WHAT EUSEBIUS KNEW: THE GENESIS OF THE *VITA CONSTANTINI*

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THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP between Eusebius of Caesarea and the subject of his biographical essay *De vita Constantini* (*VC*) long was a given of modern scholarship. In the fifteenth century, Reginald Pecock could take it for granted that Eusebius "was lyuyng and conuersaunt with . . . Constantyn, and was as priuey with Constantyn in the counceilis of his herte and of his conscience, as a confessour."[1] Lately, however, this assumption has come under suspicion, with the author of a major study concluding that the bishop probably "met and conversed with the emperor" on no more than four occasions.[2] The assessment appears to be confirmed by the documents Eusebius included in the *VC:* although they are numerous, almost all deal with matters in which the bishop was directly or indirectly involved and as such are the type that he might have had at hand in his personal archives in Caesarea.[3]

I wish to thank Fergus Millar and B. H. Warmington for their criticism of early drafts of this article. At a later stage, C. E. V. Nixon and the Editor saved me from numerous embarrassments. Responsibility for remaining errors is my own. For the *De vita Constantini* I have used the edition of F. Winkelmann, "*Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin*," Eusebius Werke 1.1 (Berlin, 1975); for the *De laudibus Constantini*, that of I. A. Heikel, *Eusebius Werke*, vol. 1, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte 7 (Leipzig, 1902). After completing this article, I learned that T. D. Barnes now proposes a date of 325 for the inception of the *VC*. I am grateful to Professor Barnes for allowing me to see a copy of the paper in which he presents his argument, "Panegyric, History and Hagiography in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*" (forthcoming).

1. *The Repressor of over much blaming of the Clergy*, 3. 12, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores 19.2 (London, 1860), p. 352; see D. M. Webb, "The Truth About Constantine: History, Hagiography and Confusion," in *Religion and Humanism*, ed. K. Robbins, Studies in Church History, vol. 17 (Oxford, 1981), p. 97. For some characterizations of Eusebius by modern scholars, see H. A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations*, University of California Publications: Classical Studies, vol. 15 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1976), p. 7, n. 4.

2. T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), p. 266, identifies the four occasions as: (1) June–July 325, during the Council of Nicaea; (2) December 327, the Council of Nicomedia; (3) November 335, at a meeting that led to Athanasius' exile; (4) July 336, delivery of the *De laudibus Constantini*. Barnes extends this last occasion to include the Council of Constantinople that condemned Marcellus, which he dates to the summer of 336.

3. Of the fifteen documents quoted in the *VC*, only one—Constantine's letter to Shapur (*VC* 4. 9–13)—has no obvious reason to have been in Eusebius' files. For recent study of the documents, see C. Dupont, "Décisions et textes constantiniens dans les oeuvres d'Eusèbe de Césarée," *Viator* 2 (1971): 1–32; C. Pietri, "Constantin en 324: Propagande et théologie impériales d'après les documents de la *vita Constantini*," in *Crise et redressement dans les provinces européennes de l'Empire (milieu du III^e^–milieu du IV^e^ siècle ap. J.C.): Actes du colloque de Strasbourg (décembre 1981)*, ed. E. Frézouls (Strasbourg, 1983), pp. 63–90; B. H. Warmington, "The Sources of Some Constantinian Documents in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and *Life of Constantine*," in *Papers of the Ninth Oxford Patristics Conference, 1983*, ed. E. A. Livingstone, Studia Patristica, vol. 18.1 (Kalamazoo, 1985), pp. 93–98.

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Another given of modern scholarship confirms and explains this limited selection. It is assumed that Eusebius conceived and wrote the *VC* only in the brief interval between the emperor's death on 22 May 337 and his own death no more than two years later, probably leaving the manuscript unfinished.[4]

These two positions have evolved independently of each other. Taken together, however, they promise a simple explanation of the inconsistencies and distortions that a century of critical scholarship has uncovered in the *VC,* for their effect is to leave the aged bishop little enough time to compose, much less conduct the research for, his work. Thus an error of fact or interpretation can be explained by either a lack of time or a lack of information or both, without need to consider the bishop's motives or scholarly goals. Yet in an important passage (*VC* 3. 24) Eusebius states plainly that he had access to many more documents than he included, restricting their use so as not to interrupt the flow of his narrative. Combined with his often-quoted (and just as often misunderstood) intention to concentrate only on the pious activities of his subject (*VC* 1. 21), this statement surely cautions us against drawing conclusions from the *VC* without trying first to understand when and why Eusebius wrote it, and how he used the information at his disposal.[5]

Exactly how much did Eusebius know? We may never be able to answer this question completely. But there are indications that he had more time and opportunity to learn than the most recent scholarship allows. Embedded in the last book of the *VC* are hints that the bishop was planning a biography of the emperor as early as 335, and that between then and Constantine's death he made at least one otherwise-unrecorded visit to Constantinople, this time for the specific purpose of gathering information for his project. In the same book, however, traces survive of both a personal agenda that influenced the bishop's treatment of his emperor and at least one serious misunderstanding—if not disagreement—between them. Paradoxically, therefore, while this investigation will suggest that Eusebius had a greater opportunity to acquire information about Constantine than is currently supposed, it will also call into question his reliability as a spokesman for Constantine's intentions.

I

Attached to the *VC* is a speech that Eusebius delivered on the occasion of Constantine's Thirtieth Jubilee, the *De laudibus Constantini* (*LC*).

4. G. Pasquali, "Die Composition der *Vita Constantini* des Eusebius," *Hermes* 45 (1910): 369–86, esp. p. 384 for the date. Warmington, "Sources," p. 96, leaves open the question when Eusebius conceived the *VC*; Pietri, "Constantin en 324," p. 69, considers it a response to the uncertainties that followed Constantine's death.

5. Averil Cameron, "Eusebius of Caesarea and the Rethinking of History," in *Tria Corda: Scritti in onore di Arnaldo Momigliano*, ed. E. Gabba (Como, 1983), p. 72, comments on the connections scholars have drawn between Eusebius' use of his sources and his credibility. Cf. *VC* 3. 59, where Eusebius also writes of letters intentionally omitted. B. H. Warmington has pointed out to me that the context of Eusebius' remarks indicates that the letters concerned only ecclesiastical topics; but the

The last eight chapters of the *LC* (11–18) clearly belong to something else: they comprise a discourse on the Incarnation, presented as a response to those who have caviled at the importance that the emperor attached to the site of Christ's Sepulcher.[6] If these chapters are from the speech on the subject of the Sepulcher that Eusebius says he delivered in Constantine's presence (*VC* 4. 33), then the peroration may show that the bishop was already thinking along the lines that would lead to an imperial biography.

