can gain some insight into what his opinions of the millennialism of Revelation may likely have been.

Origen himself was deeply suspicious of overly literal interpretations of Christian literature, and this tendency automatically made him disinterested in the millennialist opinion. There are several passages in his famous work On First Principles which deal with Origen’s understanding of the end times. Characteristic of all of them is suspicion of literalist thinking when it comes to interpretation. In fact, Origen demonstrates two main preoccupations in relation to eschatological discussion, both of which are characteristically allegorical. First is his understanding of the transformation of the earthly body into a unique spiritual body. Secondly, he argues that eschatology is primarily concerned with the consummation of all creation in a return to the beginning of all creation. Nowhere does he understand that God has an end for creation contained within the constraints of history. The closest he comes to such an understanding is in the following passage:

This, then, is how we must suppose that events happen in the consummation and restitution of all things, namely, that souls, advancing and ascending little by little in due measure and order, first attain to that other earth and the instruction that is in it, and are there prepared for those better precepts to which nothing can ever be added. For in the place of ‘stewards’ and ‘governors’ Christ the Lord, who is King of all, will himself take over the kingdom; that is, he himself will instruct those who are able to receive him in his character of wisdom, after their preliminary training in the holy virtues, and will reign in them until such time as he subjects them to the Father who subjected all things to him; or in other words, when they have been rendered capable of receiving God, then God will be to them ‘all in all.’ It follows of necessity that then even their bodily nature will assume


8. PArch Praef. 5-7, 1.6, 2.4-5, 2.10, 2.11.5-7, 3.6.6-9. (Here using the Westminster Handbook abbreviation for the more usual De Princ.) The translation used here and throughout is Origen, On First Principles, G.W. Butterworth, reprint, 1936 (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966).
that supreme condition to which nothing can ever be added.⁹

One can see in the beginning of this passage what seems to be a concrete notion that in the end, humanity will find another earth in which God will reign and teach. However, even though one might consider this a concrete eschatological passage for Origen, such an excerpt demonstrates Origen’s unwillingness to be bound by discrete thinking in his theological process. In particular, one can see in his two elaborations above (following “that is” and “in other words”) a desire to further spiritualize his theological thinking.

When it comes to the idea of a literal earthly kingdom, Origen was quite clear, and he outlined his opinion in another section of On First Principles:

Now some men, who reject the labour of thinking and seek after the outward and literal meaning of the law, or rather give way to their own desires and lusts, disciples of the mere letter, consider that the promises of the future are to be looked for in the form of pleasure and bodily luxury. And chiefly on this account they desire after the resurrection to have flesh of such a sort that they will never lack the power to eat and drink and to do all things that pertain to flesh and blood, not following the teaching of the apostle Paul about the resurrection of a ‘spiritual body.’ Consequently, they go on to say that even after the resurrection there will be engagements to marry and the procreation of children, for they picture to themselves the earthly city of Jerusalem about to be rebuilt ... Such are the thoughts of men who believe indeed in Christ, but because they understand the divine scriptures in a Judaistic sense, extract from them nothing that is worthy of the divine promises.¹⁰

Of particular note here is Origen’s habit of establishing a link between literalism and a Jewish way of making sense of scripture.

Bearing the influence of Origen in mind, when we then turn to Eusebius, we can note that in several sections he questions the authority of the book of Revelation without clearly demonstrating his anti-millennialist opinion. The following three examples suffice to demonstrate this fact:

But besides the Gospel of John, his first epistle is acknowledged without dispute, both by those of the present day, and also by the ancients. The other two epistles, however, are disputed. The opinions respecting the revelation are now greatly being dragged through the mud.”¹¹

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⁹. PArch 3.6.9.

¹⁰. PArch 2.11.2.

¹¹. Eusebius, H.E. 3.24.17-18a. Please note the translation, “dragged through the mud” is the author’s own, from the Greek περιελκεται coming from the Greek word περιελκώ which in the LSJ has the definition “drag round, drag about” in the first position and “drag in the mire” in
Among the books which are not genuine must be numbered the Acts of Paul, and the one called the Shepherd, the Apocalypse of Peter, and in addition to them those known as the Epistle of Barnabas and the ones called the Teachings of the Apostles. And in addition, as I said, the Revelation of John, if this view prevail, which some, as I said, reject but others rank among the genuine.\footnote{Eusebius, \textit{H.E.} 3.25.4.}

It is here worth noting that he \[n.b. Eusebius here refers to Papias, whom he quotes immediately prior to this passage speaking about how he learned the faith from companions of the apostles\] twice counts the name of John, and mentions the first John with Peter, James, Matthew, and the other Apostles, clearly meaning the evangelist, but distinguishing his writing [i.e. writing in another place], places the second [John] with the others outside the number of the apostles, putting Aristeion before him and clearly calling him a presbyter. This confirms the truth of the story of those who have said that here were two [Johns] of the same name in Asia, and that there are two tombs at Ephesus both still called John’s. This calls for attention: for it is probable that the second [John] (unless anyone prefer the former) saw the revelation ascribed to John.\footnote{Eusebius, \textit{H.E.} 3.39.5-6.}

In the above three passages we can see very clearly that instead of overtly demonstrating his discomfort with Revelation, Eusebius simply calls into question its authorship, thereby subtly undermining its authority since he suggests that it is not always associated with the authority of an apostle of Christ.

Among these general remarks, however, we find Eusebius revealing the heart of his opposition to Revelation in the following passages:

We have received the tradition that at the time under discussion Cerinthus founded another heresy. Gaius, whose words I have quoted before, in the inquiry attributed to him writes as follows about Cerinthus, ‘Moreover, Cerinthus, who through revelations attributed to the writing of a great apostle, lyingly introduces marvelous tales as though shown to him by angels, and says that after the resurrection the kingdom of Christ will be on earth and that humanity living in Jerusalem will again be the slave of lust and pleasure. He is the enemy of the scriptures of God and in his desire to deceive says that the marriage feast will last a thousand years.’\footnote{Eusebius, \textit{H.E.} 3.28.1-2.}

Dionysius, too, who held the episcopate of Alexandria while we were away, in the second book of his Promises makes some remarks about the Apocalypse of John as though from ancient tradition and refers to the same Cerinthus in these words, ‘Cerinthus too, who founded the Cerinthian heresy named after him, wished to attach a name worthy of credit to his own invention, for the doctrine of his teaching was this, that the kingdom of Christ would be on earth, and being fond of his body and very carnal he dreamed of a future

\textit{the second position. Lake prefers a freer translation of, “... there have been many advocates of either opinion up to the present,” and Cruse prefers, “The opinions respecting the revelation are still greatly divided.”}

\footnote{Eusebius, \textit{H.E.} 3.25.4.}

\footnote{Eusebius, \textit{H.E.} 3.39.5-6.}

\footnote{Eusebius, \textit{H.E.} 3.28.1-2.}
according to his own desires, given up to the indulgence of the flesh, that is, eating and drinking and marrying, and to those things which seem a euphemism for these things, feasts and sacrifices and the slaughter of victims.15

[Papias] gives other accounts, as though they came to him from unwritten tradition, and some strange parables and teachings of the Savior, and some other more legendary accounts. Among them he says that there will be a millennium after the resurrection of the dead, when there will be set up a literal [σοφατικῶς] kingdom of Christ on this earth. I suppose that he got these notions by a misunderstood reading of the apostolic accounts, not realizing that they had spoken mystically and symbolically.16

In describing Nepos, a bishop of Egypt who, according to Dionysius, was in favor of millennialism, Eusebius writes: “The teaching of Nepos [was] ... that the promises which had been made to the saints in the divine Scriptures should be interpreted after a more Jewish fashion, and his assumption that there will be a kind of millennium on this earth devoted to bodily indulgence.”17

Quoting Dionysius’ description of the book of Revelation, Eusebius writes:

‘[Some say] that the author of this book was not only not one of the apostles, nor even one of the saints or those belonging to the Church, but Cerinthus, the same who created the sect called ‘Cerinthian’ after him, since he desired to affix to his own forgery a name worthy of credit [i.e. John]. For this is the doctrine that he taught, that the kingdom of Christ would be on earth; for since he was a lover of the body, and altogether sensual in those things which he so eagerly craved, he dreamed that he would revel in the gratification of the sensual appetite, i.e. in eating and drinking, and marrying; and to give the things a milder aspect and expression, in festivals and sacrifices, and the slaying of victims.’18

When taken together, these passages demonstrate a key fact that must be taken into consideration at the outset. Eusebius was clearly anti-millennialist. Following in the footsteps of the Alexandrian tradition from which he learned his theology, and we can see this ever so clearly if we review the passages from Origen above, Eusebius condemned a kind of earthly paradise

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15. Eusebius, H.E. 3.28.3-5. (n.b. the translation of παροικίας, which Cruse translates “day” and Lake translated “time” but which means something more like a sojourning in a foreign land, thus, “while we were away.”


17. Eusebius, H.E. 7.24.1. Note in this passage the association of literalistic thinking and Jewish identity which was prevalent in the thinking of Origen as demonstrated in the earlier passage from On First Principles. See above p. 67.

which would fulfill God’s intentions for all creation. Therefore, he subtly undermines the theological authority of the book of Revelation, one of the primary containers of Christian millenarian ideology, by questioning its provenance through reference to earlier Christian thinkers who also doubted its authorship. There is also the further character of Cerinthus, a dubious character to whom early Christian authors refer without making reference to his millennial ideas however. While Daniélou seems to take Eusebius’ comments regarding Cerinthus at face value, a more careful analysis via Klijn and Renink, who argue that there is very little evidence that anything meaningful can be said about Cerinthus, seems to suggest that Eusebius found a useful heretical container in which to place ideas he found abhorrent. Eusebius is less subtle in other passages, however, when he quite clearly and stridently condemns Revelation because of its idea of a thousand-year earthly reign of Christ and its final eschatology which envisions an eternal corporeal paradise.

This in no way, however, suggests that Eusebius is anti-eschatological in the Ecclesiastical History. If we stick to the firm and consistent definition of historical and iconic eschatology set forth in the previous chapter of this study we will find that, in fact, eschatology seemed foremost in the mind of Eusebius as he composed his monumental history.

Form as Eschatology in the Ecclesiastical History

The character, tone and form of Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History has often been the basis of much speculation about the editorial history of the work as a whole. Such scholarly work began after the monumental article of Lightfoot detailing Eusebius and his works in the Dictionary of Christian Biography. Most striking is the deep and evident transition from book


seven to book eight in both tone and form. Books 1–7 are composed of the historical record from the time of Christ (including the prophetic prefigurations of His coming) straight up to the beginning of the Great Persecution in A.D. 303. Eusebius begins his entire work by enumerating his aims which encompass recording (1) the succession of the holy apostles of this time, (2) the key events of Church history, (3) the most important teachers and preachers of the Church, (4) the most infamous heretics of the time, (5) the fate of the Jews after they plotted against Christ, (6) the wars waged against Christians, and finally (7) the martyrdoms of his own time during the Great Persecution. What is noteworthy is the fastidiousness with which Eusebius follows his own programme throughout the first seven books of the Ecclesiastical History in contrast to his near abandonment of such goals in books 8–10, which, in some manuscripts, includes his Martyrs of Palestine embedded between books eight and nine. The first, and larger, section of seven books is replete with lengthy references in which Eusebius quotes historians and writers of the era, often relying upon their interpretation to guide his reader. Lists of bishops and the detailed histories of heretics abound, and Eusebius is careful to fulfill his promises to the reader set out at the beginning of book one. Lightfoot’s comment that Eusebius is “desultory” in his treatment of his sources seems an understatement to be sure. His antiquarian nature displays itself fully in the character of his first seven books; but he is mystifyingly arbitrary as well, bouncing from topic to topic with little care for the narrative integrity of his historical work. All


23. It is not a complete abandonment because certainly his final objective, that is, telling the stories of the martyrs, plays a prominent role in book 8 and the Martyrs of Palestine.

24. The editorial history of the Martyrs of Palestine, its independence of or dependence upon the Ecclesiastical History, and its location within such pages, if indeed it is an integral part of the H.E., is a matter of extensive discussion to say the least. One does well to read the opinions of Burgess on the topic which provide perhaps the only clarity on how the reader of MP should view its relationship to H.E. For the purposes of this study, we shall use the MP as pertinent to the arguments since, in Eusebius’ mind in any case, it was at least in his first edition integral to the work. See R. W. Burgess, “The Dates and Editions of Eusebius’ ‘Chronici Canones’ and ‘Historia Ecclesiastica’,” The Journal of Theological Studies 48, no. 2 (October 1997): 471–504.

of this changes dramatically in books eight, the Martyrs of Palestine, nine, and especially book ten. In this second section, Eusebius is insightful, wholly dependent upon his own opinions (understandable given the contemporary nature of the material) and keenly capable of telling a good story. Most importantly, as we shall see, it is also in this second section that Eusebius lays out his most striking eschatological content.

This seemingly curious arrangement has been the starting point of deep disagreement over the past century concerning the editorial history of Eusebius’ most important work. As Andrew Louth has very helpfully outlined, many theories have been advanced regarding the different editions of the Ecclesiastical History, and they have not always been based on this two-part arrangement. However, the contemporary debate regarding the dating of the editions of the Ecclesiastical History, carried on between Louth and T.D. Barnes, certainly identifies the shift after book seven as a possible clue to Eusebius’ editorial hand.

In Barnes’ article entitled “The Editions of Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History,” he argues that due to the stylistic differences between books seven and eight, there must have been an editorial break in the process at this point and therefore the first seven books of the Ecclesiastical History must have been written prior to A.D. 303, the date at which their description of Christian history ends. Louth disputed this with great precision and panache by challenging each of Barnes’ points and arguing instead for a much more nuanced and less strident view of its editorial history. Most appealing is the way in which Fr. Louth hints, but only just, at the underlying justification for his rebuttal of Barnes. He writes:

There is a further, more general point. The dispute about the date of the first edition of the Historia Ecclesiastica is not merely an argument about dates: it is an argument about the fundamental nature of Eusebius’ great work. Is it (in the words of Westcott) a work which ‘gathers up and expresses ... the experience, the feelings, the hopes of a body which had just accomplished its sovereign success, and was conscious of its inward strength’, or (as Professor Barnes sees it) ‘contemporary evidence for the standing of the Christian Church in Roman society in the late third century’? That is why it is important that the idea of an early date for Eusebius’ Historia Ecclesiastica should not become, as seems increasingly to be the case, an accepted conclusion of modern scholarship, if the evidence for such a view is wanting.


27. Louth, “The Date,” 123.
Indeed it is the contention of this study that an analysis of the form of the Ecclesiastical History in the context of Eusebius’ emergent historical iconic eschatology enlightens a path to a possible answer to the question posed above by Professor Louth.

If the question concerning the break in style and content between books seven and eight is examined not in the light of an editorial break on Eusebius’ part, but rather a stylistic choice, a new avenue of understanding opens in relation to the problem. What if, in fact, Eusebius’ dramatic change of tone at this point in his work is a literary shift intended to heighten the tension of the narrative for his reader so that they might become more aware of the essential element of his work; namely its eschatological element? Such a strategy is not at all absent in the other major eschatological works of the day. A review of the entire gamut of Eusebius’ eschatological content is in order at this point.

Early on in his Ecclesiastical History Eusebius displays his eschatological penchant. In a section in which Eusebius explains the reasons why God chose not to send Jesus Christ into the world sooner than He did, Eusebius refers to the book of Daniel when discussing God’s ultimate plans for humanity which culminate in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He writes:

The prophet Daniel, seeing by the divine Spirit His kingdom in the end, was inspired to describe in human terms the vision of God writing, ‘For I beheld,’ he said, ‘until thrones were set and an Ancient of Days did sit. And his garment was white like snow and the hair of his head was like pure wool; his throne was a flame of fire, his wheels were flaming fire, a river of fire ran before him, thousand thousands ministered unto him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him, the judgement sat, and books were opened.’ And he goes on to say, ‘I beheld, and lo, one like to a son of man coming with the clouds of Heaven, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was brought before him. And to him was given the sovereignty and honor and kingdom, and all the people, tribes, and tongues shall serve him. His power is an everlasting power, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed.’ Clearly this would apply to none but our Savior, the God Word who was in the beginning with God, called son of man because of his ultimate taking on of human flesh.28

The importance of this passage cannot be underestimated in relation to Eusebius' overall eschatological perspective. First of all, this excerpt from Daniel comes very early in Eusebius’ long work and is embedded within a larger section which quickly outlines the whole salvation history of God in order to explain the reasons why God did not become incarnate earlier in

human history. It introduces the entire work of the history and it is a progressive vision which understands the historical arc of God's salvation history as coming to an apex in the life of Christ. Secondly, by doing so, he repossesses an apocalyptic work placing it at the very beginning of his original work; he puts it to use in his new reformulation of historical eschatology turning something purely visionary and esoteric into a building block for a more tangible and wide-ranging kind of eschatology. Beginning with such an introduction pointedly signals to Eusebius’ readers that his work plans to incorporate an eschatological outlook from the outset.

Curiously, however, Eusebius then goes on, in the first seven books, to say very little about eschatology in any conventional way. There is almost no discussion of the book of Daniel from this point onwards, and the discussion of the book of Revelation, as we have seen, was laden with Eusebius’ inherited doubts regarding its advocacy of an earthly kingdom of God. One theme that does appear again and again is the constant struggle, played out in the events of history, between God and the devil, an eschatological theme if ever there was one. However, it could be easy to chalk such a theme up to conventional Christian tropes, which often display themselves in the writings of his sources which he quotes extensively. In fact, it is difficult to discern in any meaningful way Eusebius’ true opinion regarding any topic due to his strong reliance upon his sources. Unlike the quotation from Daniel above, which is interlaced with personal and clear commentary from Eusebius himself, most of the content of books 1–7 is dominated by summative commentary by Eusebius regarding the raw material provided by his sources.

This, however, changes significantly in the chapters following chapter seven. Throughout these chapters Eusebius liberally sprinkles views which demonstrate his eschatological tendency. Over and over again he argues that God’s almighty superintendency is revealed in the very events of history. Eusebius understands the historical narrative about which he is writing to be iconic of the salvific plan God has created for humanity. Importantly, he begins chapter eight by setting up the reader with a dramatic narrative counterpoint in which he describes the great honor in which the Church was held by all people in the period before the Great Persecution began in A.D. 303. In luxurious tones, Eusebius describes “with what favour one might note that the rulers in every
church were honoured by all procurators and governors! And how could one fully describe those assemblies thronged with countless men, and the multitudes that gathered together in every city...”\(^{29}\) Shortly thereafter, however, Eusebius demonstrates his rhetorical ability by starkly contrasting this set of circumstances with the reality under which Christians existed during the depths of the Great Persecution. Bolstering his description is Eusebius’ noted references to two important works with eschatological themes, Lamentations and Psalm 89 (88). In quoting Lamentations 2:1-2, Eusebius writes: “The Lord hath darkened the daughter of Zion in his anger, and hath cast down from heaven the glory of Israel; he hath not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger; but the Lord hath also swallowed up all the beauty of Israel and hath broken down all his hedges.”\(^{30}\) Quoting Psalm 89 (88) Eusebius writes:

He has overturned the covenant of his servant and has profaned to the ground, through the destruction of the churches, his sanctuary and has broken down all his hedges, he has made his strongholds cowardice. All that pass by the way have spoiled the multitudes of the people, yea more, he has become a reproach to his neighbors. For he has exalted the right hand of his adversaries, and has turned back the help of his sword and has not taken his part in the battle. But he has also made his purification to cease, and has cast his throne down to the ground, and has shortened the days of his time and, last of all, he has covered him with shame.\(^{31}\)

Both of these passages betray to Eusebius’ reader the larger intent behind the second section of his historical record.

First of all, both passages are eschatological in nature. Lamentations itself alludes to the tragedy of the destruction of the first Jewish temple in Jerusalem and the subsequent exile of the Jewish people. Inasmuch as it hearkens back to an historical event already accomplished, one might argue with the labeling of it as a work of eschatology. However, if eschatology is seen as we have defined it in the previous chapter, that is as an investigation into the iconic events of history in order to determine within their fabric the ultimate intent of God for creation, then Lamentations, with its woeful air of desperate rationalization in relation to the events of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, can be seen clearly as eschatological in scope. In Psalm 89(88) the same kind


of eschatological process is evident as well. In fact, book eight of the Ecclesiastical History seems to mirror the narrative arc of Psalm 89(88). The Psalm begins with the extolling of the חסד [chesed] of the Lord and a reminiscence and definition of His covenant with Israel through King David. Then in verse 38, which is the beginning of the passage used by Eusebius, an abrupt change in tone occurs when the psalmist recalls the horror that transpired after the withdrawal of the Lord’s favor. This continues to the end of the psalm. In the plaintive tone of the psalm one can sense the cry for help of the psalmist in trying to discover the meaning behind the suffering and pain caused by the loss of the Lord’s strength.

In addition to both being eschatological in nature, it is worth noting the rhetorical force of both selections. Lamentations 2 and Psalm 89(88) are both poetic works meant to bring out the eschatological force of feeling in an artistic and narrative way. Both selections portray desolation within the context of a narrative drama in which time plays a prominent role. They both seek to make an impression on their readers through the beauty and poignancy of narrative endeavor.

Not surprisingly, the second section of Eusebius’ history, which we have identified as books eight through ten with the inclusion of the Martyrs of Palestine, displays the same narrative quality and seeks to convey the same eschatological themes. Through his references to Lamentations and Psalm 89(88), Eusebius sets an eschatological and narrative theme at the beginning of book eight and the second section of his history.

The contrast with the first section of the history becomes more pronounced when Eusebius begins to comment over and over again on the agency of God in the everyday moments of human history. Particularly important is the following statement from Eusebius which seems to reveal the larger agenda of what he is writing beginning with chapter eight:

But as to these [the clergy of the Church who were warring against one another], it is not our part to describe their melancholy misfortunes in the issue, even as we do not think it proper to hand down to memory their dissensions and unnatural conduct to one another before the persecution. Therefore, we resolved to place on record nothing more about them than what would justify the divine judgement.32

We can see in these clear words the intent behind Eusebius’ second section. Though he is

32. Eusebius, H.E. 8.2.2–3.
tempted to write all of the details of the persecution and the events preceding it, he only binds himself to the goal of illuminating the judgment of God in history, the main goal of his work. Indeed, he begins this chapter with the clear statement that “all things in truth were fulfilled in our day...”

In stark contrast to his near total silence regarding his own eschatological opinions in the first section of the history, this second section continues to abound with references to God’s ultimate plan in history for humanity. A good example of another such reference comes near the end of book eight when Eusebius suggests that the Roman rulers were, in fact, puppets controlled by the beneficence, or indeed the lack thereof, of God. When discussing their change of heart in relation to the Christians and the ongoing persecution Eusebius writes:

But this was not due to any human agency nor to the pity, as one might say, or humanity of the rulers. Far from it. For from the beginning up to that time they were inventing fresh assaults upon us by means of still more varied devices. But it was due to the manifestation of the Divine Providence itself, which, while it became reconciled to the people, attacked the perpetrator of these evils, and was wroth with him as the chief author of the wickedness of the persecution as a whole.

Much the same sentiment is conveyed at the beginning of the Martyrs of Palestine when Eusebius describes the suffering of the witnesses of the faith in the following terms:

“Nevertheless, they endured what came upon them, following the uncertain judgements of God in the end.”

Again in chapter thirteen of the Martyrs of Palestine, Eusebius demonstrates the hand of God in the midst of history when he writes of the prize of martyrdom in the following terms:

The hated enemy, as they were armed against him zealously through their prayers to God, could no longer endure them, and determined to slay and destroy them from off the earth

33. Eusebius, H.E. 8.2.1.

34. Eusebius, H.E. 8.16.2.

35. Eusebius, Martyrs of Palestine 1.4. [Translations here are the author’s own, influenced by both the translation of McGiffert in the NPNF and the translation of Cruse which has of late been updated and reissued by Hanmer.] Of note in this quotation is the fact that it ends in the word τελον which is a key word in the vocabulary of eschatology. It is here used in an adverbial sense without definite article and so could mean “in the end” “to the end” or even “until the end times,” though the latter seems speculative at best. See BDAG, 2nd edition, p. 811 under the heading for τελον heading 1d. Interestingly, neither McGiffert nor Cruse chose to translate this key word it seems.
because they troubled him. And God permitted him to accomplish this, that he might not be restrained from the wickedness he desired, and that at the same time they might receive the prizes of their manifold conflicts. Therefore at the command of the most accursed Maximinus, forty, lacking one, were beheaded in one day. 

In book nine, Eusebius returns to this theme of the immediate agency of God in human affairs when, discussing the reestablishment of peace after the defeat of Maxentius and Maximinus by Constantine, he writes:

Most marvellously, as in a thick darkness, He [God] caused the light of peace to shine upon us from Himself, and made it manifest to all that God Himself had been watching over our affairs continually, at times scourging and in due season correcting His people by means of misfortunes, and again on the other hand after sufficient chastisement showing mercy and goodwill to those who fix their hopes on Him.

