**Eusebius as Reader of Philostratus and Hierocles**

**Apologetics, Interpretation and Authority**

Adam Kemezis  
Univ. of Alberta  
kemezis@ualberta.ca

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Philiost. VA 1.2.1</th>
<th>People still do not recognize [Apollonius] for his genuine wisdom, which he cultivated in a philosophical, wholesome way. Rather they either praise one or other aspect of the man or, since he spent time with the Magi of Babylon and the Brachmans of Indian and the Naked Ones in Egypt, they suppose he was a magos and assail his philosophy as sorcery.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Eusebius Hier. 1.2</td>
<td>Our business is only to examine the part about Apollonius, since here, for the first time in all that has been written against us we see this figure specifically set beside and compared with Our Savior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lact. Inst. 5.2.12-17</td>
<td>The second [of two pagan apologists, i.e. Hierocles] made a more telling version of the same argument. He was then one of the judges, and took a leading role in carrying out persecutions. Not content with that crime, he then attacked in writing those whom he had brought to ruin. So he wrote two books, not &quot;against the Christians,&quot; since he didn't want it to look like a hostile attack, but &quot;to the Christians,&quot; so people would think he was offering polite and kindly advice. In these he tried to prove the holy scriptures false on the grounds that they entirely contradicted themselves. He brought out certain passages that appeared to be odds with each other. He listed so many of them, and in such detail, that he seemed to have once been a follower of their teachings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a. Lact. Inst. 5.3.7-10, 16</td>
<td>Then [Hierocles], while he was tearing down [Jesus'] miracles without actually saying they hadn't happened, also wanted to show that Apollonius had done as much or better. I'm surprised he left out Apuleius, whose many miracles are so often related. Why, then, you deluded fool, does nobody worship Apollonius as a god? Except maybe you, he's certainly the right sort of god for you, and the real god will punish both of you for eternity. And if Christ was a magus because he did miracles, then certainly Apollonius must have been a more skilled one, since, as you tell it, when Domitian wanted to punish him, suddenly he was nowhere to be found in the courtroom, whereas Jesus was caught and nailed to a cross. Maybe, though, he wants to assert that Christ is being outrageous by setting himself up as god, so it will seem Apollonius was more modest since although, as Hierocles would have it, he did greater deeds, still he did not claim that for himself. [arguments why it is absurd to think anyone would not want to be considered immortal] &quot;My point is not,&quot; says Hierocles, &quot;that we should not consider Apollonius a god because he didn't want it, but rather so it will be evident that we, who do not immediately turn every miracle into evidence of divinity, are wiser than you, who believe someone is a god based on the smallest uncanny occurrence.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Philiost. VA 1.2.1</th>
<th>οὕπω δὲ οἱ ἰδίωται γεγόνσκοιν απὸ τῆς ἑλθίνης σοφίας, ἵνα φιλοσόφως τα καὶ ψυχός ἐπίσημαν, ἀλλὰ ὁ μὲν ὁ δὲ τὸ ἐπάνει τινάν ἄνδρος, οἱ δὲ ἐπεὶ δὴ μάγοι Βαβυλωνίων καὶ ἰδιόν Βραχμάσα καὶ τοῖς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ Γυμνοῖς συνεγένετο, μάγον ἤγονται αὐτὸν καὶ διαβάλλουσιν ὡς βασιλία σοφοῖν, καθὼς γεγόντοντες:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Eusebius Hier. 1.2</td>
<td>μόνε δὲ εἰκότως νυνι τά περί τοῦ Ἀπολλωνίου ἐποψήμεθα, ἐπὶ καὶ μόνον παρὰ τοὺς πάποτε καθ’ ἕμων γεγραφότας ἐξάρετος νῦν τούτω γέγονεν ἢ τοῦτο πρὸς τὸν ἡμέτερον σωτῆρα παράθεσις τα χειρὶ παραδείσις.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lact. Inst. 5.2.12-17</td>
<td>alius eadem materiam mordaciis scriptis, qui erat tunc unus e numero judicum et qui auctor in primis faciendae persecutionis fuit, quo scelere non contentus etiam scriptis eos quos adfliserat insectus est. compositum enim libellos duos, non contra Christianos, ne inimice insectari videretur, sed ad Christianos, ut humane ac benignse consulere putaretur. in quibus ita falsitatem scripturae argueret conatus est, tamquam sibi esset tota consulere putaretur. in quibus ita falsitatem scripturae argueret conatus est, tamquam sibi esset tota consulere putaretur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a. Lact. Inst. 5.3.7-10, 16</td>
<td>idem cum facta eius mirabilia destrueret nec tamen negaret, voluit ostendere Apollonium vel paria vel etiam maiora fecisse. mirum quod Apuleium praetermisit, cuius solent et multa et mira memorari. cur iturit, o delirium caput, nemo Apollonion pro deo colit? nisi forte tu solus, illo scilicet deo dignus, cum quo te in sempiternum verus deus puent. si magus Christus, quia mirabilia feicit perior utique Apollonius qui ut describis cum Dominicus eum punire vellet, repente in iudicio non comparuit quam ille qui et reprehensus est et cruci adfixus. at enim ex hoc ipso forte insolentiam Christi voluit arguerre, quod deum se constituerit, ut ille verecundior fuisse videatur, qui cum maiora faceret, ut hic putat, tamen id sibi non adrogaverit. [...] non inquit hoc dico, idicirco Apollonion non haberi deum, quia noluerit, sed ut appareat nos sapientiores esse qui adhuc Deus creditistis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Indeed he expresses wonder and approval, saying that [Apollonius] did wonders “by some divine and inexpressible wisdom and not by the charlatan tricks of a sophist.” He believes and doggedly affirms without any proof that somehow that was just how it really happened. Listen to what he says, word for word: “They cry up and down, exalting how Jesus restored sight to the blind and did marvels of that kind.” And then after a bit he continues “So let us then examine how much better and shrewder we are in understanding such things and what our ideas are about men of outstanding virtue.”