Having discussed the working of the Savior through Constantine's deeds, Eusebius closes this oration by begging a favor of the emperor, as was the privilege of panegyrists.[7] But his request is unusual (*LC* 18. 1–3):

> You yourself, my Emperor, should leisure permit, could tell us if you wished of the countless manifestations of your Savior and his countless personal visits during sleep. . . . You might, for instance, fittingly tell us about the manifest support by your Champion and Guardian God in battles, the destruction of enemies and conspirators, protection from dangers, solutions of the insoluble, . . . about your forethought for the general good . . . , about your undertaking of enormous projects.

This request for biographical information must be combined with another favor begged by Eusebius at the very outset of the speech (*LC* 11. 7): "I pray that I may be a kind of interpreter of your intentions and become the reporter of your devout soul." Together, the two at least indicate that the idea of a biography of the emperor was already formed in Eusebius' mind.[8]

The occasion for this address most likely was the immediate aftermath of the events that led to the exile of Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria to Gaul on 7 November 335.[9] In the summer of that year, Eusebius had presided over a Council summoned to Tyre to judge the eloquent and fiery champion of Nicene orthodoxy in his long-simmering feud with Meletian schismatics in Egypt. In October, he was one of a delegation of bishops from the Council who traveled to Constantinople to report to the emperor, only to discover that Athanasius had outpaced them and convinced Constantine to review the charges himself. Eusebius attended

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existence of a collection of the emperor's writings at a later date is indicated by both Soc. *Hist. Eccl.* 1. 9. 39 and Joh. Lyd. *De mag.* 2. 30, 3. 33: see S. Mazzarino, *Antico, tardantico ed èra costantiniana*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1974), pp. 100–101.

6. For what follows, see at greater length Drake, *Praise*, pp. 30–45.

7. Few orators will have been as direct in their demand for a quid pro quo as was Libanius in *Epist.* 175 (λόγον τε κομίζων καὶ φασκώλιον κενόν, ὅπως τὸν μὲν εἴποι, τὸ δὲ ἐμπλήσαι), though one of Constantine's earlier panegyrists came close to using his peroration to plead for his children and students: *Pan. Lat.* 6 (7). 23. 1–2. In citing the passage of Libanius, G. Boissier, *La fin du paganisme: Étude sur les dernières luttes religieuses en Occident au quatrième siècle*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1903), p. 216, makes the useful point that permission to deliver such addresses in antiquity was itself a form of patronage.

8. Cf. Drake, *Praise*, p. 180, n. 1, and more recently Cameron, "Eusebius," p. 78.

9. The date is confirmed in A. Martin and M. Albert, eds., *Histoire "acéphale" et Index syriaque des Lettres festales d'Athanase d'Alexandrie*, Sources chrétiennes 317 (Paris, 1985), p. 232. In "When Was the *De laudibus Constantini* Delivered?" *Historia* 24 (1975): 345–56, I accepted the existence of a council summoned by Constantine to hear the case against Athanasius. I since have been persuaded by T. D. Barnes, "Emperors and Bishops, A.D. 324–344: Some Problems," *AJAH* 3 (1978): 62–63, that this council never met.

a stormy meeting, this time in the emperor's presence, at which Constantine himself ordered the flamboyant archbishop into exile.

Eusebius says little of these events, and nothing at all of Athanasius, in the *VC*. But he does speak of a happier moment that occurred between the meetings at Tyre and Constantinople—the dedication of Constantine's new Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. The crown jewel of an ambitious imperial program of church-building, the church was dedicated with a full octave festival, celebrated September 13–20. As both metropolitan of Palestine and the Church's leading scholar, Eusebius played a chief role in the dedication, delivering several orations (as he tells us in *VC* 4. 45) to commemorate the event. Constantine had lavished not only his resources but also his personal interest on this church.[10] It is inconceivable that the just-completed dedication would not have been discussed by the two men when they met in Constantinople less than two months later; and this in turn would fit the occasion recalled at *VC* 4. 33, when the emperor's piety had emboldened Eusebius to ask permission "to deliver an account of the Savior's memorial in his hearing." This is presumably the same account to which he refers at *VC* 4. 46, now with a promise to append it to the *VC*:[11]

> As for the Church of the Savior and the Cave of Salvation, the objects of imperial art and multitudes of offerings provided in gold, silver, and precious stones, these we have detailed to the best of our ability in a separate composition (σύγραμμα) dedicated to the emperor himself. This account we shall publish in its proper place following the subject now under discussion.

But are these surviving chapters from that work? At *VC* 4. 46 Eusebius describes his treatise as if it were a detailed account of the physical structure of the new church, and nothing of the sort survives in *LC* 11–18. On these grounds, T. D. Barnes has argued that the chapters in the *LC* are not the speech Eusebius gave in Constantine's presence but belong to one of the other speeches that he delivered during the dedication ceremony in Jerusalem, mistakenly appended after the bishop's death by his editor in place of the work Eusebius intended.[12]

As internal references show, Barnes is surely correct to identify these chapters as a speech given at Jerusalem.[13] But does it follow that an entirely different speech must have been composed for Constantine's hearing? There is a problem of time. Eusebius' remark at *VC* 4. 33, to the effect that he sought permission to speak, indicates that this was not a speech for which Constantine had asked in advance; the initiative was Eusebius'. Yet until the events surrounding Athanasius' exile there was

10. *VC* 3. 30–32 reproduces a letter from Constantine to Bishop Macarius of Jerusalem detailing his ideas about the construction and indicating familiarity with existing plans; see H. A. Drake, "Eusebius on the True Cross," *JEH* 36 (1985): 8–11.

11. The presumption follows from Eusebius' statement in the same chapter that the *LC* was only the second occasion he had to speak in Constantine's palace; see Drake, *Praise*, pp. 40–42.

12. "Two Speeches by Eusebius," *GRBS* 18 (1977): 341–45.

