

The Church of Virgins and Martyrs: Ecclesiastical Identity in the Sermons of Eusebius of Emesa

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Published studies of the extant sermons of Eusebius of Emesa have focused on two of his concerns which, up to this point, have been treated independently of each other: his understanding of the divinity of the Son in the midst of the theological debates of the fourth century and his understanding of the importance of the life of asceticism. In the article that follows, I argue that there was a point of intersection between his theology and his zeal for asceticism, and that this point of intersection was his understanding of human salvation—and thus his understanding of the identity of the church. As creator, “God, the Son of God” transformed created natures while on earth; as savior, “God, the Son of God” transforms human nature into an angelic nature on earth. In his sermons, Eusebius communicated a vision of the church as a body of virgins and martyrs, the former those who represent the church’s ascetic ideal of the angelic life and the latter those who sacrifice everything for the church’s ascetic ideal.

From all accounts, Eusebius of Emesa (c. 300–59) was a popular bishop and writer among his contemporaries. Born at Edessa where he received his education in the Bible and Greek, he later studied under Eusebius of Caesarea and was closely connected to the early fourth-century ecclesiastical establishment at Antioch. Eusebius earned the respect of both the influential Eusebius of Nicomedia, who wanted to appoint him as bishop of Alexandria, and the Emperor Constantius, who included him in his entourage on a campaign against the Persians.¹ Presumably becoming

1. The principal sources for the life of Eusebius are the ecclesiastical historians Socrates, *HE* 2.9 and Sozomen, *HE* 3.6. Both claim to be dependent on an account of

acquainted with Eusebius' legacy while in Antioch, Jerome reported in *De viris illustribus* that he had delivered "brief but numerous homilies on the gospels" (*in evangelia homiliae breves sed plurimae*) that employed skillful and pleasing rhetoric. When not delivering sermons, he was composing commentaries on the Octateuch and Paul's epistles, and polemical treatises against Manichees, Marcionites, Jews, Novatianists and pagans. Jerome noted that after Eusebius' death and burial at Antioch bishops such as Diodore of Tarsus and John Chrysostom were still reading his sermons.²

His popularity did not follow him into the modern period, and in fact, many of the works attributed to him in antiquity were lost. At the beginning of the twentieth century, two fragments of a sermon Theodoret of Cyrus preserved in his *Eranistes* and some fragments of his commentaries were the only acknowledged bases for any studies of Eusebius' theology.³ This dearth of sources changed in the mid-twentieth century. In the 1950s

his life George of Laodicea composed which Socrates calls an *encomium* [Socrates, *HE* 1.24]. Buytaert's analysis of the sources for Eusebius' life remains the most comprehensive treatment: Buytaert, *L'héritage littéraire d'Eusèbe d'Émèse* (Louvain: Bureaux de Muséon, 1949), 61–96.

2. Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, 91, ed. E. C. Richardson (Leipzig: Teubner, 1896), 45–46, 52, 54. In his entries on Diodore of Tarsus and John Chrysostom, Jerome mentions this connection with Eusebius. Jerome knew about a commentary on Galatians and one of the polemical works: *Adversus Judaeos et gentiles et Novatianos*. In the Greek exegetical *catenae*, there are fragments of his commentaries on the Octateuch and Romans and Galatians. The commentary on the Octateuch survives in its entirety in classical Armenian. See in particular R. Bas ter Haar Romeny, *A Syrian in Greek Dress*, *Traditio Exegetica Graeca* 6 (Louvain: Peeters, 1997). Although based on R. Devreese's older edition of the *catenae*, which Françoise Petit's work is rendering obsolete, the following articles are nevertheless still useful: Jiří A Novotný, "Les fragments exégétiques sur les livres de l'Ancien Testament d'Eusèbe d'Émèse," *OCP* 57 (1991), 27–67; and Novotný, "Eusebius of Emesa as Interpreter of Paul," in *Analecta Biblica* 18 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1963), 471–79. In his *Haereticorum Fabularum Compendium* 1.25–26, Theodoret of Cyrus credited Eusebius of Emesa with writing treatises against Marcion and against the Manichees. At *Panarion* 66.21.3, Epiphanius mentions a treatise against the Manichees by Eusebius.

3. Theodoret, *Eranistes*, ed. Gerard H. Ettliger (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 249–51. There had been earlier attempts to attribute texts to Eusebius of Emesa. For a history of scholarship on Eusebius of Emesa in the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, and in particular the attempt to connect Eusebius of Emesa with Eusebius of Alexandria, see Henning Lehmann, *Per Piscatores: Studies in the Armenian Version of a Collection of Homilies by Eusebius of Emesa and Severian of Gabala* (Aarhus: Eget, 1975), 23–33. On the sermons printed in PG 86, cols. 462–563, which are no longer considered authentic and may be attributable to Eusebius of Alexandria, again see *Per Piscatores*, 26.

Eligius M. Buytaert published an edition of twenty-nine of Eusebius' sermons preserved in an old Gallic Latin translation, an article providing a thorough analysis of their authenticity, and a monograph that included a study of the sources for Eusebius' life as well as a study of the Armenian, Syriac, and Greek fragments of commentaries and sermons ascribed to him.⁴ While Buytaert was publishing these works, Nerses Akinian published eight sermons extant in classical Armenian that are ascribed to Eusebius.⁵ Fifteen years later, Henning Lehmann produced a careful study of these eight sermons that confirmed the close connection between them and the Latin material Buytaert published. In particular, he demonstrated that one of these sermons is an Armenian version of a Latin sermon Buytaert had published.⁶

The availability of these sermons rekindled interest in Eusebius of Emesa. Buytaert's editions of the Latin sermons generated all of the attention, and soon after their publication, articles began to appear addressing various aspects of Eusebius' thought. Some of these studies have attempted to situate the theology of Eusebius within the spectrum of positions represented by the debate over the relationship between the Father and the Son during the fourth century.⁷ Others have addressed Eusebius'

4. Eusebius of Emesa, *Discours conservés en latin, I. La collection de Troyes; II. La collection de Sirmond*, ed. E. M. Buytaert, 2 vols. (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1953); Buytaert, "L'authenticité des dix-sept opuscules contenus dans le MS. T. 523 sous le nom d'Eusèbe d'Émèse," *RHE* 43 (1948): 5–89; and Buytaert, *Héritage littéraire d'Eusèbe d'Émèse*. Throughout this article, volumes I and II of Buytaert's edition will be abbreviated as B I and B II. All references to the Latin sermons will include the Latin title of the sermon (as listed in *CPG*, 3525–3526), paragraph number from the text, and then the volume and page number from Buytaert's edition.

5. *Die Reden des Bischofs Eusebius von Emesa*, ed. N. Akinian, in *Handes Amsorya* 70 (1956): 291–300, 385–416; 71 (1957): 101–30, 257–67, 357–80, 513–24; 72 (1958): 1–22. Throughout this article, *Handes Amsorya* will be abbreviated as *HA* and, for the sake of convenience, all titles of the Armenian sermons will be given in their Latin version as listed in *CPG*, 3531.

6. The Armenian sermon *Sermo de passione Christi* equals the Latin sermon *De Filio*. See Lehmann, *Per Piscatores*, 45–102.

7. Listed chronologically, the following have written on Eusebius of Emesa's theology: Buytaert, "L'authenticité des dix-sept opuscules contenus dans le MS. T. 523 sous le nom d'Eusèbe d'Émèse"; although concerned with textual issues, this article does contain some theological analysis of the different treatises. Buytaert, "On the Trinitarian Doctrine of Eusebius of Emesa," *Franciscan Studies* 14 (1954): 34–48, despite its title, has very little to do with theology. Othmar Perler, "Pseudo-Ignatius und Eusebius von Emesa," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 77 (1958): 73–82; Ignace Berten, "Cyrille de Jérusalem, Eusèbe d'Émèse et la théologie semi-arienne," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 52 (1968): 38–75; Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in*

discussion of asceticism in his sermons and, in particular, the extent to which Eusebius is representative of other writers of a fourth-century Syrian milieu.⁸ Although these studies have done much to clarify these two prominent themes of his sermons, theology and asceticism, they are nevertheless limited in two respects. First, they rely solely on the Latin sermons Buytaert published; there is still no study of Eusebius' thought that incorporates the Armenian material. Second, these two topics are treated in isolation from each other; there is still no study that attempts to link, for example, his understanding of the divinity of the Son and his praise of virginity.

The study that follows addresses both of these limitations by presenting a portrait of his views on sexual renunciation that draws on both the Latin and Armenian sermons and by indicating a point of intersection

Christian Tradition, vol. 1 (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965), 250–54, 260–70; Pieter Smulders, “Eusèbe d’Émèse comme source du *De Trinitate* d’Hilaire de Poitiers,” in *Hilaire et son temps* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1968), 175–212; Manlio Simonetti, *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1975), 192–98; Richard P. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 387–98; Maurice F. Wiles, “The Theology of Eusebius of Emesa,” in *SP* 19 (1989), 267–80; Joseph T. Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth-Century Theology* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 186–97.