[Hierocles] then recounts [Apollonius'] marvels starting from the beginning, after which he adds the following, in his own words: “Why have I brought up these things? So that one may compare our careful and steady judgement in each instance with the Christians’ empty-headedness, given that when someone has done such things, we think of him not as a god, but a man pleasing to the gods. They, on the other hand, proclaim Jesus a god because of a few fairy stories.”

If I can be so bold as to compare the “gullibility” and “empty-headedness” with which we are charged with the “careful and steady judgement in each instance” of our truth-loving author, let us examine not who was the more divine, nor which one did the more remarkable and numerous miracles, nor how it was only our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ whose coming among humanity was prophesied through divine inspiration so many thousands of years ago by the wise men of the Jews nor [various other instances of Jesus’ unique significance] To look for such things in Apollonius’ case, or even to ask about them, would be senseless. Let us only consider the writings of Philostratus, from which we can on the contrary establish that he does not deserve to be counted as a decent or moral man, never mind a philosopher. There is no reason this Apollonius can be compared with our Savior Christ, to judge from the work of this writer whom the “truth-loving author” says attained much learning but who has no regard for truth.

Another writer engaged in the same quarrel might have attacked straightaway, laying into the man he was speaking against as his hated enemy. I, however, my friend, have always thought of the Tyanean as a wise man in human terms, and I would be happy to remain of that view and if you asked me, I would deliver my opinion of him thus: If someone wants to rank the man alongside whatever philosopher, and doesn’t then go on to bother me with silly stories about him, I have no problem with that. But if some Assyrian Damis, or Philostratus, or any other author or storyteller thinks they can cross the line and set their sights beyond philosophy? They claim they’re not talking about charlatanny, but they give the man such a load of doings and sayings, dressing him in the Pythagorean discipline like a theater-mask. Then for me there’s no more philosopher, just a donkey hiding in a lion’s skin. We find out he’s really just a sophist begging from town to town, nothing in the world but a charlatan, no philosopher at all.
7. Euseb. Hier. 35.1-2

episthēsai δ’ ἀξίων δ’ ἄλλης τῆς πραγματείας, ὡς ὅτι κἂν ἀληθεύειν δοθῇ τῷ συγγραφεῖ παράρδοξα, συνεργεῖ δαιμόνιον ἐκατόν τοῦτο διαπεράσθαι τούτων σοφῶν δείκνυται, [...] τοῦτο δὲ παρίσταστι σοφῆς τὸ μὴ δὴ ὅλου καὶ περὶ πάντων τὴν πρόγνωσιν αὐτῶν ἀποσώκειν, ἀπὸδε σὲ ἐν πλείστοις καὶ πυθάνασθαι δὴ ἤγοναιν, ὅπερ οὐκ ἦν, εἰ δειαὶ ἀρετῆς μετὴν αὐτῶν, πεισόνθω.

