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10 filiación

Proverbs 8,22-31:
Text, Context, Reception

Proverbios 8,22-31:
Texto, contexto, recepción

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 18TH RESEARCH CONFERENCE
ACTAS DE LAS XVIII JORNADAS DE ESTUDIO

**LA FILIACIÓN EN LOS INICIOS
DE LA REFLEXIÓN CRISTIANA**

Facultad de Literatura Cristiana y Clásica San Justino,
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Abbreviations

Abreviaturas

AnGr _____	Analecta Gregoriana
ANRW _____	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
AW _____	Athanasius Werke
BAC _____	Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos
BPat _____	Biblioteca Patristica
BZ _____	Biblische Zeitschrift
CCSA _____	Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum
CCSG _____	Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca
CCSL _____	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CSCO _____	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
DJD _____	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
EThL _____	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses
FuP _____	Fuentes Patristicas
GCS _____	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
JBL _____	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBTh _____	Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie
J ECS _____	Journal of Early Christian Studies
JEH _____	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JSJ _____	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period
JSNT _____	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSOR _____	Journal of the Society of Oriental Research
JThS _____	Journal of Theological Studies
LCL _____	Loeb Classical Library
MCom _____	Miscelánea Comillas: Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales
NDPAC _____	Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane
NTS _____	New Testament Studies
OW _____	Origenes Werke
PG _____	Patrologia Graeca
PO _____	Patrologia Orientalis

PS _____	Patrologia Syriaca
RET _____	Revista española de teología
SCh _____	Sources Chrétiennes
SVigChr _____	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
ThGl _____	Theologie und Glaube
ThWNT _____	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament
TThZ _____	Trierer theologische Zeitschrift
TU _____	Texte und Untersuchungen
VigChr _____	Vigiliae Christianae
VT.S _____	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
ZAW _____	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZNW _____	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

Preface

Presentación

Andrés Sáez Gutiérrez

Universidad San Dámaso (Madrid)

We have the pleasant task of presenting the volume of *Filiación* 10, the second in the series – after *Filiación* 9 – published in the editions of the Universidad San Dámaso, after the editorial change mentioned in the introduction to the previous volume. Its content includes the proceedings of the 18th Research Conference “Filiation at the Origins of Christian Thought” – the coming of age of the Conference! – organized by the Facultad de Literatura Cristiana y Clásica San Justino (UESD, Madrid) in November 15, 16 and 17, 2021.

The conferences of that edition were entirely devoted to a single topic: the study of the text, the context and the history of the reception of *Prov* 8:22-31. Other editions of the Conference had already been dedicated partially or totally to a single theme, as was the case of the day dedicated to Justin and the Conference dedicated to Clement of Alexandria or the Valentinians. However, in these cases, the corresponding papers had appeared together with others in the same volume. This time, on the contrary, the topic, addressed at length, from the meaning of the passage in Proverbs to its reception in the fifth century, offers more than enough material to form a standing volume.

The basis or assumption of all this is the extraordinary relevance of *Prov* 8:22-31 in the first Christian centuries. *Prov* 8:22 – “The Lord created me as a beginning of his ways for his works” – and the passage linked to it played a fundamental role in the first theology about the identity and generation of the Son and in the formulation of the Trinitarian and Christological doctrine of the first centuries, in particular,

around the Arian crisis of the fourth century, at least in its first phase. In this sense, in this volume our usual interest in studying the identity of Jesus Christ as Son in its various and interrelated aspects converges with the preparation of the anniversary of the Council of Nicaea that will take place in 2025. The topic was treated competently, although more synthetically, by Manlio Simonetti almost sixty years ago¹. Taking this work as an incentive and springboard, we have wanted to deepen and update the studies surrounding the history of the interpretation of the aforementioned passage. This volume also serves as a tribute to the great Italian scholar.

Getting down to details, the volume consists of twenty contributions, the work of specialists from various countries, published in Spanish, Italian, English and French, and divided into four sections. The first section, "Text, Context and Jewish Reception", presents in detail the scriptural text of *Prov 8:22-31* according to the Hebrew text and its various versions, highlighting its characteristics, difficulties and possibilities (Ignacio Carbajosa, Madrid), as well as the context of the passage in the book of Proverbs, its place within the Second Temple Judaism and its Jewish reception (Maurizio Girolami, Padova).

The second section is dedicated to the "Pre-Nicene Christian Reception" of *Prov 8:22-31*. The contribution dedicated to the *Odes of Solomon* (Pilar González, Madrid) gives an account of the first explicit testimony of this scriptural passage among Christians, curiously in a Syriac setting. Next, several studies deal with the interpretation of these verses in a Greco-Latin context, linked in most cases to the explanation of the pre-existing generation of the Son. Andrés Sáez (Madrid) presents the exegesis of *Prov 8,22-31* in the apologists Justin, Athenagoras and Theophilus; Bogdan G. Bucur (Yonkers, NY) does the same by delving into the work of Clement of Alexandria; Frédéric Chapot offers a paper on *Prov 8,22-31* in Tertullian, the first author to use the passage in an antiheretical polemical framework, specifically, against Hermogenes and Praxeas; Fernando Soler (Santiago de Chile) exposes the theology of Origen on the Son-Wisdom around *Prov 8,22-31*; and Davide Tomaselli (Madrid), trying to cover the period from Origen to Nicaea, analyzes the documentation related to the controversy between Dionysius

1 M. SIMONETTI, "Sull'interpretazione patristica di *Proverbi 8,22*", en ID., *Studi sull'arianesimo*, Roma 1965, 9-87.

of Alexandria and Dionysius of Rome, as well as the most relevant passages of an author such as Methodius of Olympus. All these ancient authors identified the Wisdom of *Prov* 8,22-31 with the Son-Logos, while witnesses of a different interpretation are Irenaeus of Lyon and perhaps, without renouncing the identity Wisdom = Logos, also Hippolytus, authors studied in our volume by Clara Sanvito (Madrid). This second section closes with a study by Lautaro Roig (Groningen) about the Platonic and Christian reception of *Timaeus* 27d-28a, a passage that invited us to reflect on the relationship between what really exists, that is, the divine realm that does not become, and what only exists apparently, that is, the created world, which suggests various points of contact with Christian reflection on mediation and the nature of the Son.

From the so-called Arian controversy onwards, the interpretation of *Prov* 8:22-31 will be developed in a diverse and controversial, very specific context, where each of the authors had to put their hermeneutical assumptions and exegetical expertise into play, which gave rise to novel interpretations in relation to those witnessed in the previous period. In fact, these will no longer be limited to the intradivine sphere, as had usually been the case in the Pre-Nicene period, but, among ecclesiastics, there will be a tendency to seek a historical-salvific solution to counteract the Arian interpretation of the passage.