13. E.g., *LC* 11. 2 πόλεώς τε τῆσδε, which in context must denote Jerusalem; see further Drake, *Praise*, pp. 35–36.

no reason for Eusebius to expect to be in Constantinople in November; and in the months immediately preceding he was completely preoccupied by the Councils of Tyre and Jerusalem. The strain of these preoccupations is reflected in the surviving address: except for an introduction linking it to the Sepulcher and a conclusion that uses Constantine's successes to demonstrate the truth of the Savior's power, it consists in large part of material warmed over from an earlier work, *De theophaneia*.[14] When, therefore, could Eusebius have written an entirely new work for Constantine's benefit? At most, he might have added a new introduction and conclusion to one of his addresses from Jerusalem, tailoring it to the imperial occasion—though even this much is problematic.[15] Yet it is worth noting that precisely these parts of the surviving work, the introduction and conclusion, contain his request for imperial support.

But what of the conflict between the contents of the surviving work, which for convenience I have entitled *De sepulchro Christi* (*SC*), and the description of it in *VC* 4. 46? It is necessary to look again at *VC* 4. 33, where Eusebius talks about the speech he asked permission to deliver. The emperor, Eusebius here reports, insisted on standing throughout the address, despite its length and Eusebius' repeated pleas for him to be seated, "saying at one point that it would not be right to listen casually to discourses about God and at another that this suited and benefited him, for it was pious to listen to divine matters on one's feet" (4. 33. 2). Eusebius included this scene not to boast of his own eloquence but to illustrate the emperior's piety; a speech that simply described the finished building, in however much detail, should not have provoked this response from either Constantine or Eusebius. On the contrary, the emperor's references to "discourses about God" (περὶ θεοῦ κινουμένων δογμάτων) and "divine matters" (τῶν θείων) make it sound very much like the work that survives in chapters 11–18 of the *LC*.

The fact remains, however, that Eusebius describes this speech at *VC* 4. 46 (using, incidentally, the same word, σύγραμμα, that occurs in the first sentence of the *SC*)[16] simply as a physical description. He may have been influenced to think first of this aspect of his treatise by the immediately preceding chapter of the *VC*, which was devoted to the dedication festivities. But something more must also be involved; for given the season and Constantine's interest, the speech must have included some description of the site. Yet there is none in the surviving chapters. Why?

14. In his edition of the *LC*, Heikel identified the following sections (to cite only the longer passages) with the Syriac version of *De theophaneia:* 11. 8–12. 16 = 1. 2–34; 13. 1–5 = 2. 3, 5–13; 13. 6–10 = 2. 55–65; 14. 2–12 = 3. 39; 15. 1–5 = 3. 45–55; 15. 10–13 = 3. 58–59; 16. 3–17. 15 = 3. 1–38. See in general H. Gressmann, *Studien zu Eusebs "Theophanie"* (Leipzig, 1903).

15. Custom allowed direct address to absent emperors: cf. Boissier, *Fin du paganisme*, 2:215; examples in Barnes, "Two Speeches," p. 344, n. 16.

16. Cf. *VC* 4. 46 ἐν οἰκείῳ συγγράμματι παραδόντες αὐτῷ βασιλεῖ προσεφωνήσαμεν with *LC* 11. 1 ἐν τῷ βασιλικῷ τῷδε ἀμφὶ τοῦ παμβασιλέως τῶν ὅλων συγγράμματι.

The easiest and most obvious answer lies in the third book of the *VC*. Here there is a lengthy description of both the history of the Sepulcher's site and the structures built there by Constantine (3. 25–40). Except for a copy of Constantine's letter ordering the construction (3. 30–32), easily inserted subsequently, these chapters are so close both in style and content to the address Eusebius describes at 4. 46 that they seem to explain what happened to the missing pages of that work: Eusebius eventually used them in Book 3 of the *VC*, making their presence in an appendix superfluous. Yet even if this is so, it does not explain why Eusebius still described the work as he did at *VC* 4. 46. A complete answer, therefore, calls for a closer inspection of Book 4, in the course of which the way Eusebius went about his task will become clear.

II

The fourth book of the *VC* long has been a puzzle to scholars. Whereas the first three books proceed more or less chronologically, this one breaks down into a series of random and repetitious observations referring to events over a span of at least twenty years, often in a general and programmatic way. It is now generally agreed that Eusebius died without having completed his revision of the *VC*.[17] The nature of Book 4 suggests it is the least revised of all. Yet inspection of the book in its unfinished state can yield important information about its development.

On a close reading, Book 4 is not quite the hodgepodge that it seems. Like the other books, it was divided into chapters either by Eusebius or by his editor. There are seventy-five chapters, most quite short, though a few fill as much as a page of printed text. It begins with four chapters showing Constantine's care for the welfare of his subjects, followed by nine others (5–13) that illustrate his prestige among foreign nations. Then comes a long passage of fifteen chapters (14–28) offering examples of the emperor's commitment to Christianity, followed by eleven more (29–39) that describe various efforts to elevate the moral level of his subjects.

Something different begins at 4. 40. Here Eusebius turns to specific events, beginning with Constantine's tricennalia (40, 47), the Council of Tyre (41–42), dedication of the Holy Sepulcher (43–45), and his own speeches to the emperor (46). Following this, there are several anecdotes: how Constantine scolded a priest who overpraised him (48); the marriage of Constantius II (49); and the arrival of ambassadors from India (50). Then, two chapters on the training of the emperor's sons (51–52), two on Constantine's mental and physical qualities and the length of his rule (53–54), and one more on the effectiveness of his speaking (55). The remaining chapters describe Constantine's preparations for war against Persia (56–57), the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople (58–60),

17. The pioneering work was done by Pasquali, "Die Composition," pp. 369–86. Cf. Winkelmann, *Konstantin*, pp. lvi–lvii; Barnes, *Constantine*, p. 265.

and his final sickness, baptism, death, and burial (61–73), ending with a brief summary of his blessings and rewards (74–75).

Various of these divisions may be contested, and there is some overlap in theme among them, but the general outline is clear enough. Roughly the first half of this book is meant to summarize Constantine's actions under the traditional categories of royal virtue: *iustitia, virtus, pietas,* and *philanthropia.*[18] The second half deals with events in the final two years of the emperor's life.

Was this scheme random or intentional? The question bears directly on our judgment of the worth of the *VC*. If, for instance, Eusebius had access to a large array of material or was the intimate adviser that scholars long imagined, these incidents could be considered the ones he judged particularly worthy of record. On the other hand, if he was merely the scholarly provincial that he now seems to have been, they may represent nothing more than his own limited interests and knowledge. What was the quality of Eusebius' information, and how did he gain access to it?