8. Most attention has surrounded two sermons extant in Latin: *De martyribus* and *De virginitate*. André Wilmart initially discussed these two discourses and provided some analysis of the contents. Wilmart, “Un discours en l’honneur des saintes d’Antioche Bernice, Prosdoce et Domnine,” *AB* 38 (1920): 241–84. In his article, David Amand de Mendieta’s summarized at length their contents and suggested that Eusebius’ views on asceticism are similar to the anonymous Greek sermon *De virginitate* and that Eusebius had an influence on John Chrysostom. Amand de Mendieta, “La virginité chez Eusèbe d’Émèse et l’ascétisme familial dans la première moitié du IV^e siècle,” *RHE* 50 (1955): 777–820. Similarly, Karl Suso Frank treated the anonymous homilist and Eusebius of Emesa together in his study of the “angelic life.” Frank, *ΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΣ ΒΙΟΣ* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964), 149–53. Peter Brown noted Eusebius of Emesa at two points: Brown, *Body and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 260, 271. Eusebius also received a passing reference in Teresa M. Shaw, “Askesis and the Appearance of Holiness,” *J ECS* 6 (1998): 495; and Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh: Fasting and Sexuality in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 226, 246. Elizabeth Clark initially mentioned Eusebius as a source for John Chrysostom’s views on virginity. Elizabeth Clark, “John Chrysostom and the Subintroductae,” in *Ascetic Piety and Women’s Faith*, *Studies in Women and Religion* 20 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon Press, 1986), 267. In her more recent volume, she included him frequently to exemplify the discourse and theology of early Christian asceticism: Elizabeth Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

between his praise for asceticism and the theological posture he assumed in the midst of the Arian controversy. The point of intersection between his theology and his praise for virginity is his understanding of human salvation, and ultimately therefore, his understanding of the identity of the church. In his sermons, Eusebius articulates a vision of the church as a body comprising virgins and martyrs, and this definition of the church is dependent on his understanding of the soteriological accomplishment of Jesus as the divine Son of God. Thus, after some observations about Eusebius' audiences and his rhetorical engagement of them, I discuss in turn the language and ideas he associates with sexual renunciation, the angelic life, and then the language and ideas he associates with his understanding of human salvation. The final section of the article addresses the implications of the link between his views on asceticism and his soteriology for his definition of the church.

I. EUSEBIUS AND HIS AUDIENCES

Eusebius communicated his vision of the Christian life as a life of asceticism, and, therefore, his understanding of ecclesiastical identity, through sermons preached before audiences in Antioch, Jerusalem, and his own see, Emesa. Even a cursory reading of the sermons attributed to Eusebius validate Jerome's observation on the rhetorical nature of his preaching. The full range of oratorical techniques available to a rhetorician in the fourth century and designed to engage an audience are present in his sermons including *synkrisis*, *ethopoieia*, and *ekphrasis*. He was particularly fond of using the techniques characteristic of diatribe: answering supposed questions from his audiences, using a fictional dialogue with members of his audiences, and denouncing forcefully the perceived theological or moral shortcomings of his audiences.⁹ Internal evidence of these sermons suggests that this lively and engaging oratory occurred in a particular context which provides a partial image of his audiences. Many of the extant sermons conclude with the language of thanksgiving and the language of the *epiclesis* marking the transition from the liturgy of the

9. On the adaption of diatribe among Christian preachers, see Karl-Heinz Uthemann, "Forms of Communication in the Homilies of Severian of Gabala: A Contribution to the Reception of the Diatribe as a Method of Exposition," tr. John Cawte, in *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*, ed. Mary B. Cunningham and Pauline Allen (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 139–77; and Folker Siegert, "Homily and Panegyric Sermon," in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.–A.D. 400*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 421–43.

word to the liturgy of the Eucharist. When Eusebius discussed what the church ought to believe and how it should live in his sermons, therefore, he was speaking in an ecclesiastical and liturgical setting and within the parameters that such a setting dictated. His audience, we can surmise, was composed chiefly of the baptized and the catechumens, and his concern was not so much to convert those outside the church as it was to delimit the theological space those identifying with the church ought to occupy.

Certain that he knew every inch of the terrain of this theological space, Eusebius designed his sermons to ensure that his audiences would fully inhabit it, recognize where its boundaries lay, and understand how it differed from the world of religious beliefs and life styles outside of these boundaries. Unanimity among his auditors on the contours of Christian faith and life—that is, unanimity with his understanding of the church’s theology—was his expectation. There was no room for debate or disagreement; such energies were rightly directed towards those outside of the boundaries. Thus, at a very idealistic but telling moment in one sermon, he suggested that the thoughts (*cogitatus*) of each and every individual in his audience can be starting points for attaining theological knowledge.¹⁰ While it is difficult to imagine Eusebius canvassing the opinions of his auditors for a consensus, such a sentiment gives expression to his conviction that whatever diversity might exist within the church, such differences ought to be minor and in harmony with what he understood to be the one apostolic faith of the church.

This explains, in part, his rhetorical efforts to include his audience in his sermons. In several sermons, Eusebius claimed to be addressing questions that members in his audience have raised concerning passages of scripture. A poignant example of this is his sermon on Matthew 21.18–22, where he remarked that some among the “faithful” have asked questions about the story of Jesus cursing the fig tree. Whether actual questions or not, Eusebius used the rhetorical ploy of taking a question from his audience, characteristic of diatribe, in order to model the unanimity that was his ideal while instructing his audience on a point of theology. “We are going to respond to the brothers in the public assembly, so that the proposed issue of one member brings joy to the whole body.”¹¹ Industrious brothers, he explained, who are zealous about matters of biblical interpretation, are like lamps illuminating and gladdening the

10. *De calice*, 25. B I, 231–32.

11. *De arbore fic* 2. B I, 256: *In communi vero coetu fratribus respondemus, ut unius membri propositio toti corpori praestet laetitiam.*

whole church; there is certainly no room in the church for unifying sparring or arguments over these questions.¹²

This also explains, however, why he equally employed his oratory to address directly the forces that he believed had the potential to undermine the church's unanimity and confuse its identity. Thus, Eusebius reminded his audiences constantly to maintain fidelity to "the fishermen," the apostles, and these reminders typically took the form of him differentiating the apostolic faith his audience should possess from the ideas of Jews, pagans, and heretics (Marcionites and Manichees).¹³ He did not want members of his audience distracted by the synagogue or heeding "Jewish interpretations" of scripture, he did not want his audience to participate in the solar cult or have conceptions of divinity that were reminiscent of pagan mythology, and he did not want his audience to adopt a heretical theology that denigrated creation, that differentiated the God of Jesus and the New Testament from the God of the Old Testament, that saw corporeal human nature as fated to sin, and that practiced a false asceticism.¹⁴

Not only did he believe that he had to remind his audience where the boundaries lay, but he also was convinced that he had to quell two potentially divisive forces within these boundaries. As was characteristic of diatribe, Eusebius was not reticent about communicating his disappointment with groups, whether actually present among his auditors or not, whose understanding of the contours of the faith and the harmony it demanded differed from his own.

12. *De arbore fici* 2. B I, 257.

13. Although used throughout his sermons, this title for the apostles is most frequent in his sermons on the apostles such as *De Petro*, *De apostolis et fide* 1 and 2, and *Sermo in sanctos apostolos*.

14. In two different sermons, in the midst of *adversus Judaeos* sections that are intended to remove any religious credibility the Jews might possess, Eusebius challenges his audience to enter a synagogue and claim that Jesus rose from the dead and then attempt to leave alive. His point is that Christians should have no need to enter the synagogue in the first place and professing Christians would certainly not be welcome: *De arbitrio* 27. B I, 30–31; *De resurrectione* 2.27. B II, 66–67. In two other sermons he rejects what he calls Jewish interpretations of the Bible that are antithetical to the teaching of the church: *De Moyse* 5–8. B I, 280–82; *De resurrectione* 1.16–25. B II, 18–24. On Eusebius' understanding of Judaism and the place of the Jews in his sermons see Ralph Hennings, "Eusebius von Emesa und die Juden," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum / Journal of Ancient Christianity* 5.2 (2001): 240–60. The solar cult: *De incorporali* 4.26–29. B II, 148–50. The five sermons comprising *De incorporali et invisibili Deo* and *De incorporali* 1–4 are framed as a sustained argument against pagan conceptions of divinity. The heretics: *De arbitrio* 13–17. B I, 21–25; *De Filio* 3–5. B I, 45–47; *De quinque panibus* 8 and *passim*; *De hominis assumptione* II, 5. B I, 373.