Beyond these simple themes of God’s role in history, however, Eusebius builds in these chapters a narrative urgency intended to make the reader inch to the edge of his seat in anticipation of what is coming. This can be seen very clearly in his Martyrs of Palestine. Possibly intended originally to be the end of his work in its first edition, and then later replaced by the current version of chapter eight, the Martyrs of Palestine displays a lyrical quality and narrative shaping that is unparalleled in any other works of Eusebius. As Joseph Verheyden has recently noted, we must view the Martyrs of Palestine as a work of great narrative force and not simply a dry historical record. He writes:

In describing the events that shocked Caesarea and the whole of Palestine (and that in the eyes of the author obviously should shock the whole Christian and civilised world!), Eusebius makes use of a wide range of rhetorical devices—superlatives (positive and negative ones), alliterations and litotes, imaginative and vivid language, detailed descriptions of gruesome and horrible things, words of praise and eulogy and of disgust and dismay, and many other such things. All of these can also be found in many other accounts of the death of Christian martyrs. But taken together and used so massively in what claims to be, not just a random collection of ‘acts of martyrs’, but the sustained account of seven years of horror and terror that affected individuals and whole communities alike, these devices and descriptions really have shaped the story, both in its details and in its overall structure.


39. Joseph Verheyden, “Pain and Glory: Some Introductory Comments on the Rhetorical Qualities and Potential of the Martyrs of Palestine by Eusebius of Caesarea,” in Martyrdom and
In fact, Verheyden’s overall description of the *Martyrs of Palestine* is concise and clear and describes in detail the way in which Eusebius’ narrative flows in order to create a climax, or as Verheyden describes it, the anti-climax, of the martyrdom of Pamphilus, Eusebius’ beloved teacher.

One example of the kind of drama about which Verheyden speaks can be found in the section of the *Martyrs of Palestine* dedicated to a “thrice-blessed Paul,” who was martyred in the first wave of Palestinian repression during the Great Persecution. Eusebius writes:

> But how can I describe as it deserves the martyrdom which followed, with which the thrice-blessed Paul was honored. He was condemned to death at the same time with them, under one sentence. At the time of his martyrdom, as the executioner was about to cut off his head, he requested a brief respite. This being granted, he first, in a clear and distinct voice, supplicated God in behalf of his fellow Christians, praying for their pardon, and that freedom might soon be restored to them. Then he asked for the conversion of the Jews to God through Christ; and proceeding in order he requested the same things for the Samaritans, and besought that those Gentiles, who were in error and were ignorant of God, might come to a knowledge of him, and adopt the true religion. Nor did he leave neglected the mixed multitude who were standing around. After all these, oh! great and unspeakable forbearance! he entreated the God of the universe for the judge who had condemned him, in his hearing and that of all present, beseeching that their sin toward him should not be reckoned against them.40

This passage so clearly represents both Eusebius’ penchant in the second section of the *Ecclesiastical History* for narrative drama, and his eschatological bent. In this speech before his imminent end, so carefully transcribed by Eusebius, the martyr Paul demonstrates all of the eschatological hope of the Christian community. The goal is for God’s kingdom to come over all through their own free acceptance of His regency and their individual humility. Eusebius’ own commentary is quite striking as well. He points out the quality of the voice of the speaker, something not unusual in Late Antique rhetoric, and cannot help but make an aside when the apex of Paul’s speech approaches; namely his prayer for his very own judge, jury and executioner! All of this demonstrates how Eusebius uses the image of the martyr, certainly an objective historical reality in his time, and through his rendering of the martyr’s story gives witness to both his own eschatological agenda as well as the witness of the martyr to begin with.

*Persecution in Late Antique Christianity*, J Leemans (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2010), 357–58.

In his more recent article on Eusbius’ Martyrs of Palestine, James Corke-Webster has sought to highlight the creativity of Eusebius’ historical method as a demonstration of Eusebius’ literary talents. Noticing the fact that the accounts of the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne contained within book five of the Ecclesiastical History bear striking resemblance to the martyr stories contained in the Martyrs of Palestine, Corke-Webster has posited that Eusebius either colored his own local martyr stories with the accounts he found in The Letter of the Churches in Lyons and Vienne to the Church in Smyrna, which forms the basis of his commentary in book five, or did the reverse. Such similarities, according to Corke-Webster were not coincidental. Instead he argues that Eusebius’ “desire for the early church always to have looked like the monolithic institution of his own day”41 dominated his characterization of historical events. Such an understanding lends credence to our suggestion that the second section of Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History is a drama leading up to the climax of his entire work, book ten.

In book eight, the Martyrs of Palestine, and book nine, Eusebius has set his readers up so cleverly that by the time they begin his final chapter, they are prepared for the fait accompli of the whole work. For it is in his tenth book that Eusebius reveals completely his full understanding of everything he has written about from books 1 to 9, including the Martyrs of Palestine. While he only hinted at his own eschatological underpinnings in books 1–7 and allowed his sources to do the talking, and then began to unveil his thinking in the narrative drama of book eight, the Martyrs of Palestine, and book nine, it is in book ten that Eusebius lets loose in a panegyric style crowned by the transcription of a speech given by him in the city of Tyre which perfectly summarizes the whole of his monumental historical work.

The heart of the speech in Tyre, and indeed the core of book ten, are the juxtaposed ideas set forth in H.E. 10.4.14-15. In H.E. 10.4.13, Eusebius reaches a fever pitch when he exuberantly proclaims the love of Christ in His incarnation and plan for salvation for the world revealed in His earthly life and eventual death and resurrection. The beginning of section fourteen reads:

And when at this great grace and benefaction [the salvation of Christ] the envy that hates the good, even the demon that loves the evil, was torn asunder with wrath, so to speak, and was marshalling all his death-dealing forces against us, at first raging like a dog which gnaws with his teeth at the stones hurled at him and vents on the lifeless missiles his fury against those who would drive him away, he directed his ferocious madness against the stones of the houses of prayer and the lifeless materials of which the buildings were composed, to work (as at least he thought within himself) the ruin of the churches; then he emitted his dread hissings and serpent-like sounds, at one time by the threats of the wicked tyrants, at another by blasphemous ordinances of impious rulers; yea further, he vomited forth the death that was his, and bewitched the souls he captured by his baneful and soul-destroying poisons, all but causing their death by his death-fraught sacrifices to dead idols, and secretly stirring up every wild beast in shape of man, and every kind of savage thing, against us.  

After this vivid imagery in which Eusebius dramatically describes the work of the devil in the Great Persecution through which he has lived and been an eyewitness, he continues in section fifteen with a dynamic juxtaposition beginning with the quintessential eschatological champion, the archangel Michael:

But now, now again once more the Angel of mighty counsel, the great Captain of the host of God, after the greatest soldiers in his kingdom had given sufficient proof of their full training by their endurance and steadfastness in all things, by nothing more than his sudden appearance, caused to vanish into nothingness whatever was adverse and hostile, so that it seemed never to have had even a name; still, whatever was friendly and dear to him, that he advanced beyond all glory in the sight of all, not only of men, but even also of the powers of heaven, the sun and moon and stars, and of the whole heaven and earth; so that now—a thing unknown up to this point—the most exalted emperors of all, conscious of the honour which they have received from him, spit upon the faces of dead idols, trample upon the unhallowed rites of demons, and laugh at the old deceits they inherited from their fathers: but Him who is the common Benefactor of all and of themselves they recognize as the one and only God, and confess that Christ the Son of God is sovereign King of the universe, and style Him as Saviour on monuments, inscribing in an imperishable record His righteous acts and His victories over the impious ones, in imperial characters in the midst of the city that is Ephesus among the cities of the world. Thus Jesus Christ our Saviour, alone of those who have ever been, is acknowledged, even by the most exalted on the earth, not as an ordinary king taken from among men, but is worshipped as the very Son of the God of the universe, and as Himself God.

It is in these two elaborate passages that we see the absolute climax of Eusebius’ entire programme. If chapter ten is the height of Eusebius’ entire narrative, and his panegyric on the building of the church in Tyre the center of that height, then these two passages represent the absolute crux of the entire story. Not surprisingly, given what has been noted above, eschatology


43. Eusebius, H.E. 10.4.15-16.
once again plays a role in the passage from section fifteen. One can see it clearly in his use of the terms “angel of mighty counsel” and “great captain of the host of God.” To whom is Eusebius referring in this instance and can it open up some understanding of this key passage?

McGiffert rightly identifies the first reference as an allusion to Isaiah 9:6, but one wonders if Professor Oulton, in the second volume of the LCL, understood clearly the differences between MT and LXX in this particular passage, for his rendering of the masculine pronouns with capitals (which we have chosen not to duplicate in the above) suggests his own understanding that, in this particular passage, Isaiah was prefiguring Christ, a common understanding of modern exegetes when referring to the MT. McGiffert seems to have made no such presumption. This makes a difference because of the fact that the LXX, unlike the MT, mentions nothing of the titles “Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” which have so deeply associated this passage with Christ as the Messiah, with not the least bit of help by George Frederic Handel in the 18th century.

Euesbius’ precise rendering of \( \mu \epsilon \gamma \alpha \lambda \eta \varsigma \, \beta \omega \upsilon \lambda \eta \varsigma \, \alpha \gamma \gamma \epsilon \lambda \omicron \varsigma \), suggests, of course, his fidelity to the text of LXX, something common to all early Patristic writers. Therefore, one must wonder if in fact, on the one hand, the text of Isaiah is actually meant to prefigure Christ, and concurrently, whether Euesbius understood it in this way regardless. In the case that he did not, it seems natural to suggest that Eusebius intends to use the passage from Isaiah to highlight the role of St. Michael at this point as the “angel of mighty counsel” and “great captain of the host of God.” This makes sense in several contexts. Firstly, the character and role of Archangel Michael was growing significantly during this period in the history of the Church,\(^{44}\) and so it would be natural for a writer like Eusebius to identify this figure in Isaiah as Archangel Michael. Secondly, the syntax of the passage suggests such a conclusion. The word \( \theta \epsilon \delta \zeta \) does not occur in the passage until the middle of \( \text{H.E.} \, 10.4.16 \), and when it does, it is described by a dependent clause, \( \tau \dot{o} \nu 

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\(^{44}\) For more on this see William S. Babcock, “Angels,” Encyclopedia of Early Christianity (1998), who discusses the way in which Angels became prominent in the 4th century due to the need for theological definition. See also Glenn Peers, Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 1–11 [accessed online at http://hdl.handle.net.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/2027/heb.08316, 8/30/2012].
κοινὸν ἀπάντησιν καὶ ἐαυτοῦ εὐφράτην, when of course it would need no such dependent clause if the subject was being carried over from the previous section; a simple masculine pronoun would do. The natural implication is that in Eusebius’ mind, the main subject has just changed and thus the main subject of line fifteen is different from God who is described in the middle of line sixteen. If this is true, then the character of line fifteen must not be God, and therefore the most natural candidate is Archangel Michael.

There is also the issue of the phrase μέγας ἀρχιστρετής which comes straight from Joshua 5:14 LXX. Does Eusebius see this title as applying to Archangel Michael? This is difficult to say, but it seems at least reasonable to suggest that he may have. In the early Church there was much confusion about the nature and character of angels and their connection to or distance from the nature of God. It is this ambivalence that allows one to question the general understanding that the reference to the removal of shoes in Joshua 5:15 LXX necessarily restricts the understanding of this figure to God due to its allusion to the theophany of the burning bush in Exodus 3.

When one keeps in mind the less loaded character of the LXX translation of Isaiah 9 with regard to messianism, and the fact that Eusebius’ sentence construction is characterized in such a way, the conclusion of Archangel Michael as the character to whom Eusebius is pointing makes sense.

The Archangel Michael only plays a role in scripture as an eschatological figure who protects the people of God against the Enemy and ultimately consummates a victory which brings about a lasting end. Such a character makes perfect sense in relation to the fact already established that Eusebius has, in this section, revealed more fully his eschatological intentions which climax at this point in his text. If Eusebius hoped to bring attention to the fact that his vision of the triumph of the Church in Constantine’s time was eschatologically loaded, then alluding to such a character seems to make perfect sense.

45. See n. 44 just above, especially Peers, Subtle Bodies. 2.

46. Dan. 10:13; 10:21; 12:1; Rev. 12:7-9; Jude 1:9; 1 Thess. 4:16.
However, in a larger sense, such references at the heart of this chapter are not entirely necessary and serve only to highlight what is already apparent when one notes the larger literary character of H.E. 10.4. For in truth, the chapter is certainly a panegyric but has the character of a song meant not to impart a purely rational argument to convince Eusebius’ hearers of the truth of his eschatological agenda, but rather, to lull them into a beautiful vision of that eschatological reality iconically displayed in the very history around them. Part of this is due to the sources from which Eusebius liberally draws. It is true that he immediately begins his panegyric to the new basilica in Tyre with direct references to recognizable eschatological works. He compares Paulinus, the presbyter in Tyre whose tireless work has created the new edifice “to Solomon, the king of a new and far goodlier Jerusalem,” directly referencing Revelation 21:2 in which the ultimate eschatological deliverance occurs in the narrative of St. John. He quotes Daniel 2:21 when he writes concerning God: “Great is He who changes the times and the seasons, removing kings and setting them up...,” a clear allusion to both the raising up of Constantine and the visions of Daniel, a hymn from whom this passage is derived. But more than this, Eusebius populates his entire panegyric with hymns and songs clearly associated with eschatological themes.

For instance, there are no fewer than seven references to Isaiah 35 sprinkled throughout chapter ten. The first such instance is most instructive and comes in a section of Eusebius’ speech in which, much like in the climax we have highlighted above, he chooses to set up a masterful counterpoint between the actions of the tyrants of the persecution, and the fruitfulness of the Church upon her restoration. Not surprisingly, Isaiah 34 and 35 present the same precise juxtaposition of desperate desolation and joyful eschatological salvation accomplished by God packaged within a hymnodic literary form.

47. Eusebius, H.E. 10.4.3. [One might note Eusebius later refers to Gal 4:26 (in 10.4.70), in which St. Paul refers to the heavenly Jerusalem as a preface to his reference to Isaiah 54, a song of deliverance for those in exile.]


49. Eusebius, H.E. 10.4.32.
As Christine Smith has written:

Eusebius’ panegyric is firmly rooted in history; it is an account of development and progress both on the earthly and the spiritual level. In the end, it is a discourse about the significance of a certain moment in time—the day of consecration—which, he argues, has proved the triumphant fulfillment of promises made about the Heavenly Church. In other words, certainty about the unknowable and invisible is deduced from the realms of the knowable and visible.  

In the context of Averil Cameron’s research on the use of rhetoric by the Christian writers of Late Antiquity, such a conclusion seems only natural. Using the already established form of a panegyric on a building, Eusebius cleverly reshapes the genre for use in a Christian setting, while also accomplishing the complementary purpose of highlighting the iconic eschatological vision he has discovered over the course of his historical research and writing. The whole literary process evident in book ten of the *Ecclesiastical History* is of a complete revisioning of Christian eschatology, the process that was outlined in chapter two above.

Most importantly, however, is that all of this demonstrates Eusesbius’ powerful vision of eschatology contained in his important historical work. As we have seen, Eusebius definitely was opposed to a millennialism which advocated a divine end including the idea of an earthly paradise. However, such an anti-millennialism did not preclude him from recognizing an eschatological imperative inherent to the divine plan as revealed in the events of history. In fact, it seems that Eusbius was quite explicit in the creation of his work. Eusebius begins his work by hinting at his eschatological discoveries without belabouring the observation. He then lays out the historical evidence he has gathered in what seems like an antiquarian and haphazard manner in his first seven books, heavily relying upon his sources to give any sense of an eschatological vision. However, as we have discovered, the entire history of the Church up until his time simply underlines the ebbs and flows of struggle in the earliest Church only to set the reader up for the true eschatological drama through which Eusebius himself has lived. In the second section of his work, beginning with book eight, continuing through the *Martyrs of Palestine*, and so on.


concluding with book nine and the climactic book ten, Eusebius describes in full detail his understanding of God’s ultimate plan. The Great Persecution, a great reckoning due to the sin of God’s people, provides the trial through which ultimate salvation is granted by God in the Constantinian settlement and peace which follows. History is iconic in this model, and nowhere does Eusebius make this more evident than in his stylized and highly rhetorical panegyric in H.E. 10.4. Here, repossessing the character of traditional Late Antique rhetoric, Eusebius reveals God’s eschatology by drawing from the songlike quality of previous eschatological works of Scripture thus managing to transcend rationalism and emphasize the mystical quality of God’s end for creation. He additionally accomplishes his goal of demonstrating the iconographic quality of history by both explicitly demonstrating the way in which human history is modeled on heavenly truth and allegorically using the basilica of Tyre as a cipher for ultimate reality. All in all, Eusebius possesses an incredibly present vision of eschatology which is untethered from apocalyptic literature, grounded in the objective events of human history, while at the same time retaining a mystical and revelatory character aligned with the emerging iconic historical eschatology we have defined in our previous chapter. What is revealed to the reader is a strong and innovative eschatology never before described in the Christian tradition.

**Dynamic Political Ideology in Eusebius**

The second task at hand is to discover Eusebius’ unique political ideology contained within the pages of the *Ecclesiastical History* and determine its relative fidelity to the classical political ideology already outlined in chapter one above. Once this baseline is established, it can be easily discerned whether or not the thesis is upheld. Is there in fact a positive relationship between the eschatology and political ideology of one of our early Christian historians of the Church?

While teasing out the eschatology of Eusebius from his famous work involved a certain amount of intertextual familiarity in order to unlock the nuance of Eusebius’ rhetoric, there is no such tedium in discovering Eusebius’ own political ideology. From the very early chapters of the *Ecclesiastical History* Eusebius is eager to demonstrate his interest in discussing political theory;
and unlike his eschatology, such ideas are not only embedded in the language of his sources. What we find is a political ideology dominated by a defense of imperialism. That is to say that Eusebius seems to be a defender of the unitary and centralized power of the Roman imperial system. It is not only that he is focused on centralized power however. It is the peculiarly Roman form of power that he seeks to defend as well. For Eusebius, the imperial system and the culture of Rome are essential elements in his vision of a successful and complete political ideology.

His earliest pertinent comments occur in book one, chapter two. He begins by discussing the heathen-like character of early humanity which “gave no thought to city or state, to art or knowledge, [sic] they had not even the name of laws and decree or virtue and philosophy.”

Next he describes the way in which the laws of the Hebrews and the ideas of the philosophers “softened” the minds of most of the heathen. Finally, he reveals the coincidence of Christ’s incarnation in the world and the birth of the Roman Empire in providential terms:

Then, at last, when all men, even the heathen throughout the world, were now fitted for the benefits prepared for them beforehand, for the reception of knowledge of the Father, then again that same divine and heavenly Logos of God, the teacher of virtues the minister of the Father in all good things, appeared at the beginning of the Roman Empire through man.

Immediately following this passage we encounter the reference to Daniel that has been noted above. Of course, such a passage does not contain only eschatological overtones but also an explicit political agenda with its talk of sovereignty and kingdoms. In addition to signalling his eschatological bent through such a passage, Eusebius uses the quotation from Daniel to demonstrate the centrality of political ideology in the message of Christ.

He immediately continues this train of thought in chapter three when he examines the way in which Moses understood the names “Jesus” and “Christ” to have special significance. Eusebius writes: “Moses was himself the first to recognize how peculiarly august and glorious is

52. Eusebius, H.E. 1.2.19.
53. Eusebius, H.E. 1.2.23.
the name of Christ ... He himself also was inspired very clearly to foresee the title ‘Jesus,’ and it
again he endued with special privilege.”

Here the words translated as august and glorious by Dr. Lake are the Greek words σεπτόν and ἐνδόξον, two words definitely linked to political
ideas. In relating Moses’ understanding of the word “Christ,” Eusebius demonstrates how
Moses designated one person as the high priest after the Theophany he experienced on Mt. Sinai,
and he says that the high priest (literally ὁ ἱερεὺς ὁ χριστός, due to the fact that he was anointed,
or “christened,” just like an ancient king would have been [cf. Lev 4:5]) was “a man of supreme
power.”

Does this statement reflect Eusebius’ belief that the high priest possessed political and
not just spiritual power? For Eusebius, the title “high priest” must have had strong political
overtones given the role of the high priest as characterized in the New Testament as well as
Josephus. Such political power associated with the High Priest in Jerusalem has been noted by
scholars for a long time. Richard Horsley notes: “As the leaders of the Jewish aristocracy in
particular, they [the High Priests] were expected by Rome to control Jewish society in the interest
of the imperial order, and they were dependent on Roman power for the maintenance of their

55. Eusebius, H.E. 1.3.2-3.

56. Plutarch is one of the heaviest ancient users of the word ἐνδόξον, for instance. Over
and over he uses the word in relation to the political ambitions of the objects of his famous
biographies [See Cicero, 1.3]. Σεπτόν, on the other hand, is a relatively obscure word in
comparison, and used mainly by later authors. For instance, Dio Cassius uses it in relation to the
law courts of a city, or, in a more illustrative case, he notes the way in which the title was given
to Gaius Octavius, later Augustus and the founder of the Roman Empire, to demonstrate his
august nature [see Roman History, 53.16.8.].

57. Eusebius, H.E. 1.3.2. [following Lev 4:5-16; 6:22]

58. Richard Horsley, in his examination of Joesphus’ understanding of the High
Priesthood, notes the following: “None of our sources suggest that that any of the popular Jewish
groups or protests of this period thought in terms of reduction of the High Priesthood to a
‘religious’ dimension, without its inherent social-political functions as well. Indeed a distinct
characteristic of ancient Palestinian Jewish society was its lack of a differentiation between (what
modern scholars understand as analytically distinct) ‘religious’ and ‘political’ aspects of its life
under the kingship of God.” Richard A. Horsley, “High Priests and the Politics of Roman
Palestine: A Contextual Analysis of the Evidence in Josephus,” Journal for the Study of Judaism
in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period 17, no. 1 (January 1986): 33.
own position of power.” From a scriptural point of view, foremost in any Christian writer’s mind when the words “high priest” are uttered must be the characterization by St. Paul in his letter to the Hebrews of Jesus Christ as the legendary priest-king Melchizedek, the perfect merging of political and religious power. All of these contextual markers in relation to the High Priesthood of Jerusalem indicate to us that Eusebius’ use of this story of Moses’ designation of a successor demonstrates his understanding that the story is a clear typological prefiguration of Jesus’ inherent political power since “the anointed one” or “Christ” was the title granted to Jesus as the true Messiah.

Further on, Eusebius points out the Mosaic importance of the name “Jesus” or “Joshua.” He argues that Moses’ selection of Joshua as his successor and ultimate political leader of the wandering Israelites, and especially his renaming of him from “Auses” to “Joshua” or “Jesus,” prefigures the role of Jesus as true king. As Eusebius writes: “His successor, at any rate, had not previously used the title ‘Jesus,’ but was called by another name, ‘Auses,’ which his parents had given him, and Moses calls him Jesus, as a precious privilege greater than any royal crown, giving to him the name because ... [he] himself bore the image [ἐικόνα] of our Savior...” In this way then, Eusebius demonstrates the political power of Christ through the story of Moses prefiguring His greatness by using His name to designate important characters who wielded enormous political power.

Continuing on, Eusebius demonstrates the ways in which the Hebrew kings of old, who were ceremoniously anointed as “Christs” in their own right, were also symbols of the ultimate kingship of Jesus Christ. Eusebius writes: “The kings ... at the bidding of God, were made Christs in a certain symbolism by the prophets who anointed them, inasmuch as they also bore in


60. Heb 5:6; 7. If we dig deeper we find so clearly in Gen 14:18-20 the reason why St. Paul made such a connection to begin with. The theophanic quality of the Melchizedek interruption (some might say interpolation) lends itself so clearly to the later Christian vision of God’s intentions in the world. For an author as well-steeped in Scriptural imagery and language as Eusebius, such connections would have been second nature to say the least.

61. Eusebius, H.E. 1.3.4.
themselves the types of the royal and sovereign power of the only true Christ, the divine Logos who reigns over all." He points to an apocalyptic work as well when he notes that Gabriel tells the prophet Daniel of the amount of time that would occur “until Christ the ruler” would come, a passage in Daniel full of political overtones.

Indeed much of book one is dedicated to this idea that all kings before the advent of Jesus Christ were images, or more properly, icons, of the True King, and Christ’s incarnation here on earth was not a symbol, or type, or image, but rather the fullness of reality. Jesus Christ is the ultimate king of all creation, the ruler of all nations. Eusebius finishes chapter three by proclaiming that Jesus “is called Christ among all men throughout the whole world ... and is mentioned thus by Jews, Greeks, and barbarians ... [He] is honoured by his worshippers throughout the world as king...”

All of this sets up for his readers what one might describe as an iconic political ideology which is employed by Eusebius to describe politics before the advent of Christ. The use of the words type [τύπος], symbol [σύμβολον], and especially image [ἐικόν] alert us to the process of rhetorical redefinition identified by Averil Cameron in her work. As outlined in chapter one above, Cameron argues that early Christian writers attempted to repossess the Hellenistic rhetorical tradition through image-conscious narrative which enabled flexibility of philosophy and appealed to readers. Here we see Eusebius accomplishing both. He observes in the historical events of his study a godly political ideology reflected in the earthly rulers before the time of Christ who prefigured Christ’s ultimate reign.