The hinge-like nature of this controversy has led us to group together in the third section the contributions of "The Time of Nicaea": Lewis Ayres (Durham) deals with the use that Arius made of *Prov* 8,22-25; Patricio de Navascués (Madrid) studies the interpretation of the passage attested in two authors of monarchian tendency such as Eustathius of Antioch and Marcellus of Ancyra; Mark DelCogliano (St. Paul, MN) delves into the immense work of Eusebius of Caesarea; and Samuel Fernández (Santiago de Chile) studies the presence and relevance of *Prov* 8,22.25 in various synods of the fourth century, from the vespers of Nicaea to the synod of Ancyra in 358.

In continuity with the previous one, the fourth section includes six studies dedicated to the "Post-Nicene Christian Reception" of *Prov* 8:22-31 from the second half of the fourth century to the fifth century, in an itinerary that reflects, in its final stages, the progressive loss of centrality of the pericope. Thus Xavier Morales (Santiago de Chile) offers a study on the Athanasian exegesis of *Prov* 8 in the letter *De decretis Nicaenae synodi*, composed approximately four decades after the first

phase of the controversy; Guillermo José Cano (Madrid) deals with the interpretation of *Prov* 8:22-31 in Hilary of Poitiers, who incorporates Nicene dogmatics into his thought without detaching himself from the Pre-Nicene reflection on the intradivine *ante tempus*; Jan Dominik Bogataj (Rome) and Ulise Zarza (Rome) offer the unique, practical, social-political and legal interpretation of Fortunatian of Aquileia; Francisco Bastitta (Buenos Aires) examines the words of the Bishop of Antioch Meletius before emperor Constantius II, in particular, his interpretation of the figure of *Sophia* in *Prov* 8; Emanuela Prinzivalli (Rome) studies the exegesis of this passage in three Latin authors, Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine, contemporaries and with reciprocal relationships in various senses; and finally Angelo Segneri (Rome) is in charge of examining exegetical traditions related to *Prov* 8,22-31 from the Cappadocian Fathers to various authors and texts of the fifth century.

Although this judgment will have to be verified by all who read it, we dare to say that the commitment of the speakers, which was already evident during the Conference both in the presentation of their studies and in the lively round tables, makes *Filiación* 10 not only a collection of twenty valuable scientific studies on the topic at hand, but a unitary volume, a *corpus* around *Prov* 8:22ff and its reception, in which the contributions illuminate, complement and enhance one another. Thus, the reader is provided with an overview of the development of the Trinitarian and Christological dogma of the first centuries and with a significant starting material to develop a history of Christian exegesis in the patristic period.

We end this presentation with an appropriate and necessary word of gratitude. First of all, it is evident that the volume would not exist if the speakers had not agreed to participate in our Conference and had not put their efforts into offering careful and innovative works, which they then prepared for publication. Still in times of pandemic, some traveled to Madrid and others, whose presence we could not enjoy, intervened from abroad thanks to the versatility of new technologies. It is an honor to have their contributions in the book that is now published. In particular, we would like to show our gratitude to Professor Samuel Fernández Eyzaguirre, from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, whose friendly and wise collaboration helped Professor Patriocio de Navascués and myself to prepare the program for the Conference and, therefore, the content of this volume.

Thanks to Professor Patricio de Navascués Benlloch, promoter and co-director of the Conference and co-director of the series *Filiación*, always ready to illuminate with his wise advice everything related to the preparation and holding of the Conference and the publication of its Proceedings. Essential has been the work of those who have shared the arduous editing tasks of *Filiación 10*: Professor Clara Sanvito, already an expert in these issues; and Professor Davide Tomaselli, always available, who makes his debut as editor on this project. Thanks to the Universidad San Dámaso, specifically, to its Publishing Department, for their support, and especially to Elena Martín Ariza. A very special thank you goes to the Facultad de Literatura Cristiana y Clásica San Justino: in particular, to its Dean, Professor Pilar González Casado, very attentive to following the preparation of this volume; to their Professors, above all to Luis Flamenco García; and to the secretarial team –especially Carmen García Martón–, with whom it is always a pleasure to work. Nor can we forget to thank Professors Juan José Ayán Calvo, mentor and promoter of the Conference, and Manuel Aroztegi Esnaola; and our friend Jesús Delgado Rodríguez, who in a silent but fruitful way continue to support this project in a thousand ways. Finally, this research would not be possible without the support of the Department of Education of the Comunidad de Madrid, to which we also express our gratitude.

* * *

Nos corresponde la grata tarea de presentar el volumen de *Filiación 10*, el segundo de la serie –tras *Filiación 9*– publicado en las ediciones de la Universidad San Dámaso, después del cambio editorial que reseñamos en la introducción al volumen precedente. Su contenido recoge las actas de las XVIII Jornadas de estudio “La filiación en los orígenes de la reflexión cristiana” –¡la mayoría de edad de las Jornadas!– organizadas por la Facultad de Literatura Cristiana y Clásica San Justino (UESD, Madrid) los días 15, 16 y 17 de noviembre de 2021.

Las ponencias de dicha reunión estuvieron íntegramente consagradas a un único tema: el estudio del texto, el contexto y la historia de la recepción de *Prov* 8,22-31. Ya otras ediciones de las Jornadas habían

sido dedicadas parcial o totalmente a una temática concreta, como fue el caso del día consagrado a Justino y de las Jornadas consagradas a Clemente alejandrino o a los valentinianos. Sin embargo, en estos casos, las ponencias correspondientes habían aparecido junto a otras en un mismo volumen. Esta vez, por el contrario, el tema, abordado con amplitud, desde la composición de *Prov* hasta la recepción del pasaje en el s. V, ofrece material más que suficiente para conformar un volumen *a se stante*.

Base o presupuesto de todo ello es la extraordinaria relevancia de *Prov* 8,22-31 en los primeros siglos cristianos. *Prov* 8,22 –«El Señor me creó como principio de sus caminos para sus obras»– y el pasaje a él vinculado desempeñaron un papel fundamental en la primera teología acerca de la identidad y de la generación del Hijo y en la formulación del dogma trinitario y cristológico de los primeros siglos, en particular, en torno a la crisis arriana del s. IV, al menos en su primera fase. En este sentido, confluye en este volumen nuestro interés habitual por estudiar la identidad de Jesucristo como Hijo en sus diversos e interrelacionados aspectos con la preparación del aniversario del Concilio de Nicea que tendrá lugar en 2025. El tema fue tratado con competencia, aun más sintéticamente, por Manlio Simonetti hace casi sesenta años². Tomando dicho trabajo como acicate y trampolín, hemos querido profundizar y poner al día los estudios en torno a la historia de la interpretación de dicho pasaje. Sirva también el presente volumen como homenaje al grandísimo estudioso italiano.