Eusebius was frustrated with the theological debate over the relationship between the Father and the Son that surrounded him during the mid-fourth century. In his view, the various parties were all brothers and were weakening the church through their arguments. Such disputation called into question the ideal of unanimity that was vital to the church's identity, and Eusebius used his sermons to remind his audiences of the apostolic faith and to call for the church to stop arguing over what should simply be received. At Antioch, where Eusebius delivered some of his sermons, he expressed his disappointment over the ecclesiastical schism in the city:

Let us cease arguing. Concerning the things about which we do not agree let brother understand brother. We are not wolves with sheep, but sheep whom Christ has united in his blood, in which we have been called. We have been purchased by the precious blood. Let us not spurn the grace of Jesus. The one who tears apart will be torn apart; the one who separates will be separated. The robe of Christ was not torn so that his church would not be torn apart. You have a common faith. Do not wish a good thing to be a matter of argument. . . . Why do you divide the one faith? Why do you contrive opposing arguments? There is one Lord, one shepherd, one priest, one body, one head, one church, one building. You should not say anything else, so you will not be estranged.¹⁵

Because of this disunity, Satan himself, who instigated the wrangling between the brothers, has snatched away the "beauty" of the church of Antioch.¹⁶ The resulting infighting had left the church appearing like a circus or a troupe of mime actors.¹⁷ Eusebius would have been well aware, of course, that during his time in Antioch there was not "one body" and "one building" but two: the establishment church that occupied the great octagonal cathedral dedicated at the synod of 341 and a smaller congregation loyal to the deposed Eustathius and Athanasius.

In a similar fashion, Eusebius used his sermons to defend his enthusiasm for and theological understanding of sexual renunciation and asceticism in general, and to address with severity those who were less than enthusiastic for it. In one sermon, Eusebius described such individuals as

15. *De apostolis et fide* 1.35–36. B I, 318–19: *Cessemus litigantes. De his, quae non reprehendimus, cognoscat frater fratrem. Non sumus lupi cum ovibus; sed oves, quam adunavit Christus in sanguinem, in quo vocati sumus; sanguine pretioso empti sumus. Non spernamus gratiam Jesu. Qui scindit, scindetur; qui dividet, dividetur. Non est scissum vestimentum Christi, ut eius ecclesia non scindatur. Habes fidem communem. Bonum noli iurgari. . . . Quid dividis unam fidem? Quid contraria sentis? Unus Dominus, unus pastor, unus pontifex, unum corpus, unum caput, una ecclesia, una aedificatio. Aliud non dicas, ne alieneris.*

16. *De apostolis et fide* 1.35. B I, 318.

17. *Adversus Sabellium* 30. B I, 124–25.

follows: “some who are listening are amazed, who, in their mind, have not attained to the chorus of angels. For whom beatitude is if they can eat and drink and marry and have possessions and heap up treasure and enjoy thoroughly their official rank, for what is beyond such things they consider inferior.” Not only were they not convinced that the asexual incorporeal angels lived a superior life that was worthy of imitation, but they also took pleasure in noting when virgins broke their vows.¹⁸ Whether this is a rhetorically fabricated type, an actual description of individuals in his audience, or somewhere in between, there is nevertheless a strong sense in Eusebius’ sermons that a significant gap existed between his ideal for asceticism and the reality he observed. “We are not your enemies,” Eusebius had to remind his audience as he was admonishing them to maintain the fasts of the church, to abandon the pursuit of wealth, and, if they are not willing to embrace a life of sexual renunciation, then at the very least to support and honor virgins in their midst who had.¹⁹

His engagement of the third of these troubling concerns, his expressed perception of his audiences’ disinterest in asceticism, is my interest here, but this inevitably involves his discussion of the second of these concerns and, more broadly, the first as well. Eusebius expected his audiences to embrace a “holy way of life” (*conversatio sancta*) that was characteristic of the life of a virgin or martyr, a life that surpassed the limitations of human nature, an angelic life that verified the divine power of Christ present in the church. For this reason, each member of his audience should consider him- or herself “a living sacrifice” and an “offering” (*promissio*).²⁰ Virginity and “holiness” in marriage were integral to his theology, which he was convinced was *the* theology of the church. Christianity without asceticism, without sexual renunciation, was inconceivable; Christianity in its soteriological aspects was by definition a soteriology of asceticism. The purpose of the incarnation and the work of Christ, the divine Son of God, was to transform human nature into an angelic nature on earth, and, therefore, Eusebius’ ecclesiology depended on a close link between his theology and his ascetic ideal. It is this link which the following two sections of the article explore.

18. *De incorporali* 4.7. B II, 139: *Forte autem quidam mirantur audientes, qui mente ad angelorum choros non pervenerunt. Quibus enim beatitudo est si manducant et bibant, et nuptiis utantur, et possessiones habeant et thesauros recondant, et iudicialis dignitatibus perfruantur, his etiam ea quae supra ista sunt, minor putantur.*

19. *De mandato Domini* 27. B II, 209: *Non sumus igitur inimici vestri.*

20. *Conversatio: De martyribus* 1. B I, 152. Living sacrifice: *De virginibus* 4. B I, 178; Eusebius is quoting Romans 12.1. *Promissio: De virginibus* 5. B I, 178.

II. CONVERSATIO ANGELORUM: THE ANGELIC LIFE IN EUSEBIUS' SERMONS

The two sermons that have figured prominently in the literature on Eusebius' understanding of asceticism are *De martyribus*, celebrating Domnina and her virgin daughters Prosdocia and Bernice, and *De virginibus*, a discussion of the theory and practice of sexual renunciation within the context of the life of the church. There is good reason to dwell on these sermons; both provide much information on Eusebius' understanding of angelic life. In the former case, Eusebius used the lives and martyrdoms of Domnina and her daughters as models of the angelic life in practice. At various points throughout the sermon, Eusebius employed the rhetorical device *ethopoieia* to bring Domnina to life and allow his audience to hear her counseling her daughters. In the first such discourse, early in the sermon, Domnina instructs her daughters: "reject wedlock and yoke yourself to an angelic way of life," and this aptly summarizes her consistent message to her daughters.²¹ At other points in the sermon Domnina paints a woeful picture of marriage in order to convince her daughters to follow this course. Her plan, apparently, is to have her daughters remain unwed at home, and the virgin girl living at home with her parents is, as in this sermon, a common way that Eusebius defined the angelic life.

In *De virginibus* a similar *praxis* of sexual renunciation is in view; that is, it is best for a virgin girl to live at home, or as a second best, with a group of sisters. Eusebius was very clear that living with a male virgin is not an acceptable arrangement.²² It was in *De virginibus*, however, more so than in *De martyribus*, that Eusebius discussed his *theoria* of sexual renunciation as an angelic life. He habitually associated his references to the angelic life with the vow (*propositum*) or the covenant (*stipulatio*) that a virgin made. Eusebius used these words interchangeably, but he attached great significance to the idea either word expressed. The covenant has made possible the translation of the nature of virgins so that their "nature is not on earth with you,"²³ Although by nature the women who have maintained their virginity are "similar to other women, never-

21. *De martyribus* 3. B I, 152: *coniugia quidem contemnite, angelicae autem conversationi vos iungite.*

22. *De virginibus* 20. B I, 188: *Ante omnia, autem nullus neque vir, si sanctimonium pollicetur, cum aliena muliere cohabitaret, neque virgo cum viro, etiamsi et ipse sit continens.* (Above all, let no man, if he has vowed holiness, dwell with another woman, nor a virgin with a man even if he might be continent).

23. *De virginibus* 13. B I, 184: *natura non est in terra tecum.*

theless transcending by their vow, they long to attain the holy of holies.”²⁴ The promise of the virgin, Eusebius claimed, “transcends nature and ascends to heaven and here lives with the angels through their lifestyle.”²⁵ He was willing to expand this language extensively. Virgins, because of the vow they maintain in this life, experience “that vision of inaccessible beauty,” they experience “communion with the Holy Spirit,” they experience “union with the Spouse,” and, following Ephesians 2, they experience “access to the Father.”²⁶

Eusebius’ characterization of the angelic life drawn from these two sermons and summarized above has governed modern interpretations of his views on sexual renunciation. Noting that a mid-fourth-century bishop in the eastern Mediterranean defined the angelic life as a virgin girl living in a domestic situation, contemporary readers of Eusebius’ sermons have suggested that the importance of these sermons lies in their banality and representative nature. Thus, David Amand de Mendieta concluded that Eusebius of Emesa is “a good example of an average Christian of his age. His ideas on marriage and virginity are found, for the most part, in innumerable treatises, opuscula, and discourses which, in the fourth century, sing with enthusiasm the praises of Christian virginity.”²⁷ Similarly, Teresa Shaw noted Eusebius as a representative of the *topoi* of early Christian asceticism that are “so common in the literature.”²⁸

Such observations are certainly correct and useful to the extent that they situate Eusebius amongst his contemporaries. Views similar to those expressed in these two sermons are present in the sermons of John Chrysostom and in the sermon *De virginitate* by the anonymous Greek homilist, to name those identified in the literature on Eusebius.²⁹ The danger in these observations, however, is that by focusing on the *praxis* as represented simply in these two sermons one could conclude that the angelic life in Eusebius’ understanding of sexual renunciation equals or is limited to the virgin girl living at home. This is not the case. In other sermons, Eusebius used the same language of the angelic life as a transformation of human nature involving a vow about all the members of the church,

24. *De virginibus* 5. B I, 178: *Quae natura quidem similes sunt aliis mulieribus, proposito autem naturam transcendentes, ad sanctum sanctae accedere cupiunt.*

25. *De virginibus* 5. B I, 178: *Promissio enim et transcendit naturam et ad caelum ascendit et hinc cum angelis ex conversatione degit*

26. *De virginibus* 5, 14. B I, 178, 185.