It would be natural to assume, then, that such an iconic political ideology would characterize Eusebius’ political ideology even after the incarnation of Christ, and, it is true, some scholars have suggested such a scenario. Glen Chesnut argues that Eusebius viewed Constantine in the typical late antique mode of hellenistic kingship in which Constantine becomes an icon or

63. Eusebius, *H.E.* 1.6.11.
64. Eusebius, *H.E.* 1.3.19.
image of God almighty. 65 One might agree that Eusebius does adopt such an understanding later in life, particularly in his Laus Constantini, a panegyric often collated with Eusebius’ Vita Constantini. Within this later speech, Eusebius seems clear that Constantine is a pure icon of God, formed straight from the archetype of the Creator. However, Chesnut himself is careful to note how qualified Eusebius is in his commentary on Constantine and unwilling to use typical terminology employed in works advocating Hellenistic kingship theory. Additionally, a work intended to praise Constantine and his work after the emperor’s death gives little insight into Eusebius’ understanding of the interplay of eschatology and political ideology since it is a rhetorical construction entirely intended for a separate literary and rhetorical purpose.

In fact, within the pages of the Ecclesiastical History something far different occurs when discussion of contemporary politics following the life, death and resurrection of Christ ensues; and this is particularly true when it comes to discussion of Constantine. For instance, when relating the events directly precedent to Constantine’s famous victory at the Milvian Bridge outside of Rome, Eusebius writes the following:

God, the great and heavenly Champion of the Christians, ... caused the light of peace to shine upon us from Himself, and made it manifest to all that God Himself had been watching over our affairs continually, at times scourging and in due season correcting His people by means of misfortunes, and again on the other hand after sufficient chastisement showing mercy and goodwill to those who fix their hopes on Him. This in truth Constantine, who, as was said before, was emperor and sprung from an emperor, pious and sprung from a most pious and in every respect most prudent father, and Licinius, who ranked next to him ... were stirred up by the King of kings, God of the universe and Saviour, two men beloved of God... 66

Here we do not see so much the idea of the earthly ruler as icon of God but rather the earthly ruler as regent or beloved of God. Instead of an iconic hellenistic kingship, Eusebius observes in the work of contemporary political rulers God’s direct intervention; God is inbreaking and His servants on earth are friends of God and beloved regents. Eusebius employs this kind of language over and over in relation to the reign of Constantine so that the emperor closely relies


“on the help that comes from God...” Eusebius notes that “God Himself as if with chains dragged the tyrant far away from the gates...” at the Milvian Bridge, and Constantine and Licinius, “propitiated God as the Author of all their good fortune.”

In the final resolution of the Constantinian peace, Eusebius cleaves to this same line of reasoning in the section of his work in which he describes Constantine’s terminal dispute with Licinius. After highlighting Licinius’ machinations against Constantine, Eusebius writes:

But God proved to be Constantine’s Friend and Protector and Guardian, who brought to light the plots that were devised secretly and in darkness, and confounded them ... Truly fenced with this, our Emperor, most dear to God, escaped the plots of this ill famed master of intrigue [Licinius]. And he, when he saw his covert design was by no means going according to his wish (for God disclosed every guile and wickedness to the Emperor whom He loved), since he was no longer able to conceal himself, raised an open warfare...

In typical dramatic narrative fashion, Eusebius recounts the fact that Licinius was nearly successful in his ultimate persecution against the faithful when he writes the following:

He [Licinius] had power to accomplish his purpose, and there was nothing to hinder him carrying it into effect, had not God, the Champion of the souls that are His own, foreseeing with all speed what would come to pass, caused to shine forth all at once, as it were out of deep darkness and most murky night, a great luminary and saviour of them all, leading in that direction with a lofty arm his servant Constantine.

Finally, in relation to the ultimate defeat of Licinius by Constantine and his son Crispus, Eusebius relates:

Therefore, mingling hatred of evil with a love of goodness, the defender of the good went forth, with that most humane Emperor, his son Crispus, stretching out the right hand of salvation to all who were perishing. Then, inasmuch as they had God the universal King and Son of God, the Saviour of all, as their Guide and Ally, the father and son both together divided their battle-array against the haters of God on all sides and easily won the victory; for everything in the encounter was made smooth for them by God according to His purpose.

70. Eusebius, H.E. 10.8.6-7.
The impression left with Eusebius’ reader is quite clear. Constantine is the “friend of God,”\textsuperscript{73} the beloved of God, and God’s instrument, but not a partaker in the nature of God or even an archetype of God. In fact, Eusebius is at pains to characterize every saving action of the Constantinian settlement as truly an act of God Himself, as he so carefully states again and again. For Eusebius, God is the prime actor and agent in the salvation of humanity, not just in a spiritual sense, though Eusebius also preserves this, but in an historical sense as well.

Just in case his readers miss this fact in the \textit{Ecclesiastical History}, Eusebius relates Constantine’s own understanding of himself as instrument of God in Constantine’s \textit{Oration to the Assembly of the Saints}\textsuperscript{74} when Constantine states:

\begin{quote}
When men commend my services, which owe their origin to the inspiration of Heaven, do they not clearly establish the truth that God is the cause of the exploits I have performed? Assuredly they do: for it belongs to God to do whatever is best, and to man, to perform the commands of God ... [All men] have witnessed battles, and have been spectators of a war in which the providence of God has granted victory to this people ... for [God] is the invincible ally and protector of the righteous, he is the supreme judge of all things, the prince of immortality, the Giver of everlasting life.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

When it comes to the Constantinian dynasty, then, Eusebius’ political ideology ought not be characterized as iconic, but instead, in the sense of regency. God appoints Constantine as his ally and friend, and using him as an instrument, God accomplishes His own preordained historical designs.

This understanding, naturally, shapes Eusebius’ political ideology as a whole when it comes to the time between the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ and the successes of Constantine. As has been noted above, Eusebius clearly linked the successes of the Christian people with the rise of the Roman Empire, even in his earliest works. This, of course set up a

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{73} Eusebius, \textit{H.E.} 10.9.2.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{74} A work which Barnes argues is now fully regarded as Constantine’s own, if somewhat corrupted by the translation into Greek from the original Latin. See Timothy D. Barnes, “Constantine’s Speech to the Assembly of the Saints: Place and Date of Delivery,” \textit{The Journal of Theological Studies} 52, no. 1 (2001): 26–36.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
natural challenge for him. How does one explain the centuries of passive harassment and then outright antagonism of the Great Persecution which had been perpetrated under the auspices of the Roman state? The answer is, naturally, with serious insight and interpretive vigor.

As has been established, there is no doubt, especially in his later works, that Eusebius came progressively to the conclusion over the span of his lifetime that the Roman Empire was a key factor in the eschatological desires of God. He begins with such a worldview when he notes in both the structure of the Chronicle,\textsuperscript{76} his earliest historical work, and early in the Ecclesiastical History in words, that the concurrence of the incarnation of Christ and the birth of the Roman Empire is no mere chance coincidence, but rather, part of a bifurcated divine plan for the salvation of the world. By his later works, after a lifetime of experience and reflection, he seems even more self-assured concerning this worldview in the Life of Constantine and the works associated with it like the speech of Constantine mentioned above and his own speeches in relation to the emperor.

The time in between the incarnation of Christ and the achievements of Constantine, however, must have been challenging for Eusebius’ political ideology, and there is evidence for this throughout the Ecclesiastical History. For instance, Eusebius recounts the now well-known but spurious account of how the emperor Tiberius, upon hearing about the miraculous life, death and resurrection of Christ, petitioned the Roman Senate to include Jesus Christ in the pantheon of Roman gods in Rome but was denied due to an ancient law in which no one, excepting the Senate itself, had the right to declare anyone a god. It is doubtful that Eusebius was aware of the falsity of this famous story since he clearly cites Tertullian in the passage.\textsuperscript{77} What is noteworthy, however, is the way in which he begins by giving the full account in summary and

\textsuperscript{76} Chesnut, \textit{First Christian Histories}, 137.

then includes the entire passage from Tertullian. What we see here is Eusebius, possibly in the earliest edition of his history (though a clear understanding of the editorial history is a moot point), grasping for clear evidence of his meta political ideology early on in the life of the Christian Church.

Eusebius’ task becomes more difficult, however, as events on the ground turned from negligent to active in relation to the Roman government’s perspective on the role of Christianity in society. Eusebius does relate to his readers the severity of early persecutions and names those emperors that chose to fight against the Christians as enemies of God. However, one cannot help but notice at least a slight apologetic tone when Eusebius describes these various historical persecutions and the authors of them. For instance, in beginning his discussion of the Neronian persecution he mentions this revealing caveat in relation to the trial and eventual martyrdom of St. Paul: “Probably at the beginning [of his reign] Nero’s disposition was gentler and it was easier for Paul’s defence on behalf of his views to be received, but as he advanced toward reckless crime the Apostles were attacked along with the rest.”78 Though Eusebius is ready to admit to the ferocity of Nero’s later disposition, he often chalks such behavior up to a maddened spirit rather than a reasoned attack. This is of course not unusual amongst other writers of the period who saw Nero in much the same light, so it would be unwise to put too much stock in such a position. However, the question remains why Eusebius has no mention of the famous Roman conflagration likely begun by Nero but blamed on the Christians and then used as a justification for terrible persecution. Is this an argumentum e silentio because Eusebius had no source? Is the event such a generally accepted story that there is no need for mention? Is it because Eusebius sought to downplay the role of official Roman government in Christian persecution? These questions are, of course, impossible to answer fully.

However, the later persecution of Domitian demonstrates again Eusebius’ tendency towards apologetic in relation to imperial persecution of Christianity. In introducing Domitian he writes: “He [Domitian] was the second to promote persecution against us, though his father,

78. Eusebius, H.E. 2.22.8.
Vespasian, had planned no evil against us.” This is a strikingly different account from the one offered by the author of Revelation. In that eschatological work, St. John (or as Eusebius has argued perhaps another John) paints the Roman emperor, most likely Nero, into a fearsome beast meant to cause strife and destruction. Two chapters later, Eusebius recounts the story of how Domitian had hunted the descendants of King David in hopes, much like Pontius Pilate before him, that he could crush any effort to create an earthly kingdom that could challenge his own. However, when the descendants are discovered to be nothing more than farmers who believe in a spiritual kingdom of Christ, Domitian sees them as harmless. He then concludes by quoting Tertullian when he writes: “Domitian also once tried to do the same as he, for he was a Nero in cruelty, but, I believe, inasmuch as he had some sense, he stopped at once and recalled those whom he had banished.”

This same tendency repeats itself again when Eusebius discusses the persecutions of both Decius and Gallus by quoting a very short passage from Dionysius and then concluding with the terse “So much concerning him [Gallus].” One might expect that Eusebius couldn’t treat the next persecution of Valerian with such short shrift, and such an expectation is valid. Eusebius understood that the Valerian persecution was second in intensity only to the Great Persecution to which he devotes so much attention later. However, in his treatment of this serious persecution, Eusebius continues to betray an apologetic tone in which he blames the persecution not on Valerian but on a magician named Macrianus in his employ. Eusebius writes:

For not a single one of the emperors before him [Valerian] was so kindly and favourably disposed towards them, not even those who were said to have been openly Christians, as he manifestly was, when he received them at the beginning in the most intimate and friendly manner; indeed all his house had been filled with godly persons, and was a church of God. But the master and ruler of the synagogue of the Egyptian magicians persuaded him to get rid of them, bidding him slay and pursue the pure and holy men, as being rivals and hinderers of his abominable and disgusting incantations...

Eusebius then goes on to say very little about Valerian, but continues to berate Macrianus as the author of the persecution.

In all of these instances, the ideology of imperial government is defended, even if its practitioners did not always live up to Eusebius’ expectations. In the case where emperors did protect or even extol Christian values, they are of course portrayed in glowing terms and given space within the narrative. One such instance is Eusebius’ chapter on Philip the Arab, whom he calls the first Christian emperor, or his description of how Trajan chose not to persecute Christians because of the famous Letter to Trajan by Pliny in which Pliny argues that the Christians are doing nothing illegal by simply rising early to sing hymns. It goes without saying that Eusebius’ feelings about Constantine, which we have encountered in passages above, follow this same trend. Constantine is seen as the hand of God and his regent on earth.

No apology, of course, could be made when it came to the Great Persecution which dominates the second section of Eusebius’ work. However, in clear concert with his thoroughgoing political ideology, Eusebius understands the horrors of the Great Persecution as a just punishment for the sin of Christians who prior to the persecution committed acts of division and selfishness. He writes:

But when, as a result of greater freedom, a change to pride and sloth came over our affairs, we fell to envy and fierce railing against one another, warring upon ourselves, so to speak, as occasion offered, with weapons and spears formed of words; and rulers attacked rulers and laity formed factions against laity, while unspeakable hypocrisy and pretence pursued their evil course to the furthest ends: until the divine judgement with a sparing hand, as is its wont (for the assemblies were still crowded), quietly and moderately began to exercise its oversight, the persecution commencing with the brethren in the army. But when in our blindness we took not the least care to secure the goodwill and propitious favour of the Deity, but, like some kind of atheists, imagined that our affairs escaped all heed and oversight, we went on adding one wickedness to another; and those accounted our pastors, casting aside the sanctions of the fear of God, were enflamed with mutual contentions, and did nothing else but add to the strifes and threats, the jealousy, enmity and hatred that they used one to another, claiming with all vehemence the objects of their ambition as if they were a despot’s spoils; then indeed, then according to the word spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord hath darkened the daughter of Zion in his anger, and hath cast down from heaven the glory of Israel...

83. Eusebius, H.E. 6.34.

84. Eusebius, H.E. 3.33.

It is in this context, according to Eusebius, that God used the persecuting emperors like puppets, as simple tools of chastisement. Thus Eusebius quotes Psalm 89(88) in declaring that God has “exalted the right hand of his [servant’s] enemies,” and he refers to Psalm 107(106) when he says that God has poured contempt out upon the rulers and “caused them to wander in the waste, where there is no way.”

What can be seen by all of this discussion is that one key to his understanding of imperial politics is Eusebius’ opinion that the emperors of the Roman empire are always a constructive element in the eschatological destiny of Christianity. If they are benevolent, then such an association is easy to connect. However, in the case of those emperors traditionally understood as persecuting emperors, Eusebius either minimizes their actions, engages in an apologetic strain which seeks to interpret such persecution as the product of influences external to their personalities or he understands that persecuting emperors are an instrument of God to chasten his people, thus preserving the divine eschatological imperative.

From a political perspective, such a predictable attitude seems to suggest that Eusebius’ positive opinion of a centralized imperial government headed by a strong emperor is often in tension with his desire to realize a society in which Christian security and growth can be assured. In such instances, his tendency is to implicitly validate the Roman imperial system while explaining away its particular temporal leader.

Perhaps Eusebius demonstrates most succinctly his political views when he includes the following lengthy quotation from Melito of Sardis, in his fourth book, in which Melito addresses a letter to the emperor Marcus Aurelius:

‘Our philosophy first grew up among the barbarians, but its full flower came among your nation in the great reign of your ancestor Augustus, and became an omen of good to your empire, for from that time the power of the Romans became great and splendid. You are now his happy successor, and shall be so along with your son, if you protect the philosophy which grew up with the empire and began with Augustus. Your ancestors nourished it together with the other cults, and the greatest proof that our doctrine flourished for good along with the empire in its noble beginning is the fact that it met no evil in the reign of Augustus, but on the contrary everything splendid and glorious


Without fault, Eusebius defends the empire and its leaders again and again as partners with God in His ultimate plans. In this passage we see the symphonic nature of Eusebius’ political ideology. In concert together, the empire and Church strengthen each other in a coproductive way. If there is a temptation to suggest that determining Eusebius’ ultimate political stance from a citation is disingenuous, one need only see his comments in his Preparation for the Gospel, written immediately following the persecution. In the third and fourth chapters, Eusebius describes how polyarchy and the confusion of many gods was followed by monarchy and monotheism after the advent of Christ. Moreover, such historical events were prophesied correctly, especially in the prophet Jeremiah. He concludes by writing: “Indeed, immediately all the polyarchy of the Romans was being stripped away, when, in the time of our Saviour’s appearance, Augustus held the office of monarch. And from then until now one would not see, as formerly, city being at war with city nor nation fighting with nation nor life being exhausted in the ancient confusion.”

Beginning with the advent of Christ, and continuing through the political upheavals of his day, Eusebius understands the hand of God to be imprinted upon the fabric of history unrolled before him; and indeed, his political ideology reflects such an understanding. When it comes to the incarnation of Christ into human history, Eusebius notes a strong and unalterable change in politics. He writes that Christ was “promoted to a kingdom ... by the Father.” He notes that it is not simply coincidental but providential that God chose to send his Son at the inception of the Roman Empire. He argues that a new invincible nation came into being under Christ.

89. Eusebius, *P.E.* 1.4.17-21. [Author’s own translation]
90. Eusebius, *H.E.* 1.3.11.
Conclusions

Our final task, then, is to note again the power of Eusebius’ eschatology and evaluate the relative dynamism of his political ideology in relation to the prevailing classical political ideology described in chapter one. Beginning with his eschatology, it is easy to conclude that Eusebius’ understanding of God’s ultimate aims is progressive and unique when compared to the prevailing apocalyptic eschatology of his day. Instead of the visionary and personalized eschatology of prophetic voices, Eusebius instead sees God’s hand in the everyday events of life around him. His eschatology is less fantastic and less fatalistic than that of the apocalypticists who precede him. This does not mean, however, that he somehow sees eschatology as less transformative. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is in this world, however, that God makes his ends known and it is through historical actors and the events in which they participate that the divine plan unfolds. Seen in this light, Eusebius clearly possesses a dynamic and powerful Christian eschatology.

The political ideology revealed in the Ecclesiastical History breaks from the norm of classical politics in every possible way. Where classical politics is local and focused upon particular cities and peoples, Eusebius demonstrates a penchant for universalism so strong that in any instance that unity is advanced at the expense of division and diversity, he is always ready to interpret such a development as positive. His unified vision of politics also is evident when he defends the Roman imperial system at all costs, even making excuses for emperors who have been traditionally considered persecutors of Christians. Where classical politics is anthropocentric and focused on human flourishing, Eusebius is theocentric and focused on ultimate divine intentions. We can see from Eusebius’ characterization of Constantine that God is the ultimate actor on the political stage. Rather than focus on individual human happiness, or an anthropology of human satisfaction, one sees in Eusebius an overriding concern with the aims of God. His perspective on martyrdom is key to this question. While martyrs undergo immense human suffering if evaluated in a purely sensual way, Eusebius’ tendency is to see them in the peculiarly Christian way as ultimate witnesses to the power of God in this world. Finally, this
draws us neatly into the question of epistemology addressed in chapter one. While classical political ideology seeks to understand the world through sensible observation, something we have termed rational positivism, Eusebius, on the other hand, looks for the abstract realities he has learned through the life, death and resurrection of Christ in iconic fashion all around him. Therefore, the Roman Empire and its prime actors are iconic of the mystical kingdom of God and are prime actors in the plan of salvation God has laid out for the world. In a simplified way, classical political ideology is purely exegetical; Eusebian political ideology is a curious comingling of exegesis and eisegesis.\footnote{93}{Without the conflictual baggage our colleagues in biblical studies have loaded onto these terms in the past century.}

Finally, after a thorough study of Eusebius’ \textit{Ecclesiastical History}, what is discovered is a powerful and dynamic eschatology embedded alongside a dynamic and powerful political ideology within the pages of this magnificent and seminal historical work. Is there a determining quality within this relationship? Such a question is extremely difficult to definitively answer. However, after thorough investigation, it seems reasonable to suggest a symphonic if not deterministic relationship between Eusebius’ eschatology and political ideology. One can conclude that as Eusebius is shaped by and helps to shape the clearly turbulent political realities of his day, his eschatology is more speculative and innovative partly due to the very political environment in which he is participating. Equally evident is the fact that his contribution to an emergent patristic eschatology more grounded in the objective realities of the sensible world while at the same time constantly searching for the iconic imprint of God’s mystical kingdom, seems to allow him more flexibility in his reflections on Roman politics, its primary actors and the results of its efforts in the emerging Christendom of his era. Is this a circular logic? It certainly seems so. However, if this is true, then Eusebius is in good company. As Averil Cameron undoubtedly would point out, it is this kind of paradoxical process, demonstrated in the Christian rhetoric of Eusebius’ age, that enabled Christianity to redefine and ultimately dominate an emergent culture being birthed in Late Antiquity. In any case, our concluding chapter will reflect more fully upon this question after a full analysis of our three other historians.
Eusebius, surnamed Pamphilus, writing the History of the Church in ten books, closed it with that period of the emperor Constantine, when the persecution which Diocletian had begun against the Christians came to an end. Also in writing the life of Constantine, this same author has but slightly treated the matters regarding Arius, being more intent on the rhetorical finish of his composition and the praises of the emperor, than on an accurate statement of facts. Now, as we propose to write the details of what has taken place in the churches since his time to our own day, we begin with the narration of the particulars which he has left out, and we shall not be solicitous to display a parade of words, but to lay before the reader what we have been able to collect from documents, and what we have heard from those who were familiar with the facts as they told them. And since it has an important bearing on the matter in hand, it will be proper to enter into a brief account of Constantine’s conversion to Christianity, making a beginning with this event.¹

It is in these opening words of the lawyer Socrates’ Ecclesiastical History that the reader of both Eusebius and Socrates discovers very quickly that she is encountering a very different style of history than she has previously encountered in the pages of Eusebius. While there can be little doubt that at its core, Socrates’ work must be considered “Eusebian,” in that it follows the documentary and chronological conventions of that innovator of a new genre of church history, it is in the differences between the style and underlying intent of the two authors that we truly find the characteristic tone of Socrates the historian. This, of course, is most important in our own endeavour. For in order to discern the eschatological influences (or perhaps lack thereof) of Socrates, and the power and dynamism of his political ideology, the task is not only to compare his ideas and content to the prevailing eschatology out of which he writes, and the classical political ideology inherent in the culture, as we have done with Eusebius previously. We also must provide a comparative peek at the two authors as they stand beside one another providing a unique interpretive vista as well.

As is clear from the outset, Socrates is critical of Eusebius’ “rhetorical finish,” “praises of the emperor” and “parade of words,” all characteristics of the rhetoric we noted through Cameron which lent itself to the theological, and particularly eschatological, bent of Eusebius’ work. Of course, there can be no denial of Socrates’ own rhetorical talent even in the opening words of his seminal work. One cannot but help admire his quick use of a straw man argument to suggest that his hard-scrabble work of documentary analysis and eyewitness authenticity is somehow something wholly absent from the Eusebian style. Regardless, one can sense immediately a desire on Socrates’ part to forgo any attempt at philosophical or theological commentary in his own work; and to a large extent, in comparison to Eusebius, Socrates achieves his goal. Take, for instance, Socrates’ slight aside regarding the role of the historian in the latter parts of his first book. In musing about the ultimate reasons behind the Manichaean heresy he writes:

> But for what reason the goodness of God permits this to be done, whether he wishes thereby to bring into activity the excellence of the principles of the church, and to utterly break down the self-importance which is wont to unite itself with faith; or what other cause, is, at the same time, a difficult question, and not relevant to the present discussion. For our object is neither to examine the soundness of doctrinal views, nor to analyze the mysterious reasons for the providences and judgments of God; but to detail as faithfully as possible the history of transactions which have taken place in the churches.  

And with that, it is as if Socrates, in his endorsement of a kind of transactional historiography, rejects any notion that he has any interest in shaping the philosophy of the Church.

With such a clear and succinct view of historiographic enterprise one might suspect that a history written by Socrates would be devoid of any sense of eschatology whatsoever. Yet, things are not so simple. The following investigation attempts to tease out of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates its eschatological perspective in order to compare it to the prevailing eschatology of Late Antiquity established in chapter two.

**Eschatological Nuance and Fervor and the Cosmic Sympathy of Socrates**

One of the most significant differences that can be noted between the eschatology of Eusebius and that of Socrates is that Socrates is far less deterministic in his eschatological vision. Every reader of Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* notices his insistence upon labeling heretics in

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order to demarcate clearly who is “in” and who is “out” of the Church. Indeed, Eusebius clearly states this as one of the key goals of his work in the very first pages of his history. The result of such clarity is that Eusebius’ eschatology is more assured since he can easily understand the winners and losers of Divine Providence when the participants are so discretely defined.

We find no such clarity in the historical writing of Socrates. Perhaps this is most obviously displayed in Socrates’ rendering of the epic fourth-century conflict between St. Athanasius and that most paradigmatic of heretics, Arius. While Athanasius plays the role of hero of the drama in Socrates’ narrative, since Athanasius was the chief representative of the “homoousian” faction that eventually won the day, Socrates does not at all shrink from criticizing, even if somewhat obliquely, his hero from time to time. For instance, when discussing the unwillingness of Athanasius to accept Arius even after Arius and his faction had recanted of their sins before Emperor Constantine, Socrates writes the following:

Athanasius nevertheless wholly refused to receive them, and wrote to inform the emperor in reply, that it was impossible for those who had once rejected the faith, and had been anathematized, to be again received into communion on their return. But the emperor, provoked at this answer, menaced Athanasius in these terms: ‘Since you have been apprised of my will, afford unhindered access into the church to all those who are desirous of entering it. For if it shall be intimated to me that you have prohibited any of those claiming to be reunited to the church, or have hindered their admission, I will forthwith send some one who at my command shall depose you, and drive you into exile.’ The emperor wrote thus from a desire of promoting the public good, and because he did not wish to see the church ruptured; for he labored earnestly to bring them all into harmony.\(^3\)

One can see clearly in the concluding statement of this passage Socrates’ own opinion that the emperor was justified in his harsh treatment of Athanasius, whether or not Athanasius was ultimately in the right or not.