Descendiendo a los detalles, el volumen consta de veinte contribuciones, obra de especialistas de diversos países, publicadas en español, italiano, inglés y francés, y divididas en cuatro secciones. La primera sección, “Texto, contexto y recepción judía”, presenta detalladamente el texto escriturístico de *Prov* 8,22-31 según el texto hebreo y sus diversas versiones, poniendo de manifiesto sus características, dificultades y posibilidades (Ignacio Carbajosa, Madrid), así como el contexto del pasaje en el libro de los Proverbios y en el ámbito del judaísmo del segundo Templo y su recepción judía (Maurizio Girolami, Padova).

La segunda sección está dedicada a la “Recepción cristiana prenicena” de *Prov* 8,22-31. La contribución dedicada a las *Odas de Salomón*

2 M. SIMONETTI, «Sull'interpretazione patristica di *Proverbi* 8,22», en Id., *Studi sull'arianesimo*, Roma 1965, 9-87.

(Pilar González, Madrid) da cuenta del primer testimonio explícito de dicho pasaje escriturístico entre cristianos, curiosamente en ámbito siríaco. A continuación, varios estudios se ocupan de la interpretación de dichos versículos en ámbito greco-latino, vinculada en la mayor parte de los casos a la explicación de la generación preexistente del Hijo. Andrés Sáez (Madrid) presenta la exégesis de *Prov 8,22-31* en los apologetas Justino, Atenágoras y Teófilo; Bogdan G. Bucur (Yonkers, NY) hace lo propio buceando en la obra de Clemente de Alejandría; Frédéric Chapot ofrece un trabajo sobre *Prov 8,22-31* en Tertuliano, primer autor que se sirve del pasaje en un marco polémico antiherético, en concreto, frente a Hermógenes y Praxeas; Fernando Soler (Santiago de Chile) expone la teología de Orígenes sobre el Hijo Sabiduría en torno a *Prov 8,22-31*; y Davide Tomaselli (Madrid), tratando de cubrir el período que va desde Orígenes hasta Nicea, analiza la documentación relativa a la llamada controversia “de los dos Dionisios”, así como los pasajes más relevantes de un autor como Metodio de Olimpo. Todos estos autores antiguos identificaron la Sabiduría de *Prov 8,22-31* con el Logos Hijo, mientras que son testigos de una interpretación diversa Ireneo de Lyon y tal vez, sin renunciar a la identidad Sabiduría = Logos, también Hipólito, autores estudiados en nuestro volumen por Clara Sanvito (Madrid). Esta segunda sección se cierra con un estudio de Lautaro Roig (Groningen) acerca de la recepción platónica y cristiana de *Timaeus 27d-28a*, pasaje que invitó a reflexionar sobre la relación entre lo realmente existente, es decir, el ámbito divino que no deviene, y lo que solo existe aparentemente, o sea, el mundo creado, lo que podría sugerir diversos puntos de contacto con la reflexión cristiana acerca de la mediación y de la naturaleza del Hijo.

A partir de la llamada controversia arriana, la interpretación de *Prov 8,22-31* se va a desarrollar en un contexto diverso y polémico, muy específico, donde cada uno de los autores hubo de poner en juego sus presupuestos hermenéuticos y su pericia exegética, lo que dio lugar a interpretaciones novedosas en relación con las atestiguadas en el período anterior. De hecho, estas ya no estarán limitadas al ámbito intra-divino, como había sido usualmente el caso en el período preniceno, sino que, entre eclesiásticos, se tenderá a buscar una solución histórico-salvífica para contrarrestar la interpretación arriana del pasaje.

El carácter de gozne de dicha polémica nos ha llevado a agrupar en la tercera sección las contribuciones “En torno a Nicea”: Lewis Ayres

(Durham) se ocupa del empleo que Arrio hizo de *Prov* 8,22-25; Patricio de Navascués (Madrid) estudia la interpretación del pasaje atestiguada en dos autores de tendencia monarquiana como Eustacio de Antioquía y Marcelo de Ancira; Mark DelCogliano (St. Paul, MN) se sumerge en la inmensa obra de Eusebio de Cesarea; y Samuel Fernández estudia la presencia y relevancia de *Prov* 8,22.25 en diversos sínodos del s. IV, desde las vísperas de Nicea hasta el sínodo de Ancira en 358.

En continuidad con la anterior, la cuarta sección recoge seis estudios dedicados a la "Recepción cristiana posnicena" de *Prov* 8,22-31 a partir de la segunda mitad del s. IV y hasta el s. V, en un itinerario que refleja, en sus últimos estadios, la progresiva pérdida de centralidad de la perícopa. Así Xavier Morales (Santiago de Chile) ofrece un trabajo sobre la exégesis atanasiana de *Prov* 8 en la carta *De decretis Nicaenae synodi*, compuesta aproximadamente cuatro décadas después de la primera fase de la controversia; Guillermo José Cano (Madrid) se ocupa de la interpretación de *Prov* 8,22-31 en Hilario de Poitiers, quien incorpora a su pensamiento la dogmática nicena sin desprenderse de la reflexión prenicena sobre el *ante tempus* intradivino; Jan Dominik Bogataj (Roma) e Ulise Zarza (Roma) ofrecen la singular interpretación, de corte práctico, social-político y jurídico de Fortunaciano de Aquileya; Francisco Bastitta (Buenos Aires) examina las palabras del obispo de Antioquía Melecio delante del emperador Constancio II, en particular, su interpretación de la figura de *Sophia* en *Prov* 8; Emanuela Prinzivalli (Roma) estudia la exégesis de este pasaje en tres personajes latinos, Ambrosio, Jerónimo y Agustín, coetáneos y con relaciones recíprocas en varios sentidos; y finalmente Angelo Segneri (Roma) se ocupa de examinar las líneas de tradición exegética relativas a *Prov* 8,22-31 desde los Padres capadocios a diversos autores y textos hasta el s. V d.C.

Si bien este juicio habrá de ser verificado por cuantos lo lean, nos atrevemos a decir que el compromiso de los ponentes, que ya se puso de manifiesto durante las Jornadas tanto en la exposición de sus estudios como en las animadas mesas redondas, hace de *Filiación* 10 no solo una colección de veinte valiosos estudios científicos sobre el tema que nos ocupa, sino un volumen unitario, un *corpus* en torno a *Prov* 8,22ss y a su recepción, en el que unas contribuciones iluminan, complementan y realzan las otras. Se pone así en manos del lector un recorrido por el desarrollo del dogma trinitario y cristológico de los primeros siglos y un material de partida significativo para desarrollar una historia de la exégesis cristiana en el período patrístico.

Terminamos esta presentación con un justo y necesario agradecimiento. En primer lugar, es evidente que el volumen no existiría si los ponentes no hubieran aceptado participar en las Jornadas de Filiación y no hubieran puesto su empeño en ofrecer unos trabajos cuidados y novedosos, que después prepararon para su publicación. Todavía en tiempos de pandemia, algunos se desplazaron a Madrid y otros, de quienes no pudimos gozar de su presencia, intervinieron desde el extranjero gracias a la versatilidad de las nuevas tecnologías. Es un honor contar con sus contribuciones en el libro que ahora ve la luz. En particular, quisiéramos mostrar nuestra gratitud al profesor Samuel Fernández Eyzaguirre, de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, cuya amistosa y sabia colaboración ayudó al profesor Patricio de Navascués y a quien les escribe estas líneas a confeccionar el programa de las Jornadas y, por tanto, el contenido del presente volumen.