27. Amand de Mendieta, “Virginité chez Eusèbe d’Émèse,” 779.

28. Teresa Shaw, “Askesis and the Appearance of Holiness,” 495.

29. For details on the similarities among the three, see Amand de Mendieta, “La virginité chez Eusèbe d’Émèse.”

women and men. Even in the two sermons just discussed there are hints that Eusebius did not limit his *theoria* of the angelic life to virgin girls even if the *praxis* he emphasized in these sermons, the domestic life, was oriented around this group.

Both *De martyribus* and *De virginibus* begin with statements of the universal application of the angelic life.³⁰ Thus in *De virginibus*, Eusebius explained that he often assumed the posture of a father to offer correction and instruction to all his children. In this sermon, therefore, he would apply his instruction on sexual renunciation to the whole congregation because the whole congregation needed to hear it. The greatest treasures of the church are not its buildings or silver and gold; rather, the treasures of the church are the bodies of his auditors offered in sacrifice. The implication of his introduction, within the context of the whole sermon, is to set up the virgin girl as a model for all of his audience to imitate. This strategy of elevating the virgin girl as a model is made explicit in *De martyribus*. For Eusebius, the value of the story of Domnina and her daughters was not simply to encourage girls to remain unmarried and in their parents' home; rather the story of the sexual renunciation and martyrdom of the three is applicable to everyone. The discourses he placed in the mouth of Domnina "will be profitable for all," and the women will be models for everyone: "let the mother be an encouragement to chaste women who are in marriages; the virgins for the virgins and the women for the men."³¹ Just as in *De virginibus*, where everyone in his audience was in Eusebius' view, so in *De martyribus* all were subject to his discussion of sexual renunciation as well. More specifically, just as in *De virginibus*, where, in conjunction with his opposition to the custom of the *subintroductae*, Eusebius mentioned male virgins who had taken a vow of holiness, so in *De martyribus*, he included men among those who are responsible to heed Eusebius' praise for sexual renunciation.

The one piece missing from these two sermons, however, is the description of males who have renounced their sexuality through a vow and who are living an angelic life and possess a transformed human nature. Turning

30. Amand de Mendieta claims that in *De martyribus* and *De virginibus*, "Eusebius addresses especially the female part of his audience" (Amand de Mendieta, "Virginité chez Eusèbe d'Émèse," 818). Although the virgin girl is his primary focus, I am not convinced that his intended audience is therefore women. This characterization of Eusebius' audience is certainly not true of other sermons where he discusses the angelic life.

31. *De martyribus* 2. B I, 152: *erit enim lucrum omnium adhortatio illa. De martyribus* 1. B I, 152: *Sit autem adhortatio castis quidem mulieribus quae sunt in nuptiis mater, virginibus autem virgines et viris mulieres.*

to other sermons, we can fill this gap. If in *De virginibus* and *De martyribus* it is unwed girls who live the angelic life and are the models of the angelic life, then in two other sermons it is John the Baptist, whom Eusebius referred to as “truly an angel visible on earth,” who, because of his life of superhuman asceticism, is the model worthy of imitation for all members of his audience, men and women.³²

In the third and fourth sermons in a series of five sermons he delivered to convince his audience that incorporeality was superior to corporeality, and therefore that God was not corporeal, he took up the topic of the angelic life. Throughout the third sermon Eusebius discussed the nature of the human soul and its principle virtue, continence (σωφοσύνη), which is the font of all the other virtues and, when present, allows the human soul to live rationally.³³ What is critical about this virtue for the incorporeal human soul, however, is that it represents control over the body, and in particular, it facilitates control over sexual desire. Thus, the virtue of continence pacifies the storms of lust (*tempestates concupiscentiarum*) and allows one to focus on the beauty of the soul and not the body.³⁴ When present, Eusebius explained to his audience, “our limbs become instruments of continence.”³⁵ This virtue is precious and very profitable for both men and women and for adolescents of both sexes because, at its most fundamental level, possessing this virtue is simply to embrace sexual renunciation or to live an angelic life.

Such a divine possession! But it is difficult to find. Who in the present has this which will be the way of life after the resurrection? For the Lord and provider of his own kingdom says, “whoever would be worthy of the resurrection of the dead do not marry nor are they given in marriage but they will be as the angels of God,” because now they cannot die. O immortality, companion of continence! Those who are victorious in battle

32. *De avaritia* 13. B I, 352: *Qui angelus est appellatus. De fide, habita Hierosolymis* 39. HA 71 (1957), 125–26: *սրղարեւ Հրեշտակ էրեւեալ ի յերկրի* (truly he was an angel visible on earth).

33. The Latin translation uses *prudicitia*: *De incorporali* 3.7. B II, 132: *Ita ergo pretiosa est pudicitia, quia, dum adest, et iustitiae praeparat locum, dat etiam spatium et virtuti; intellectum autem, ut interpretetur nomen, salvat.* (Therefore self-control is precious, because, while it is present, it provides a place for righteousness and also grants a space for courage; it preserves rationality, as the word means.)

Buytaert conjectures from this latter phrase, where Eusebius offers an etymological interpretation of the word, that his original term here is σωφοσύνη which he understood to be derived from σφῆρι φρεσίν.

34. *De incorporali* 3.3, 5. B II, 131–32.

35. *Ibid.*, 5. B II, 132: *Nostra enim membra operamenta pudicitiae fiunt.*

are not made as the angels, but those who neither marry nor are given in marriage. This is the judgement of him who created nature.³⁶

All those, and not just unwed girls, who reject marriage are already living an angelic life, a life that will characterize the eschatological state, in the world of the present. Eusebius advanced this universal application of the angelic life in the next sermon in the series which he devoted to the angels. In this sermon, as he started to do in the previous sermon, he recommend to his whole audience that the angelic life is one they ought to adopt. Thus, he invited them to ascend mentally to the abode of the angels, so that although still on earth, they have abandoned sensuality. Then each member of his audience would be situated “with angels, both ten thousand angels and ten thousand archangels, in another existence and constitution and way of life.”³⁷ In this sermon series, therefore, Eusebius was addressing his whole audience, men and women alike, to convince them that the angelic life, a life that suggests at the very least rational control of the body, and even more a life of sexual renunciation, was a life they ought to pursue.

Alongside these two sermons, one other sermon that suggests this universal application of the angelic life is from the series he delivered at Jerusalem on the life of Christ. Throughout the final sermon in the series, in which he addressed the resurrection of Christ, he maintained the validity of the resurrection against arguments he identified with Jews and pagans. If Christ had not risen, then how did the apostles who were lacking in wealth and education convince so many to abandon their traditional polytheistic religions? How is it that Peter went from being afraid of a little girl to boldly proclaiming the message of Christ and his resurrection? How is it that the martyrs had the courage to face torture and death? Finally, at the conclusion of the sermon, Eusebius introduced the angelic life as one final piece of evidence that the divine Christ came to earth and rose from the dead:

36. *De incorporali* 3.9. B II, 134: *Divina possessio ista! Sed difficile invenitur. Qui autem iam habent illam, quae post resurrectionem futura est conversatio? Dicit enim ipsius regni Dominus et apportator: Quicumque resurrectionis mortuorum digni fuerint, non nubent, neque nubentur, sed ut angeli erunt Dei, quia nec mori iam possunt. O immortalitas, pudicitiae iuncta! Qui in bellis vincunt, non efficiuntur ut angeli; sed qui neque nubunt neque nubuntur. Hoc iudicium est eius qui fecit naturam.*

37. *De incorporali* 4.19. B II, 145: *cum angelis et angelorum decies milibus et archangelorum milibus, in alia vita et constitutione et conversatione positus.*

Was it not God who came to earth to draw man to heaven? If you do not believe, then how are men changed to the rank of angels, since not being married and not marrying is not of our nature but of the angels? Father and mother do not teach the virgin girl and boy not to marry. But since God hastened to earth, it is possible for the pious to become as the angels.³⁸

The angelic life is for both sexes, and its universality is an element of Eusebius' argument for the divinity and resurrection of Christ. He continued this line of reasoning in what follows this passage. First, he admonished his audience not to be cynical and critical of the angelic life simply because some have broken their promises; instead, they should feel awe and wonder at those who are victorious by maintaining them. After all, he commented to his audience, "he is a man similar to you who promised virginity, similar to you in the rush of desires, similar in dangers, and similar in longings."³⁹ Thus, although not all men who make this promise keep it, his audience should not respond with disbelief or cynicism about men living an angelic life. Similarly, they should not focus on the women who squander their promise through drunkenness and provocative dress. Instead they should imitate those who overcome the world through the strength of Christ, their spouse, and are therefore worthy of admiration.

Eusebius' understanding of the angelic life, as he expressed it in all of these sermons, therefore, is far more than a synonym for a consecrated virgin girl. At its most generic, it is the requisite bodily self-control that Christians must exercise and which implies sexual renunciation; at its most specific, it refers to consecrated virginity which both men and women undertook. All in his audiences—men and women, boys and girls—were in view when he advocated rejecting marriage, receiving the divine possession of continence, and being transformed from humanity to the rank of angels. Furthermore, living an angelic life, being transformed, manifests God's activity in humanity, and it is on this point that a connection between Eusebius' understanding of sexual renunciation and his understanding of salvation emerges.