Something can be learned from isolating those passages where Eusebius indicates that he was an eyewitness to what he is describing. There are only five of these, three of which already have been discussed: 4. 33, 4. 45, and 4. 46, all dealing with speeches he gave in either Jerusalem or Constantinople. The fourth and fifth may refer to a single incident: at 4. 7 Eusebius indicates that he was on hand in the capital on "various occasions" to see ambassadors arrive from distant lands, and at 4. 50 he speaks specifically of ambassadors from India.[19] But there are other passages that, either by their subject or by some striking detail, also suggest direct experience. Such, for instance, is the wedding of Constantius II (4. 49), a topic that has little to recommend it for inclusion in this biography other than the likelihood that Eusebius witnessed it: the wedding occurred in conjunction with the closing ceremonies of the tricennial year in the summer of 336, which is one of the four occasions when Eusebius is known to have been with the emperor.[20] Such, too, are the descriptions of Constantine's reaction to a speaker who praised him excessively (4. 48) and of the way he dressed down an official for greed (4. 30). No date or context is given for either event, and both clearly are meant to illustrate the emperor's character. But they are the kind of detail that suggests autopsy.

It is admittedly tricky to proceed with such criteria: by these standards we would have to exclude one of the few events at which Eusebius was certainly present, the Council of Tyre (4. 41). Yet there is a remarkable

18. A fresh study of Eusebius' methods has been undertaken by G. Vigna, "The Influence of Epideictic Rhetoric on Eusebius of Caesarea's Political Theology" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1980); on the virtues, see pp. 114–40. More generally, see M. P. Charlesworth, "The Virtues of a Roman Emperor: Propaganda and the Creation of Belief," *PBA* 23 (1937): 105–33; J. Gagé, "Σταυρὸς νικοποιός: La victoire impériale dans l'empire chrétien," *RHPhR* 13 (1933): 370–400; A. Wallace-Hadrill, "The Emperor and His Virtues," *Historia* 30 (1981): 298–323.

19. Cf. Barnes, *Constantine*, p. 253, with n. 85, connecting the two passages.

20. See n. 2 above.

consistency to the results, which suggest an intention to write more of a personal memorial than a carefully weighed history. Eusebius seems to say as much in a passage to which surprisingly little attention has been paid. Precisely at the point where he turns from summarizing imperial virtues to discuss specific events, Eusebius writes (4. 39. 3):

> But it is not for us to write about each of the God-beloved's acts in order, but rather for those who have been deemed worthy to spend all the time with him. Rather, transmitting briefly in this sketch the things that we know well (ἡμῖν διεγνωσμένα), we shall pass over to the final periods of his life.

Is it too much to take ἡμῖν διεγνωσμένα to mean "in which we participated"? The events immediately following this remark are the tricennalia, the Councils of Tyre and Jerusalem, and Eusebius' own speeches before Constantine. The anecdotal material also could be assigned comfortably to one or another of these occasions.

Eusebius' own actions in 335 and the years following thus form the key to the structure of at least the latter part of this book. But there are indications that this theme of personal involvement might extend to the first part as well. For just as Eusebius' general statement about foreign ambassadors at 4. 7 seems to match the specific embassy of 4. 50, so too other general remarks in this part of the book seem to correspond to specific statements in the second half. For instance, descriptions of Constantine's habits of prayer, particularly at Easter (4. 17, 22), fit nicely with his last Easter vigil (recounted at 4. 57, 60), and description of the topics of his discourse at 4. 29 fits with a specific speech mentioned in 4. 55. Indeed, even the Persian request for an alliance at 4. 8 might correspond to the Persian embassy specified at 4. 57, and Constantine's request to bishops to pray for him at 4. 14 might refer to the promise of bishops to pray on his behalf at 4. 56. If these passages do correspond, as they appear to do, then the whole of Book 4 will have grown out of events between 335 and 337.[21]

On the other hand, in chapters 25–28 Eusebius summarizes various of Constantine's laws to illustrate his piety. Those that can be dated by passages surviving in later codes are not from any one period, but cover a range of years from 319 to 335.[22] Similarly, chapters 9–13 reproduce a letter of Constantine to the Persian king Shapur II that is usually dated to the 320s; and chapter 32 refers to Constantine's *Oration to the Saints,* which is usually dated no later than 326.[23] Such dates seem to belie the

21. Barnes recognized the doublet about the ambassadors (see n. 19 above), but he has suggested that the Persian treaty belongs to the period 324–25: "Constantine and the Christians of Persia," *JRS* 75 (1985): 131.

22. *CTh* 9. 16. 2 (A.D. 319) presumably is the ban on divination to which Eusebius refers, though it is limited to private divination. The latest law Eusebius mentions here survives in *CTh* 16. 8. 5 and 16. 9. 1 (both of which represent different parts of *Const. Sirm.* 4), dating to the fall of 335; they renew an earlier law (possibly *CTh* 16. 9. 2, redated from 339 to 329: see Barnes, *Constantine*, p. 392, n. 74).

23. The Letter to Shapur still needs definitive treatment: see, most recently, D. de Decker, "Le destinataire de la lettre au Roi des Perses (Eusèbe de Césarée, *Vit. Const.*, IV, 9–13) et la conversion de l'Arménie à la religion chrétienne," *Persica* 8 (1979): 99–116. On the *Oration*, H. A. Drake, "Suggestions of Date in Constantine's *Oration to the Saints*," *AJP* 106 (1985): 335–49; D. Ison, "The Constantinian

focus on Constantine's final years. Yet even these items may prove the rule, if they represent material Eusebius only collected during an extended stay in the capital sometime after the fall of 335. If so, the general, summary way in which Eusebius here describes Constantine's laws—some of which he already remarked in specific contexts in Book 2—further suggests that the bishop still was at the stage of summarizing and organizing his evidence at the time Book 4 was written,[24] and thus that Book 4 in its present form antedates the more precise narrative of Book 2.