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The Time of Nicaea

En torno a Nicea

Proverbs 8:22-31 in Eusebius of Caesarea

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ABSTRACT This communication provides an analysis of Eusebius of Caesarea's interpretation of Proverbs 8:22-31. It focuses on three pivotal moments in his exegesis of these verses: *Generalis elementaria introductio* VIII,1 (ca. 310-313), *Demonstratio evangelica* V,1 (ca. 313-320), and *Ecclesiastica theologia* III,1-3 (ca. 336-337). Though these works were written over the course of more than twenty years and in vastly different circumstances, his exegesis of Proverbs 8:22-31 is remarkably consistent. His earlier exegesis in *Generalis elementaria introductio* and *Demonstratio evangelica* proved to be a solid foundation for his refutation of Marcellus of Ancyra in *Ecclesiastica theologia*.

KEYWORDS Eusebius of Caesarea, Proverbs 8, Trinitarian Controversy, Marcellus of Ancyra

RESUMEN Este artículo ofrece un análisis de la interpretación que hace Eusebio de Cesarea de Proverbios 8,22-31. Se centra en tres momentos cruciales en su exégesis de estos versículos: *Generalis elementaria introductio* VIII,1 (ca. 310-313), *Demonstratio evangelica* V,1 (ca. 313-320) y *Ecclesiastica theologia* III,1-3 (ca. 336-337). Aunque estas obras fueron escritas a lo largo de más de veinte años y en circunstancias muy diferentes, su exégesis de Proverbios 8,22-31 es notablemente consistente. Su exégesis más temprana en *Generalis elementaria introductio* y *Demonstratio evangelica* resultó ser una base sólida para su refutación de Marcelo de Ancira en *Ecclesiastica theologia*.

PALABRAS CLAVE Eusebio de Cesarea, Proverbios 8, Controversia trinitaria, Marcelo de Ancira

Eusebius was prolific in many ways¹. This holds true as well for his engagement with Proverbs 8:22-31. He cites and comments on these verses many times, in many places, to varying extents, often in conversation with other biblical verses. There are so many passages to take into account that an exhaustive survey of his exegesis of Proverbs 8:22-31 is beyond the scope of a conference paper. Accordingly, this study focuses on three pivotal moments in his exegesis of Proverbs 8:22-31 over the course of his long career: *Generalis elementaria introductio* VIII.1, *Demonstratio evangelica* V,1, and *Ecclesiastica theologia* III,1-3. The first of these is his earliest extant treatment of Proverbs 8:22-31 and it is foundational for all his subsequent exegesis of these verses. The other two discussions are the two most extensive in his corpus: the Greek of *Demonstratio evangelica* V,1 takes up seven pages in the GCS edition, whereas that of *Ecclesiastica theologia* III,1-3 twenty pages.

The *Generalis elementaria introductio* (= GEI) is one of the earliest works of Eusebius (though fewer than four of the original ten books survive), written during the “great” persecution between 310 and 313, before Eusebius became bishop². Consisting of selections from the Hebrew Scriptures with commentary by Eusebius, the purpose of this book was pedagogical, to teach its readers the proper Christian way of interpreting the Bible³. The *Demonstratio evangelica* (= DE) and its companion *Praeparatio evangelica* (= PE) were likely written in the early years of Eusebius’s episcopacy before the Arian controversy arose; therefore, after 313 but before the early 320s⁴. These works are pedagogical and

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- 1 These collections of essays give a good sense of Eusebius’s range of interests, his industry, and his innovativeness: Sabrina INOWLOCKI - Claudio ZAMAGNI (eds.), *Reconsidering Eusebius: Collected Papers on Literary, Historical, and Theological Issues*, SVigChr 107, Leiden 2011; Aaron JOHNSON - Jeremy SCHOTT (eds.), *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations*, Hellenic Studies Series 60, Washington DC 2013. Two recent monographs focus on specific works of Eusebius that were particularly innovative and exercised massive influence: Matthew R. CRAWFORD, *The Eusebian Canon Tables: Ordering Textual Knowledge in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, and Michael J. HOLLERICH, *Making Christian History. Eusebius of Caesarea and His Readers*, Oakland 2021.
 - 2 In matters of characterizing and dating these works I follow Aaron JOHNSON, *Eusebius*, London - New York 2014.
 - 3 See *Eusebius Pamphili Eclogae Propheticae* (T. GAISFORD, Oxford 1842). Gaisford published GEI under the subtitle Eusebius gave to books VI-IX, *Eclogae propheticae*. Thus GEI VIII is also known as *Eclogae propheticae* III.
 - 4 See *Eusebius Werke, Band 6: Die Demonstratio evangelica* (I. A. HEIKEL, GCS 23, Leipzig 1913); *Eusebius Werke, Band 8: Die Praeparatio evangelica, Teil 1: Einleitung, die Bücher*

apologetic in intent, interpreting the Greek tradition and the ancient writings of the Hebrews through a Christian lens. In contrast, the *Ecclesiastica theologia* (= ET) and its companion *Contra Marcellum* (= CM) were written at the end of Eusebius's career in 336-337, a few years before he died in 339⁵. Both are works of theological polemics in response to Marcellus's work against the leading figures of the ecclesial alliance to which Eusebius himself belonged.

One might expect that his interpretation of Proverbs 8:22-31 changed considerably in these works since they were different in genre and were written over the course of more than twenty years and in vastly different ecclesiastical and personal circumstances, as the era of persecution came to an end, as Eusebius became a bishop, and as theological shifts were brought on by the early stages of the Arian controversy, and then by the Council of Nicaea and its aftermath. But in actuality his exegesis of Proverbs 8:22-31 remains remarkably consistent through the years in spite of the changing circumstances. His earlier exegesis in GEI and DE proved to be a solid foundation for his refutation of Marcellus in ET. His earlier pedagogical and apologetic exegesis was readily adapted for his anti-Marcellan exegesis, though there are shifts in emphasis.

1. The Pedagogical Interpretation

GEI VIII includes selections from what is today called wisdom literature and the prophetic writings, with the exception of Isaiah, to which GEI IX is devoted. The first selection that Eusebius presents in GEI VIII is Proverbs 8:12-31. Why does Eusebius quote Proverbs 8 starting with verse 12? Because this verse clearly indicates who the speaker of the passage is: "I, Wisdom, have dwelt with counsel". Here Eusebius is employing the well-known grammatical reading technique of prosopographical exegesis, wherein the *prosōpon* or "person" or speaker of the

I bis X, Register (K. MRAS - É. DES PLACES, GCS 43,1, Berlin ²1982); and *Eusebius Werke, Band 8: Die Praeparatio evangelica, Teil 2: Die Bücher XI bis XV, Register* (K. MRAS - É. DES PLACES, GCS 43.2, Berlin ²1983).