38. *De resurrectione* 21. HA 71 (1957), 521–22: Եթէ ո՛չ Աստուած էր որ եկն յերկիր Հանել զմարդն յերկինս. եւ թէ չՀաւատաս, տես զիմ րո՞ւ մարդիկ ի կարգս Հրեշտակաց փոխին. զի չամուսնել եւ չամուսնանալ ոչ մերոյ բնութեան է, այլ Հրեշտակաց: Ոչ ուսուցին Հայր եւ մայր կուսին կամ անկնոջն չամուսնանալ: Այլ քանզի Աստուած գիտեաց յերկիր, Հարկ է պաշտանել իցն իբրեւ զՀրեշտակս լինել:

39. *De resurrectione* 21. HA 71 (1957), 522: Մարդ է իբրեւ զքեզ որ զկուսաթիւնն խտրտացաւ, ի նոյն ի քոյնն ի խաղացս գանկովեան. նոյն վանագք, նոյն տենչանք.

III. THE THEOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY OF EUSEBIUS OF EMESA

The ecclesiastical historians Socrates and Sozomen both introduced Eusebius into their narratives in connection with their accounts of the “Dedication Synod,” the council that met in 341 at Antioch under the auspices of Constantius to dedicate the new basilica church of the city and to formulate a new creed intended to erase the embarrassment of Nicea and condemn Arius. They presented him as one who was in full agreement with the council, and in his sermons, Eusebius echoed its theology. Studiously avoiding the word *homoousios*, Eusebius nevertheless often acknowledged that the Son is “God from God” or, adapting John 1, that the Son is “God with God.”⁴⁰ Another of his favorite ways to express the divinity of the Son was the word “power.” Thus, what characterizes the divinity of the Son is the divine power that he received from his Father, and one of the ways that Eusebius described the relationship between the Father and the Son is that the Son is “similar in power.”⁴¹ The Son is by nature God with God and God at the right hand of God; his nature does not have its origin with Mary at the point of the incarnation.⁴² Finally, although the Son’s divinity is derivative, nevertheless, Eusebius made clear that the Son is truly and really God. In his sermon on

40. Eusebius uses both of these phrases multiple times throughout his sermons. I provide some examples here from both the Latin and the Armenian sermons: *Adversus Sabellium* 21–22. B I, 117–18; *De imagine* 7. B I, 132; *De calice* 30. B I, 235; *De fide, habita Hierosolymis* 27, 32. HA 71 (1957), 117–18, 121–22; *Sermo in sanctos apostolos* 32. HA 70 (1956), 299–300. Both the so-called second and the fourth creeds of the Dedication council use the phrase θεόν ἐκ θεοῦ. See *Bibliothek der Symbole und Glaubensregeln der alten Kirche*, 3rd ed., ed. G. Ludwig Hahn (Breslau, 1897; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1962), 184, 187.

41. *De imagine* 3. B I, 130: *virtute est similis*. Power (*virtus*/ἡλικία/ἰσχύς/δύναμις) as a christological title is found throughout the extant sermons. See, for example: *De arbitrio* 29–38. B I, 64–72, [extant in Greek in Theodoret, *Eranistes*, 249–51]; *De Filio* 8, 41. B I, 48–49, 73–74; *De fide* 2, 32. B I, 80, 98; *De quinque panibus* 8. B I, 201–2; *De fide, habita Hierosolymis* 8, 21. HA 71 (1957), 105–6, 113–14; *De passione* 14, 16. HA 71 (1957), 365–68; *De cruce passionis* 4. HA 72 (1958), 19–20. On power theology in general see Michel Barnes, *The Power of God: Dynamis in Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

42. *Adversus Sabellium* 21–22. B I, 118: *Sicut enim Pater eminet et super omnem naturam est, quod est nonnatus, ita et Filius supra omnes habetur in eo, quod est progenies vera, Deus apud Deum, Deus ad dextram Dei . . . [22] Tunc non primum Deus, cum ex virgine, sed primum ex Deo. Ex virgine, enim propter dispensationem, ex Deo autem propter naturam.*

Matthew 14.13–21, the feeding of the five thousand, Eusebius reminded his audience that the Son did not need to learn from the Father; instead, he perfectly imitated his Father so that just as the Father is full and perfect, so also “the Son is full and perfect by his own nature.”⁴³

In this same sermon on Matthew 14, Eusebius discussed a further dimension of the divinity of the Son that provides a broad context for appreciating his theology of salvation. The Son, possessing divine power as God from God, is the creator of all natures, including human nature, and the Son is the tireless power (*infatigabilis virtus*) operating behind the scenes throughout creation. Thus, Eusebius informed his audience in another sermon, “[God] by his incorporeal power is present to all and yet being present everywhere he is separate from everything,” and he attempted to prove in the sermon on the feeding of the five thousand that this incorporeal power is the Son.⁴⁴ In the form of Jesus on earth, the Son displayed his creative divine power and his control over the natures he created. He could transform the nature of water into the nature of wine, as he always does in vineyards, Eusebius noted, or he could take the nature of bread and produce an abundance of bread from a few pieces, as he always does when a small amount of grain is planted in the ground and it produces an abundant harvest.⁴⁵ Eusebius was convinced, therefore, that the Son should be acknowledged as God, and as God, the Son is the Lord of creation who can transform its natures.

For Eusebius, salvation required such a savior, a savior who is by nature God from God, God with God, and the divine power of God, and a savior who is the creator of all natures and therefore is able to transform such natures at will. Human salvation is simply a transformation of human nature. “God, the Son of God, came in a body in order to conform men to divinity,” he declared in one sermon, because human nature could not provide for itself what it needed; and thus could not on its own power conform to the divine nature.⁴⁶ What is necessary for such a conforming to divinity is a transformation of human nature. Thus in another sermon, “God, the Son of God, descends from that place and, descending, since it was inconceivable that men should ascend to that place, he assumes what

43. *De quinque panibus* 7. B I, 201: *Ita Filius perfectus et plenus sua natura est.*

44. *De incorporali* 1.2. B II, 103: *virtute enim incorporali adest omnibus, ubique praesens et ab omnibus separatus.*

45. *De quinque panibus* 12–14. B I, 205–6, 209–10.

46. *De eo quod ait Dominus: non veni pacem mittere* 8–9. B II, 179–80: *venit formare ad deitatem homines.*

is unbelievable, that is, our body.”⁴⁷ “God assumed us,” he continued, because he desired to bring salvation to humanity; that is, he desired to change our nature.⁴⁸ Just as iron placed in fire is transformed until all of it is fire, so those experiencing salvation through the Son are changed as they, in Eusebius’ language, lay aside the weight of the body and its vices and are led upwards until “they have passed outside of nature.”⁴⁹

In his sermon on Matthew 10.34–42, Eusebius discussed this transformation of human nature he envisioned as a result of desire for the Son. In the context of describing the incarnation as the descent of God into a body, he explained its soteriological significance not only as a cure for the poison inflicted on humanity at the fall but also as a reorienting of human love away from corporeal beauty to the beauty and goodness of God in the Son. Therefore, through the coming of the Son God was calling humanity to turn its love to him.⁵⁰ Those who respond to this call and orient their love solely to the incarnate Christ—who, Eusebius reminded his congregation, was still with them and could still be seen among them if they knew how to see—would be transformed by their love. Because such a person “does not permit his focus to be divided into many things,” he loses his awareness of physical place and his memory of his physical surroundings and the natural world.⁵¹ Eventually even angels and archangels no longer interest him and finally he loses awareness of himself.

For the one in such a state is ignorant that he has flesh and what is more remarkable, he has no memory of his own soul. For his whole being is emptied into him whom he desires. All things are dead to him and he lives for him alone. This is the characteristic that the apostle describes, “now I do not live, but Christ lives in me.” For by desire he is wholly devoured and falls away from himself, and the result is that he has died through a good death but has exchanged it for a good life so that he says, “now I do not live.”⁵²

47. *De incorporali* 4.21. B II, 146: *Descendit Deus Dei Filius inde; et descendens, quia incredibile erat homines illic ascendere, assumpsit hoc incredibile, hoc est: nostrum corpus; e summo descendens, non ad confusionem, sed ad salutem eius qui assumebatur.*

48. *De incorporali* 4.21. B II, 146: *Deus nos assumpsit.*

49. *De incorporali* 4.22. B II, 146: *veluti e natura egressi.*

50. *De eo quod ait Dominus: non veni pacem mittere in terram* 10–11. B II, 180–81.

51. *Ibid.* 16. B II, 184: *unus enim ille non permittit dividi visionem ad multa.*

52. *Ibid.* *Qui enim in tali constitutione habetur, nescit quia et carnem habet, et quod est maximum, nec animae suae memor est. Totus enim evacuatus in illum est quem desiderat, et universa ei sunt emortua, et illi soli vivit. Et hoc est illud insigne quod ait Apostolus: Vivo iam non ego, sed vivit in me Christus. Desiderio enim totus devoratus et a semetipso descendens, illius autem effectus, bona quidem morte est mortuus; bonam autem vitam commutavit ut dicat: Vivo iam non ego.*

Although he was using the language of an ecstatic experience, Eusebius did not envision the change he described here as temporary. Describing it as a death and then connecting this conclusion to the Pauline passage from Galatians suggests that the change is permanent. Furthermore, he was also indicating that this permanent change is not an eschatological transformation. Paul and the hypothetical Christian he was describing are changed in the present, and for this reason, the life of Paul and the other apostles are models of this permanent and earthly transformation.