The idea of an extended stay in Constantinople has been precluded by the standard view that Eusebius began the *VC* only after Constantine's death, a view that leaves him too little time even to finish the work, much less undertake such a research trip, before his own death no more than two years later.[25] But once it is admitted that the idea for the *VC* was in his mind a year and a half before Constantine died, such a trip becomes more plausible. However, neither of Eusebius' two known trips to Constantinople during this period—in October 335, after the Council of Tyre, and in July 336, for the tricennalia—seems suitable for such a stay. If the Council of Constantinople, summoned to judge Marcellus of Ancyra, had been held early in 336, as once was believed, then Eusebius could well have extended his trip of October 335 through the winter of 335–36 to draw up the charges that he later published in the *Contra Marcellum*.[26] But there are now indications that Constantine, who was present at this Council, may have been on campaign at the Danube early in 336;[27] furthermore, Eusebius himself comments (*VC* 4. 33) that he returned home to his usual duties after speaking on the Sepulcher. Eusebius' other known visit occurred in the summer of 336. Yet both bishop and emperor should have been too preoccupied by scheduled events, including not only the tricennalia but also the Council of Constantinople, to allow for the type of research Eusebius hoped to conduct.

An alternative means for Eusebius to have received his information has been put forward in a brilliant piece of detective work by B. H. Warmington, who has established that the imperial *notarius* Marianus was a likely conduit for documents in Eusebius' possession. Warmington's thesis removes the need for Eusebius to have been in the capital and has the additional advantage of explaining the Constantinian docu-

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Oration to the Saints—Authorship and Background" (Ph.D. diss., King's College, London, 1985), pp. 207–11 (for the question of date); R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York, 1986), pp. 627–35.

24. His references to bans on sacrifice and idol worship at 4. 23 and 4. 25, for instance, match the laws described at 2. 44–45; see Dupont, "Décisions," p. 17.

25. So Cameron, "Eusebius," p. 87; for this reason, she sees the personalia simply as part of the *VC*'s roots in panegyric (pp. 83–84). See also n. 4 above.

26. Cf. Barnes, "Emperors and Bishops," p. 64; for a summary of its contents, see Barnes, *Constantine*, pp. 264–65. Although events subsequent to the Council led to its publication, the substance of the *Contra Marcellum* is likely to have been prepared for use by the Council of Constantinople. If Eusebius wrote this indictment, it would explain both why he was asked to prepare the published document and how he was able to do so in such a short time.

27. See Barnes, "Emperors and Bishops," p. 74, n. 77.

ments in another work not considered here, the *Historia Ecclesiastica*—although Warmington recognizes that Marianus may not have been the one who supplied these.[28] A key to the issue is the "Letter to Shapur." Before quoting it, Eusebius describes it as having been written in the emperor's own hand and then translated from Latin into Greek (4. 9): φέρεται μὲν οὖν Ῥωμαίᾳ γλώττῃ παρ' αὐτοῖς ἡμῖν καὶ τοῦτο τὸ βασιλέως ἰδιόγραφον γράμμα, μεταβληθὲν δ' ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλήνων φωνὴν γνωριμώτερον γένοιτ' ἂν τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσιν. Warmington takes φέρεται to mean that the letter was "cited" or "described" to Eusebius;[29] yet the verb could mean, more simply, "brought" or "given," indicating that Eusebius saw the original himself. The vague way in which the bishop describes Constantine's *Oration to the Saints* at *VC* 4. 55—as if he were himself ignorant of the occasion on which it was delivered—also suggests that he knew it only from an archive copy. Eusebius' references in Book 2 to a signed copy of Constantine's letter "On Piety" in his possession (*VC* 2. 23) and to yet another autograph copy, this one of Constantine's letter "To the Provincials" (*VC* 2. 47), do not certainly resolve the issue, although the very fact that the bishop had knowledge of more than one document in a Latin original might tip the scales ever so slightly in favor of an archival visit. Happily, for our present purposes the issue may be left in doubt, since either explanation establishes sources of information for Eusebius outside his normal episcopal channels.

There is, however, reason to believe that Eusebius was in the capital for one reason or another during an Easter season, for Easter emerges as an important sub-theme of Book 4. The zeal with which the emperor celebrated the festival is described at 4. 22, and the specific work of Constantine that Eusebius promises at 4. 32 to append to the *VC*—the problematical *Oration to the Saints*—takes the arrival of Good Friday as its starting point. Then, immediately after describing his own oration on the Sepulcher in 4. 33, Eusebius speaks of a tract explaining the mystic significance of Easter that he sent to the emperor, following it with a supporting document, Constantine's letter of acknowledgment (4. 34–35). Finally, there is the vigil of Constantine's last Easter (4. 57, 60), which is followed by an account of his sickness, baptism, and death.

More important than the sub-theme are the little touches that suggest Eusebius was present in Constantinople for this final Easter: the way Constantine illuminated the city with candles, for instance (4. 22), or his request to bishops "who happened to be at his court" to accompany him on campaign against Persia (4. 56). In this period as well must fall the funeral oration Constantine delivered shortly before his own death: Eusebius was sufficiently well informed about this speech to know not only its content but also the reaction of philosophers in attendance (4. 55).

28. "Sources," pp. 95–96.
29. Ibid., p. 94.

This Easter visit to Constantinople is not one of the four clearly indicated by the record.[30] Given his age and the distance of Caesarea from the capital, one could suggest that Eusebius extended his visit in the summer of 336 into a full sabbatical rather than make yet another journey the subsequent spring—his third in as many years. But either way, to be absent from his see during the Easter season surely would have been unusual. It must signal some special urgency or some special eagerness on the bishop's part. Had he finally received Constantine's consent to the request for a biography made in the speech delivered at the time of Athanasius' exile?

P. Meyer long ago voiced the suspicion that Eusebius had begun the *VC* while Constantine was still alive; but he assumed that the initiative must have been the emperor's.[31] The pattern of events unfolded here suggests otherwise: the initiative was not Constantine's but Eusebius'. The bishop brought the idea for this work with him to Constantinople in the fall of 335 and, if the sequence of events in the *VC* is any guide, followed up on his return by sending the emperor a tract on a subject of particular interest to him, Easter.

Far from suggesting the project, Constantine seems to have received it initially with hesitation, if not coolness. He thanked Eusebius for the essay on Easter (4. 35) but showed no eagerness to have him back in Constantinople: his letter requesting fifty new Bibles for the capital (4. 36) seems pointed in its advice to Eusebius to entrust delivery to one of his deacons. The most that Constantine appears to have given the bishop in response to his request in 335 is a commission to speak at his tricennalia the subsequent summer, which may even have been proffered as a means for Eusebius to demonstrate the type of work he had in mind. He responded with an address to the emperor's liking—one that couched its praise in suitably pious terms, preached an inoffensive and nonspecific brand of Christianity, and attacked only the most unrefined and offensive aspects of pagan practice.[32] Only then did he win imperial support for his project.