We see this same opinion again in a later section when Socrates seems to defend Constantine’s decision to banish Athanasius into his first exile, even though Socrates admits that Constantine was tricked into believing that Athanasius had tried to prohibit the all-important grain shipment from Alexandria to Constantinople. Justifying the emperor and criticizing Athanasius, Socrates writes: “Now some affirm that the emperor came to this decision with a

\(^3\) Socrates Scholasticus, *H.E.*, 1.27.
view to the establishment of unity in the church, since Athanasius was inexorable in his refusal to hold any communion with Arius and his adherents."

Socrates even seems to blame military disaster on Athanasius; and his opinion only further solidifies this habit of his to nuance the actors in the eschatological drama played out within history. When discussing Constantius’ military failures against the Persians and his domestic disturbances, Socrates writes:

...The Persian war was raised against the Romans, in which Constantius did nothing prosperously: for in a battle fought by night on the frontiers of both parties, the Persians had to some slight extent the advantage. And this at a time when the affairs of the Christians became no less unsettled, there being great disturbance throughout the churches on account of Athanasius, and the term homoousion. Affairs having reached this pass, there sprang up a tyrant in the western parts called Magnentius, who by treachery slew Constans, the emperor of the western division of the empire, at that time residing in the Gauls.

If Socrates was unclear about the role of Athanasius in the troubles of the empire, his opinion regarding another sect more contemporary to his situation, namely the Novatians, is also heavily nuanced. While Eusebius clearly demarcates the Novatians as heretics (and even calls their original leader Novatus arrogant, his opinions inhuman and his behavior brother-hating), Socrates seems to admire this sect as a group filled with holiness. One such example of this is the story of Eutychian, a great Novatian holy man, who, because his piety was admired by Constantine, effected the release of a bodyguard accused of treason by the emperor. Another passage in which Paul, a bishop of the Novatians in Constantinople, saves the Novatian church by his constant prayer, is yet another example of this unconventional approach to established religious boundaries often first demarcated by Eusebius himself.

If Socrates is unwilling in his eschatological foundations to clearly mark out who is holy and who is not in God’s scheme for humanity, this does not, however, necessarily mean that he


shies away from demonstrating his eschatological bent. In fact, we can see in several instances Socrates’ own opinion that God clearly plays out his ultimate aim for creation within the events of history unveiled before the eyes of the historian. One way in which this is seen within the work of Socrates is in his insistence that political and even natural disasters are often directly related to disturbances within the Church. For instance, after the promulgation of a series of heretical creeds by the Arians, Socrates notes that “it happened that public affairs also were disturbed. The nation called Franks made incursions into the Roman territories in Gaul, and at the same time there occurred violent earthquakes in the East, and especially at Antioch [the location of the heretical synod], which continued to suffer concussions during a whole year.”

In another instance, the Arianism of the heretic emperor Valens is blamed upon his being baptized by an Arian bishop, and after Socrates meticulously describes the division present within the churches of the empire at the time, he concludes by talking about the persecution of “homoousion” Christians by Valens followed by the political uprising of the usurper Procopius, earthquakes, and the changing of coastlines due to the violence of an earthquake.

This theme is most apparent in a section in which Socrates rather abashedly describes why he mixes up within the pages of a church history the affairs of the state as well. In this rather lengthy passage, many underlying assumptions of our author are made apparent:

Before we begin the fifth book of our history, we must beg those who may peruse this treatise, not to censure us too hastily because having set out to write a church history we still intermingle with ecclesiastical matters, such an account of the wars which took place during the period under consideration, as could be duly authenticated. For this we have done for several reasons: first, in order to lay before our readers an exact statement of the facts; but secondly, in order that the minds of the readers might not become satiated with the repetition of the contentious disputes of bishops, and their insidious designs against one another; but more especially that it might be made apparent, that whenever the affairs of the state were disturbed, those of the Church, as if by some vital sympathy, became disordered also. Indeed whoever shall attentively examine the subject will find, that the mischiefs of the state, and the troubles of the church have been inseparably connected; for he will perceive that they have either arisen together, or immediately succeeded one another. Sometimes the affairs of the Church come first in order; then commotions in the state follow, and sometimes the reverse, so that I cannot believe this invariable interchange is merely fortuitous, but am persuaded that it proceeds from our iniquities;


10. Socrates Scholasticus, H.E., 4.1-4.3. For even more examples see 4.11 and 4.16.
and that these evils are inflicted upon us as merited chastisements...\textsuperscript{11}

This passage is the quintessential example of what Glen Chesnut has identified as the “cosmic sympathy” present in the historical work of Socrates and which ties him securely with classical philosophy and historiography. Chesnut writes:

Socrates espoused a doctrine of \textit{συμπαι\dieresis\}, of cosmic ‘sympathy.’ When one violin is bowed, the strings of another violin, sitting on a table, resonate with sympathetic vibrations. When disturbances appear in one part of the cosmos, the cosmos is soon thrown out of joint by sympathetic reactions in its other parts. ‘The times are out of joint, \textit{O cursed spite}’ is not a bad description of what Socrates meant by a \textit{κακος πός} of this sort. There is no need to dwell on the many uses of the idea of cosmic sympathy in the ancient world—Stoic physics, Neoplatonic explanations of astrology and magic...\textsuperscript{12}

Perhaps it is in this essential insight of Chesnut into Socrates’ mindset that we can begin to understand the relationship between Socrates’ eschatology and political ideology. At the end of his work, as Chesnut does not hesitate to point out, Socrates explains the reason for his historical work quite succinctly. He argues that there is no need for the work of the historian when the cosmos is in complete harmony. “But we shall here close our history, praying that the churches everywhere, with the cities and nations, may live in peace; for as long as peace continues, those who desire to write histories will find no materials for their purpose.”\textsuperscript{13} For Socrates, historians write about conflict all the while praying for harmony and peace.

But what is the cause of such peace? In Socrates’ opinion, peace and harmony are established when extremist ideologies are rejected in favor of a balance between factions. The evidence of this opinion can be seen, for instance, in his characterization of Athanasius or his blanket condemnation of the “contentious disputes of bishops, and their insidious designs against one another...” But even more telling is Socrates’ view of other political and ecclesiastical conflicts.

One such example is Socrates’ description of the emperor Julian. In the opinion of Christians, Julian, as is well known, was one of the most hated emperors in the post-
Constantinian era because of his attempt to reestablish the dominance of pagan beliefs. The writers of the Early Church almost universally despised Julian, and it was this disdain which ultimately gave him the title “Apostate” by many commentators.

Socrates, however, demonstrates his deep desire to see harmony and balance of power when discussing the violent beginning to Julian’s reign. Julian was acclaimed emperor by his troops after a period in which it seems clear that his cousin, Emperor Constantius II, was threatened by the martial prowess and high regard of the soldiery for Julian. There was no doubt that after Julian’s acclamation as Augustus by his legions, civil war was on the horizon for at least the eastern half of the empire. However, Constantius unexpectedly died of a fever before a true confrontation ever materialized. Writing about this event in retrospect, and especially after the later untimely death of Julian, one might expect Socrates to lament the death of Constantius and bemoan the rise of Julian; but his words betray his deep dislike of conflict regardless of the protagonists and their relative value to the Church. The first chapter of his third book is a veritable ode to Julian and his extraordinary talents and skill in warfare. Deftly avoiding every possible political barrier placed in his way by his Constantinian relatives, Julian arrives unscathed on the scene of his conflict with Constantius ready to plunge into a full-blown succession crisis. At the high point of the narrative when Julian is prepared to confront Constantius, Socrates writes:

In this manner he [Julian] managed to excite a civil war against Constantius; and thus, as far as he was concerned, he would have involved the empire in all the disastrous consequences of war. For this philosopher’s aim could not have been attained without much bloodshed: but God, in the sovereignty of his own councils, checked the fury of these antagonists without detriment to the state, by the removal of one of them. For when Julian arrived among the Thracians, intelligence was brought him that Constantius was dead; and thus was the Roman empire at that time preserved from the intestine [sic] strife that threatened it.¹⁴

One might expect a Christian historian of the Eusebian school to conclude such a passage with dark forebodings of the future given Julian’s imperial trajectory and his legacy. Yet, even after his death and without the fear of imperial censure of his work, Socrates instead chose to characterize Julian’s succession in a rather benign way.

Socrates then goes on to detail the way in which Julian deftly tried to conciliate all of the religious parties that made up the contentious patchwork of factions that was Constantinople. He restored the “homoousion” bishops, reopened pagan temples, and generally tried to reform the excesses of his cousin’s previous administration. While it must be said that Socrates eventually gets around to criticizing Julian’s behavior towards Christians, which became progressively worse as his reign matured, Socrates’ general tone regarding Julian is exceedingly charitable for a writer of the era and particularly the writer of a church history.

Such a surprising tone is also found in Socrates’ discussion of the growth of episcopal power in later years. Of the Patriarchate of Alexandria he writes:

Cyril came into possession of the episcopate, with greater power than Theophilus [his uncle and predecessor] had ever exercised. For from that time the bishopric of Alexandria went beyond the limits of its sacerdotal functions, and assumed the administration of secular matters. Cyril therefore shut up the churches of the Novatians at Alexandria, and took possession of all their consecrated vessels and ornaments; and then stripped their bishop Theopemptus of all that he had.\footnote{Socrates Scholasticus, \textit{H.E.}, 7.7.}

Of the Papacy in Rome following its destruction by Alaric in 410 Socrates writes:

Until this time the Novatians had flourished exceedingly in Rome, possessing many churches there, which were attended by large congregations. But envy attacked them also, as soon as the Roman episcopate, like that of Alexandria, extended itself beyond the limits of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and degenerated into its present state of secular domination. For thenceforth the bishops would not suffer even those who agreed with them in matters of faith to enjoy the privilege of assembling in peace, but stripped them of all they possessed, praising them merely for these agreements in faith. The bishops of Constantinople kept themselves free from this [sort of conduct]; inasmuch as in addition to tolerating them and permitting them to hold their assemblies within the city, as I have already stated, they treated them with every mark of Christian regard.\footnote{Socrates Scholasticus, \textit{H.E.}, 7.11.}

In both of these instances we see, first of all, Socrates’ high regard for the Novatians, which we have already noted above. But significantly we see emphasized, both with negative and positive examples, his high regard for concord and harmony in which factions are allowed to exist on equal footing within society.

Chesnut has located this sense of equality found in the work of Socrates in his primary philosophical bent. Referring to \textit{H.E.} 2.35, Chesnut argues that Socrates is grounded in the...
philosophical method of non-judgemental skepticism found in the early Greek logicians, fused with the philosophy of Plato and the neo-Platonic mysticism of Plotinus. Chesnut writes: “In its fully developed form, this mode of methodical doubt operated by placing the opposing arguments of differing philosophical schools side by side; in light of the irreconcilable differences that were thereby caused to appear, it declared that no sure human knowledge was possible, only probabilities at best.” Over and over one can see this philosophical principle playing itself out within the pages of Socrates’ history, according to Chesnut, and indeed this seems reasonable and helps to explain his often non-partisan opinions with regard to the great conflicts he chronicles.

An even more compelling reason, however, for this insistence upon harmony that we find in the historical writing of Socrates may be the characteristic we identified at the outset as one of the foundations of classical Greek political ideology; ἴσονομία. As Gregory Vlastos pointed out, and we demonstrated briefly in the works of both Plato and Aristotle, this concept of equilibrium was intrinsic to the classical characterization of a healthy politics. Socrates himself was deeply enamored of classical learning and we can see this in some of his comments which reveal this sympathy while at the same time advocating the concept of ἴσονομία (though, it must be admitted, not using the actual word itself). For instance, though we have already demonstrated Socrates’ somewhat apologetic tone when it came to Julian the Apostate, the following passage clearly melds his high regard for balancing factions and its connection to classical philosophy.


18. As Pierre Maraval keenly notes: «Socrate s’insère donc dans cette lignée qui, en passant par Origène et les Cappadociens, a reconnu ce que la paideia classique peut apporter aux chrétiens, malgré son caractère païen.» See Bernard Poudron and Yves-Marie Duval, eds., L’Historiographie de l’Eglise Des Premiers Siècles (Paris: Beauchesne, 2001), 291. Incidentally, Maraval also notes Socrates’ sense of balance in his recognition of Socrates’ advocacy of tolerance. See his comment on p. 282 of the article in which he reveals that his original title was «Amour de la culture et tolérance.»

19. “...Socrates, the most eminent of all the philosophers ... who was admired by all the Greeks for his modesty, justice, and other virtues; whom Plato, the most admirable among them, Xenophon, and the rest of the philosophic band, not only honor as one beloved of God, but also are accustomed to think of as having been endowed with superhuman intelligence.” Socrates Scholasticus, H.E., 3.23.
Detailing the period in which the emperor Julian visited Antioch before his untimely death, Socrates writes:

Then indeed the emperor’s real temper and disposition, which he had hitherto kept as much as possible from observation, became fully manifested: for he who had boasted so much of his philosophy, was no longer able to restrain himself; but being goaded almost to madness by these reproachful hymns [which the Christian population of Antioch sang against him], he was ready to inflict the same cruelties on the Christians, with which Diocletian’s agents had formerly visited them.\(^\text{20}\)

And again earlier when speaking of his change from a balanced emperor to one of madness, Socrates writes: “Although at the beginning of his reign the Emperor Julian conducted himself mildly toward all men ... as he went on he did not continue to show the same equanimity.”\(^\text{21}\)

We see this same advocacy of balance and equilibrium present in Socrates’ discussion of other political leaders as well. For instance, after the death of his brother and co-emperor Valentinian, Socrates records the following anecdote about the emperor Valens as he resided in Antioch before the fateful conflicts that would later take his life:

In the meanwhile, Valens, making his residence at Antioch, was wholly undisturbed by foreign wars; for the barbarians on every side restrained themselves within their own boundaries. Nevertheless, he himself waged a most cruel war against those who maintained the ‘homoousian’ doctrine, inflicting on them more grievous punishments every day; until the philosopher Themistius by his *Appealing Oration* somewhat moderated his severity. In this speech he tells the emperor, ‘That he ought not to be surprised at the difference of judgment on religious questions existing among Christians; inasmuch as that discrepancy was trifling when compared with the multitude of conflicting opinions current among the heathen; for these amount to above three hundred; that dissension indeed was an inevitable consequence of this disagreement; but that God would be the more glorified by a diversity of sentiment, and the greatness of his majesty be more venerated, for the fact of its not being easy to have a knowledge of Him.’ The philosopher having said these and similar things, the emperor became milder...\(^\text{22}\)

After Valens’ death at Adrianople, Socrates extols Gratian, his successor, because he recalled those exiled under Valens and “enacted that persons of all sects, without distinction, might securely assemble together in their churches.”\(^\text{23}\) Further on he praises the emperor Theodosius


\(^{21}\) Socrates Scholasticus, *H.E.*, 3.11.

\(^{22}\) Socrates Scholasticus, *H.E.*, 4.32.

\(^{23}\) Socrates Scholasticus, *H.E.*, 5.3.
for calling together a meeting of disparate Christian factions when even the Council of
Constantinople has not provided clear unity. He writes:

But I cannot sufficiently admire the emperor’s prudence in this contingency. For he was
unwilling to fill the cities with disturbance, as far as this was dependent on him, and so
after a very short time he called together a general conference of the sects, thinking that
by a discussion among their bishops, their mutual differences might be adjusted, and
unanimity established. And this purpose of the emperor’s I am persuaded was the reason
that his affairs were so prosperous at that time.\textsuperscript{24}

Even Arcadius, on whom Socrates seems to spend little time, is praised as a prince “of a mild and
gentle disposition.”\textsuperscript{25}

All of this pales, however, in comparison to Socrates’ love of the equilibrium and balance
displayed by emperor Theodosius II. In describing his virtues shortly before his accession,
Socrates writes the following:

In clemency and humanity he far surpassed all others. For the emperor Julian although he
professed to be a philosopher, could not moderate his rage against the Antiochians who
derided him, but inflicted upon Theodore the most agonizing tortures. Theodosius on the
contrary, bidding farewell to Aristotle’s syllogisms, exercised philosophy in deeds, by
getting the mastery over anger, grief, and pleasure. Never has he revenged himself on any
one by whom he has been injured; nor has anyone ever even seen him irritated.

Socrates then goes on to explain how on one occasion the emperor was able to convince a
stadium filled with spectators to sing hymns in order to calm violent weather! In \textit{H.E.} 42,
Socrates violates his own (rather tongue in cheek) stated reasons for writing his history when he
glowingly praises Theodosius II in the following manner:

For in fact he himself was a pattern to all true priests and never approved of those who
attempted to persecute others. Nay I may venture to affirm, that in meekness he
surpassed all those who have ever faithfully borne the sacerdotal office. And what is
recorded of Moses in the book of numbers, ‘Now the man Moses was very meek, above
all the men which were upon the face of the earth’—may most justly be applied at this
day; for the Emperor Theodosius is ‘meek above all the men which are upon the face of
the earth.’ ... For the God of the universe has afforded this most devout emperor in our
times supernatural aid of a similar kind to what was vouchsafed to the righteous
heretofore. I write not these things from adulation, but truthfully narrate facts such as
everybody can attest.\textsuperscript{26}

When we compare such high praise with the characterization offered by Socrates of the great

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} Socrates Scholasticus, \textit{H.E.}, 5.10.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Socrates Scholasticus, \textit{H.E.}, 6.23.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Socrates Scholasticus, \textit{H.E.}, 7.42.
\end{itemize}
villain of the age, the eventual heretic Nestorius, Socrates’ philosophy of equilibrium is complete:

Nestorius was brought from Antioch, being greatly lauded by some for his temperance: but what sort of a disposition he was of in other respects, those who possessed any discernment were able to perceive from his first sermon. Being ordained on the 10th of April ... he immediately uttered those famous words, before all the people, in addressing the emperor, ‘Give me, my prince, the earth purged of heretics, and I will give you heaven as a recompense. Assist me in destroying heretics, and I will assist you in vanquishing the Persians.’ Now although these utterances were extremely gratifying to some of the multitude, who cherished a senseless antipathy to the very name of heretic; yet those, as I have said, who were skillful in predicating a man’s character from his expressions, did not fail to detect his levity of mind, and violent and vainglorious temperament inasmuch as he had burst forth into such vehemence without being able to contain himself for even the shortest space of time ... He could not rest, but seeking every means of harassing those who embraced not his own sentiments, he continually disturbed the public tranquility ... but the emperor by his admonitions checked his fury.  

Taken altogether, it is not hard to see how avidly Socrates embraced the classical political notion outlined by Vlastos and present in the classical traditions of ἰσονομία. What is left to determine are the ways in which Socrates’ eschatology intertwines with his political ideology. Once this is established, we can reliably settle whether or not our ultimate thesis holds up.

**Traditional Biblical Eschatology in Socrates**

As we have already noticed, Socrates’ eschatological views are clearly demonstrated in his identified providential connections between God’s intentions and humanity’s actions which Chesnut has called “cosmic sympathy.” However, one might reasonably ask if there are any more obvious and blatant examples of eschatological thinking in the work of Socrates which might betray his overall eschatological philosophy. Two examples in the heart of Socrates’ work give evidence of the fact that Socrates is at least minimally interested in buttressing his eschatological theme with the help of biblical witness. The first can be found in H.E. 3.20 where he details the efforts of the Jews of Jerusalem, with the financial support of the emperor Julian, to rebuild the Solomonic temple. He writes:

The emperor having ordered that the expenses of this structure should be defrayed out of the public treasury, all things were soon provided, such as timber and stone, burnt brick, clay, lime, and all other materials necessary for building. On this occasion Cyril bishop of Jerusalem, called to mind the prophecy of Daniel, which Christ also in the holy gospels has confirmed, and predicted in the presence of many persons, that the time had indeed

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come ‘in which one stone should not be left upon another in that temple,’ but that the Saviour’s prophetic declaration should have its full accomplishment.  

Socrates then goes on to detail the way in which a miraculous earthquake and ensuing fire from heaven both destroyed any work already begun and burned up all the instruments and tools needed for such work. When even after this the Jews did not believe in Jesus Christ as God, they found the sign of the cross mystically imbued upon their garments which they in vain tried to wipe off; a clear sign, according to Socrates, of their unwillingness to believe.

This extraordinary tale, which is of course mentioned in both Sozomen and in Theodoret, gives a vibrant and clear example of how Socrates uses biblical eschatology to buttress his own interest in eschatology within his historical work. By referring directly to the sermon of St. Cyril, which referred to the eschatological prophecy of both Daniel and Jesus Christ, and tying them to the events surrounding the attempt to rebuild the temple in Julian’s day, Socrates demonstrates his allegiance to traditional biblical eschatology. It must be noted, however, that compared to our other historians, and Theodoret in particular, Socrates exhibits the least interest in biblical witness.

This does not, however, stop him from alluding to the eschatological passage of St. Paul in his letter to the Hebrews found in Hebrews 11. In H.E. 4.24, Socrates relates the story of how the emperor Valens, in his attempt to stamp out any allegiance to the homoousian creed, which eventually became the truly orthodox creed of the Church, persecuted the monks of Egypt mercilessly. He writes of the monks:

Thus in them were renewed those things which are spoken of by the apostle [St. Paul]: ‘for they were mocked, and had trial of scourgings, were stripped naked, put in bonds, stoned, slain with the sword, went about in the wilderness clad in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts, in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.’ In all these things ‘they obtained a good report’ for their faith and their works, and the cures which the grace of Christ...
wrought by their hands. But as it appears Divine Providence permitted them to endure these evils, ‘having for them provided something better,’ that through their sufferings others might obtain the salvation of God, and this subsequent events seem to prove.\(^{33}\)

Socrates next tells how the monks were eventually exiled, since the emperor sensed that persecution was not accomplishing his goal. In their exile, they are able to convert to the faith a pagan priest and his entire island population through the curing of his daughter, thus fulfilling God’s ultimate aims for His creation, even in the midst of persecution and suffering.

If this biblical support for eschatology does not provide enough evidence, the most striking such example is provided by Socrates near the end of his work. In an opportune rhetorical moment, Socrates refers to Ezekiel 38, a clearly eschatological, and we must also note apocalyptic, passage, when discussing the failure of the rebel named John who had attempted to rise up and rule the western regions of the empire. Socrates writes the following:

> After the death of the usurper, the barbarians whom he had called to his assistance against the Romans, made preparations for ravaging the Roman provinces. The emperor (Theodosius II) being informed of this, immediately, as his custom was, committed the management of the matter to God; and continuing in earnest prayer, he speedily obtained what he sought; for it is worth while to give attention to the disasters which befell the barbarians. For their chief, whose name was Rougas, was struck dead with a thunderbolt. Then a plague followed which destroyed most of the men who were under him: and as if this was not sufficient, fire came down from heaven, and consumed many of the survivors. This filled the barbarians with the utmost terror; not so much because they had dared to take up arms against a nation of such valor as the Romans possessed, as that they perceived them to be assisted by a mighty God. On this occasion, Proclus the bishop preached a sermon in the church in which he applied a prophecy out of Ezekiel to the deliverance effected by God in the late emergency, and was in consequence much admired. This is the language of the prophecy: ‘And thou, son of man, prophesy against Gog the prince of Rhos, Mosoch, and Thobel. For I will judge him with death, and with blood, and with overflowing rain, and with hailstones. I will also rain fire and brimstone upon him, and upon all his bands, and upon many nations that are with him. And I will be magnified, and glorified, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations: and they shall know that I am the Lord.’ This application of the prophecy was received with great applause, as I have said, and enhanced the estimation in which Proclus was held. Moreover the providence of God rewarded the meekness of the emperor in various other ways...\(^{34}\)

To begin with, the eschatological bent of the above passage is patently clear. In the original context, the prophet Ezekiel, given a unique revelation of God while in exile in Babylon, shares the vision in a series of prophetic narratives describing the fall of Jerusalem, the condemnation of


\(^{34}\) Socrates Scholasticus, \textit{H.E.}, 7.43.
surrounding nations, and the apocalyptic redemption of holy Jerusalem. Completely focused on God’s ultimate aims for God’s chosen people, the prophecies of Ezekiel are deeply eschatological and predate the late Jewish apocalyptic literature of Daniel and the early Christian apocalyptic literature of Revelation already addressed above. It might be reasonable to suggest that Socrates simply described this homily of Proclus, the patriarch of Constantinople, out of a sense of duty and it is thus not substantive to his eschatological theme. However, Proclus is only mentioned in passing by Sozomen,\textsuperscript{35} an author, as we shall see, who chronicles nearly the same era as Socrates. Consequently, Socrates’ greater elaboration, and his concluding aside, demonstrates its importance in our discussion. Furthermore, when viewed within the larger framework of the end of Socrates’ history, this blatant appeal to eschatology makes greater sense.