Eusebius took what Paul said in Galatians about himself as a model for every Christian. Paul's life is Christ, and his own life ended. Eusebius, therefore, wanted his audience to follow Paul by losing themselves. Just as iron placed in fire ultimately becomes fire as the former totally penetrates and transforms the latter, so Paul was completely transformed and lost himself. Eusebius explained, "but we who have the mind of Christ find nothing offensive about saying that such a man has become Christ."⁵³ In a sermon lauding Peter and the other apostles, Eusebius also used them as examples of the kind of transformation that followed from the work of Christ bringing salvation.

If you see Peter as the same man before and after the cross then do not say Christ was crucified at all. How much firmer than a rock did the cross make Peter? Do you think that Peter is that man who after the cross was also before the cross? Perhaps it was that very man, but touched with fire having been baptized by the Spirit. Therefore he was himself and yet not himself. Just as if wool which is made purple through dying is itself and is not itself or iron which is wetted in fire is itself and yet is not itself, so Peter, who was fearful before the cross, after the cross is found to be firm and strong and he remains himself.⁵⁴

Although he had previously denied, after the resurrection of Christ and receiving the Spirit, "Peter was transformed."⁵⁵ In fact, Eusebius told his audience, all of the early followers of Christ were changed in this way. When sent out on missionary travels they had no human powers of

53. *De eo quod ait Dominus: non veni pacem mittere in terram* 17. B II, 184: *Sed nos qui sensum Christi habemus, non pigebit nos dicere, quia talis homo Christus est factus.*

54. *De Petro* 10. B I, 244: *Vide Petrum ante crucem eundemque post crucem et noli iam dicere quia crucifixus est Christus. Quemadmodum firmiorem saxo crux Petrum effecerit? Putas enim quia ipse est Petrus, qui post crucem, qui fuit et ante crucem? Forte autem ipse, sed tinctus est igni, baptizatus autem est Spiritu. Ipse ergo et non ipse. Siquidem et lana, quae efficitur purpura per tincturam, ipsa et non ipsa; et ferrum, quod tingitur in igne et ipsum et non ipsum est. Petrus, qui timidus ante crucem erat, post crucem et constans et fortis invenitur et ipse quidem est.*

55. *De operibus bonis* 10. B II, 224: *transmutatus est Petrus.*

speech or education to assist them; instead, they possessed the divine power of Christ. Through Christ's power they accomplished much because they had been changed: "there was nothing human about them."⁵⁶

These apostles and early Christians are not exceptions; they are the norm. Eusebius described them to put on display portraits of salvation through the divine Son of God. In all of these sermons he was suggesting to his audiences that to be part of the church, to have the experience of Paul or Peter or other early Christians, means to be transformed in their nature. Thus, in the sermon mentioned above, those who are participating in salvation through Christ and who "pass outside of nature" and ascend in their mind beyond the burden of body and memory are those who represent what Eusebius expected of all his audience. As observers of the early followers of Christ could comment that "there was nothing human about them," so too "these kind of men," who have ascended in this way, he concludes, "are not men."⁵⁷

What exactly then are the members of the church supposed to be if they are to lose themselves like Paul and be transformed like Peter and be men and yet not men? Eusebius' answer, which he provided in several sermons, is not surprising: the community of salvation is a community of angels on earth. His sermon *De imagine* is a useful place to start. In this sermon, Eusebius was focusing predominately on his understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Thus, the Son is the perfect image of the Father: "the Father is God, and the Son is God . . . the Son is God from God, similar to the Father."⁵⁸ This theology of the Son as perfect image and therefore "God from God" is directly related to his understanding of human salvation that he introduced in the latter half of the sermon. "The Father wanted to save the ruined sons of Adam," Eusebius reminded his audience, and only his fully divine Son, and not Moses nor the angels, could accomplish this salvation.⁵⁹ Continuing his theme, Eusebius asked his audience, "But how have we been saved? How do we describe these things?"⁶⁰ His answer was to emphasize first the need for salvation. After all, the kingdom of heaven does not need to be

56. *Sermo in sanctos apostolos* 15. HA 70 (1956), 295: *οὐ ψῆυς ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ἀλλὰ ἀγγελικὸς ἔστιν.*

57. *De incorporali* 4.22. B II, 146: *Istiusmodi enim homines illic non sunt homines.*

58. *De imagine* 7. B I, 131–32: *Deus Pater est, Deus et Filius est. . . . Filius Deus de Deo, similis Filio Patri est.*

59. *De imagine* 29. B I, 146: *Voluit Pater salvare filios Adam iam perditos.*

60. *De imagine* 30. B I, 147: *Quemadmodum ergo salvati sumus? Quemadmodum ea dicimus?*

granted to those already there. The predicament of humanity that evoked the need for salvation was the primal expulsion from paradise. Eusebius explained:

For we had fallen from paradise; we had been ejected from the enjoyment of paradise, expelled, excluded, thrown out from a place in which there was a blessing, in which there were trees for food. Such was the situation there. But now we have been saved by the only-begotten Son of God so that we have come to be in the similitude of angels.⁶¹

To make sure his audience did not miss this latter point, he clarified what he meant by equating salvation and the angelic life through a conflation of the gospel pericope on the angelic life and a line from Romans 5. This angelic life and this state of salvation is “where they neither marry nor are married because ‘the gift is not like the transgression.’”⁶² The gift of the one man Jesus Christ that, as Paul described it, resulted in justification, salvation, and reconciliation to God, is in fact the angelic life, a life of sexual renunciation. Those who have been saved are by definition angels. Through this conflation of the gospel passage and the Pauline passage, Eusebius has lifted the angelic life out of the eschatological context in which Jesus situated it and repositioned it within Paul’s discussion of the church’s life of faith in Christ and reconciliation to God in Christ. In the context of the whole passage, what he was suggesting is that salvation as an angelic life, the gift, is an undoing of the transgression that resulted in the removal from paradise. Although not explicitly stated, the implication of Eusebius’ reasoning here is that this angelic life is a return to the paradise that was lost.

If in this sermon Eusebius directly equated salvation, the gift of faith in Christ, with the angelic life, then in another sermon he linked this equation of angelic life and life in Christ with the theme of a transformed human nature. In the fourth sermon in his series on incorporeality, Eusebius discussed the nature of angels and attempted to prove to his skeptical audience that the incorporeal and asexual angels live a life worthy of honor and emulation. One of the arguments he used was to relate his audience’s own pursuit of salvation with the angelic life. Here again, Eusebius drew on a Pauline passage, Galatians 3, to discuss salvation

61. *De imagine* 30. B I, 148: *Excideramus enim nos e paradiso; abiecti eramus a conversatione paradisi, pulsi, exclusi, proiecti ex eo in quo benedictio erat, in quo arbores ad escam. Et haec quidem illic; nunc autem ab unigenito Dei Filio ita salvati sumus, ut ad similitudinem angelorum veniremus.*

62. *De imagine* 30. B I, 148: *non nubunt neque nubuntur quia ‘non sicut delictum, ita et donum.’*

through Christ, and here again he conflated a Pauline idea with the gospel pericope on the angelic life. Taking Paul's argument that faith in Christ breaks down hierarchical and conventional boundaries among the sons of God, Eusebius shifted it into an equation of faith in Christ with sexual renunciation and the angelic life.

First he recalled the passage from Galatians for his audience: "Perhaps you have heard that marvelous saying of the Apostle that, among those for whom nature has established male and female, among whom faith is found and unity through faith, 'in Christ,' he says, 'there is neither male nor female.'"⁶³ Paul was originally addressing, Eusebius was suggesting to his audience, a community just like your own: men and women with Christian faith. Thus, Paul's definition of "in Christ" as an erasing of sexual distinction was directly applicable to his audience, and Eusebius had no doubts about what the apostle meant with his statement. He continued, "therefore, what by nature is male and female, in Christ, is made neither male nor female but is an imitation of the angels."⁶⁴ Linking together this passage from Galatians and the gospel pericope concerning the angelic life, and once again passing over the original eschatological orientation of the angelic life, Eusebius informed his audience that the conclusions they should draw are clear. Through grace, those in Christ either bring down the nature of the angels (*natura angelorum*) to human nature or are caught up to the meadow of the angels (*pratum angelorum*). Both of these options were for Eusebius descriptions of the same point: faith in Christ assumes an asexual angelic existence.⁶⁵ Thus, Eusebius had a name for those whom he suggested as examples to his audience. Those who ascend above their corporeal desires through God who descended to save humanity, who are men and yet not men and who pass outside of nature, are angels whose "thinking, by imitation, is equal or similar to the angels with whom nature does not prevent communion."⁶⁶

63. *De incorporali* 4.9. B II, 140: *forte enim audisti mirabile illud dictum Apostoli, quia et apud quos natura statuit masculum esse et feminam, apud istos ipsos fides, et per fidem coniunctio invenitur: In Christo enim, inquit, non est masculus neque femina.*

64. *De incorporali* 4.9. B II, 140: *igitur ubi ex natura est masculus neque femina, in Christo efficitur neque masculus neque femina, sed imitatio angelorum.*

65. *De incorporali* 4.9. B II, 140.