The chronology developed in the preceding pages may be put into tabular form as follows:

A.D. 335	
July–October	Council of Tyre
13–20 September	Council of Jerusalem: *SC* first delivered

30. See n. 2 above.

31. "De vita Constantini Eusebiana," *Festschrift dem Gymnasium Adolfinum zu Moers zu dem am 10 Aug. d. j. stattfinden Iubelfeier seines 300. jaehrigen Bestehens* (Bonn, 1882), p. 27. More recently, F. Heim, "L'influence exercée par Constantin sur Lactance: Sa théologie de la victoire," in *Lactance et son temps: Recherches actuelles. Actes du IV^e Colloque d'Études Historiques et Patristiques, Chantilly 21–23 septembre 1976*, ed. J. Fontaine and M. Perrin, Théologie historique, vol. 48 (Paris, 1978), p. 70.

32. Drake, *Praise*, pp. 46–60; see also n. 45 below.

7 November	Constantinople:
	Exile of Athanasius
	SC repeated for Constantine:
	Request for permission to write *VC*
	Invitation to deliver *LC*
	Return to Caesarea
A.D. 336	
Summer	Constantinople: Marcellus
	Tricennalia (25 July): *LC*
	Permission for *VC*
	Eusebius remains in capital?
A.D. 337	
Spring	Eusebius in Constantinople
22 May	Death of Constantine
9 September	Sons named Augusti
Fall	Eusebius completes draft of *VC* 4

III

We can now try to explain Eusebius' description of his speech to Constantine on the Holy Sepulcher at *VC* 4. 46. The fourth book is not only the least finished of the books of *VC;* it is also the first on which Eusebius worked. This view of its composition explains both its encomiastic structure and why the encomium is fleshed out with the events of 335–37, material that would have been freshest in the author's mind. This being so, it would have been natural for Eusebius, when he came to describe his speech before the emperor, to think first of the part that best suited his immediate theme, the history and description of the Sepulcher's site. Subsequently, however, he found that this part of his speech was exactly what he needed for his account of the site's discovery in *VC* 3. 25–40 and adopted it wholesale. Either he or his editor then deleted the now embarrassingly repetitive material from the speech but neglected to make a corresponding change in *VC* 4. 46.[33]

This solution to a relatively minor problem leads to a much more important conclusion about the nature of Eusebius' biography of the emperor. The *VC* was no sudden inspiration, composed in the aftermath of the emperor's death. It was an idea Eusebius had carried around in his head for several years and worked diligently to realize. Possibly as early as the spring of Constantine's last year, Eusebius moved to the capital to collect information and begin writing. Thus, his direct access to documents, as well as to Constantine himself, if not as extensive as once believed, appears to have been greater than the most recent studies would allow.

33. It is tempting to suggest that this descriptive material stood immediately before the abrupt Φέρε δή σοι with which the surviving portion begins (*LC* 11. 1), but at 16. 9 Eusebius refers back to material in chapter 11 in a way that suggests it was always the beginning of the speech (see Drake, *Praise*, pp. 38–39), and Barnes ("Two Speeches," p. 344, n. 14) has given other examples of speeches beginning with a resumptive phrase. An equally suitable opportunity to describe the building and its history exists in chapter 17, where Eusebius turns to Constantine's restoration of the churches.

Now the argument comes full circle: how much did events of the summer and fall of 335 contribute to the genesis of the *VC?* The absence from these pages of Athanasius and the stormy meetings at Tyre does not mean they were not on Eusebius' mind when he formed the idea of heralding the emperor's pious achievements.[34] Again, Book 4 yields clues; for it is not merely reminiscences. Combined with the personalia are frequent references to the esteem in which the emperor held the author—references that go so far as to emphasize that Constantine personally testified to the truth of Eusebius' theology.[35] The combination is particularly effective. It helps explain why some scholars for so long have tended to magnify the extent of Eusebius' influence on the emperor; but as evidence for Eusebius' state of mind, it also indicates how defensive the recent clashes with Athanasius had made the bishop of Caesarea. One original intent of the *VC* surely was to cloak Eusebius in the security of the emperor's mantle.

Book 4 thus shows the type of work the bishop initially intended to write: a combination of rhetoric and reminiscence. No doubt he intended simply to quarry material for the earlier periods of Constantine's life out of his *Historia Ecclesiastica.* Yet the work grew under his pen into something else: a powerful portrait of the prototypical Christian emperor. Other events of these final months must have contributed to the process, especially one that occurred during the critical weeks in the autumn of 335. From his few grudging sentences about the Council of Tyre in the *VC,* Eusebius turns in almost joyful relief to the Council of Jerusalem in September that dedicated Constantine's Church of the Holy Sepulcher. One wonders how this reminder of Constantine's sheer physical impact on the Church affected the bishop of Caesarea: the emperor's buildings receive attention in the *SC,* appropriately enough; but they also are prominent in both the *LC* and the *VC.*[36] It is necessary, furthermore, to consider the effect of Eusebius' opportunity to observe Constantine at close range—perhaps for the first time—during the final months of his reign: his speeches, his constant prayer, his zeal for Easter, juxtaposed against the dazzling majesty of late Roman imperial ceremonial.

Amid the account of all this in Book 4, an easily neglected comment. Describing Constantine's Church of the Apostles in Constantinople, Eusebius writes (*VC* 4. 60. 2):

> Now he also built it with another plan in mind, one which in fact was at first unknown, but which toward the end was made manifest to all. For he had guarded

34. J.-M. Sansterre, "Eusèbe de Césarée et la naissance de la théorie 'Césaropapiste,'" *Byzantion* 42 (1972): 131–95, 532–94, has called attention to the importance of the events of 335 for the development of Eusebius' concept of the relationship of the emperor to the Church.

35. *VC* 4. 33. 1 συντεταμένῳ δὲ λογισμῷ τὴν διάκρισιν ἐποιεῖτο τῶν λεγομένων, ταῖς τε δογματικαῖς θεολογίαις ἀλήθειαν ἐπεμαρτύρει, referring to Eusebius' speech on the Holy Sepulcher.

36. *LC* 9. 14–19; *VC* 3. 25–53.

> this very site for himself until the appropriate moment of his own end, making provision with a surpassing eagerness of faith that after death his own body would share in the invocations of the apostles.