We have already noted the way in which Socrates understands Theodosius II to be the true embodiment of a perfect, and balanced, Christian ruler. In addition, as previously noted, Socrates seems to reach a fever pitch when in the last book of his history he details the heresy, and eventual downfall of Nestorius, in stark relief to the rise of Patriarch Proclus, not coincidentally championed by the emperor. It seems obvious that the chapter quoted above, in which Socrates ties the eirenic victory of Theodosius over Rougas and his tribe to the eschatological and apocalyptic prophecies of Ezekiel, represents the climax of the final book, and indeed could be said to represent the climax of Socrates’ history. For, from this point on, the remaining chapters read like the neatly tied up drama of a concluding romantic novella. In \textsc{H.E.} 7.44, the emperor’s daughter marries his choice for emperor of the western half of the empire, solidifying his authority; an event labeled by Socrates as a, “kingly piece of good luck” \textsc{	extup[τὸ βασιλεῖ] ἑυτύχημα\textup]. Next, in \textsc{H.E.} 7.45, Proclus single-handedly brings the partisans of St. John Chrysostom back into the fold of the universal Church by translating his relics back to Constantinople. Even more astonishing, a seemingly unavoidable schism amongst the Novatians is skirted through the providential intervention of the dying bishop Paul in \textsc{H.E.} 7.46. \textsc{H.E.} 7.47 glosses over a commonly known estrangement between the emperor Theodosius and the empress

\textsuperscript{35} Sozomen, \textsc{H.E.}, 9.2.
Eudocia by suggesting that sending Eudocia to Jerusalem was an act of thanksgiving by the emperor. Finally, Socrates ends his history with a chapter in which he gives his famous statement about the role of historians we have mentioned earlier, namely, that in a time of peace, such as the one established by Theodosius II, there is nothing left about which to write by historians such as himself.

What does all of this demonstrate in relation to our overriding thesis? To begin with, one can see clearly the ways in which Socrates falls neatly into the role of Christian rhetorical innovator after the preceding analysis of the end of Socrates’ church history. Insisting upon a moving narrative arc, Socrates demonstrates in both the arrangement and characterization of his historical material at the end of book seven that he intends to cultivate in his readers a particular perspective of the historical material molded into a Christian worldview. Secondly, he marks off this rhetorical effort by referring directly to an important prophetic and eschatological text, thereby demonstrating his commitment to an emerging patristic eschatology which usurps the apocalyptic genre in the service of an immanent theological outlook. Both of these points demonstrate the arguments we have made previously about the hallmarks of Eusebian historiography.

In relation to the ultimate thesis, however, a reiteration is important. Our contention is that where we find a dynamic eschatology in the work of our historians, there too we will find a dynamic political ideology. It must be admitted that after an initial reading of the Ecclesiastical History of Socrates, particularly quickly after a reading of Eusebius, one could come to the conclusion that the eschatology of Socrates is rather thin; and that was indeed the first conclusion of this study. Paired with what appears to be a political ideology similar in tone to the politics of classical political theorists, particularly in relation to the theory of ἴσον ὀμολογία noted above, it seems a natural conclusion that the work of Socrates proves the inverse of our thesis and thus buttresses the overall argument through a negative example. In other words, a weak and generally conventional eschatology leads to a static political ideology which is classical in character. The thorn in such an argument, however, is the final eschatological section of book seven detailed above and the fact that Socrates’ political ideology is so different from that of Eusebius, who, in
one sense, ought to be the control for Socrates’ vision of political ideology. Upon further reflection, however, and more isolated reading, it seems more reasonable to suggest that while the eschatology of Socrates might be somewhat less fantastical than that of Eusebius, it is still clearly present and dynamic if evaluated in isolation. Does this then, in fact, invalidate the thesis? Does a present and vibrant eschatology exist alongside a static and conventional politics?

The key to understanding the way in which the overall thesis is upheld and enhanced by the work of Socrates is to understand the context within which he was writing. Socrates was a lawyer of Constantinople with a less obstructed and more complete view of the consequences of the Constantinian and Christian political revolution of the fourth and early fifth centuries than our other historians. The main source from which he modeled his history was the work of Eusebius which provided the intellectual and philosophical grounding for such a political movement. Seen within this milieu it is a grounded conclusion to suggest that Socrates’ political ideology was every bit as dynamic as his vibrant and powerful eschatology. To begin with, while the eschatological character of Socrates’ text might seem muted or possibly more conventional than that of Eusebius, this, in fact, demonstrates its dynamism. Choosing not to mimic the eschatological characterizations in the text of Eusebius, while at the same time infusing his text with Christian eschatology, obviously demonstrates its dynamism. In much the same way, Socrates’ vision of politics must have been challenging to the political elites of his day who had just begun to take for granted the monolithic Christian and, to a certain extent, autocratic political realities which had been championed in the work of Eusebius if not fully realized in his generation. Socrates’ vision of balance and equanimity within the context of ecclesiastical and political power structures may have hearkened back to a classical understanding of successful politics, but it was clearly buttressed by an ever-present eschatology which he used to demonstrate the fact that God’s will sanctioned such a vision of political power. This helps to explain his sympathetic view of an otherwise despised emperor in Julian, his championing of an “heretical” Christian sect in the Novatians, his disgust with the perceived constant divisions and rigidity of bishops, his praise of moderation in political leaders, and his absolute canonization of Theodosius as the perfect representation of Christian political power. Socrates, much like
Eusebius in his day but to entirely different result, used eschatology in the service of a dynamic political ideology. By emphasizing God’s aims for His creation, Socrates presented a dynamic and powerful political ideology different from the norms of his day and ready to influence the larger society around him. Our next task is to analyze his near contemporary’s use of eschatology and whether such use continues the theme of our thesis or threatens to undermine the soundness of our conclusions. Let us see how Sozomen lives up to such expectations.
CHAPTER 5
Hermias Salaminius Sozomen of Constantinople: Folkloric Eschatology and the Subjugation of Political Power

The Emergence of Folk Eschatology

In the third chapter of his first book, Hermias Salaminius Sozomen wrote the following account of Constantine’s conversion to the Christian faith:

At daybreak, he called together the priests of Christ, and questioned them concerning their doctrines. They opened the sacred Scriptures, and expounded the truths relative to Christ, and showed him from the prophets, how the signs which had been predicted, had been fulfilled. The sign which had appeared to him was the symbol, they said, of the victory over hell; for Christ came among men, was stretched upon the cross, died, and returned to life the third day. On this account, they said, there was hope that at the close of the present dispensation, there would be a general resurrection of the dead, and entrance upon immortality, when those who had led a good life would receive accordingly, and those who had done evil would be punished.¹

Besides the fact that Sozomen’s description of this auspicious event in the history of the Church is the most lurid and descriptive of those extant in the ancient world, his account also demonstrates the extent to which his eschatology is obvious in his general tone. From the beginning to the end of his history, Sozomen clearly and unabashedly portrays humanity and its history completely wrapped up in divine determinism perfectly evident to any casual observer.

Even more important, however, is the company with which eschatological thinking abides in his world; and that company is clearly lay-focused and folkloric, with monks, martyrs, and simple clergy as the paragons of eschatological wisdom. Since Sozomen was raised in the deeply ascetic region of Gaza and belonged to a lineage which was won to the Christian faith through monastic means, it is not at all surprising to see his eschatology wrapped up in the dressings of Palestinian simplicity. In fact, this is the main distinguishing feature of Sozomen’s eschatology

¹ Sozomen, H.E. 1.3.
when compared with those of Eusebius and Socrates, the first two historians we have investigated within the Eusebian tradition. It is not surprising, either, that such a laicized vision of eschatology necessarily impacts the political ideology revealed in the pages of Sozomen’s history; particularly in an era like the early fifth century which was dominated by conflicts between simple, practical purveyors of Christian wisdom, and the champions of a decadent and decaying classical heritage desperately trying to stay relevant.²

We are first introduced to Sozomen’s fascination with simple monasticism in H.E. 1.12. In this chapter he describes the lives of monks in glowing terms and highlights their eschatological thinking:

Indeed, the most useful thing that has been received by man from God is their [the monks’] philosophy. They neglect many branches of mathematics and the technicalities of dialectics, because they regard such studies as superfluous, and as a useless expenditure of time, seeing that they contribute nothing towards correct living. They apply themselves exclusively to the cultivation of natural and useful science, in order that they may mitigate, if not eradicate, evil ... They regard the present life as a journey only, and are not therefore solicitous about acquiring wealth, nor do they provide for the present beyond urgent necessities. They admire the beauty and simplicity of nature, but their hope is placed in heaven and the blessedness of the future.³

This represents just the beginning of Sozomen’s foray into the monastic wisdom of his age. Throughout his work we see him turning again and again to the lives and activities of monks for inspiration for his view of the world, and, in particular, as an eschatological resource from which to draw. Notably, Sozomen subtly rejects a presentist eschatology that can be certainly detected in Eusebius and Socrates, and argues in favor of a futurist eschatology in which the concept of the kingdom of heaven as a discrete reality in which judgement for present behavior determines just rewards and punishments. For instance, in his section extolling the ascetic pioneers of Egypt he writes:

The attire and government [πολιτεία] of this sect differed in some respects from those of other monks. Its members were, however, devoted to virtue, they contemned the things of earth, excited the soul to heavenly contemplation, and prepared it to quit the body with joy. They were clothed in skins in remembrance of Elias, it appears to me, because they thought that the virtue of the prophet would be thus always retained in their memory, and that they would be enabled, like him to resist manfully the seductions of amorous pleasures, to be influenced by similar zeal, and be incited to the practice of sobriety by the

2. On this see the views of Hartranft in Sozomen, “NPNF 2, 2,” 461.
hope of an equal reward. 4

We shall return to the suggestive use of the word “government” within this passage later, but it is no coincidence that in this apocalyptic and eschatological excerpt, the prophet Elijah [Elias prior to the Vulgate] should suddenly make an appearance. Remembering the traditional definition of apocalyptic, it involves the notion of a direct revelation of God, and it would be difficult to nominate a prophet more representative of true eschatology than one who for the first time since Moses returns to Mt. Horeb and receives a direct revelation of God5 or who is received by an open heaven itself in a fiery chariot.6 Indeed, throughout this section in Sozomen, one of the key marks of a champion of monastic life is his ability to receive direct insight from God. Thus, the two Macarii are “endowed with Divine knowledge and philosophy,” while Pachomius, like Moses in his great epiphany, receives a tablet from an angel detailing monastic order. Pachomius also knew the future and spoke with angels, and God denied his contemporary Apollonius “nothing of what he asked from God.” Anuph, also from Egypt, was personally instructed by a holy angel in every virtue. In Sozomen’s report, Egypt was a veritable hotbed of revelation!

Such monastic apocalyptic eschatology was not confined to Egypt however. Sozomen’s love of monastic life led him to profile the lives and courage of many monks in his history; and repeatedly we see him taking for granted their eschatological view of the cosmos. While he spends a great deal of space speaking about the illustrious St. Ephraim of Syria, it is not surprising that he finishes his account with a tale “so worthy of remembrance that I shall record it here.” He then relates how Ephraim, shortly before his death, convinced the wealthy population of Edessa to support the poor in the midst of famine not simply out of altruism but because “the wealth which they were treasuring up so carefully would turn to their own condemnation, and to the ruin of the soul, which is of more value than all riches, and the body itself and all other values, and he proved that they were putting no estimate upon their souls, because of their


5. 1 Kings 19:1-18.

6. 2 Kings 2:9-12.
Inherent in his argument is the eschatological judgement taken for granted amongst the monastic circles revered so much by our author. Indeed, when describing contemporaries of Ephraim, Sozomen relates that their way of life was meant to obtain future glory. He writes: “For as they were intent upon the exchange of future benefits, they made God alone the witness of their thoughts, and had no concern for outward glory.”

Sozomen’s lay-focused eschatology, however, is not limited to his glorification of monasticism. It is in his discussions of confessors and martyrs that we also see an eschatology influenced by the everyday suppositions of the people. For instance, in his recounting of the tale of Theodore the Confessor he relates, in more descriptive forms than his sources, the entire account of Theodore’s bodily confession. Stretched upon the rack by the orders of the emperor Julian, Theodore, with great fortitude, simply sings the psalms, acting as if nothing is hurting him at all. Most notable is the way in which God sends a “young man who had stood by him, and who had wiped off the perspiration with the finest linen cloth, and supplied him with coolest water by which he eased the inflammation and refreshed his labors.”

Such imagery, beyond extolling the virtues of folk theology, cannot help but remind the reader of the apocalyptic eschatological visions of Daniel. Compare Sozomen’s description above with the prose paragraph inserted between the apocryphal Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews which themselves are


8. *ibid.*

9. Sozomen most definitely received this story from the pages of Rufinus’ continuation of Eusebius’ history. Rufinus, *H.E.*, 1.36. Translation used: Rufinus, *Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia: Books 10 and 11*, trans. Philip R. Amidon (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, USA, 1997), 40, Accessed Online through University of Toronto E-Resources 4/8/2013. He must also have read Socrates’ account taken from Rufinus; see Socrates, *H.E.*, 3.19. But of all three accounts, Sozomen’s is the most lurid. For instance, he includes the rhetorical flourish of describing to his readers the mindset of the praetorian prefect ordered by Julian to commit such atrocities. Neither Rufinus or Socrates adds this detail. Socrates, it goes without saying, gives the most cursory account of this episode.

inserted\textsuperscript{11} in the heart of the narrative of the three youths in the fiery furnace of the book of Daniel 3:23:

Now the king’s servants who threw them in kept stoking the furnace with naphtha, pitch, tow, and brushwood. And the flames poured out above the furnace forty-nine cubits, and spread out and burned those Chaldeans who were caught near the furnace. But the angel of the Lord came down into the furnace to be with Azariah and his companions, and drove the fiery flame out of the furnace as though a moist wind were whistling through it. The fire did not touch them at all and caused no pain or distress. [Azariah and the Three Jews 1:23-27]

Such a folk eschatological theme pervades the narrative of Daniel as is evidenced in the later story of Daniel himself being protected by an angel of the Lord within the lions’ den in which King Darius had locked him.\textsuperscript{12}

Also found in the same section as the account of Theodore the Confessor, Sozomen relates the story of how after the translation of the relics of the martyr Byblas away from the pagan temple at Daphne, God chose to burn down the temple in preference to Christianity. Sozomen writes: “The Christians were ... convinced ... that it was not by the deed of man, but by the wrath of God, that fire was poured down from heaven upon the temple.”\textsuperscript{13} Such direct and violent intervention by God in human affairs certainly falls into the category of apocalyptic eschatology in its most traditional sense.

Most striking, however, is the combination of folk or lay-centered eschatology and the subjugation of imperial power that Sozomen demonstrates again and again throughout his work. Such a recognition provides a significant segue into an investigation of the political ideology of Sozomen. One key example demonstrates this tendency quite well. In H.E. 5.21, Sozomen relates the story of the statue of Christ and the statue of Julian. If we synoptically analyze the story in both Eusebius and Sozomen, and also note the fact that Socrates is completely silent about the story, a key truth of Sozomen’s worldview is clearly demonstrated. We begin with Sozomen’s account:

\textsuperscript{11} In the Greek manuscripts of the LXX and Theodotian versions.

\textsuperscript{12} Dan. 6:18-23.

\textsuperscript{13} Sozomen, H.E., 5.20.
Among so many remarkable events which occurred during the reign of Julian, I must not omit to mention one which affords a sign of the power of Christ, and proof of the Divine wrath against the emperor. Having heard that at Caesarea Philippi, otherwise called Paneas, a city of Phoenicia, there was a celebrated statue of Christ which had been erected by a woman whom the Lord had cured of a flow of blood, Julian commanded it to be taken down and a statue of himself erected in its place; but a violent fire from heaven fell upon it and broke off the parts contiguous to the breast; the head and neck were thrown prostrate, and it was transfixed to the ground with the face downwards at the point where the fracture of the bust was; and it has stood in that fashion from that day until now, full of the rust of the lightning. The statue of Christ was dragged around the city and mutilated by the pagans; but the Christians recovered the fragments, and deposited the statue in the church in which it is still preserved. Eusebius relates, that at the base of this statue grew an herb which was unknown to the physicians and empirics, but was efficacious in the cure of all disorders. It does not appear a matter of astonishment to me, that, after God had vouchsafed to dwell with men, he should condescend to bestow benefits upon them. It appears that innumerable other miracles were wrought in different cities and villages; accounts have been accurately preserved by the inhabitants of these places only, because they learned them from ancestral tradition; and how true this is, I will show at once.\textsuperscript{14}

The account above by Sozomen, contrasts clearly with the account below by Eusebius:

But since I have come to mention this city, I do not think it right to omit a story that is worthy to be recorded also for those that come after us. For they say that she who had an issue of blood, and who, as we learn from the sacred Gospels, found at the hands of our Saviour relief from her affliction, came from this place, and that her house was pointed out in the city, and that marvellous memorials of the good deed, which the Savior wrought upon her, still remained. For [they said] that there stood on a lofty stone at the gates of her house a brazen figure in relief of a woman, bending on her knee and stretching forth her hands like a suppliant, while opposite to this there was another of the same material, an upright figure of a man, clothed in comely fashion in a double cloak and stretching out his hand to the woman; at his feet on the monument itself a strange species of herb was growing, which climbed up to the border of the double cloak of brass, and acted as an antidote to all kinds of diseases. This statue, they said, bore the likeness of Jesus. And it was in existence even to our day, so that we saw it with our own eyes when we stayed in the city. And there is nothing wonderful in the fact that those heathen, who long ago had good deeds done to them by our Saviour, should have made these objects, since we saw the likenesses of His apostles also, of Paul and Peter, and indeed of Christ Himself, preserved in pictures painted in colours. And this is what we should expect, for the ancients were wont, according to their pagan habit, to honour them as saviours, without reservation, in this fashion.\textsuperscript{15}

It is important to note the significant difference in tone between these two accounts. To begin with, Eusebius uses the tone of a disinterested observer. Though it may be plausible that he considers the story historically accurate, having personally seen the statue resembling Christ,\textsuperscript{16} he

\begin{itemize}
  \item[14.] Sozomen, \textit{H.E.}, 5.21.
  \item[15.] Eusebius, \textit{H.E.} 7.18.
  \item[16.] It should be noted, that this judgement is not given by Eusebius, who explicitly chooses to say that the people of the town suggested that it bore a resemblance to Christ, not that
chooses to passively describe the story in a non-partisan matter. Sozomen, on the other hand, seems to take the tone of a deeply faithful commentator relating a folk story which has seriously impressed him. Substantively the two stories differ in their facts as well. Eusebius relates the story of two statues, one clearly meant to represent Jesus Christ and the other the woman healed by Him. Sozomen intentionally, since we know from his own words that he used Eusebius as a source for this story, leaves out the statue of the woman. Most significantly, Sozomen introduces the notion of a connection between a statue of Julian, which is eschatologically destroyed by God intervening in the created world.\(^\text{17}\) This counterpoint thematic element is certainly a new addition of Sozomen’s, whether an invention or from local stories is inconsequential. We know, from the account in Philostorgius,\(^\text{18}\) which Sozomen must have cribbed, that Sozomen originated this textual tradition regarding the story since Philostorgius makes no mention of a statue resembling Julian. It is worth asking how all of these differences in such a magnificent story demonstrate the unique worldview of Sozomen.

First of all, Sozomen’s account demonstrates his strong attraction to lay folk stories and, importantly, their authority in his eyes as compared to Eusebius, who displays a passive tone, or Socrates, who willfully chose not to include this story in his own historical account. See for instance the concluding statement of Sozomen above regarding the authority of folk stories and his defensive tone about why such stories are only preserved in certain regions. Secondly, Sozomen’s interpretive stance in the story demonstrates his efforts to downplay imperial power in favor of lay-centered spiritual power. His inclusion of the statue of Julian, which does not appear in the contemporary account of Philostorgius, provides a strong rhetorical flourish which helps to highlight the political ideology one can uncover in the study of his history, a task to which he believed this.

17. Certainly Eusebius could not have included such a story since he did not live long enough to experience Julian’s reign.

which we turn very shortly. It was clearly important for Sozomen to contrast the two statues as a way to highlight the favor demonstrated to the faithful Christian community by God and the divine condemnation of Julian. Such an anti-imperial stance also helps to explain, for instance, his unwillingness to include within the story the account of the statue of the woman healed by Jesus. If he had chosen to do so, it would have muddled the counterpoint effect he hoped to achieve in the contrast between the statue of Christ and the statue of Julian. As we shall see, this story is perhaps the most illustrative of a theme demonstrated throughout Sozomen’s work. Over and over again we see the strong eschatology identified above along with an anti-imperial political ideology both of which are tightly packaged within a perspective which values a folkloric and lay-centered worldview.

**Anti-Imperial Politics in Sozomen**

Throughout Sozomen’s *Ecclesiastical History*, the reader encounters a political ideology which seeks to marginalize imperial power while at the same time lionize the spiritual folk heroes of Christian Late Antiquity. This is, of course, in stark contrast to Eusebius who, as we have seen, unabashedly supported the power of the Constantinian dynasty and explicitly connected its success with the rise of Christianity. It also is counter to the political ideology of Socrates who, as was noted in our last chapter, hearkened back to a classical idea of balance and harmony in politics causing him to view even Julian, the great apostate emperor, in a positive light when Julian’s policies veered toward Socrates’ traditional ideal.

For Sozomen, a provincial not rooted within the cosmopolitan and centralized politics of the capital cities, political ideology was neither monolithic nor solitary in his mental catalogue of worldly power. We can see this clearly in another famous Christian hagiographic tale that he details earlier in his fifth book than the story of the two statues discussed above. It is the account of the martyrdom of Macedonius, Theodulus and Tatian and it includes a sarcastic quotation by the martyrs that serves to introduce well Sozomen’s view of political ideology throughout his work:

About the same period, Macedonius, Theodulus, and Tatian, who were Phrygians by birth courageously endured martyrdom. A temple of Misos, a city of Phrygia, having been reopened by the governor of the province, after it had been closed many years, these
martyrs entered therein by night, and destroyed the images. As other individuals were
arrested, and were on the point of being punished for the deed, they avowed themselves
the actors in the transaction. They might have escaped all further punishment by offering
sacrifices to idols; but the governor could not persuade them to accept acquittal on these
terms. His persuasions being ineffectual, he maltreated them in a variety of forms, and
finally extended them on a gridiron, beneath which a fire had been lighted. While they
were being consumed, they said to the governor, ‘Amachus (for that was his name), ‘if
you desire cooked flesh, give orders that our bodies may be turned with the other side to
the fire, in order that we may not seem, to your taste, half cooked.’ Thus did these men
nobly endure and lay down their life amid the punishments.\textsuperscript{19}

This cheeky and rather bold tone towards the governor in the story of the martyrdom of the
Phrygians could easily be considered a cipher for the political ideology of Sozomen. From the
very beginning of his historical account of the Church, he very cleverly and with subtlety seeks to
demonstrate that worldly political power is secondary and subject to divine power. Though he
chooses not to go so far as to completely discount the role of politics and government in the
everyday life of a citizen of his era, he clearly seeks to make subordinate political power and
uphold divine power as displayed in the common sense wisdom of lay Christians.

Such a tone is laid out very quickly in \textit{H.E.} 1.1 when he talks about the character of the
earliest Christians: “They gave up their property, neglected their kindred, were stretched upon a
cross, and as if endowed with bodies not their own, suffered many and excruciating tortures;
neither seduced by the adulation of the people and rulers of any city, nor terrified by their
menaces, they clearly evidenced by their conduct, that they were supported in the struggle by the
hope of a high reward.”\textsuperscript{20} Though it may not be surprising to hear Sozomen argue that the
martyrs in the earliest Church were not seduced by the rulers of the day, and we might even
suspect that Eusebius or Socrates would make such a comment in reference to persecuting rulers,
Sozomen follows this up by suggesting that the reason he is able to even write a history of the
Church at all is because “so divine and marvelous a change has taken place in the circumstances

\textsuperscript{19} Sozomen, \textit{H.E.}, 5.11. One must note here that Socrates [\textit{H.E.}, 3.15] also relates this
same story in his history in much the same way, praising the martyrs for their boldness. The only
difference appears to be the outright relish that Sozomen expresses in naming the governor with
his aside to the reader. Is this a sign of a strengthening of the anti-imperial rhetoric?

\textsuperscript{20} Sozomen, \textit{H.E.}, 1.1.
of men, that ancient cults and national laws have fallen into contempt." Sozomen seems to suggest that prior to and in his own day, national laws have fallen into contempt.

We can more fully appreciate Sozomen’s challenge to imperial power, however, when he displays his opinions regarding the Constantinian dynasty in the pages of his history. One such occasion occurs in Sozomen’s account of the Council of Nicaea. Both Eusebius and Socrates highlight the humility of Constantine in his dealings with the bishops at the council and emphasize his ultimate command of the synod and ability to cajole the warring factions of the bishops towards unity. Sozomen, on the other hand, is quick to offer an alternate version of Constantine’s initial speech to the riotous bishops which states in stark terms the emperor’s secondary status in relation to the Church:

All these accusations will be brought forward in their own season at the great day of judgment, and will there be judged by the Great Judge of all men; as to me, I am but a man, and it would be evil in me to take cognizance of such matters, seeing that the accuser and the accused are priests; and the priests ought so to act as never to become amenable to the judgment of others. Imitate, therefore, the divine love and mercy of God, and be reconciled to one another; withdraw your accusations against each other; let us be persuaded, and let us devote our attention to those subjects connected with the faith on account of which we are assembled.

