
Who wrote the pseudo-Athanasian *De Trinitate*? This question is still an utter mystery. Nowadays, the traditional ascription to Athanasius supported by the majority of manuscripts has no followers at all. Several proposals starting in the 17th century (Vigilius of Thapsus, Eusebius of Vercelli and Gregory of Elvira), faced serious opposition and failed to draw a universal scholarly consensus. The Vigilian authorship proposed first by Chifflet was refuted by Ficker (1897) and no one followed it thereafter.¹ The Eusebian authorship was first proposed by Morin (1898) and rejected by the same author two years later.² The Gregorian authorship followed almost the same fate as the Eusebian proposal. It was first proposed by Morin (1900) and refuted by the same author two years later.³ Unlike the Vigilian and Gregorian authorship, however, the Eusebian authorship has attracted supporters intermittently over a century. As Dattrino rightly observes, on the matter of the authorship of the *De Trinitate*, one can divide previous scholarship into two groups: those who support the Eusebian authorship and those who oppose it.⁴ I side with those scholars who find se-

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¹ For an introduction to the origin of the Vigilian authorship and its refutation, see Gerhard Ficker, *Studien zu Vigilius von Thapsus* (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1897) 42–79.


⁴ Dattrino provides a helpful list of a number of scholars and their works on this very question in L. Dattrino, *Pseudo-Atanasio: La Trinità* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1980) 8–9.
rious problems with the Eusebian authorship such as Künstle, Saltet, Dattrino, Simonetti, etc.

The aim of this essay is to demonstrate that Eusebius probably did not produce the pseudo-Athanasian *De Trinitate*. This essay has been divided into four parts. Part One will provide a brief introduction to the text in question, namely, the seven books of the pseudo-Athanasian *De Trinitate*. Part Two will examine the origin and history of the Eusebian authorship. Here we will summarize several arguments for the Eusebian authorship and at the same time, point out how shaky and fragile these arguments are. Finally and most importantly, Parts Three and Four will compare and contrast the surviving writings about and of Eusebius of Vercelli with the *De Trinitate* to see any affinity between them on historical as well as theological grounds. As a final remark before the discussion, anyone who deals with fundamental questions concerning the pseudo-Athanasian *De Trinitate*, must bear in mind that it is always a matter of probability, not of certainty. There is no one single piece of evidence that will silence all debates. Sometimes there is need for much inference due to the scantiness of relevant information. A number of arguments for or against each issue are not conclusive for either position when they are individually considered. They are to be regarded as a whole. If all sources and arguments are considered comprehensively, the present author will argue that they orient us toward a certain specific direction rather than another one.

**Part One. Brief Introduction to the Text in Question**

When one picks up a Latin Migne vol. 62, there is found a treatise entitled “On the Trinity Twelve Books written by Vigilius of Thapsus under the name of Saint Athanasius Bishop of Alexandria.” This treatise, however, was not written by Vigilius, nor are the twelve books (I–XII) the work of one single author. According to contemporary scholarly consensus, only the first seven books (I–VII) comprise a unit written by one author and the remaining books (VIII–XII) share noth-

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(5) What can be said positively about the identity of the pseudonymous author will be outside the scope of this essay.