5 Cf. *Eusebius Werke, Band 4: Gegen Marcell. Über die kirchliche Theologie. Die Fragmente Marcellis* (G. C. HANSEN - E. KLOSTERMANN, GCS 14, Berlin ²1972).

passage is identified as a first step toward correct interpretation. In his introductory remarks to the quotation Eusebius makes it clear that it is Wisdom who speaks the passage, and he also summarizes what it is that Wisdom teaches about itself:

It appears that the whole book of Proverbs is spoken from the person of Wisdom, who sometimes counsels the ethical life and sometimes represents the words of other speakers, sometimes sets forth enigmas and sometimes teaches certain things about itself and gives instruction on those things which concern its divine rank. We shall make selections from these, by which we learn that Wisdom happens to be a living, divine, and entirely virtuous nature; it is a second cause of the universe after the first God, God the Word in the beginning with God, and governor and administrator of everything and the anticipatory providence of God as far as realities upon earth, created before every substance and hypostasis, being the beginning of the ways of the whole creative endeavor⁶.

After these comments, Eusebius quotes Proverbs 8:12-31, and then says, "Wisdom teaches these things about itself"⁷. Since Eusebius detects a single speaker throughout these verses, that is, he detects no changes of speaker, he attributes every verse in this section to the person of Wisdom. This identification of Wisdom as the speaker of Proverbs 8:12-31 is a hallmark of Eusebius's exegesis of this passage and it becomes foundational for him. Throughout his corpus, however, though Eusebius often quotes Proverbs 8:12-31, not every verse is discussed by him. The most important verses for Eusebius, as shall be seen, are 22 and 25, with 27 and 30 holding second place.

6 GEI VIII,1 (GAISFORD, 98,1-15): Πᾶσα μὲν ἡ βίβλος τῶν Παροιμιῶν ἐκ προσώπου λέγεσθαι τῆς Σοφίας ἔοικε, πῆ μὲν τὸν ἠθικὸν ὑποτιθεμένης βίον, πῆ δὲ προσωποποιούσης ἑτέρων λόγου· καὶ ποτὲ μὲν αἰνίγματα προβαλλομένης, ποτὲ δ' αὖ περὶ αὐτῆς τιὰ διδασκούσης, καὶ τὰ περὶ τοῦ ἑαυτῆς ἐνθέου ἀξιώματος παιδευούσης. Τούτων δ' ἀναλεξόμεθα δι' ὧν μαθάνομεν ὅτι δὴ ζῶον θεῖον καὶ πάντη τὴν φύσιν ἐνάρετον ἡ Σοφία τυγχάνει, ἢ αὐτὴ οὐσα τῶ μετὰ τὸν πρῶτον Θεὸν δευτέρῳ τῶν ὄλων αἰτίῳ, τῶ τε ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν Θεῶ Λόγω, καὶ τῇ διοικουσίῃ καὶ οἰκονομουσίῃ τὰ σύμπαντα καὶ μέχρι τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς πραγμάτων φθανούση προνοία τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἢ καὶ πρὸ πάσης οὐσίας τε καὶ ὑποστάσεως ἔκτισται, ἀρχὴ ὁδῶν οὐσα τῆς ὅλης δημιουργίας.

7 GEI VIII,1 (GAISFORD, 99,19-20): Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν διδάσκει περὶ ἑαυτῆς ἡ Σοφία.

After the quotation of Proverbs 8:12-31, now that the existence of such a Wisdom has been established, Eusebius uses the teaching of the apostle Paul to identify who this Wisdom is:

But as to who this is, the sacred apostle teaches when he says, "Christ God's power and God's wisdom" (1 Cor 1:24). And again: "Who became for us wisdom from God" (1 Cor 1:30). Therefore, Christ is the one who spoke the above-cited [verses of Prov 8:12-31]. He is the Wisdom and Word of God through whom all things came into being: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him" (Jo 1:1,3). And "in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible" (Col 1:16), according to the apostle. But in whatever manner he functions, according to one conceptualization, as the Word of God, and according to another as Life, and again as Truth and True Light, and the rest of the things that the divine Scriptures say he is, in the same manner he is also designated Wisdom, having become servant of the Father in both the providence and administration of the universe⁸.

While in later treatises Eusebius suggests that Proverbs 8:12-31 best prove the Hebrew concept of the second cause, and that these verses most influenced New Testament authors, here he delineates the connection between Proverbs 8:12-31 and the various Pauline and Johanneine passages that he has cited. His purpose is to demonstrate that the Wisdom of God spoken about in the Hebrew Scriptures is to be identified with Christ, the Word with God who created the universe along with the God the Father. Eusebius alludes to Origen's well-known

8 GEI VIII,1 (GAISFORD, 99,20-100,5): τίς δέ ἐστιν αὕτη, ὁ ἱερὸς ἀπόστολος παιδεύει λέγων, «Χριστὸς Θεοῦ δύναμις καὶ Θεοῦ σοφία» καὶ πάλιν, «ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ Θεοῦ». Χριστὸς οὖν ἐστιν ὁ τὰ προειρημένα φάσκων· ἡ Σοφία καὶ Λόγος ἐστὶ Θεοῦ, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα γέγονται· «Ἐν ἀρχῇ γὰρ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. Πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο»· καὶ, «ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα, τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, εἴτε ὀρατὰ εἴτε ἀόρατα», κατὰ τὸν ἀπόστολον· ὄνπερ δὲ τρόπον κατὰ τινα ἐπίνοιαν Λόγος Θεοῦ χρηματίζει, καὶ καθ' ἑτέραν «ζωή», καὶ πάλιν, «ἀλήθεια» καὶ «φῶς ἀληθινόν», καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ὅποσα φασὶν αὐτὸν αἰθεῖαι γραφαί, τὸν αὐτὸν δὴ τρόπον καὶ Σοφία προσηγόρευται, ὑπηρέτης τυγχάνουσα τοῦ Πατρὸς εἰς τὴν ὅλων πρόνοιάν τε καὶ οἰκονομίαν.

teaching about the various *epinoiai* of Christ when he says that Christ's title as Wisdom is just as important as the others he lists⁹. But the insight into Christ that "Wisdom" provides is that he serves the Father in the providence and administration of the universe. Eusebius emphasizes Wisdom's role in creation and its ongoing maintenance.

And so, three foundational aspects of Eusebius's exegesis of Proverbs 8:22-31 are in evidence here: (1) Wisdom as the speaker of the entire passage; (2) Wisdom is identified with Christ; and (3) Christ is speaking about his origin from God and his role in creation.