Here we can see clearly Sozomen’s political ideology placed in the mouth of the most iconic figure of political power in his day. It is true that Sozomen cribbed this account from the pages of Rufinus’ continuation of Eusebius’ history, however, this only strengthens the argument; for

21. Ibid. It must be admitted that the Greek is very difficult here. Not the least because of a printing error in the Migne edition which does not allow one to know the exact word being used in one section of the sentence. The University of Michigan copy was the best option, but even it was obscured. It seems that the first part of this phrase has an implied verb, which explains Hartranft’s use of the continuing past tense in the English.


25. Rufinus was a monk and then priest of the late fourth century. A strong defender of the orthodoxy of Origen, Rufinus was also a prolific translator of works of the eastern fathers into Latin. This included a translation and continuation of Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History around 401 C.E. For a succinct overview of Rufinus see Matthias Skeb, “Rufinus of Aquileia,” in Dictionary of Early Christian Literature, eds Siegmar Dopp and Wilhelm Geerlings (New
it reveals one important clue. Sozomen had to choose his account either from Eusebius’ account in the Life of Constantine, which had no such anti-imperial stance within it, from Sozomen’s account in his Ecclesiastical History, which largely copies Eusebius’ words, or from Rufinus, who, it must be added, had an even stronger anti-imperial rhetoric alluding to Psalm 82:1. Sozomen’s choice seems clear. For Sozomen, the emperor is less authoritative or significant than a simple Christian priest, since a priest is not subject to the judgment of others.

When discussing the end of Constantine’s life we see a marked contrast, as well, between the account of Eusebius, Socrates, Rufinus and Sozomen. Eusebius, and to a lesser extent Socrates, extols the emperor with voluminous praise. Rufinus, on the other hand, barely mentions his death and seems much more concerned with the machinations of the supporters of Arius than the political dimension of Constantine’s death. Sozomen takes an entirely different tack. The very last paragraph of his second book, which culminates in the death of Constantine, reads:

After the death of Constantine, his body was placed in a golden coffin, conveyed to Constantinople, and deposited on a certain platform in the palace; the same honor and ceremonial were observed, by those who were in the palace, as were accorded to him while living. On hearing of his father’s death, Constantius, who was then in the East, hastened to Constantinople, and interred the royal remains with the utmost magnificence, and deposited them in the tomb which had been constructed by order of the deceased in the Church of the Apostles. From this period it became the custom to deposit the remains of subsequent Christian emperors in the same place of interment; and here bishops, likewise, were buried, for the hierarchical dignity is not only equal in honor to imperial power, but, in sacred places, even takes the ascendancy.


26. Rufinus, Church History, 2.1, p. 10 (Hereafter, Rufinus’ history will be referred to as simply H.E. as with our other historians.) With thanks to Philip R. Amadon, S.J. for noting this allusion. It could be argued that Sozomen may have chosen to drop this allusion to Psalm 82 preferring a more historically accurate approach while still retaining his anti-imperial tone.

27. Eusebius, V.C., 4.61-75.


29. Rufinus, H.E., 10.12.

30. Sozomen, H.E., 2.34.

31. Ibid.
It should be of interest that Sozomen chooses to conclude this extremely important moment in his history with a statement which subjugates the political power of the empire to the Church. It is yet another example of the tone of his political ideology which is in opposition to imperial power.

Another area in which Sozomen displays his lack of regard for imperial power, especially in relation to the work of Socrates, is in his opinion of the emperor Julian. We have already related the way in which Socrates’ more nuanced perspective on Julian veered from the traditional Christian historiographical opinion of Julian as an apostate and oppressor. Sozomen is much more interested in characterizing Julian along traditional lines. For instance, we see the rather graphic story of Julian’s uncle, another Julian, in H.E. 5.8. In his account, Sozomen insinuates that the uncle of the emperor, who was also the prefect of the East, in his crazed hatred of Christianity, seized the votive offerings in the church of Antioch intending to deposit them in the imperial treasury. While there, with others in his retinue, he also sat upon the sacred vessels of the church possibly urinating or defecating into them. Sozomen relates that immediately his genitals and rectum were infected with worms and he eventually died from the infection. We see the same story related in both Philostorgius’s reconstructed history, and the Ecclesiastical History of Theodoret. Hartranft argues in favor of Philostorgius as a source for Sozomen, though it is difficult to establish since Sozomen is uninterested in revealing his sources. Even if this was the case, Philostorgius suggests only that someone else, not Julian the prefect, urinated on the altar. Theodoret, who in any case seems unknown to Sozomen, relates that Julian himself did this heinous deed, not in the vessels but upon the altar, following Philostorgius. Due to these facts, it seems possible that Sozomen originated the story of Julian the Prefect, who was Julian the Apostle’s main representative in the East, committing a terrible deed in the midst of the

32. Philostorgius, *Church History*, 7.10, p. 106


34. Sozomen, NPNF 2, 2, 222.

35. Whether from original sources or folklore we may never know.
church in Antioch. Given the fact that three near-contemporary historians report this story, though in different forms, it is only surprising that Socrates does not relay this story if, in fact, we do not know his pro-Julian sympathies. The fact that Sozomen includes the story, and an elaborated one at that, when he clearly uses Socrates as a main source, seems to buttress our theory that his opposition to imperial authority is one of the key hallmarks of his political ideology.

However, it is possibly in the extraordinary stories of two champions of the Church that we get the clearest indication of Sozomen’s political ideology which is dominated by a subjugation of imperial power. St. Ambrose is perhaps the most well-known example of a bishop of the early Church challenging imperial authority, and Sozomen, with the one exception of Theodoret (whose account, we shall see, is even more colorful), uses the story to his full advantage. He writes:

After the death of Eugenius, the emperor went to Milan, and repaired towards the church to pray within its walls. When he drew near the gates of the edifice, he was met by Ambrose, the bishop of the city, who took hold of him by his purple robe, and said to him, in the presence of the multitude, ‘Stand back! a [sic] man defiled by sin, and with hands imbued in blood unjustly shed, is not worthy, without repentance, to enter within these sacred precincts, or partake of the holy mysteries.’ The emperor, struck with admiration at the boldness of the bishop, began to reflect on his own conduct, and, with much contrition, retraced his steps.36

Sozomen then goes on to explain the well-known story of the slaughter of Thessalonica in which Theodosius ordered his own troops to slay several thousands in the city in response to an uprising which had killed the magister militium (or strategos) of the city, which in turn was a consequence of the military commander imprisoning a popular charioteer for a homosexual offense against him. It is noteworthy that in Socrates’ history, Ambrose is mentioned in a rather cursory matter,37 but is never mentioned in relation to this extraordinary act of courage against the emperor. It is in Sozomen’s history, Theodoret’s history,38 Rufinus’ history39 and a letter of


Ambrose himself,⁴⁰ that we find the account. Though Theodoret’s version contains the most dramatic language, it is Sozomen’s that seems to show Ambrose displaying the most historically authentic⁴¹ boldness in front of the emperor, even expressing that Ambrose grabbed the emperor by his very cloak. He adds the fact that the emperor was “struck with admiration” for Ambrose. Finally, in a detail we also find nowhere else, Sozomen relates the way in which St. Ambrose forbade the emperor from sitting within the altar, a habit that Sozomen clearly despises, and instead made the emperor sit outside the iconostasis, not failing to mention “behind the priests!”⁴² All of this goes to show the way in which Sozomen consistently downplays the power of emperors in favor of the power of the Church.

If we turn to the example of St. John Chrysostom and the empress Aelia Eudoxia, the wife of Arcadius, the conflict between church and political power, and Sozomen’s opinion of this conflict become quite clear, particularly in reference to Socrates’ views. It is no secret that Chrysostom had significant struggles with the rich and powerful of Constantinople during his tenure as patriarch.⁴³ Sprinkled throughout his eighth book, Sozomen relates the several conflicts, and two banishments, that Chrysostom suffered at the hands of imperial authorities. There are two incidents that require our attention. One is a dramatic disagreement that the patriarch had with another Syrian bishop named Severian.⁴⁴ When the empress learned of the


⁴¹. Though this is conjecture, it seems reasonable since there are certainly good reasons for Ambrose to modify his comments given his relationship with the empire and the emperor in particular. Theodoret, due to his rhetorical style, could be expected to add several flourishes to the story. That leaves us with the accounts of Rufinus and Sozomen. Since we have identified that one of Sozomen’s main themes, not just based on this passage, is the subjugation of imperial power, it seems reasonable to suggest that he might present this passage as accurately as possible with some rhetorical coloring, but clearly less than that of Theodoret. Thus this rather sweeping (at first glance) statement.

⁴². Sozomen, H.E., 7.25.

⁴³. See for instance the comments of Sozomen in H.E., 8.8.

⁴⁴. Sozomen, H.E., 8.10.
conflict, she immediately worked to heal the rift, particularly because she seemed to favor Severian in the affair. However, what is noteworthy is the way in which the empress implored Chrysostom. Sozomen writes: “At length the Empress Eudoxia herself, in the church called The Apostles, placed her son Theodosius, who now so happily reigns, but was then quite an infant, before John’s knees, and adjuring him repeatedly by the young prince her son, with difficulty prevailed upon him to be reconciled to Severian.”\textsuperscript{45} What is important is the way in which the empress must come before Chrysostom, swearing an oath upon her infant son and future emperor. A counterpoint is clearly intended by Sozomen at this juncture in his narrative.\textsuperscript{46} One might expect that a bishop would be summoned to the palace for a chat in such a situation, but here, Sozomen demonstrates the way in which the empress must instead appeal to Chrysostom in the palace of Christ, the Church of the Apostles.

This narrative passage sets up Sozomen’s reader for the much more dramatic conflict that St. John had with the empress over the erection of a silver statue of herself that she had placed very near to the cathedral. Sozomen writes:

Not long after these occurrences the silver statue of the empress, which is still to be seen to the south of the church opposite the grand council-chamber, was placed upon a column of porphyry on a high platform, and the event was celebrated there with applause and popular spectacles of dances and mimes, as was then customary on the erection of the statues of the emperors. In a public discourse to the people John charged that these proceedings reflected dishonor on the Church. This remark recalled former grievances to the recollection of the empress, and irritated her so exceedingly at the insult that she determined to convene another council. He did not yield, but added fuel to her indignation by still more openly declaiming against her in the church; and it was at this period that he pronounced the memorable discourse commencing with the words, ‘Herodias is again enraged; again she dances; again she seeks to have the head of John in a basin.’\textsuperscript{47}

Socrates, not surprisingly given its public nature, also comments upon this conflict. It is worth excerpting his account as well, since it is in a comparison of the two that we are most able to

\textsuperscript{45.} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{46.} Valesius, the compiler of Sozomen’s manuscripts, doubts the authenticity of this story, but whether historically accurate or not, this narrative moment only strengthens our argument, via Averil Cameron, that narrative rhetoric becomes a tool used by the early Fathers to control the social space of Late Antiquity.

\textsuperscript{47.} Sozomen, \textit{H.E.}, 8.20.
demonstrate the dominant political ideology of Sozomen:

At this time a silver statue of the Empress Eudoxia covered with a long robe was erected upon a column of porphyry supported by a lofty base. And this stood neither near nor far from the church named Sophia, but one-half the breadth of the street separated them. At this statue public games were accustomed to be performed; these John regarded as an insult offered to the church, and having regained his ordinary freedom and keenness of tongue, he employed his tongue against those who tolerated them. Now while it would have been proper to induce the authorities by a supplicatory petition to discontinue the games, he did not do this, but employing abusive language he ridiculed those who had enjoined such practices.48

When compared, one can easily see the obvious differences between these two synoptic accounts of the same event. While Socrates’ version clearly is filled with judgement of St. John, Sozomen places the acceleration of the conflict squarely at the feet of the empress. Socrates has much to say about the location of the stature making it obvious that this was clearly an issue in the debate. He is careful, though, to suggest that it was “neither near nor far” from the cathedral. Sozomen, on the other hand, presumes its close location to the south of the church. More revealing is Socrates’ sarcastic reference to St. John’s tone within the argument, and his insistence that, in his estimation, John did not follow proper protocol.

Most interesting in this instance, however, is Sozomen’s eschatological and typological reference in the conclusion of our excerpt in concert with his dynamic political views when compared to Socrates, Eusebius, and the traditional classical political ideology we identified earlier. The fact that Sozomen chose to highlight, at this point, St. John’s famous sermon in which he compares himself to St. John the Forerunner (Baptist) is an indicator of our main thesis. St. John is called the forerunner, especially in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, because he is the last of the prophets and the forerunner to the eschaton of Jesus Christ. Every icon of St. John demonstrates him pointing towards Christ as the end of all salvation. Sozomen’s highlighting of St. John Chrysostom’s sermon demonstrates the way in which his eschatological underpinnings go hand in glove with his political theorizing; and, as we can see from this passage, Sozomen’s political ideology is dominated by an anti-imperial stance which seeks to elevate the hierarchy of the Church above imperial authority.

If we return to Sozomen’s earlier passage detailing the life of monks in Egypt we are provided with a more global perspective of his view of politics which, conveniently, does not directly involve his opinion of the contemporary political system of his day. This passage is worth excerpting one more time. In his section on the monks of Egypt, Sozomen begins by writing: “The attire and government \( \pi\omega\lambda\varepsilon\iota\alpha \) of this sect differed in some respects from those of other monks.” In this seeming toss-away sentence, we see the revealing use of the word \textit{politeia} by Sozomen. As we have already noted in chapter one, this word forms the underpinning for all notions of political ideology in the ancient Greek world. The LSJ gives many suggestions for the word, but chief among them is the sense of “government,” “administration” and “civil polity,” all words hearkening back to classical political modes of thinking. So what we can learn from Sozomen’s use of this word is that in his understanding, the monks of Egypt had created a government all their own and one which employed the same etymological foundations as the political ideologies of the day.

Our theory regarding Sozomen’s entire agenda of political ideology can be cemented with reference to two extraordinary saints that Sozomen highlights in his text—saints, it should be noted, that are lionized church leaders embedded within the literary motif of folktales. Let’s begin with the story of St. Isaac the Syrian:

When Valens was on the point of departing from Constantinople, Isaac, a monk of great virtue, who feared no danger in the cause of God, presented himself before him, and addressed him in the following words: ‘Give back, O emperor, to the orthodox, and to those who maintain the Nicene doctrines, the churches of which you have deprived them, and the victory will be yours.’ The emperor was offended at this act of boldness, and commanded that Isaac should be arrested and kept in chains until his return, when he meant to bring him to justice for his temerity. Isaac, however, replied, ‘You will not return unless you restore the churches.’ And so in fact it came to pass.\(^{49}\)

Sozomen then goes on to relate the disastrous turn of events at Adrianople, perhaps one of the most monumental defeats of the ancient world, in which Valens lost his life and his empire. It

should be noted that Socrates relates the story of Adrianople and the mocking of the emperor by the crowds in Constantinople, but nowhere does he mention Isaac and his bold gesture.

In this important passage, we see the marriage of many of the characteristic traits of Sozomen’s general outlook. There is the bold and heroic figure of the folkloric monk. There is the energized disdain for imperial power. There also is the characterization of Isaac as a hero because of his “great virtue.” Finally, we can only see in such a figure the literary flavour of a prophetic character pronouncing the future in an eschatological manner upon a leading figure of the day. As we shall see in the next chapter, Theodoret uses the same character in much more florid terms to demonstrate his own outlook on history and politics.

Yet another example of the political outlook of Sozomen embedded within the folkloric wisdom of the people is the story of a simple priest and his didactic demonstration toward the emperor Theodosius:

...It is said that the bishops then residing in Constantinople went to the emperor, to render him the customary salutations. An old priest from a city of little note, and who was simple and unworldly, yet well instructed in Divine subjects, formed one of this party. The rest saluted the emperor with uncovered head and very reverently. The aged priest greeted him in the same form; but, instead of rendering equal honor to the prince, who was seated beside his father, the old priest approached him, patted him familiarly, and called him his dear child. The emperor was incensed and enraged at the indignity offered to his son, in that he had not been accorded like honor; and commanded that the old man should be thrust from his presence with violence. While being pushed away, here and there, however, the old priest turned around and exclaimed, ‘Reflect, O emperor, on the wrath of the Heavenly Father against those who do not honor His Son as Himself, and who have the audacity to assert that the Son is inferior to the Father.’ The emperor felt the force of this observation, recalled the priest, apologized to him for what had occurred, and confessed that he had spoken truth.

The old priest, who we shall see is identified more clearly by Theodoret, was referring to the


51. This can only be for one of four reasons. Socrates either had no knowledge of a real Isaac, had knowledge, but chose to omit him (which would fit nicely with what we have already discovered about Socrates’ own worldview of imperial apologetic), or Isaac is a pure construction of Sozomen’s rhetoric. The last two buttress our theory regarding Sozomen, the first does not undermine such a theory. The fourth reason could be that Socrates did in fact include Isaac, but the manuscript tradition has lost such an account. I find this final option highly unlikely given the literary structure of the passages.

Arians and their theological conflict with other Christians regarding the proper relationship amongst the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Theodosius was a refreshing change for the “orthodox” in that he reversed the decisions of his predecessor and eventually supported the part of the Church which would ultimately win the day theologically. What is important for our purposes, however, is the way in which a simple priest, who is clearly revered by Sozomen partly because he is an everyday priest and not one of high station, is the container of great power and wisdom in relation to the imperial person of the emperor and his son. In fact, in much the same way as we saw with Ambrose, this simple priest puts Theodosius “in his place,” so to speak; and as we have seen from Sozomen, the place for the political powers of the day is a humble one subjugated by the power of the Church. Sozomen summarizes this perspective clearly when he writes at the beginning of his final book: “It appears to me that it was the design of God to show by the events of this period, that piety alone suffices for the salvation of princes; and that without piety, armies, a powerful empire, and every other resource, are of no avail.”

Conclusions

It seems that upon full investigation of the historical work of Sozomen, our thesis still holds. What one can see clearly in Sozomen is a vibrant eschatology. However, his eschatology clearly bears differences not found in either of our previous contributors to the Eusebian tradition. The eschatology of Sozomen displays a return to a more traditional notion of the end times, one that is future-oriented and not as presentist as the eschatology of both Eusebius and Socrates, one that is dominated by a simple folkloric outlook, and one that is both more apocalyptic and based in divine judgement. This, in turn, influences his notion of political ideology it seems; for how could it be otherwise? In his discussions of the empire and its political power, we see Sozomen again and again subjugating imperial power to that of the Church, and not only the Church, but the facet of the Church that is most simple and pious. In constant comparison with Socrates, since we can see clearly that Sozomen relied heavily upon Socrates, Sozomen exudes a tone which is much less conciliatory towards any emperor and far

more interested in the basic lay-centered stories of monks and martyrs.

This demonstrates his flexibility and dynamism when it comes to his political outlook. Contrary to Socrates, who was one of his main sources, he does not defer to emperors and their power. Similarly, if we compare him to the traditional classical concepts of political ideology we identified in the work of Socrates (the classical philosopher) and Aristotle in chapter one, we see none of the themes of human flourishing or political balancing that is clearly evident in the work of Socrates (the Church historian). This also demonstrates the dynamism at work in Sozomen and proves the thesis of our work. It seems clear, then, that once again, in the Eusebian tradition of historiography, where a strong and dynamic eschatology is present in the work of an historian, there too resides a dynamic and vibrant political ideology.

Perhaps the best way to sum up this evident relationship within the work of Sozomen is to finish where he began. Sozomen begins his work in his very first chapter by describing the earliest leaders of the Church in the following manner:54

If they did not, indeed, possess a language sharpened for expression or for beauty of diction, nor the power of convincing their hearers by means of phrases or mathematical demonstrations, yet they did not the less accomplish the work they had undertaken. They gave up their property, neglected their kindred, were stretched upon a cross, and as if endowed with bodies not their own, suffered many and excruciating tortures; neither seduced by the adulation of the people and rulers of any city, nor terrified by their menaces, they clearly evidenced by their conduct, that they were supported in the struggle by the hope of a high reward.55

54. A passage certainly reminiscent of some of the most passionate letters by St. Paul. See for instance Hebrews 17 or 1 Corinthians 4:9-17.

CHAPTER 6

St. Theodoret of Cyrus:
Eschatological Crasis: Politics in the Frame of Biblical Cosmic Struggle

In the early pages of his Ecclesiastical History, St. Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus, betrays very quickly the overarching historiographical bent contained within the pages of his work. When describing the emperor Constantine, Theodoret writes the following: “… Constantine, a prince deserving of all praise, whose calling, like that of the divine Apostle [i.e. St. Paul], was not of men, nor by man, but from heaven.”¹ This worldview is neatly bookended later in the work by the following words of Theodoret regarding Julian the Apostate: “Julian, who had made his soul a home of destroying demons, went his corybantic² way, ever raging against true religion.”³ For the reader of Theodoret, no introduction could be better; for in his view, the created world is but a microcosm of the divine eschatological order, prophesied in Scripture, toward which humanity is inexorably moving. On one pole, are God and His angels, constantly exhorting His creation to become the Kingdom of Heaven. On the other, are the devil and his demons, distracting the world and usurping it for their evil purposes.

In a certain sense, one might argue that Theodoret represents a more evocative Eusebian vision of the world than Eusebius himself described, one which we encountered at the beginning

¹. Theodoret, H.E., 1.1.

². Here Theodoret refers to the Corybantes who were the armed consorts of the Phrygian goddess Cybele and performed what seemed to him a crazed, and importantly demonic, performance in honor of their goddess. For more on this see Noel Robertson, “The Ancient Mother of the Gods: A Missing Chapter in the History of Greek Religion,” in Cybele, Attis and Related Cults: Essays in Memory of M.J Vermaseren, ed. Eugene N. Lane (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 292–95.

³. Theodoret, H.E., 3.15.
of our journey through the Eusebian tradition. Much like Eusebius, Theodoret sees many of the political actors of his world as instruments of God intended to instruct and guide the faithful. This is truly Eusebian in outlook to be sure.

However, while we saw Eusebius often equivocating about the role of the persecuting emperors\(^4\) because his political ideology did not seem to coincide with events on the ground, no such doubt exists in the work of Theodoret. His self-confidence and fully engaged eschatology is on full display with consistency and vigor; and the reason for this, as we shall see, is his ever-present and mature Scriptural eschatology which leaves no room for doubts in his presentation of the history of the Church. In the worldview of Theodoret, an extreme crisis has occurred between biblical eschatology and politics which makes a coherent historiographical system.

**Historical Eschatology Revealed in the Biblical Narrative of Fatalistic Cosmic Dualism**

Eschatology in Theodoret took on the tone of a dualistic cosmic struggle from the moment he put reed pen to vellum. In his first chapter, Theodoret characterizes the content of his history as a struggle between God and the devil, particularly in relation to the Arian controversy which certainly dominated his historical thinking. In introducing this theme, Theodoret writes:

> But the devil, full of all envy and wickedness, the destroyer of mankind, unable to bear the sight of the Church sailing on with favourable winds, stirred up plans of evil counsel, eager to sink the vessel steered by the Creator and Lord of the Universe. When he began to perceive that the error of the Greeks had been made manifest, that the various tricks of the demons had been detected, and that the greater number of men worshipped the Creator, instead of adoring, as heretofore, the creature, he did not dare to declare open war against our God and Saviour; but having found some who, though dignified with the name of Christians, were yet slaves to ambition and vainglory, he made them fit instruments for the execution of his designs, and by their means drew others back into their old error, not indeed by the former method of setting up the worship of the creature, but by bringing it about that the Creator and Maker of all should be reduced to a level with the creature.\(^5\)

Not surprisingly, Theodoret then proceeds to launch into a narrative in his first book about the reign of Constantine. In this book, we see a rather conventional retelling of the story of Constantine’s conversion, his instituting the legality of Christianity, his calling of the first

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\(^4\) See above chapter 3.

ecumenical synod at Nicaea, and the other various moments of his life described by all three of our previous historians. However, if one employs the keen eye of observation and comparison, a certain narrative fatalism emerges in which the principal historical figures of the age, with whom we have become so familiar, seem to take on the attributes of stock characters in a preordained romance. One such example emerges in the introduction to Arius, one of the main combatants in all three of the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates, Sozomen and now Theodoret. While Socrates very cursorily introduces Arius, and the beginning of the Arian controversy, even commenting on Arius as being “possessed of no inconsiderable logical acumen,”\(^6\) and Sozomen, while elaborating upon the difficulties that arose out of Arius’ opinions, is equivocal about the roles of both Arius and Patriarch Alexander in the initial salvo of the controversy,\(^7\) Theodoret makes no bones about what is behind the troubles of Arius. He writes of Arius:

> At that time, Arius, who had been enrolled in the list of the presbytery, and entrusted with the exposition of the Holy Scriptures, fell prey to the assaults of jealousy, when he saw that the helm of the high priesthood was committed to Alexander. Stung by this passion, he sought opportunities for dispute and contention; and, although he perceived that Alexander’s irrepriachable conduct forbade his bringing any charges against him, envy would not allow him to rest. In him the enemy of the truth found an instrument through which to stir and agitate the angry waters of the Church, and persuaded him to oppose the apostolical doctrine of Alexander. While the Patriarch, in obedience to the Holy Scriptures, taught that the Son is of equal dignity with the Father, and of the same substance with God who had begotten Him, Arius, in direct opposition to the truth, affirmed that the Son of God is merely a creature or created being, adding the famous dictum, ‘There once was a time when He was not;’ with other opinions which may be learned from his own writings. He taught these false doctrines with perseverance, not only in the church, but also in general meetings and assemblies; and he even went from house to house, endeavouring to make men the slaves of his error. Alexander, who was strongly attached to the doctrines of the Apostles, at first tried by exhortations and counsels to convince him of his error; but when he saw him playing the madman \[κορυβαντιών\]\(^8\) and making public declaration of his impiety, he deposed him from the order of the presbytery, for he heard the law of God loudly declaring, ‘If your right eye offends you, pluck it out, and cast it from you.’\(^9\)

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8. Here again, in the Greek, we see the reference to the Corybantes. Could this be revealing of Theodoret’s animosity towards Montanism with its connection to the mystery cults? For the primary reference see Theodoret, *Theodoret Kirchengeschichte*, 1.1 [following Jackson’s numbering], 1 2, 14 [following Parmentier’s numbering], p. 7.