66. *De incorporali* 4.22. B II, 146: *Quibus enim intellectus ex imitatione aequus angelis habetur aut similis, istis non prohibet natura conversationem.*

IV. THE CHURCH OF VIRGINS AND MARTYRS

In Eusebius' sermons, the transformation of human nature into an angelic life is the defining characteristic both for a virgin who has made a vow or covenant and for all those "in Christ" who are experiencing salvation. The divine Son, God from God and the God of creation, manifests his divinity by transforming natures. The same divine power who changes water into wine and who transforms Peter and other early Christians is the same divine power who in Eusebius' day continued to transform human nature into an angelic nature, that is, to grant salvation. Thus, at one point in his sermon *De martyribus*, Eusebius commented: "when God descends to earth, that is the Son, then he makes angels from men."⁶⁷ This is a statement of fact, not a suggestion or an option. The Son of God came to make angels; "being saved by the only-begotten Son of God," as he stated it, or being in Christ, is to be in the similitude of the asexual angels, it is to be men and yet not men, it is to be rendered into a state so that like the early Christians Eusebius described, external observers of the church would conclude, "there is nothing human about them."⁶⁸

Eusebius was convinced, however, that some in the church were very content to be human. An angelic life did not interest them; what interested them was to eat, drink, marry, have possessions and enjoy life. Eusebius' ideal, where the boundaries circumscribing those in Christ and those renouncing their sexuality were coterminous, was apparently not a reality that he observed in practice. His response to this confrontation between his ideal and the reality of the church was not to dismiss those who did not appreciate the fundamental importance of the angelic life for the church's identity and nurture the few who personified this identity. On the contrary, employing a pastoral and paternalistic tone, he mapped out a way for all in the church to participate in his ideal of the church's identity by explaining how the married life also had a place within it.

In the midst of his praise for the angelic life, Eusebius was careful to clarify that he was not advocating an encratic church. He never defined marriage and human reproduction as evil, and, in fact, in several sermons, Eusebius was emphatic that by highlighting the goodness of virginity he did not intend to join the heretics and teach that marriage is evil. After all, "if there were no marriages, there would be no virgins." Thus,

67. *De martyribus* 8. B I, 156: *cum descendit Deus ad terram, hoc est Filius, tunc fecit ab hominibus angelos.*

68. *Sermo in sanctos apostolos* 15. HA 70 (1956), 295: *αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ἁγίων ἀναγομένων ἐστίν.*

adopting a position typical of other early Christians, Eusebius concluded that while marriage is good, virginity is better.⁶⁹ If he did not condemn marriage, nevertheless, he stressed that there were appropriate ways that the married could support and manifest in their lives the angelic identity of the church. It would have been best, of course, if those in the church overcame the passion of youth and thus avoided “the taste of marriage” (*gustum coniugii*) altogether. However, he also acknowledged that some,

bearing a first and then a second son are satisfied—although it would have been more useful to withdraw even before the taste—with a sufficient sowing, withdrawing from marital sex and drawn to chastity, they are continent with their spouses and encourage others to circumvent marriage and pursue virginity saying, “we hoped not to be overtaken but having been overtaken we admonish others.”⁷⁰

In short, these are people “who have a spouse but act as if they do not.”⁷¹ Although it is not virginity, Eusebius respected and praised this kind of marriage. Such individuals are more to be imitated than virgins who abandon their vow to get married, and he invited his audience to observe and imitate these kinds of married people, the “holy,” and become holy themselves.⁷² Not only should sexual renunciation, holiness, characterize their marriages, but fasting and generosity should as well. After all, those who reject the angelic life not only marry but also enjoy their tables and their treasures, and for this reason, John the Baptist was especially important to Eusebius as a model for his audience. Not only did his sexual

69. *De martyribus* 17. B I, 162: *Si enim non essent nuptiae, nec virgines essent.* Also *De martyribus* 5. B I, 155; and *De Filio* 3. B I, 46 (= *Sermo de passione Christi* 7. HA 70 [1956], 387–88).

70. *De virginibus* 9. B I, 181: *unum et secundum filium procreatnes manserunt,—utilius magis fuerat ante gustum recedere—tamen sufficiente semine, ad pudicitiam extrahuntur et cessantes a nuptiis, sunt coniugibus continentes et hortantur alios separare coniugia et virginitatem studere, dicentes quia ‘nos optavimus non praeveniri; praeventi autem alios monemus.’*

71. *De virginibus* 9. B I, 181: *qui habent coniugia ut non habentes faciunt*

72. *De virginibus* 9. B I, 181: *vidimus sanctos et sanctificati sumus.* Although he admits that Eusebius of Emesa “is not strictly encratic,” Amand de Mendieta cites some of these passages from *De virginibus* in his article as evidence for the “latent encratism” in Eusebius’ theology (Amand de Mendieta, “Virginité chez Eusèbe d’Émèse,” 787, 797–98). I am not comfortable even with this designation. There is a very fine distinction, of course, between the encratism of second-century gnostic groups or fourth-century groups such as the Manichees or church of Marcion, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the zeal for sexual renunciation Eusebius and other fourth-century Christian writers expressed. There is, nevertheless, a distinction, and it is a distinction that Eusebius himself wished to make. Although he clearly did not favor marriage, he did not condemn it.

renunciation make him an angel on earth but also his poverty and his abstemious diet. Similarly, he recommended Jesus as a model for his audience. They should “transcend nature” and become similar to him in his contempt for the world of buying and selling and in his fasting.⁷³

The angelic life is fundamental to Eusebius’ understanding of the identity of the church, but this does not mean that the church is exclusively a body of virgins. There is a place for the married life in Eusebius’ church, although it is a married state that is not defined by its concupiscence, gluttony and avarice, but by its continence and holiness, its frugality and its generosity. In Eusebius’ parlance, such members of the church are martyrs. Although not virgins, they sacrifice everything in their asceticism for the church’s ideal of the angelic life, and by doing so they are manifesting their own pursuit of salvation in Christ.

Once again, *De martyribus* is the best point of departure to clarify how Eusebius situated the married, the martyrs, in the life of the church. As appropriate in an encomium for martyrs, Eusebius related the story of the deaths of Domnina and her daughters in the course of the sermon. Having been captured by soldiers, Domnina fears that she and her daughters will be raped as they are being transported. She convinces her daughters, therefore, that they should jump from a ravine into a nearby river and rightly preserve their virginity and her marital chastity through a second baptism. Eusebius was quick to explain to his audience that this was not a suicide. Christ revealed to the mother that in this way she and her daughters would preserve their purity and experience their martyrdom. By jumping down into the river they paradoxically scaled a ladder to heaven.⁷⁴

Delivering this encomium at Antioch concerning these three Antiochene martyrs, Eusebius commented on the value of Domnina, Prosdocia, and Bernice for his audience both in the sermon’s introduction and conclusion. Thus in the conclusion,

These are your holocausts, your sustenance, your sacrifices; these are the mothers and daughters of the church, the good treasures, most beautiful treasures, the honored miracles. Men, do not wish to be bested by women. Women, do not wish to be left behind by your sisters.⁷⁵

73. *De avaritia* 13. B I, 352. *De fide, habita Hierosolymis* 39. HA (1957), 125–26. *De virginibus* 8. B I, 180–81.

74. *De martyribus* 22–24, 30. B I, 165–68, 172–74.

75. *De martyribus* 31. B I, 174: *Hae vestra holocausta sunt, hae sacrificia, hae ecclesiae matres et filiae, boni thesauri, optimae formae, honestae admirationes. Viri, nolite vinci a mulieribus. Mulieres, nolite relinqui a congeneribus vestris.*

De martyribus is, with good reason, frequently taken as one of Eusebius' sermons indicating his praise for virginity. Nevertheless, it is not the virgin daughters who get the attention in this sermon; instead, it is the mother Domnina to whom Eusebius directed his audience's attention. It is Domnina who convinces her daughters to reject marriage through her exhortations, which Eusebius' audience hears through his renditions of her appeals, and it is Domnina who convinces her daughters in the end to accept "martyrdom" rather than allow themselves to be violated, which again his audience hears through Eusebius' personification of Domnina. For the majority of his audience who are not virgins, the figure of Domnina is their model. He was calling on his audience to be like Domnina, a woman who sacrificed everything to preserve the virginity of her daughters. In the same way, his auditors and the whole church were all personally responsible to ensure that a covenant of virginity is kept. Eusebius was emphatic on this point. Virginity is not a private matter; it is a communal concern. Thus, he prodded his audience not only to give up their sarcasm and sensuality but also to give up their life in martyrdom by embracing a life of asceticism and by doing everything in their power to support and encourage those who had vowed virginity.