2. The Apologetic Interpretation

An objective of Eusebius in his apologies was to show that the Hebrews anticipated the claims of Christian theology. For this purpose, he often appeals to Proverbs 8:12-31, building upon his interpretation of these verses in GEI VIII,1 in terms of Wisdom as the speaker of the verse, Wisdom's identification with Christ, and Wisdom's origin and role in the creation of the universe. PE VII,12 and XI,14 cite Proverbs 8:12-21 among other Old Testament verses to show that the Hebrews had a concept of a second divine cause in addition to God the first cause, just as Christians do. But Eusebius's fullest interpretation of these verses in the apologetic works is DE V,1, where he argues that the theology about Christ articulated through such New Testament passages as *Jo* 1:1-3 (Word of God), *Col* 1:15 (image of God), and *1 Cor* 1:24 (power and wisdom of God) is also found in the writings of the Hebrew prophets. Since the passage from DE says everything that the passages from PE say but also much more, at least in terms of understanding Eusebius's apologetic interpretation of Proverbs, here I focus on DE V,1. I want to highlight three aspects of his exegesis.

First, Eusebius pays particular attention to verse 22, which says that God "created" Wisdom. He is clear that this verse does not mean that

9 Most famously developed in the first book of his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. For a summary of Origen's teaching about Christ's *epinoiai*, see Mark DELCOGLIANO, *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names: Christian Theology and Late-Antique Philosophy in the Fourth-Century Trinitarian Controversy*, SVigChr 103, Leiden 2010, 172-174.

God brought Wisdom into existence from nothing. Here are two passages from DE in which Eusebius offers a summary of his understanding of verse 22:

[Wisdom is] generated (γενητὸν) and not the same as the un-generated one, given being before every age and issued as a kind of foundation of all generated things¹⁰.

[Wisdom] exists before all ages, who is the productive Word of God, and co-exists together with the Father, and is the only-begotten Son of the God of the universe, and has become minister and coworker of the Father in the bringing of the universe into existence and arranging it¹¹.

Eusebius explains the “creation” of Wisdom using forms of *gignomai* and avoids *ktizō* and its cognates. Why? Because “creation” implies being brought into existence from nothing. “One cannot simply say”, writes Eusebius, “that the Son was generated from nothing like the rest of the generated things were”¹². The generateness of Wisdom functions as a way of distinguishing the Son from the ungenerated Father, not as way of emphasizing that the Son has an origin. Of course, Eusebius believes that the Son has an origin, but this is not what he highlights in his interpretation of Proverbs 8. Rather, what is stressed is that Wisdom co-exists together with the Father and pre-exists the creation of the universe. And so, the “creation” of Wisdom in verse 22 refers to Wisdom being established as God’s agent of creation and the foundation of all generated beings. For this reason, Eusebius speculates that Proverbs 8:22 inspired Paul in Colossians 1:15 to call Christ “the firstborn

10 DE V,1,6 (GCS 23, 211,12-14): καὶ γενητὸν ἑαυτὸν, οὐχὶ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν ὄντα τῷ ἀγενήτῳ διδάσκει, πρὸ παντὸς αἰῶνος οὐσιωμένοι, θεμελίου τε τρόπον τῶν γενητῶν ἀπάντων προβεβλημένον.

11 DE V,1,17 (GCS 23, 212,30-34): τὸ πρὸ πάντων αἰώνων εἶναι, λόγον ὄντα θεοῦ δημιουργικόν, καὶ τῷ πατρὶ συνεῖναι, μονογενῆ τε υἱὸν εἶναι τοῦ τῶν ὄλων θεοῦ, ὑπουργόν τε καὶ συνεργὸν τῷ πατρὶ τῆς τῶν ὄλων οὐσιώσεώς τε καὶ διακοσμήσεως γεγενημένον.

12 DE V,1,15 (GCS 23, 212,24-25): ἀπλῶς οὕτως ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων γενητὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῖς λοιποῖς γενητοῖς ὁμοίως ἀποφῆνασθαι.

of all creation" (*prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs*)¹³. Here Eusebius is not putting Wisdom on the created side of an ontological divide, but rather proposing that Wisdom has been generated in order to bring all creatures into existence.

Second, while Eusebius uses forms of *gignomai* to interpret verse 22, he uses forms of *gennaō* in his interpretation of verse 25, which states that before so many works of creation the Lord "begot" (*gennai*) Wisdom. Eusebius also connects this with *Col* 1:15, saying that Wisdom is the image of the invisible God "because he is something begotten of the unbegotten nature"¹⁴. For Eusebius, then, begetting denotes a kind of production wherein the begotten one is an image of the begetter, that is, the image resembles the begetter. Since many sorts of creatures can be described as begotten, Eusebius devotes many lines to explaining in what sense Wisdom is something begotten. On account of God's simplicity, all human or material ways of understanding the begetting of Wisdom must be rejected. Eusebius repeatedly appeals to Isaiah 53:8 to underscore the begetting of Wisdom is a mystery that cannot be understood, even if we can understand what it is not¹⁵. So, Eusebius rules out not only human and material ways of understanding the begetting of Wisdom, but also generation *ex nihilo* in the manner of the rest of generated beings.

Eusebius offers two analogies to explain the relationship between the Father and Son that results from the begetting and generation: "like fragrance and a ray of light the Son exists from infinite ages or rather before the ages, and having come to be he co-exists together with and has come to be always together with the Father"¹⁶. Eusebius specifies

13 DE V,1,7 (GCS 23, 211,16). The same idea is expressed in PE V,12,2 (GCS 43,1, 386,11-15): "After the beginningless and ungenerated substance of the God of the universe, which is unmixed and beyond all comprehension, they introduce a second substance and divine power, which subsists as the beginning of all generated things and the first generated from the first cause, designating it Word and Wisdom and Power of God". The summary in PE XI,14,1 merely states that the second cause is "Word of God and God from God" (GCS 43,2, 34,11-12).

14 DE V,1,7 (GCS 23, 211,19-20): ὡς ἂν γέννημα τῆς ἀγεννήτου φύσεως τυγχάνον.

15 Cf. DE V,1,8-14; V,1,18; V,1,25-26.

16 DE V.1.18 (GCS 23, 213,12-14): ὡσπερ εὐωδίαν τινὰ καὶ φωτὸς αὐγὴν τὸν υἱὸν ἐξ ἀπίρων αἰώνων μᾶλλον δὲ πρὸ πάντων αἰώνων ὑποστῆναι, γενόμενόν τε συνεῖναι καὶ συγγερόμενον ἀεὶ τῷ πατρὶ.

precisely what these analogies teach us about the relationship between the Father and Son in the following:

For the ray, which is kindred with the nature of the light and co-exists substantially with the light, could not exist outside of that in which it is, whereas the Word of God has being and exists in itself, and does not co-exist with the Father in an unbegotten manner, but has been begotten from the Father as his sole only-begotten Son before all ages¹⁷.