It may be that historians have been too smitten with the blatant display of a nascent Caesaropapism in these lines to catch the amazement in Eusebius' words;[37] or perhaps after sixteen hundred years Constantine's choice of a final resting place now seems too appropriate ever to have been in doubt. Yet a subsequent comment makes clear that Constantine announced this decision only in the final weeks of his life, for in it the bishop indicates that up to the time of Constantine's death the senate in Rome continued to harbor hopes of possessing the emperor's corpse. Indeed, the magnificent porphyry sarcophagus on display in the Vatican still stands as mute testimony to this dashed hope.[38]

At *VC* 4. 60. 4, Eusebius adds that Constantine had "kept this plan in his thoughts for the longest time." Here is one of those touches that helped to mislead scholars for so long, implying as it does that Eusebius, as Constantine's confidant, had always been privy to the secret. With our understanding of the bishop's more limited contacts, however, we now may assume that he found out about Constantine's choice of a final resting place only when everyone else did, sometime during the emperor's last months. We must, then, consider the impact of this late revelation on Eusebius' plans for the *VC*.

Although it is absent from the pages of Eusebius' biography, the emperor's equivocal treatment of the old and new faiths has long been known.[39] But thanks largely to the unequivocal portrait of the *VC,* filled with such reassuring glosses about the emperor's secret thoughts as the one just discussed, the possibility that Christians at the time were themselves uncertain of his intentions rarely has been considered.[40] To historians, blessed with hindsight, the future belonged to the Church. Eusebius' own hindsight, however, should have provoked darker memories, of the long period of peace and prosperity that had been shattered

37. See, e.g., O. Weinreich, "Konstantin der Grosse als Dreizehnter Apostel und die religionspolitische Tendenz seiner Grabeskirche," in his *Triskaidekadische Studien* (Giessen, 1916), pp. 3–14.

38. *VC* 4. 69. 2 βοαῖς τ' ἐχρῶντο ἱκετηρίαις τὸ σκῆνος τοῦ σφῶν βασιλέως παρ' αὐτοῖς κομίζεσθαι καὶ τῇ βασιλίδι πόλει κατατίθεσθαι ποτνιώμενοι—a statement confirmed, as B. H. Warmington has kindly reminded me, by Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 41. 17 "funus relatum in urbem sui nominis. Quod sane populus Romanus aegerrime tulit, quippe cuius armis, legibus, clementi imperio quasi novatam urbem Romam arbitrarentur." The sarcophagus became known as the resting place of Constantine's mother, Helena, who died in 327, but its military motif and date of construction (about fifteen years earlier) suggest that it was originally intended for the emperor; see C. Pietri, *Roma Christiana: Recherches sur l'Eglise de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte III (311–440),* BEFAR 224.1 (Rome, 1976), p. 32.

39. F. Winkelmann, "Zur Geschichte des Authentizitätsproblems der *Vita Constantini*," *Klio* 40 (1962): 187–243, includes a masterful review of the scholarship on this issue; see also his "Konstantins Religionspolitik und ihre Motive im Urteil der literarischen Quellen des 4. und 5. Jahrhunderts," *AAntHung* 9 (1961): 239–56; and L. de Giovanni, *Costantino e il mondo pagano*[2], Koinonia: Collana di studi e testi a cura dell'Associazioni di Studi Tardoantichi, vol. 11 (Naples, 1982), esp. pp. 151–58.

40. An exception is W. Telfer, who once concluded that the *VC* had been written precisely to reassure Christians that Constantine was, and always had been, their emperor: "The Author's Purpose in the *Vita Constantini*," *Studia Patristica* 1.1 (Berlin, 1957), p. 160.

by Diocletian's persecution. Had Eusebius been, say, Tacitus, such considerations could easily have led to a much more guarded and monitory study. Yet so certain was the bishop of Constantine's faith that instead he produced an account that colors even the earliest deeds of the emperor with the bright hues of Christian belief.

Why? Part of the answer certainly lies in a deep-seated optimism that even the Great Persecution could not shake: Eusebius was no Tacitus! Yet it is a historiographic commonplace that ancient writers had an essentially static conception of personality and character: as a person was at the end, so he had always been. No one has yet given reason to believe that Eusebius held a different view. Could not, then, the decisive actions of Constantine's last months—not least, his choice of the Church of the Apostles as his final resting place and the dramatic deathbed baptism described at *VC* 4. 61–64—also have given Eusebius the confidence to expunge all ambiguity from his subject's life?

IV

The question cannot be left there, for study of the *VC*'s last book has also produced hints that the emperor was not as wholeheartedly on Eusebius' side as the bishop would have us believe. There are indications of Eusebius' efforts to win some sort of imperial cooperation in his project, affording him access not only to the emperor's memory but also to his archives; but there are also indications of some initial delay in gaining permission. The delay is most safely attributed to imperial indifference or preoccupation with other matters, but it conceivably was caused by doubts about the character of the work the bishop would produce, doubts that were put to rest by Eusebius' panegyric for the Jubilee.

Doubts, if such they were, could have been prompted by any number of considerations: one of the documents in the *VC* (3. 60–62) shows that Constantine's confidence in Eusebius was not unlimited, for he refused to allow him to be translated to the volatile See of Antioch. But in yet another passage from Book 4 Eusebius himself indicates an area more pertinent to our inquiry in which he and the emperor held differing views.

In one of the *VC*'s few negative comments the bishop writes of two particular abuses of the emperor's goodwill and benevolence: the first worked by greedy and rapacious men who victimized everyone; the second produced by "the unspeakable dissimulation of those who slipped into the Church and falsely assumed the name of Christians" (*VC* 4. 54. 2). He goes on to say (*VC* 4. 54. 3) that Constantine's "benevolence and innate goodness, the purity of his faith and truth-loving nature led him to trust in the outward show of those who were believed to be Christians and claimed with lying spirit to have genuine goodwill toward him." Exactly what group Eusebius had in mind when he wrote the latter passage is not immediately obvious. It is sometimes held that

rivals in the Church hierarchy were his targets.[41] Yet from his succeeding remark (4. 55), to the effect that these malefactors soon got their just deserts, it would seem that Eusebius was directing at least some of his wrath at Constantine's ministers—an impression supported by a parallel passage at 4. 30, where the graphic example of Constantine marking out a grave for a greedy courtier concludes with the observation that events soon showed the emperor's gesture to have been prophetic.[42]

There is, in fact, tar enough here for several brushes. Eusebius' introductory reference to "two evils" (4. 54. 2 δύο χαλεπά) shows that he had in mind not one but two separate groups, "greedy ministers" and "pseudo-Christians." Furthermore, the thrust of his comment about these "pseudo-Christians" suggests that he was thinking of laymen and recent converts rather than his ecclesiastical enemies. Some of these may indeed have been ministers—opportunists who converted to Christianity simply to please their imperial master. But despite the possible overlap, it is clear that Eusebius sees them as two distinct "evils."