One should realize, though, that through this whole story [of the run-up to Ap.'s trial], even if one accepts that the author is telling the truth about the miracles, he makes it clear that all of them were done with the assistance of demons. [examples of demonic-seeming actions]. This is clear from the way he does not have clairvoyance the whole time and about everything, but is often at a loss and asks things out of ignorance, which would never have happened if he enjoyed divine powers.

8a. Euseb. Hier. 20

τοῦτα Ἑρωκλεῖ τὰ ἀνωτάτο καὶ καθολὸ δικαστήρια πεπεστευμένων μετὰ ἀντίστασις ἀληθῆ καὶ πιστά εἶναι δοκεῖ καὶ ἱμῶν μὲν σύγχροα καὶ κοινότης πλείστη ὡς κατέγνωσιν παρ’ αὐτῷ, αὐτὸς δὲ τοιουτοῦ Philostратο πιστεύων αὐτοῦ δὴ ἰσχύει σεμνύεται λέγων ἑπεικονιώμενα γε μην, διὰ βέλτων καὶ συνετῶτερον ἡμῶν ἐκδοξοῦμα τοὐς αὐτάτα, καὶ ἤπειρόν τῶν ἑγονότων ἄριστον ἴσην γνώμην." And Hierocles, entrusted as he is with high and far-reaching judicial powers, after holding a great inquest, finds these things true and trustworthy. For all that he accuses us of so much gullibility and empty-headedness, he credits such accounts from Philostratus and talks them up thus: "So let us then examine how much better and shrewder we are in understanding such things and what our ideas are about men of outstanding virtue.

8b. Euseb. Hier. 24

πολλὰ κάγαθα γένοιτο πραγμάτων ἡμᾶς ἀπολύσασιν τῷ συγγραφεῖ δῆλα γάρ, ὡς ἀληθῆ καὶ τοιαύτα, ὅτε βροντᾶς καὶ ἀνέμως ἐν πίθοις τρίποδά τε ἐκ λίθου φοιτῶντας αὐτομάτους καὶ σύνοχους ἀπὸ χαλκοῦ περιπελανεῖν ἐν κόκλῳ τάς κλίκια προστήρυσε διὰ τῆς περὶ τοιουτῶν ὡς ἀληθῶν ἀργηθέσι καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀπὰντων ἐξεφηνε ταῦτα καὶ διήλεγξε τὴν μυθολογίαν.

Hurrhah for the historian who has made our job so much easier! It's clear now how true all of this must be, since when he's told us about thunder and wind in jars, and stone tripods moving by themselves, and bronze wine-servers passing the cups around, and made out that all this and the rest is true, he makes plain and indeed proves what a load of silly stories it all is.

9. Euseb. Hier. 48.2

taute μὲν οὖν ταύτη. εἰ δ’ ἐπί τοις ἐν φιλοσόφων διατριβής ἀξίων ἐπι καταλέγειν τις τὸν ἀνάρα, λείλετεται, ὡς ἄρα εἰ ἀποκαθήσαν τῆς ἐξεσθεν λύμης, ἀτάρ καὶ τῆς ἀπὸ τῆς γραφῆς ἐπεισκυκλομένης αὐτὸ σκεύης, φθόνοις πάς αὐτοὺς ἔκδοκαν ἡ ἔνθ’ ὄρος δ’ εἰ ἁλλιτείας προὼν τις ὑπὲρ φιλοσόφων ἐκθεάζει αὐτὸν πειράτο, λάθο ἄν αὐτὸ γότος ἄτερχας διαβολήν ἐπενεργήσας, ὡς ταυτά τὰ συγγράμματα σοφιστικῶς ἀναπεκαλμένα οὐδὲ φιλοσοφός ἐκλέγεται καὶ διεισὶ τάνδρος διαμεθελής παρὰ τοῖς νοῦν ἔχουσιν ἐμοῖς δοκεὶ περίεργες.

That's all there is to say about that. If after all this someone still wants to list him in the philosophical schools, let this be said: if they will purify him of the stain others have put on him, and strip off the costume this book has dressed him up in, they're welcome to do so. But if someone goes beyond the truth and tries to make him out something more than a philosopher, he will certainly, without knowing it, load on him another accusation of being a charlatan. Thus in my opinion these sophistically contrived writings do nothing but expose the man and provide a formidable indictment of him in the eyes of any person of sense.

Bibliography


Cambridge.