The ray exists in the same way as the light exists in terms of substance but cannot exist except as intrinsic to the light, whereas the Word exists outside the Father and does not exist in the same way as the Father in terms of substance. In other words, the Father's manner of existence is ungenerated, whereas the Son's is generated and uniquely so. And so, this rules out the Son co-existing beginninglessly with the Father since only the Father is ungenerated and all fathers must pre-exist their sons¹⁸. Once again this shows that the generateness of Son serves to distinguish the Son from the Father, not to stress that the Son has an origin.

The analogies also help us understand how the Son is the image of God: whereas normally images differ from their archetypes in both substance and form, the Son is an image that "is itself the whole form and is made like the self-subsistent Father"¹⁹. In other words, the nature of the Son is to be like the Father with the greatest degree of exactness possible, to be in himself the whole form of God²⁰. It is in virtue of his begetting by the Father that the Son has this status as the image of God.

17 DE V.1.19 (GCS 23, 213,17-22): ἡ τε γὰρ ἀυγή, σύμφυτος οὖσα τῆ τοῦ φωτὸς φύσει καὶ οὐσιωδῶς συνυπάρχουσα τῷ φωτί, οὐκ ἂν δύναίτο ἐκτὸς ὑφεστάναι τοῦ ἐν ᾧ ἐστίν· ὁ δέ γε τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος καθ' ἑαυτὸν οὐσίωταί τε καὶ ὑφέστηκεν, καὶ οὐκ ἀγενήτως συνυπάρχει τῷ πατρὶ, ἀλλ' ὡς μονογενῆς υἱὸς μόνος πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεγεννημένος.

18 DE V.1.20 (GCS 23, 213,27-30): οὐδέ γε ἀνάρχως συνυφέστηκεν τῷ πατρὶ, ἐπεὶ ὁ μὲν ἀγέννητος ὁ δὲ γεννητός, καὶ ὁ μὲν πατὴρ ὁ δὲ υἱός, προὑπάρχειν δὲ καὶ προὑφεστάναι πατέρα υἱοῦ πᾶς ὅστις οὖν <ἂν> ὁμολογήσειεν.

19 DE V.1.21 (GCS 23, 213,34-35): ἀλλ' ὅλον αὐτὸ εἶδος ὦν, καὶ αὐτοουσία τῷ πατρὶ ἀφομοιούμενος.

20 On Eusebius's image theology, see Mark DELCOGLIANO, "Eusebian Theologies of the Son as Image of God before 341", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14/4 (2006) 459-484,

Third, Eusebius comments only briefly on verses 27 and 30, which speak of Wisdom's presence and mutual delight with the Father during the constitution of the universe. He says that these verses reveal "the eternity from endless ages of his permanence with the Father"²¹. This is an idea that he will expand upon in his later anti-Marcellan treatises, to which we now turn.

3. The Anti-Marcellan Interpretation

In his anti-Marcellan writings, Eusebius interprets Proverbs 8:22-31 in order to refute Marcellus's interpretation of the same verses. The subject comes up many times, but his most extensive and systematic refutation is found in *Ecclesiastica theologia* III,3,1-3²². This is by far the most extensive discussion of Proverbs 8:22-31 in his corpus. I want to highlight three aspects of Marcellus's interpretation of Proverbs 8:22-31 and Eusebius's refutation²³.

First, Marcellus sees Proverbs 8:22 as referring to the creation of Christ's humanity, that is, Christ's flesh, in the second economy, in the incarnation. And so, for Marcellus verse 22 is not at all about the generation of the Word before the ages. Why? He believes that the Word always existed in God even if it came forth at some point for the purposes of creation, and thus it is improper to speak of the Word as ever being generated. Accordingly, he reassigned the generation mentioned in verse 22 to the flesh of the Savior at the incarnation²⁴. Eusebius thinks this is quite wrong because of his prosopographical exegesis: Wisdom is the single *prosōpon* or person who speaks in Proverbs 8:12-31. But Marcellus has failed to realize this, or just ignored it, and has not pro-

at 471-476.

21 DE V,1,27 (GCS 23, 215,4-5).

22 CM 2,3,8-21 also offers an abbreviated summary of the main points of difference.

23 Marcellus's interpretation of these verses is nicely elaborated in Samuel FERNÁNDEZ, "Marcelo de Ancira y la sabiduría de Pr 8: Teología y hermenéutica", *Teología* 56 / 128 (2019) 103-117. See also in this volume the study of P. DE NAVASCUÉS in Marcellus's interpretation of *Prov* 8, p. 315-336.

24 Eusebius summarizes Marcellus's interpretation of Proverbs 8:22 in ET III,2,27-34.

vided any evidence that there is change of speaker in verse 22 going to verse 25²⁵.

In his response to Marcellus Eusebius brings forward a new argument, one which focuses on the meaning of the verb “created” (ἐκτίσέν) in the verse. In the apologies, Eusebius was comfortable speaking about Wisdom as generated, as the firstborn of all creation, though with the *caveat* that this was an immaterial generation and not from nothing. But against Marcellus Eusebius does not interpret verse 22 as the generation of Wisdom. He does not use the forms of *gignomai* as prominently as earlier but he still avoids *ktizō* and its cognates; he does not link the verse with the “firstborn of creation” of Colossians 1:15; he does not reuse the analogies of fragrance and ray of light. Rather, his interpretation is calibrated to refute Marcellus. We see this in a passage that summarizes his understanding of verse 22, where Eusebius emphasizes that it should be “as if Wisdom both subsisted and lived, and was before and pre-existed the establishment of the whole cosmos, having been appointed to rule the universe by the Lord, his Father”²⁶. Here Eusebius stresses the independent subsistence and life of Wisdom to refute Marcellus’s concept of the interior Logos. Here Eusebius no longer talks about the generation of Wisdom but stresses the existence of Wisdom with the Father before the creation of the universe. Here the “creation” of Wisdom is actually the Father’s appointment or establishment of Wisdom, who already existed, as the ruler of the universe. The differences between ET and DE are a matter of emphasis.

Eusebius offers two kinds of evidence to support this interpretation. First, he appeals to the customary usage of Scripture and cites other verses that similarly use “create” to mean “appoint”²⁷. Second, he notes that the three post-Septuagint translators of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, all translated the verb in verse 22 as “he acquired me” (ἐκτήσατό με) instead of the Septuagint’s “he created me”²⁸. According to Eusebius, “acquired” here has the sense

25 Cf. ET III,2,1; III,2,32-33; CM 2,3,8-10.

26 ET III,2,8 (GCS 14, 140,10-13): ὡς ὑφ’εστῶς μὲν καὶ ζῶν, προῶν τε καὶ προϋπάρχων τῆς τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου συστάσεως, ἄρχειν δὲ τῶν ὄλων ὑπὸ κυρίου, τοῦ αὐτοῦ πατρός, κατατεταγμένος.

27 Cf. ET III,2,9-14.

28 Cf. ET III,2,15.

of “appointing” him as head, savior, ruler, and governor of the universe. He writes:

For the great acquisition of God was the only-begotten Son, not only in the sense that he was generated from him since he is his Son, but also in the sense that he was appointed the benefactor and savior to all, and thus he is and was named the greatest and most honored acquisition of the Father²⁹.