In this important passage, we can see immediately the cosmic dualism which is the structuring narrative of all of Theodoret’s work. Arius is not much more than a puppet; he becomes “an instrument” through which the devil has his way. An element of apocalyptic eschatology, namely immediate revelation, is also present in this short dialogue in that Alexander directly hears God loudly declaring His will from scripture. Additionally, we see the authorial shaping of the narrative, identified by Averil Cameron as one of the hallmarks of this age, in such moments as Theodoret’s characterization of Arius going from house to house making men slaves to his error \([\text{kai\ t\`\`e\ o\`i\`k\`i\`a\`s\ p\`e\r\i\nu\o\s\o\s\t\`\w\`\i\`\w\`\h\`\o\`\`t\`w\`\o\`n\ \v\`e\z\i\nu\d\o\p\`\o\`\`\d\`\i\`\z\`\e\v\`\`\n\ o\`\`s\`o\`\`\w\`o\`\`s\ \i\`\`x\`\h\`\u\`\w\`\v\`\`n}\), a narrative ornament not seen in either Socrates’ or Sozomen’s account. However, this is only one of many passages in which Theodoret demonstrates that a dualistic and cosmic struggle is constantly at work in an historical situation dramatically affected by God’s will. For Theodoret, God’s desired aims for creation are contained within this struggle.

**Exodus, Daniel and Genesis in Theodoret**

If one is careful to look for subtle changes in the ways in which Theodoret describes the same historical moments detailed in either Socrates’ or Sozomen’s histories, these same characteristics are displayed again and again. One such example is the story of the conversion of India (or, more properly, Aksum, what is today considered Ethiopia and Eritria) through the travels of a philosopher named Meropius who had two young assistants that were taken into captivity by the “Indians” when he was murdered. After becoming captives, the two men, named Edesius and Frumentius, eventually took over regency of the kingdom when the king, who regarded them highly, passed away. In the course of their regency, they brought the “Indians” to Christianity and then received permission to return home to Alexandria. After meeting with St. Athanasius, Frumentius returned as bishop with attendant clergy in order to spiritually lead the Aksumites. Socrates’ version of this story\(^{10}\) largely follows the original of Rufinus,\(^{11}\) straying little from its details. Interestingly, Sozomen prefaces the story with a long historical and

\(^{10}\) Socrates Scholasticus, *H.E.*, 1.19.

\(^{11}\) Rufinus, *H.E.*, 1.9.
glowing justification of Meropius’ travels and investigations in Aksum, comparing him even to Plato.\textsuperscript{12} Otherwise, Sozomen’s account stays true to form. In a similar way, Theodoret’s story of the conversion of “India” is fairly typical,\textsuperscript{13} except that he does make two rhetorical decisions that change the tone of the passage entirely. First of all, Theodoret chooses to excise the name of the philosopher Meropius from the account thereby taking any notion that Meropius was responsible for the conversion of “India” out of his reader’s mind. Secondly, and more importantly, Theodoret includes an eschatological flourish which recolors the whole account for the reader. In the middle of his version he writes:

The king of the country, in course of time, perceiving their [Edesius and Frumentius] intelligence, promoted them to superintendence of his household. If any one should doubt the truth of this account, let him recall to mind the history of Joseph in the kingdom of Egypt, and also the history of Daniel, and of the three champions of the truth, who, from being captives, became princes of Babylon. The king died; but these young men remained with his son, and were advanced to still greater power.\textsuperscript{14}

Here we see Theodoret rhetorically connect the story of the conversion of “India” with the events of Joseph in Egypt, as well as the tale of Daniel and the three youths in the fiery furnace, both stories of extreme eschatological urgency. It may not seem so surprising that Theodoret would make this connection; in fact, we might even wonder why Socrates and Sozomen did not! However, his choice to do so, while clearly relying upon the work of his predecessors who, intentionally or not, did not make this connection, demonstrates his desire to have an eschatological theme dominate his historical narrative. Additionally, as we have noted before, Theodoret’s narrative takes on a more stilted tone as a result. Consequently, he puts into the mouth of Athanasius a properly eschatological question: “‘Who,’ said he, ‘better than you yourself can scatter the mists of ignorance, and introduce among this people the light of Divine preaching?’” It is worth noting that this short vignette is found in no other account of this event. Describing Frumentius as bishop, Theodoret also displays the skill of a novelist or dramatist when he writes: “There, having the grace of God to labour with him, he cheerfully and

\textsuperscript{12} Sozomen, \textit{H.E.}, 2.24.

\textsuperscript{13} Theodoret, \textit{H.E.}, 1.22.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}
successfully played the husbandman, catching those who sought to gainsay his words by works of apostolic wonder, and thus, by these marvels, confirming his teaching, he continued each day to take many souls alive.”

The story of the conversion of “India” brings to attention the fact that the eschatology from which Theodoret draws in order to bracket his understanding of historical events is derived directly from the scriptural eschatology in which he was well versed. In particular, the events surrounding the redemption of Israel from Egypt and the vivid story of the three youths in the fiery furnace from the eschatological visions of Daniel seem important to Theodoret. So, for instance, when speaking of God’s miraculous intervention in Julian’s ill-conceived notion to rebuild the Jewish temple in Jerusalem (an eschatological event in post-biblical history if there ever was one), Theodoret writes: “When God’s enemies saw these things, in terror at the heaven-sent plagues they fled, and made their way home, confessing the Godhead of Him who had been crucified by their fathers. Julian heard of these events, for they were repeated by every one. But like Pharaoh he hardened his heart.”¹⁵ Once again we see that the accounts of this same event in Socrates¹⁶ and in Sozomen¹⁷ make no biblical connection between Julian and Pharaoh.

Later in his text, in the section relating to the reign of Valens, Theodoret shares the story of when Valens had demanded the religious allegiance of St. Basil the Great, and Basil had “manfully” resisted against the prefect and the emperor. As a consequence, Valens ordered the immediate exile of Basil. However, the emperor’s son and wife having become gravely ill (his son to the point of death) Valens requested an audience with Basil, who came immediately and prayed for the boy promising his recovery should he be baptized by the orthodox. Valens,


¹⁶. Socrates Scholasticus, *H.E.*, 3.20. As we noted in chapter four, this passage in Socrates is evidence of Socrates’ eschatology, but the main difference between Socrates and Theodoret is the fact that Theodoret makes the rhetorical connection between this episode and the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart.

¹⁷. Sozomen, *H.E.*, 5.22. This chapter, in fact, proves to be the transition from book five to book six in Sozomen’s history, which also is the death of Julian and demonstrates how noteworthy this story of the failed rebuilding of the Solomonic Temple became for Christians of the time.
however, due to his allegiance to the Arian cause, had his son baptized by Arian clergy, and the child immediately died.

What is noteworthy in this story is the differing tales told by Sozomen, who is the only other historian of the Eusebian tradition to relate this account, and Theodoret. While they both agree that the illness of the immediate family of the Emperor and the death of his son were a direct result of his actions toward St. Basil, Sozomen does so in the “cosmic sympathy” model identified by Glen Chesnut, while Theodoret, on the other hand, treats the story in a much more conventional and preordained way by connecting it to the eschatological story of Pharaoh and the redemption of the Israelites. In his account he writes: “In his palace he saw that plagues from heaven had fallen, for his son lay sick at the very gates of death and his wife was beset by many ailments.”

Theodoret returns again to the theme of Pharaoh when he tells the story of Aphraates, the bold monk, who violently debated the emperor Valens, when he happened to see Aphraates on the street while Valens was standing in his balcony. After the conflict, the emperor’s servant of the bath, who had also berated Aphraates, entered into the bath chamber to prepare the emperor’s bath, lost his wits, fell into the bath and boiled to death. Upon finding the servant in the bath, according to Theodoret, the emperor’s other servants did not learn from the experience but rather “hardened their heart like Pharaoh, and the infatuated emperor, though made aware of the miracle of the holy man, persisted in his mad rage against piety.” Here, yet again, we see the way in which Theodoret uses a biblical narrative infused with eschatology to neatly contain the historical events around him.

But perhaps more illustrative of this tendency in Theodoret are his references to the three youths in the fiery furnace and their conflict with the Babylonian leader Nebuchadnezzar from the book of Daniel. There are two important passages where this is demonstrated beyond the one


19. Theodoret, H.E., 4.16. Continuing the eschatological theme, Theodoret then compares the oath-making of Valens to Herod.

20. Theodoret, H.E., 4.23.
we have already noted. One is what may seem a passing reference in the heart of the conflict between Liberius, the rightful bishop of Rome, and the emperor Constantius, son of Constantine, whose Arian (or semi-Arian by modern standards) sympathies were unfavorable to Liberius. When we note that Socrates only refers to this event in the contents of a letter from the bishops to Constantius,\(^{21}\) and Sozomen describes the conflict in detail but does not include the dialogue of Theodoret,\(^{22}\) the eschatological reference in the midst of the exchange between Liberius and Constantius found in Theodoret’s account becomes more noteworthy. In the heart of their argument, as recorded by Theodoret, the following exchange occurs when the emperor and the patriarch are discussing St. Athanasius:

The Emperor (addressing Liberius)—‘What portion do you constitute of the universe, that you alone by yourself take part with an impious man, and are destroying the peace of the empire and of the whole world?’

Liberius—‘My standing alone does not make truth one bit weaker. According to the ancient story, there are found but three men resisting a decree.’

Eusebius the Eunuch [advisor to the emperor]—‘You make our emperor a Nebuchadnezzar.’

Liberius—‘By no means. But you rashly condemn a man without any trial...\(^{23}\)

It makes very little difference if we believe that Theodoret is either the author of this dialogue or has found it in an ancient archive. His inclusion of the dialogue in his history and, most importantly, its central outburst about Constantius being another Nebuchadnezzar demonstrates yet again the way in which Theodoret tends to frame his historical inquiry and political ideology. As the story goes in the book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered the burning of the three holy youths who refused to bow to his gigantic golden statue. However, the Lord had other plans in mind and saved the youths in the fiery furnace who constantly praised God in song while He protected them in the furnace of unimaginable flame. Even in the midst of exile, God’s will for His people is so strong that He thwarts the will of the powerful in order to further His own aims for creation. In recalling this passage in such a way that Nebuchadnezzar is seen as the villain who has been sanctioned by God’s will, Theodoret brackets his history with a biblical

eschatology so firm and faithful that the actors in the drama become determined stock characters.

In case one might doubt that the passing reference above is determinative of this fact, the story that Theodoret gives about the martyrdom of Juventinus and Maximinus is even more convincing. The martyrdom of these two “shield bearers” of Julian is referred to in only two places: Theodoret’s history and in a sermon of St. John Chrysostom preached on their feast day shortly before the birth of Theodoret. The story in Theodoret begins by a description of the ways in which the emperor Julian was cleverly offering pagan sacrifice of food and water in the public places of Antioch so that anyone who consumed such food or water would become a partaker in the sacrifice to idols. In this context Theodoret writes:

Two officers in the army, who were shield bearers in the imperial suite, at a certain banquet lamented in somewhat warm language the abomination of what was being done, and employed the admirable language of the glorious youths of Babylon, “You have given us over to an impious Prince, an apostate beyond all the nations of the earth.” One of the guests gave information of this, and the emperor arrested these right worthy men and endeavoured to ascertain by questioning them what was the language they had used. They accepted the imperial enquiry as an opportunity for open speech, and with noble enthusiasm replied, “Sir we were brought up in true religion; we were obedient to most excellent laws, the laws of Constantine and of his sons; now we see the world full of pollution, meats and drinks alike defiled with abominable sacrifices, and we lament. We bewail these things at home, and now before your face we express grief, for this is the one thing in your reign which we take ill.” No sooner did he whom sympathetic courtiers called most mild and most philosophic [i.e. Julian] hear these words than he took off his mask of moderation, and exposed the countenance of impiety.

Once again in this passage we see Theodoret’s penchant for bracketing his political ideology with eschatological fervor. It should be noted that in Chrysostom’s sermon we hear nothing of this quotation from the Song of the Three Children. However, in Theodoret, the connections the

24. Theodoret, H.E., 3.11.


26. The verse quoted in the passage from Theodoret comes from the Song of the Three Children verse 8, a deuterocanonical book of the canon which plays a central role in the Holy Week services of the Orthodox churches. Chrysostom, in his account, focuses not so much on the sacrifice of food and water, but on the ethical behavior of the soldiers at the banquet. However, it should be noted that Chrysostom does make a connection between the youths in the
martyrs make between themselves and the youths of the fiery furnace, and between Julian and Nebuchadnezzar, seem to take center stage to be sure.

Another key way in which Theodoret uses his vast knowledge of Scripture to frame his overall argument about the fact that history is soaked in eschatology is through his appeal to the creation story of Adam and Eve from the book of Genesis. The most obvious section where he refers to Genesis is within the following passage in which he offers his opinion about the descent of the emperor Valens into heresy:

… But his [Valens’] subsequent conduct betrays very great feebleness of character, resulting in the abandonment of the truth. His fate was the same as that of our first father, Adam; for he too, won over by the arguments of his wife, lost his free estate and became not merely a captive but an obedient listener to woman’s wily words. His wife had already been entrapped in the Arian snare, and now she caught her husband, and persuaded him to fall along with her into the pit of blasphemy. Their leader and initiator was Eudoxius, who still held the tiller of Constantinople, with the result that the ship was not steered onwards but sunk to the bottom.

While one may excuse but not forgive the inherent sexism of Theodoret’s view of the creation story, this passage demonstrates quite clearly our thesis regarding Theodoret’s narrative style. By referring to the story of Genesis, perhaps the first eschatologically themed story of the Scriptures because of its commentary on the destiny of humanity, Theodoret clearly intends to make an eschatological connection for his reader; and not coincidentally such a connection in the context of the Genesis story perfectly fits into the mold of his cosmic dualism. Genesis, and especially its initial story of the creation of Adam and Eve, has always formed the foundation for Christian eschatology. One need only read St. Paul’s commentary on Genesis contained within the pages of his letter to the Romans [Romans 5:12] to find this Adam-Christ typology which forms the heart of Christian eschatology. In their recent article demonstrating the connection between the eschatology of the Gospel of Mark and Genesis, Dane Ortlund and G.K. Beale summed it up quite nicely writing: “Jesus is the second Adam ... With the first Adam, son of God, creation dawned, and all those in him share in the results of his covenant failure. With the second Adam, fiery furnace and the martyrs Juventinus and Maximinus later in his text when the two martyrs have been imprisoned. This demonstrates for us, once again, Cameron’s thesis about the Christian repossession of rhetorical power in Late Antiquity and the fact that it was widespread since we see it in the only two accounts of these martyrs by two unrelated authors.
Son of God, new creation dawned, and all those in him share in the benefits of his covenant faithfulness.”

One can see in Theodoret’s connection between Valens and his descent into Arianism a parallel with the covenantal failure of Adam. The creation story in Genesis forms the very foundation of eschatology especially for the great theologians of the ancient Church. As John VonMaaren notes in his article on the theme of Christ as the second Adam in St. Paul and the early church fathers, if anything, the fathers were quick to take the Adam-Christ typology found in Paul and make it even more deterministic for theological issues related to ultimate salvation.

Were Theodoret to have elaborated further, though he probably felt no need since it is so obviously implied, he could have rhapsodized about the Devil in the form of the snake and his ability to ensnare Eve long before she carried the tale on to Adam about the forbidden fruit of the garden. What this shows is that for Theodoret, in characteristic Christian fashion, ultimate stories of deep theological importance shape even the contemporary history around the individual believer; and that history is clearly illuminated through careful attendance to biblical precedence.

Theodoret again appeals to the creation story of Genesis in his account of the famous destruction of the imperial statues of Antioch by the populace. We know a great deal about this story because it is attested to both in Sozomen’s history as well as in the sermons of St. John Chrysostom. However, while Sozomen gives a rather short and entirely divergent account of the events, which nonetheless is supported by St. John, 

Theodoret’s version prominently features

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29. Sozomen, H.E., 7.23.

the monk Macedonius\textsuperscript{31} who in a short speech to the commissioners of Theodosius, who have come to punish the inhabitants of Antioch, says:

Say, dear sirs, to the emperor; you are not only an emperor, you are also a man. Therefore, think, not only of your sovereignty, but also of your nature. You are a man, and you reign over your fellow men. Now the nature of man is formed after the image and likeness of God. Do not, therefore, thus savagely and cruelly order the massacre of God’s image, for by punishing His image you will anger the Maker. Think how you are acting in your wrath, in this way, for the sake of a brazen image. Now all who are endowed with reason know how far a lifeless image is inferior to one alive and gifted with soul and sense. Take into account, too, that for one image of bronze we can easily make many more. Even you yourself cannot make one single hair of the slain.\textsuperscript{32}

Here again we see a direct reflection of eschatology in the reference to the creation story of Genesis. If we compare it with the account from St. John just mentioned above, we find the same reference to God’s image in humanity, but not in nearly so ponderous a way. It is as if Theodoret is trying to browbeat his reader with his notion that the biblical witness forms the basis for our eschatological understanding in the current age.

\textbf{Cosmic Dualism in Everyday Events}

It is not always necessary, however, for Theodoret to buttress his dualistic eschatological views and their impact upon the unfolding political drama in his work with the foundation of biblical witness. In an earlier chapter about Julian, Theodoret demonstrates this fact when he concludes a chapter foreshadowing the ascent of Valentinian. Theodoret writes:

Valentinianus, who shortly afterwards became emperor, was at that time a Tribune and commanded the Hastati quartered in the palace. He made no secret of his zeal for the true religion. On one occasion when the infatuated emperor \textit{[Julian]} was going in solemn procession into the sacred enclosure of the Temple of Fortune, on either side of the gates stood the temple servants purifying, as they supposed, all who were coming in, with their sprinkling whisks. As Valentinianus walked before the emperor, he noticed that a drop had fallen on his own cloak and gave the attendant a blow with his fist, ‘for’ said he, ‘I am not purified but defiled.’ For this deed he won two empires. On seeing what had happened Julian the accursed sent him to a fortress in the desert, and ordered him to remain there, but after the lapse of a year and a few months he received the empire as a reward of his confession of faith, for not only in the life that is to come does the just Judge honour them that care for holy things, but sometimes even here below He gives compensation for good deeds, confirming the hope of rewards yet to be received by what

\textsuperscript{31} Who is only briefly mentioned by St. John anonymously. See Chrysostom, \textit{“Homilies on the Statues,”} 453.

\textsuperscript{32} Theodoret, \textit{H.E.}, 5.19.
He gives in abundance now.\textsuperscript{33}

Here we can see clearly laid out by Theodoret our assertion in chapter two above that in the Patristic legacy of Late Antiquity we can see the gradual evolution of eschatology to include the idea of an inbreaking Kingdom of God demonstrating its effects even in the here and now. Additionally, Theodoret demonstrates in this passage his strong opinion that the political leaders of the day are characters used by God to further his own devices.

In yet another section of eschatological urgency, Theodoret discusses the intransigence of the Arians after the council of Nicaea by referring directly to a prophecy of Isaiah. After describing how the supporters of Arius falsely recanted at the council, he then goes on to characterize the nefarious character of these supporters with the following: “But we do not believe that these atheists can ever thus overcome the Deity. For though they ‘gird themselves’ they ‘shall be broken in pieces,’ according to the solemn prophecy of Isaiah.”\textsuperscript{34}

The passage of Isaiah to which Theodoret referred [Isaiah 8:9-15] is a prophetic hymn of Isaiah spoken in warning to Judah that God would bring Assyria upon them to wreak havoc. In this passage of Theodoret, we see once again the strong biblical foundation he uses to undergird his eschatological vision of contemporary history.

As we mentioned above, however, Theodoret is always interested in cosmic dualism. God is not the only main actor on the eschatological stage created by the events of history, and Theodoret is quick to point this out in his narrative as well. The most important example of this dualism at work in his text is in the letter from the rulers Valentinian, Valens and Gratian to the eastern bishops. In this letter Valentinian hoped to convince those bishops who were still sympathetic to the Arian cause to relent and accept the results of a council held at Illyricum which upheld the decrees of the council of Nicaea. It is included in full here because of how illustrative it is of the struggle that Theodoret envisions between God and the devil:

\[\text{A great council having met in Illyricum, after much discussion concerning the Word of salvation, the thrice-blessed bishops have declared that the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is of one substance. They worship this Trinity, in no way refraining from the}\]

\textsuperscript{33} Theodoret, \textit{H.E.}, 3.12.

\textsuperscript{34} Theodoret, \textit{H.E.}, 1.7.
service which has duly fallen to their lot, the worship of the great King. It is our imperial will that this Trinity be preached, so that none may say, ‘We accept the religion of the sovereign who rules this world without regard to Him who has given us the message of salvation,’ for, as the gospel of our God says, which contains this judgment, ‘we should render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s’

What say you, you bishops, you champions of the Word of salvation? If these are your professions, then continue, in this way, to love one another, and cease to abuse the imperial dignity. No longer persecute those who diligently serve God, by whose prayers both wars cease upon the earth, and the assaults of apostate angels are repelled. These striving through supplication to repel all harmful demons both know how to pay tribute as the law instructs, and do not contradict the power of their sovereign, but with pure minds both keep the commandment of the heavenly King, and are subject to our laws. But you have been shown to be disobedient. We have tried every means but you have given yourselves up. We however wish to be pure from you, as Pilate at the trial of Christ when He lived among us, was unwilling to kill Him, and when they begged for His death, turned to the East, asked for water for his hands and washed his hands, saying I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man.

Thus our majesty has invariably charged that those who are working in the field of Christ are not to be persecuted, oppressed, or ill-treated; nor the stewards of the great King sent into exile; lest today under our Sovereign you may seem to flourish and abound, and then together with your evil counselor trample on His covenant, as in the case of the blood of Zacharias, but he and his were destroyed by our Heavenly King Jesus Christ after (at) His coming, being delivered to death’s judgment, they and the deadly fiend who aided them.35

We ought, at first, to begin by discussing the provenance of this letter and its authenticity.

Theodoret seems to be the only ancient source in which this letter from the co-emperors Valentinian and his brother Valens exists. In fact, its mention of a council in Illyricum is the only place one can see a mention of such a council in the extant literature.36 It seems exceedingly strange that both Socrates and Sozomen (including, it seems, all other contemporary historians) would omit such a seemingly important council in the heart of the debate over Arianism. Does this then mean that the council and the ensuing letter from the emperors are simply inventions of Theodoret? This could certainly be a possibility. However, the tone and content of the letter does indeed seem genuine, though possibly a forgery. Another conclusion does present itself however if one reads between the lines. The giveaway is Theodoret’s comment that the letter “exhibits the soundness of Valens in divine doctrines at that time.” Could it be that Theodoret included an authentic letter that was deliberately excised by Socrates and Sozomen on the

35. Theodoret, H.E., 4.7.

36. Neil McLynn, Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 92–95  Here McLynn reveals the fact that the letter is a likely forgery of Theodoret’s. If so, it only lends further support to our thesis.
grounds that he was slightly more sympathetic than they were to the semi-Arian emperor? We may never know and it certainly seems unlikely for one so adamantly opposed to the Arian cause.

The most likely explanation, however, for the inclusion of this fascinating imperial letter, whether it is a forgery or indeed authentic, is its dualistic eschatology. This passage is rife with dualistic eschatological references. We see that the prayers of the pious hold back the attacks of the angels of the Devil; that those who follow the laws are at the same time fighting against evil demons; that those who are counseled by the Evil One seek to destroy the covenant of God.

However, perhaps the most powerful eschatological suggestion is the end of the passage in which Theodoret refers to “Zacharias” and his blood. It seems obvious that this is a passing, yet powerful, reference to Matthew 23:35 in which Jesus, transitioning from a discourse of extreme judgement to a speech of extreme eschatology, makes reference to the death of Zechariah, the son of the high priest in Jerusalem who was killed when he criticized the Jewish people for their apostasy after the death of his father. This original story to which Jesus seems to have referred is found in 2 Chronicles 24:15-22. At the end of it, Zechariah shouts at his death: “May the LORD see and avenge!” Such a vengeful tone is the one taken by Jesus in the Matthew 23 passage. In verses one through thirty-three, Jesus condemns and judges the scribes and Pharisees with his famous statements of woe, dramatically leading up to the following reference to Zechariah:

You snakes, you brood of vipers! How can you escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly I tell you, all this will come upon this generation. [Matt 23:33-36]

Jesus then launches into His lament over Jerusalem, prediction of its fall, and details of the end times, a powerfully eschatological passage, and one of the only apocalyptic passages of the Gospels. It is in the beginning of this section, for instance, that we hear the liturgically familiar “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” [Matt. 23:38] This phrase, a hallmark of the prelude to Holy Week in the liturgical cycle when Christians all over the world chant the phrase in reference to Jesus’ Entry into Jerusalem, is also a reference to Psalm 118, a veritable
treasure-trove of apocalyptic and eschatological imagery from which the Christian liturgical tradition has borrowed since the times of the ancient Church.\(^\text{37}\) If there is any doubt that Theodoret connects these scriptural relationships with his own eschatological understanding of his contemporary situation, his unique inclusion of this lengthy letter in his narrative, especially with its final statement of the eschatological era inaugurated at Jesus’ coming, should clear any such confusion from our minds.