For Eusebius, the Constantinian era did not bring an end to the church of the martyrs. Martyrdom, Eusebius explained in another sermon addressing these issues, was not simply the act of withstanding external flames for the sake of God. "A martyr, and he is truly a martyr, is one who extinguishes the interior fire of envy for the sake of the Lord Jesus."⁷⁶ These interior fires also included the fire of lust and the fire of deception. The correct response to all of them, extinguishing them, produces "acts of martyrdom and confession."⁷⁷ A martyr is one who resists the temptation to commit perjury against a brother for some economic advantage although he could get away with it, who avoids being avaricious for what is not his own, who does not curse a brother in anger, and who does not entertain thoughts of concupiscence.⁷⁸

At the very least, what is required of a martyr is that he should not deny Christ. This means that when he enters "a city of the pagans" (*civitatem gentilium*), he ought to make the sign of the cross on his forehead, and it means that when at "a dinner party of the pagans" (*caenam gentilium*), and Eusebius admitted that a Christian might attend such gatherings, he

76. *De mandato Domini* 21. B II, 205–6: *martyr, et valde martyr, qui extinguit interius incendium invidiae propter Dominum Iesum.*

77. *Ibid. martyria et confessiones habentur.*

78. *De mandato Domini* 21–22. B II, 206–7.

must vocalize his objections to libations and to slander against the Christian God.⁷⁹ Failure to do either of these things constituted a denial of Christ. There were other behaviors that Eusebius also considered a denial of Christ and thus a failure to embrace martyrdom. Some hear the cross mentioned and blush while turning away their eyes, while others blame their faith on their parents. Some hurry to church all the while fearing that they will be noticed, the furtive scurrying of their feet matching the trepidation of their minds, while others conceal their fasting as if it were blameworthy. Finally there are those who are embarrassed “to go out to the [shrines of the] martyrs . . . who are unwilling to be mocked by men.”⁸⁰

Beyond publicly confessing by identifying openly with the church, the martyr especially must triumph in the inner contest against vice. Each day, Eusebius told his audience, and in every place—the bed, the forum, the home, the theater, the brothel—the mind and concupiscence struggle against each other, back and forth, like wrestlers in the ring. For others in his audience the confrontation was with greed: they see a pauper and have the inclination to be merciful but avarice checks their philanthropy. Each day “you know that you are so often seduced to concupiscence, so often to lust, so often to avarice, so often to deceit, so often to anger, so often to rage.”⁸¹ Nevertheless, it was through these frequent, multiple contests between God and corporeal desires that the members of his audience could become “martyrs of God” if they overcame the tendency towards lust or avarice.⁸²

The consequences of failing to pursue zealously martyrdom in this way were disastrous both for the community as a whole, the virgins and those who should be living as martyrs, and for the individual Christian who had failed to live as a martyr. In *De virginibus*, Eusebius was particularly direct in addressing his audience about the consequences for the community and the responsibility of the community for these consequences. If those who had not taken vows of virginity in the church were unwilling to sacrifice themselves in daily martyrdom, and, like Domnina, do everything to preserve covenants of virginity, then the outcome would be the fall of a virgin “from heaven to earth.” And when this happens, it is not

79. *De mandato Domini* 19. B II, 204–5.

80. *De mandato Domini* 20. B II, 205: *qui confunduntur exire ad martyres . . . qui nolunt irrideri ab hominibus.*

81. *De mandato Domini* 25. B II, 208: *Scitis enim quoties ad concupiscentiam, quoties ad libidinem illecti estis; quoties ad avaritiam, quoties ad fraudem, quoties ad iram, quoties ad indignationem.*

82. *De mandato Domini* 26. B II, 208: *Ergo martyres efficiamur Dei.*

the virgin who deserves a reprimand, but the whole church itself.⁸³ Since the entire church was responsible for ensuring that a virgin kept her vow, he did not harangue the virgin for this failure. Instead, he accused those who should have assisted her.

You blame a virgin who has fallen. Who are you, you who have a spouse but you are not content with her, you who have the resources to be a glutton but nevertheless you steal, you who have a noble wife and yet you wrong a servant girl and you look twice at a slave, you who have a chaste wife and yet you turn your gaze to a prostitute? And if a virgin has rightly set her will over nature, but she is brought back down to nature, then you are indignant at such a girl, you rebuke her, you scold, you censure, you recite what ought and ought not to be said, and, as if you have forgotten your own evil deeds, you grow angry that she fell! Shouldn't you rather be amazed that she was so disposed in the first place?—You say, 'she did not fulfill [her vow] because she was not strong enough.'—She wanted it and she longed for continence, but it was snatched away by you, you who blame the efficiency of many other natures, of food, of drink and of the night.⁸⁴

Eusebius did consider a virgin's fall a catastrophe for which she bore responsibility, but in his sermons the failure of the virgin was not the primary issue. In fact, in the section immediately following the harangue cited above, Eusebius treated sympathetically the virgin who, having fallen because of this failure of the church, endeavored to return to the angelic life and repudiate the concupiscence into which she erred.⁸⁵

He had no such sympathy for the church. If a virgin strayed from the vow, then the church did not provide an environment that would have encouraged a girl to pursue her desire for chastity. She must not have received support through a community interested in her success and possessing the kinds of virtues she should exemplify. In short, she must

83. A lapsed virgin experiences "ruin": *De virginibus* 11. B I, 183. A lapsed virgin falls from heaven to earth: *De virginibus* 26. B I, 193.

84. *De virginibus* 11. B I, 182–83: *Sed culparis virginem quae cecidit. Quis es tu, qui habes coniugem et ipsa non es contentus, qui potestatem habes manducandi, nihilominus tamen furaris; qui habes ingenuam et in ancillam delinquis et ad famulam respicis; qui habes pudicam et ad fornicariam oculum convertis? Si autem virgo, supra naturam et velle proponens bene quidem proposuit, deducta autem ad naturam est, isti indignaris, isti increpas, obiurgas, vituperas, loqueris dicenda et non dicenda, tuorum utpote malorum oblitus, irasceris quia cecidit! Cur autem non miraris quia prompta fuit?—Sed non perfecti, inquis, quia non valuit.—voluit autem quia pudicitiam dilexit, furata autem est forte et a te, qui vituperas multarum et aliarum efficientiam naturarum, et escae, potus, et noctis.*

85. *De virginibus* 11. B I, 183.

not have been part of a community of martyrs. Concluding his sermon on virginity, Eusebius reminded his audience that when a virgin has fallen, the consequences are not simply directed against the one who fell. It is a communal matter. “The fall of a virgin is held against the whole church.”⁸⁶

Of course, failure to live a life of martyrdom not only has communal consequences but it also has personal consequences as well, and these consequences are not surprisingly soteriological. Eusebius called his audience to pursue asceticism, an angelic life, because it would guarantee their salvation. He emphasized this point in his sermon on Matthew 10, *De mandato domini*, in which Eusebius discussed extensively the life of asceticism as a life of martyrdom. His audience should remember that he and his fellow clergy were not teaching them to be generous and avoid avarice to make them paupers, but to make them “rich in the kingdom of heaven,” they were not addressing them to strip away their bodies through fasting but rather “to dress you in immortality.” Finally, they were not attempting to destroy their corporeal life in martyrdom but to ensure “you are not in Gehenna with body and soul.”⁸⁷

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I turn briefly to another sermon that summarizes well the aspects of Eusebius’ thought I have discussed above. Towards the end of a sermon addressing the question “Why did Christ appear in the flesh?” Eusebius broached the subject of asceticism as proof that God did indeed become a man. A new way of life has begun because of the coming of Christ, and as part of his summary of this new life, he remarked: “We have left behind the class of men and ascended to the rank of angels because the Lord of the rank of angels has come and taught the way of life of the angels.” As a result, Eusebius continued, some now live in virginity (*ի կուսութեանն*) and others in holiness (*ի սրբութեանն*) having abandoned the pursuit of pleasure.⁸⁸ Why did Christ appear in the flesh? Christ appeared to create a church whose defining characteristics are virginity

86. *De virginibus* 27. B I, 194: *Virginis casus adversum omnem ecclesiam habetur.*

87. *De mandato Domini* 27. B II, 209: *non ut pauperes vos faciamus, monemus; sed divites potius in regno caelorum; non ut deiciamus corpus vestrum ieiuniis, sed ut induamus vos immortalitate; non ut occidamus in martyrio, sed ut non eatis in gehennam corpore et anima.*

88. *Cur Christus in carne apparuit* 28. HA 72 (1958), 16–17: **Թողար զաշտիճան մարդկան եւ ելար ի կարգս Հրշտակաց. քանզի եկն տէրն Հրշտակաց եւ ուսոյց զվարս Հրեշտակաց:**

and holiness, characteristics that manifest the power of God, the Son of God, and, therefore, that equally reveal human salvation at work.

What Eusebius advocated in his sermons, therefore, was a Christian church defined by its devotion to the angelic life. The church should be a community of virgins and martyrs. The former are those already experiencing the saving power of the Son of God who has transformed their human nature into an angelic nature; the latter, the martyrs, are those who sacrifice everything to support and exemplify, to the extent that they can, the angelic life through the virtues of asceticism in a marital state of holiness. In either case, whether virgin or martyr, Eusebius assumed that asceticism and more specifically, sexual renunciation, would be the defining characteristic of the members of the church and thus integral to the church's identity.

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