Eusebius supports this interpretation of the Hebrew term for “acquiring” by appeal to the customary usage of Scripture and cites other verses that use the term³⁰. A comment by Eusebius reveals why “creation” language is so problematic for him and “acquiring” language so attractive: while “acquiring” suggests coming to possess something that already pre-exists, “creation” implies the passage from nothingness into being³¹. Innate to the language of acquiring then is the idea of the Son’s pre-existence, which is so central for Eusebius in the anti-Marcellan writings. Accordingly, the creation of Wisdom has nothing to do with the generation or coming into existence of the Son as the firstborn of all creation, and everything to do with the pre-existent Wisdom being appointed by God as ruler over creation.

Second, Marcellus’s interpretations of verses 23-25 needed to harmonize with his interpretation of verse 22. In verses 23-25, the thing created in verse 22 and begotten in verse 25 is spoken of as existing before the creation of various physical entities: the earth, the depths, the springs of water, the mountains, and the hills. Since Christ’s flesh cannot have existed before all these physical entities were created, Marcellus is forced to interpret these non-literally. So, he interprets them figuratively as references to the apostles and their successors. In other words, Christ existed before the apostles and their successors and became the way of piety and salvation for them³².

29 ET III,2,21 (GCS 14, 142,35-143,2): τὸ γὰρ μέγα κτῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ μονογενὴς υἱὸς ἦν, καθ’ ὃ μὲν ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγένητο υἱὸς ὡν αὐτοῦ, καθ’ ὃ δὲ τοῖς πᾶσιν κοινωφελὴς καὶ σωτήριος καθέστηκεν, τὸ μέγιστον καὶ τιμιώτατον κτῆμα τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπάρχων τε καὶ ὠνομασμένος.

30 Cf. ET III,2,21-22.

31 Cf. ET III,2,23.

32 Eusebius summarizes Marcellus’s interpretation of Proverb 8:23-25 at ET III,2,27-34.

Eusebius disagrees with this interpretation too. For Eusebius, verses 23-25 complement the creation narrative in Genesis 1, mentioning the creation of things not explicitly mentioned there, but also showing the pre-existence of the Word, his rule over the universe, and his characteristic belonging to the Father³³. Eusebius also faults Marcellus for thinking that people were pious and saved only after the incarnation; what about the Old Testament prophets and patriarchs? asks Eusebius. Surely, the way of salvation did not begin with the incarnation since the Old Testament prophets and patriarchs were saved by the ministry of the pre-incarnate Word. Accordingly, it makes more sense to understand the speaker of these verses as Wisdom rather than the Savior's flesh, since the pre-existent Word became the way of piety and salvation even for the patriarchs and prophets³⁴. Eusebius investigates each physical entity on its own - the earth³⁵, the depths³⁶, springs of water³⁷, and mountains and hills³⁸ - and challenges Marcellus's figurative interpretation. It is not necessary to summarize each, but one critique of Marcellus found throughout is that Marcellus has invented figurative interpretations of the physical entities that ignore how Scripture customarily speaks of these entities. In other words, the customary usage of Scripture allows for a wide variety of figural interpretations of these entities, but Marcellus has ignored all these and made them refer to a single thing.

And so, Eusebius rejects Marcellus's figural interpretation of verses 23-25 and prefers a literal interpretation because he thinks the person of Wisdom is the speaker of these texts and this makes it clear that Wisdom pre-existed the physical creation. If Christ's flesh is the speaker of these verses, it results in nonsense or at least strained figural interpretations of Scripture that ignore its customary habits of language. However, Eusebius admits that there can be a figural interpretation of these verses that sees the mountains and hills as the heavenly and angelic powers created by God, something not mentioned in the stand-

33 Cf. ET III,2,24-26.

34 Cf. ET III,3,1-9.

35 Cf. ET III,3,11-13.

36 Cf. ET III,3,14-19.

37 Cf. ET III,3,20-27.

38 Cf. ET III,3,27-33.

ard account in Genesis 1³⁹. This admission is in conformity with Eusebius's understanding that verses 23-25 are complementary to the creation narrative in Genesis 1.

Third, Marcellus does not appear to have connected his interpretation of Proverbs 8:27-30 with the preceding verses. For he sees verses 27-30 as referring to the Word after it came forth from God to assist in the making of the universe⁴⁰. The hallmark idea of Eusebius reappears here: there is one person speaking in these verses. Eusebius accuses Marcellus of gross inconsistency: if these verses are spoken by the Word, why not the earlier ones in Proverbs 8 since there is no indication of the change of speaker⁴¹? Rather, says Eusebius, the Word was together with and present to God before the creation of the universe, and he assisted God in the work of creation. Eusebius spends considerable time explaining how the Word co-operated with God. He imagines the Word's co-operation with God in creation to be something like the Father being the source of the design of creation and the Son executing the plan. The fact that the Word says "I was present with him" shows that the Word was not internal to the mind of God as Marcellus thought, but was a living and subsistent Word who pre-existed all creation.

4. Conclusion

In distinct works of pedagogy, apologetics, and theological polemics written over a span of more than twenty years, Eusebius provides three major interpretations of Proverbs 8:12-31 that are consistent, in spite of differences in genre, time, and context. Eusebius saw the "events" in Proverbs 8 as occurring "before all ages". At this point Wisdom has already been generated, and was already in existence with God, and was pre-existent in relation to creation. The main "action" that verse 22 suggests is the Father's appointing the Son as the ruler over creation. He does not see Proverbs 8:22-31 as primarily about Wisdom's generation and origin from the Father (though this is obviously true), and still less as affirming that the Son was created *ex nihilo*. His emphases

39 Cf. ET III,3,33-40.

40 Cf. ET III,3,41-44.

41 Cf. ET III,3,44-49.

may be different in the anti-Marcellan works, but Eusebius never explicitly speaks of the Father and Son as co-eternal because the Father alone was eternal and unbegotten. Yet at the same time he never speaks of a “gap” between Father and Son: his affirmation of the co-existence of Father and Son, and the analogies that he uses suggest a simultaneous existence of Father and Son that is functionally co-eternal and in line with later pro-Nicene understandings of the co-eternity of Father and Son.

This account of Eusebius’s interpretation of Proverbs 8:22-31 has necessarily had to give a rapid treatment of lots of fascinating material and even to omit some of it. But I find it quite remarkable - and perhaps even providential? - that his earlier interpretation in GEI and DE had so well prepared him to refute Marcellus many years later. Of course, he does not simply repeat himself, but presents his basic convictions in a revised package of argumentation that is tailor-made to reveal the many faults of Marcellus’s exegesis. In terms of rhetoric, Eusebius depicts Marcellus as a bad exegete of Scripture and himself as the master of the interpretative art.