**Political Ideology and Stock Characters in Theodoret’s History**

It is fairly easy to characterize the political ideology of Theodoret because so much of it has already been displayed and intimated in the passages above regarding his eschatology. From the caricature of Julian and Valens to the opening statement about Constantine, Theodoret’s *Ecclesiastical History* is populated by stock characters who come across to his reader just as wooden as Theodoret intends. His striking lack of reflection, compared to his predecessors in the Eusebian tradition, when it comes to the characterizations of major historical figures comes across in our modern context of historical “objectivity” and “veracity” as disingenuous at best. However, if we are to uncover whether or not the work of Theodoret proves our thesis about the coincidence of dynamic and powerful eschatology alongside dynamic and powerful political ideology, we must leave such modern preoccupations behind.

Beyond the preformed characterizations we have seen above, a few other examples will suffice to demonstrate the ways in which Theodoret takes the accounts of leaders from his predecessor historians and shapes them into characters for his rhetorical strategy. The famous exchange between St. Ambrose and Theodosius, detailed previously in chapter five about Sozomen above, gives us an ideal opportunity to demonstrate this fact. While Sozomen, in his account,\(^\text{38}\) certainly demonstrates the boldness of St. Ambrose and the contrition of the emperor,

\(^{37}\) For instance: “the stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.” Also contained in this psalm are the traditional antiphonal responses of the Eastern Orthodox tradition which are recited during the joy of the Pascha season again and again, the most eschatological of the liturgical seasons to be sure.

\(^\text{38}\) Sozomen, *H.E.*, 7.25.
in no way does he come close to the narrative and rhetorical fireworks of the Wagnerian drama which is included in the following passage from Theodoret:

Ambrose met him [Theodosius] outside the outer porch and forbade him to step over the sacred threshold. ‘You seem, sir, not to know.’ he said, ‘the magnitude of the bloody deed that has been done. Your rage has subsided, but your reason has not yet recognised the character of the deed. Perhaps your imperial power prevents you from recognising the sin, and power stands in the light of reason. We must, however, know how our nature passes away and is subject to death; we must know the ancestral dust from which we sprang, and to which we are swiftly returning. We must not because we are dazzled by the sheen of the purple fail to see the weakness of the body that it robes. You are a sovereign, sir, of men of the same nature as your own and who are in truth your fellow slaves; for there is one Lord and Sovereign of mankind, Creator of the Universe. With what eyes then will you look on the temple of our common Lord—with what feet will you tread that holy threshold, how will you stretch forth your hands still dripping with the blood of unjust slaughter? How in such hands will you receive the all holy Body of the Lord? How will you who in your rage unrighteously poured forth so much blood lift to your lips the precious Blood? Go away. Do not attempt to add another crime to that which you have committed. Submit to the restriction to which the God the Lord of all agrees that you be sentenced. He will be your physician. He will give you health.’

There can be little doubt that no matter how bold Ambrose was in his tongue-lashing of the emperor, such a speech as the above could not have happened in any historically objective sense. In the ensuing passage, Theodosius comes across as the perfectly constructed foil to St. Ambrose, knowing “clearly what belonged to priests and what to emperors. He therefore bowed to the rebuke of Ambrose, and retired sighing and weeping to the palace,” even “shedding a storm of tears” months later. After the controller of his household offers to petition Ambrose on his behalf, Theodoret ratchets up the drama even further by having the emperor reply: “I know the justice of the sentence passed by Ambrose, nor will he ever be moved by respect for my imperial power to transgress the law of God.” This, after Theodosius has already lamented his lot because of the fact that beggars and menial people can enter the church but he cannot! The narrative continues and after a good deal of back and forth, the emperor is given the task of amending the law in a more just way as penance. Upon completion of this process, Theodosius reentered the church but did not pray standing up “or even on his knees, but lying prone upon the ground he uttered David’s cry, ‘My soul clings to the dust, revive me according to Your word.’” In all of this it is easy to see the authorial hand of Theodoret shaping the historical events to his liking,

fitting them into his eschatological mold. We should not at all be surprised when he completes the account of Theodosius’ conflict with Ambrose with a passage from Psalm 119, a psalm begging for mercy in the light of God’s ultimate judgement.

This same tendency of portraiture imbues Theodoret’s characterization of Theodosius in the beginning of the emperor’s reign. Just before he is appointed co-emperor by Gratian, Theodosius is successful in a huge battle against the pagans. He then has an amazing dream about God’s intentions for him. Theodoret writes:

The great general [Theodosius] remained, and then saw a wonderful vision clearly shown to him by the very God of the universe Himself. In it he seemed to see the divine Meletius, chief of the church of the Antiochenes, investing him with an imperial robe, and covering his head with an imperial crown. The morning after the night in which he had seen the vision he told it to one of his intimate friends, who pointed out that the dream was plain and had nothing obscure or ambiguous about it.

Later, when Theodosius had already been appointed co-emperor by Gratian, he summoned all the bishops of the Eastern part of the empire together to settle the Arian debate. Theodoret writes:

They arrived, being in all one hundred and fifty in number and Theodosius forbade any one to tell him which was the great Meletius, for he wished the bishop to be recognized by his dream. The whole company of the bishops entered the imperial palace, and then without any notice of all the rest, Theodosius ran up to the great Meletius, and, like a boy who loves his father, stood for a long space gazing on him with filial joy, then flung his arms around him, and covered eyes and lips and breast and head and the hand that had given him the crown, with kisses.

The Victorian overtones of our translator must be accounted for here, but there can be no denying the intentions behind the powerful, and indeed unique, and possibly constructed, story of Theodoret’s. Much like the story of Theodosius’ later encounter with St. Ambrose, his meeting with Meletius is meant to clearly demonstrate, through the use of a carefully constructed rhetorical character, the complete subordination of imperial power to that of the Church.

40. One which historians generally agree was a fabrication by Theodoret since both Socrates, Sozomen, and others report a significant and successful attack by the pagans at this period on the city of Constantinople.

41. Theodoret, H.E., 5.6.

42. The Second Ecumenical Council.

43. Ibid.
Theodoret accomplishes this same feat in many of the characterizations of the emperors that he employs throughout his work. We have already seen the exchange between the earlier emperor, Constantius, and Liberius, the bishop of Rome, in which we mined the passage for its eschatological import. However, in much the same way as he does in the debate between Theodosius and Ambrose, Theodoret, in his classic wooden rhetorical tone, downplays the power of the emperor in favor of the church. To recapitulate, this argument between Liberius and Constantius originated in what Liberius felt was the wrongful treatment of St. Athanasius by the emperor. Their argument is over whether or not Constantius ought to condemn Athanasius without even the outward appearance of an ecclesiastical trial. One way Theodoret demonstrates his political ideology in this debate is in the following statement by Liberius, in response to Constantius’ desire that he return to Rome: “I have already taken leave of the brethren who are in that city. The decrees of the church are of greater importance than a residence in Rome.”

Unlike the account in Sozomen, where Liberius rejects an offering of money by Constantius when he is sent into exile, Theodoret, in characteristic fashion, does Sozomen one better and has Liberius reject three different offerings of gold from three different sources! Theodoret then goes on to describe in much more intense detail than his predecessors the fact that the emperor finally relented and returned Liberius to the head of the Roman church after the protestations of the wives of the nobles of the city demanded it of him. In all of this it is easy to see Theodoret’s absolute insistence upon the subordination of imperial power to that of the Church.

This is the consistent political ideology of Theodoret throughout the *Ecclesiastical History*. Persecuting emperors like Valens and Julian are nothing but puppets of the Devil, ever-berated by the likes of Aphraates, Juventinus and Maximinus. God-fearing emperors are instruments of God unless, of course, they slip up, in which case, the appropriate bishop conveniently appears, prepared for his entrance slightly offstage, to chastise the emperor and return him to the straight and narrow path.


45. Here we see Christian numerology in all of its untarnished glory!
Dynamic Eschatology and Historical Plasticity

What all of this demonstrates is that much like with our three previous historians, Theodoret seems to positively prove our original thesis as stated. There is little doubt when one reads Theodoret’s *Ecclesiastical History* that it is filled with an ever-present eschatology dominated by a cosmic dualism of God versus the Devil. It should, of course, come as no surprise to us that a bishop of Syria would be well versed in such an eschatology. An ever-changing and stark land to begin with, the Antiochian region has always contributed to the Christian tradition bold and uncompromising ideas. It is also unsurprising that a bishop would choose to frame his understanding of eschatology within the context of deep biblical guidance as Theodoret has done in his historical work. Unlike the work of his immediate predecessors, Socrates and Sozomen, Theodoret grounds his eschatology so firmly in biblical narrative structure that he finds himself eisegetically imposing it upon the historical events around him. While it is true that both Socrates, and especially Sozomen, discover the eschatology within the traditional pages of scripture, neither chooses to import along with his eschatological ideology the narrative qualities of scriptural eschatology in so strong a way as does Theodoret. Theodoret does so without hesitation.

In the context of this abiding eschatological worldview, it is also evident that a dynamic political ideology, infused with a scripted rhetorical strategy, is at work. Why can we claim that such a political ideology is dynamic? It is certainly true that Theodoret’s political ideology seems not entirely different than that of Sozomen’s; in fact we might justifiably suggest that Theodoret’s political ideology is simply Sozomen’s with a dose of boldness. However, though the results are certainly a more striking vision of the imperial subjugation we have seen in Sozomen’s work, the underlying methodology of political ideology is entirely different. While Sozomen seems to have exegeted his political ideology out of his deep regard for the folk-inspired stories of the athletic monasticism and lay-focused Christianity of his Palestinian youth, Theodoret begins from a theoretically established political ideology and then eisegetically imposes such a vision on the stuff of history. His political ideology is one formed prior to his
historical work and clearly undergirded by a biblical vision of cosmic dualism in which God and the devil are in constant competition with each other. He very artistically and creatively uses the events of history all around him as the materials which reflect a political ideology already established in his own heart and mind.

We must be very careful, of course, not to judge Theodoret in the court of modern contemporary historiography. Such a project as Theodoret has completed would certainly not pass muster in our current high-level academies of historical thinking. Dominated by a post-Rankian vision of historical “authenticity,” a modern faculty of history would have great difficulty suggesting an approach such as Theodoret’s to its young students; but what of a modern faculty of theology? This is an important question and has brought us back to the essence of chapter two in which we identified the emergence of a Patristic eschatology in the era of Late Antiquity. It is perhaps in the work of Theodoret that we see this project most fully formed. History for Theodoret has become something entirely different from history for Herodotus a millennium prior. It resembles much more something like theological rhetoric, a rhetoric identified for us previously by Averil Cameron.

Regardless, what we can see so clearly, once again, in this last of our Eusebian continuators is that a dynamic and powerful eschatology is accompanied by a dynamic and powerful political ideology. This leads us naturally to a summing up of our thesis and a cataloguing of conclusions.
CHAPTER 7

Conclusions

After a full analysis of the four major historians of the Eusebian tradition, we are forced now to take a full accounting of our conclusions in light of our original thesis. Our thesis is simply stated yet extremely difficult to tease out appropriately. It argues that where one finds a dynamic and powerful eschatology, there also is found a dynamic and powerful political ideology. As we have seen, each of our four historians irrefutably represents in their work the truth of this thesis. A brief summary is appropriate.

Eusebius of Caesarea

In analyzing Eusebius’ historical work, primarily in his *Ecclesiastical History*, we came to the conclusion that Eusebius’ eschatology was certainly dynamic and powerful. It was powerful in that it was ever-present throughout his work and a key component of his overall vision. His eschatology could be characterized as dynamic because of the unique way in which it differed from the millennialist and apocalyptic eschatology that is prevalent in the biblical tradition so foundational for all of our historians and also in the form in which his history was completed. We can see clearly in his editorial efforts a desire to emphasize a kind of historical eschatology that was certainly something of an innovation in the work of Eusebius.

Similarly, we see a strong and dynamic political ideology in the work of Eusebius. Breaking from the classical tradition, Eusebius deemphasizes individual human flourishing and societal concord while highlighting the importance of universalism and group identity formation when it comes to the destiny of God’s kingdom historically inaugurated by Jesus Christ. His desire to clearly demarcate the “good” and “bad” emperors, alongside the “in” and “out” ecclesiastical leaders shows his penchant for a political ideology that borders on the autocratic
and discards the balance and harmony of earlier classical political theorists. Grounded in an idealistic Christian eschatology, the positive rationalistic character of classical politics that we discovered in the work of Socrates (the philosopher) and Aristotle is clearly rejected by Eusebius.

**Socrates of Constantinople**

Socrates presents perhaps the most difficult affirmation of our established thesis. At first glance, particularly after a thorough reading of Eusebius, it seems that Socrates is less interested in eschatology and offers a kind of conservative political ideology that either disproves the thesis, or proves its opposite. However, placed within his proper historical context, and when it is understood that Eusebian conclusions form the control factor in an analysis of his historical work, Socrates’ work does indeed positively affirm the thesis of our project.

The eschatology of Socrates is dynamic and powerful. To begin with we must insist on the fact that the work of Eusebius forms the control for whether or not we see the work of Socrates as dynamic and powerful. This only makes sense since it is Eusebius who undergirds the entire reason behind why Socrates has even attempted his work, as he so clearly states in the beginning of the *Ecclesiastical History*. Therefore, we can claim that the eschatology of Socrates is dynamic because of the fact that it is less all-consuming, but yet still present, than the eschatology of Eusebius. It also originates from a different source from the eschatology of Eusebius. While Eusebius seeks to undermine the apocalyptic and millennialist underpinnings of biblical eschatology, Socrates seems to embrace them, particularly in his most illustrative example at the end of book seven.

In a much more obvious way, the political ideology of Socrates is dynamic because it is so significantly different than that of Eusebius. While Eusebius has often been accused of fawning over Constantine and establishing the political groundwork for Christian autocracy, Socrates, on the other hand, hearkens back clearly to a more classical understanding of politics, one that is based upon individual human flourishing and a balancing of political factions in order

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1. Opinions not *necessarily* obvious from his work I might emphasize.
to create political harmony. While we may have originally considered this a static position if we
understood Eusebius and Socrates to have shared the same political ideological controls, our
recognition of Socrates’ dynamism in politics comes directly from a realization that Socrates is
writing in response to Eusebius, something he reveals in his opening pages. So even though it
might be a fair estimate to characterize Socrates’ political ideology as conservative due to the
similarities it shares with classical foundations, its dynamism is certainly not in question.

**Hermias Salaminius Sozomen**

Our third historian of the Eusebian legacy, Sozomen, also manages to affirm the
soundness of our thesis. We know that Sozomen wrote his *Ecclesiastical History* slightly later
than Socrates wrote his *Ecclesiastical History*, and so our control for his ideas becomes slightly
more complicated since we must consider such a control as two-fold. Both the eschatology and
political ideology of Eusebius and Socrates must be kept in mind when evaluating Sozomen’s
work.

Even so, Sozomen’s eschatology, as we have shown, proves to be dynamic and powerful.
More prevalent and embracing than that of Socrates, Sozomen’s eschatology is nonetheless
derived from a high regard for folk and lay-centered notions of God’s ultimate aims for creation.
Though, like his predecessors, his understanding of biblical eschatology is intact, he chooses to
ground his eschatology in the everyday stories of Christian heroes who have resisted the
temptations of the world and persecutions of the most powerful interests of their day. We also
note in the work of Sozomen a comfort level with apocalyptic eschatology not displayed by our
earlier historians. All of these characteristics are what make Sozomen’s eschatology both
powerful and dynamic.

Not surprisingly, at this point, Sozomen’s political ideology is also dynamic and
powerful. We see in Sozomen’s vision of politics an emerging disregard for the “powers that
be,” that is the imperial powers of the day, and a deep respect for the power of the Church;
especially the Church as it is represented by the everyday spiritual athletes he comes to respect so
fully. Consequently, we sense the real historical drama present in his work when imperial power
bumps up against ecclesiastical power. The result is a growing critique and subjugation of imperial power when it is not influenced by the power of the present Church and a championing of local and lay-focused leadership to the detriment of typical political actors.

**Theodoret of Cyrus**

In Theodoret, we have perhaps the most striking example of the coincidence of dynamic and powerful eschatology and dynamic and powerful political ideology. There is certainly a thematic similarity between the work of Sozomen and Theodoret. However, the historical immediacy and suspense we find in the work of Sozomen is completely replaced by a narrative determinism and dramatic rhetorical agenda in Theodoret’s *Ecclesiastical History*.

The eschatology found in Theodoret is one unequivocally bound up in the eschatology of Scripture and imposed eisegetically on the contents of history. Over and over again we see the all-encompassing and deeply Biblical eschatology of Theodoret leaking its way into accounts previously detailed in both Socrates and Sozomen. This intentional and demarcated Biblical quality of Theodoret’s eschatology is what makes it so dynamic in the context of the rest of the Eusebian tradition.

Additionally, we see a dynamic and powerful political ideology present in the pages of Theodoret’s history. Much like Sozomen, we see in Theodoret a deep regard for ecclesiastical power in relation to imperial power. What is different is the degree to which this tendency plays itself out in the historical work of Theodoret. Theodoret has completely subjugated the imperial power of the Roman empire to the power of the Church. Importantly, he has done this through the use of his narrative and rhetorical strategy. As we have seen, most of Theodoret’s historical observations play themselves out as carefully-constructed set pieces; and this is particularly true of his sections related to imperial power. Theodoret’s political ideology is dynamic precisely because it is a theoretical structure imposed through the use of narrative and rhetoric upon the events of history he observes all around him.

**Emerging Patristic Eschatology**

It is at this point that we have the opportunity to globally revisit the ideas we introduced
in chapter two above because it is in Theodoret that we are able to see the full blossoming of an emerging Patristic eschatology begun, at least in the historical tradition, with Eusebius and completed by Theodoret. History no longer seems so divorced from Theology by the time we reach a full understanding of the work of the Eusebian tradition.

As we noted above, the Eusebian tradition, at its core, represents a seminal and never-ending project in the history of the Christian tradition, and that is the constant reworking of eschatology and its implications. When we were finished with our evaluation of Theodoret, we might have justifiably asked why he chose to couch his theological vision of eschatology within the confines of an historical narrative. Couldn’t Theodoret have written a simple theological treatise or apologetic work extolling the power of Christianity over imperial power? To ask such a question is to miss the iconic nature at the core of all Christian theology. As we have said above, the very fact that God chose to enter into the world, taking on the flesh of humanity in visible form, undergirds the work of all Christian thought. Therefore, it may in fact be proper not to impose upon our subjects the title “historian” after all. If Averil Cameron is correct, then the work of the “Eusebians” is just one other facet of what she has identified as the Christian repossession of the Greco-Roman rhetorical strategy with a new iconic emphasis. It is only natural that eschatology should become redefined and reshaped by the iconic events of history in the great thinkers of the Early Church. What is most obvious in the Eusebian tradition is this fact. The Eusebian legacy is one part of a larger movement in Late Antique Christianity which was slowly enriching Christian eschatology to include the rhetorical strategies of those commenting on the iconic events of history unfolding all around them.

**Eschatology and Political Ideology: Mere Coincidence or Providence?**

While we have clearly demonstrated the coincidence of dynamic and powerful eschatology with dynamic and powerful political ideology in the work of the historians of the Eusebian tradition, the last question we must ask ourselves is whether or not such a coincidence is merely a coincidence or representative of something deeper.

It is certainly obvious that the most anticipated criticism of our thesis would be simply the recognition that the mere presence of two things in proximity does not in fact prove the necessity
of those two things in proximity. I am certainly sensitive to the fact that this is self-evident and that the research conducted above may not, in fact, definitively prove for readers that a dynamic eschatology somehow produces a dynamic political ideology. There is no “smoking gun” in the words of our historians to prove such a point; nowhere do we find one of them saying explicitly that their understanding of God’s intentions for humanity have driven them towards an evaluation of the political situations in which they existed.

However, one must ask whether such a conclusion can ever be proved if our historians granted such a primacy of place to eschatology in their collective worldviews that they felt no need to dramatically point out such a connection since they themselves took such a link for granted. It is not such a stretch to assume that this would be true. As we have pointed out, eschatology was a natural theme in all of the work of the historians of the Eusebian tradition; indeed eschatology has been such an obvious theme in the Christian tradition since its beginning that it regularly goes unmentioned in the work of Christian writers.

We might reasonably argue as well that the very nature of eschatology begs of its beholders to constantly revise and reevaluate the entire social context surrounding them, including, most particularly, political ideology. For what is eschatology but the working out of God’s ultimate aims for humanity? Ought it be surprising to us that any Christian thinkers would be constantly recreating their social situation for as long as they felt that God’s plan had not ultimately revealed itself to them? Is it fair to at least suggest that beyond a simply coincidental pairing, the presence of dynamic and powerful eschatology in the work of our historians is determinative for their dynamic and powerful political ideology; and this would of course make sense in the traditional understanding of our historians regarding their place in the world? As we have seen again and again, Eusebius and his continuators were constantly vigilant, ever peering into the stuff of history to ferret out God’s will for them and all of creation. In this context, we must, in fact, be compelled to consider the link between eschatology and political ideology in our historians as not simply coincidental but providential. If we take them on their own terms, it is

2. Something which ought to be the foundational touchstone of all historical work.
most reasonable to suggest that God, in His wisdom, sent His Son into the world to consummate His eschatological vision for humanity. If this is the case, then it is only natural, and indeed logical, to assume that it is the eschatology of our historians that drives them to constantly reevaluate and reenvision the contours and strategies of politics to fit more completely into God’s intended aim for His creation.
CHAPTER 8

Implications

Perhaps the most striking influence this research could have on the wider academic fields of Church History and Theology is to rescue the historians of the Eusebian tradition from the false notion that they are merely fact checkers, an understanding of “historian” that does not take into full account the conclusions of Cameron and the evidence of true historical work. This is to say that in identifying the early church historians as not only identifiers of facts (or in some cases distorters of facts), but as theorists, rhetoricians, and, in the largest sense, historical theologians, we can begin to more fully appreciate the larger theological diversity of Late Antiquity. It is common practice for theologians and biblical scholars to very cursorily include Eusebius in their work. However, it is a rare thing indeed to see the names Socrates, Sozomen or Theodoret cross the pages of most current surveys of theology. As an example, Alister McGrath only mentions Eusebius once in his 510 page introduction to Christian theology widely used by undergraduates and first-year seminarians. He writes: “With the conversion of Constantine, the situation changed radically. Increasingly, theologians began to draw parallels between the empire and the church - whether negatively (as with Hippolytus of Rome, who saw the empire as a satanic imitation of the church), or positively (as with Eusebius, who saw the empire as a divinely ordained institution, charged with the task of preparing the world for the coming of the kingdom of Christ).”¹ That’s it; twenty-eight words for the entire Eusebian tradition, though one must admit that McGrath rightly identifies Eusebius as theologian and cuts straight to his eschatology!

Justo Gonzalez and Zaida Perez never even mention him at all.\(^2\) The fact remains that Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret have not been adequately mined for the wealth of theological insight they have residing within their historical cores. This is not just true of their eschatology and its relation to political ideology. One would be richly rewarded in an investigation of their notions of ecclesiology, heresiology or hagiography. Such comparative studies would yield forth great academic fruit.

Even so it is their notions of eschatology and its relation to political ideology that remain most fascinating. If the current research, which is just a beginning, were to dig deeper, what might scholars discover about the particular theme of political leadership in these historians? What about the notions of autocracy or democracy in the Eusebian tradition? Eschatologically speaking, how does apocalyptic eschatology, or lack thereof, in our historians spur more fervent, or less fervent, reflection in other theological spheres? These are questions that naturally arise from this initial foray into the depths of the Eusebian tradition.

The longstanding legacy that research inspires yet further research in the academic world certainly holds true in this instance. If it weren’t for the insights of scholars like Peter Brown, Glen Chesnut and Averil Cameron, this study would never have occurred. And certainly, the current research is only a part of a broader movement to redefine the early historians of the Church in a new light. For instance, see the following insight from Marie Verdoner in the conclusion to her recent book about Eusebius and his *Ecclesiastical History* entitled *Narrated Reality*. “In modern times, *historia ecclesiastica* has perhaps primarily been regarded as nothing but a source to early Christianity, but it may none the less have influenced the basic conceptualization of this period ... The narrated world of *historia ecclesiastica* has thus long influenced a basic master narrative about the reality of the early Christian church.”\(^3\)

The fact is, there is currently a revisioning underway of the Eusebian tradition and the


contributions it has to offer to the wider fields of theology and biblical studies. This study is but one of several⁴ that contributes to such a correction.

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