In any case, it is not the presence of these "pseudo-Christians" in Constantine's government that is significant. Historians have long postulated such a class, and if Eusebius were merely confirming their existence his remark would be of little consequence to the present discussion. What is important in the present context is Eusebius' criticism, which suggests that Constantine valued pledges of personal allegiance over what Eusebius considered purity of faith. No matter how favorably he presents the emperor's motives, Eusebius simply cannot hide the fact that Constantine's standards for judging Christian conduct were not identical to his own. The distinction is crucial, for it leads to the further conclusion that Eusebius and Constantine differed in their definitions of the minimally acceptable standards for conversion—which means that they differed also, and inevitably, in their conceptions of the faith itself.[43] Does this narrower and less tolerant view of Christianity lie behind the emperor's delay in granting Eusebius the right to speak for him? Although it cannot be answered with complete assurance, the question must be asked, for it is precisely on Eusebius' skill as an interpreter of the emperor's faith that the argument over his reliability must turn.

V

It is widely assumed even today that Constantine made no secret of his Christian leanings from the time of his vision of the Cross in 312, if not

41. Pasquali, "Die Composition," p. 385, read the passage as a veiled warning to Constantine's sons prompted by the release of Athanasius from his exile in Gaul after Constantine's death. J. Speigl, "Eine Kritik an Kaiser Konstantin in der *Vita Constantini* des Euseb," *Wegzeichen: Festgabe H. Biedermann* (Würzburg, 1971), pp. 88–90, tied the passage to the Arian controversy.

42. B. H. Warmington has very plausibly suggested to me that Eusebius refers to Optatus and Ablabius, both casualties of the army's uprising (described ingenuously at *VC* 4. 68) that followed Constantine's death.

43. On the significance of the new type of convert for Christianity's future, see now G. Bonner, "The Extinction of Paganism and the Church Historian," *JEH* 35 (1984): 348–49.

even earlier. As a corollary, scholars also conclude that everything Constantine did in the remaining quarter-century of his life to further the cause of Christianity and the Christian Church was done openly and with the intention of dismantling the apparatus of the pagan state.[44] Other than specialists, however, few pause to consider how much this understanding of Constantine's intentions depends on the glosses of the bishop of Caesarea. With the simple assertion that Constantine had "kept this plan in his thoughts for the longest time," for instance, Eusebius suggests something not only about his own relationship to the emperor but also about the length and the consistency of the emperor's own purposes.

Simply because the *VC* forms such a large part of what we know and think about Constantine, attempts to unravel its author's purpose become all the more important. The argument of this present study widens and lengthens the extent of Eusebius' contacts with the court. As a result, the nature and scope of documents that he chose to include in the *VC* no longer can be attributed to chance. The choice of what to include—and exclude—must be seen as deliberate, and therefore as one more indicator of Eusebius' plans and intentions.

According to this reconstruction, Eusebius broached the idea for some sort of a memorial to Constantine during the fall of 335. The first fruits of this idea show themselves in the *LC*, delivered the subsequent summer during the emperor's tricennalia. In this speech, the broad outlines of the *VC* may be discerned: Constantine's sense of mission, his election by God, his combat against evil and concern for salvation. Because of its high language, it is possible to read the *LC* as either a conscious concession to pagan sentiment or a coolheaded application of classical culture to the purposes of a Christian revolution.[45] Either way, one conclusion is indisputable: there is more philosophy than theology in this speech, as well as a clear preference for circumlocution when it describes Constantine's faith.[46] All such ambiguity will disappear from the *VC*.

Because of the limited evidence, any conclusions about the genesis and purpose of the *VC* are bound to be speculative. But the approach adopted here attempts to take Eusebius on his own terms and to see the *VC* in the context of contemporary events. A hint—and nothing more—that Eusebius had a biography in mind almost two years before Constantine died survives in his speech on the Holy Sepulcher. Careful

44. The classic formulation is by N. H. Baynes, *Constantine the Great and the Christian Church*, 2d ed. by H. Chadwick (London, 1972), p. 83, n. 57: "the emperor's consistent aim was the triumph of Christianity and the union of the Roman state with the Christian Church"; cf. Barnes, *Constantine*, p. 247, where Constantine is credited with having made Christianity "the official religion of the state."

45. I argued the case for a conciliatory stance in *Praise*, pp. 46–60. For the opposing view, see Barnes, *Constantine*, pp. 253–55.

46. Cf. H. Chadwick, "The Emperor as Antichrist," *TLS*, 28 May 1982, p. 573: "There can be no dispute that, in the Panegyric, bishop Eusebius is reticent about the specifically Christian theme of the Incarnation."

analysis of the speech locates it precisely in the period of a major Church controversy, one in which Eusebius was intensely involved. Correlation does not amount to causation; but it does remind us that the bishop of Caesarea did not enjoy an insulated environment.

One of the first clues to the composition of the *VC* came from observing that Eusebius summarizes the documents he includes incompletely and even misleadingly. This observation led to the conclusion that he worked from memory or notes, leaving the actual copying of the documents to others.[47] But there is more to be seen in these summaries than work-methods; for Eusebius' summaries consistently tend to exaggerate the narrowness of Constantine's Christianity.

The reason need not be duplicity. It may well be, as a recent study concludes, that Eusebius was primarily a scholar who made himself into a historian and, only late and reluctantly, an apologist.[48] Yet there is much to be learned from reading all of Eusebius' works, including his history, as apologia: the exercise reveals a consistent effort to cast a Christian light on events and statements.[49] This very talent, which would have made him attractive to a Constantine eager to reconcile Christian and pagan belief, may in itself have been responsible for obscuring Constantine's own goals from our view. The *VC* is not so much wrong as incomplete. What we most need to supply is the development, the dynamics missing from Eusebius' static conception, the process by which the Constantine who necessarily felt his way, who lived as much in the old world as in the new, gave way to the dedicated servant of Eusebius' ideal, a zealous advocate of the Christian cause.

This, and the simple realization that the author of our account is Eusebius, not Constantine. Eusebius shared many of the emperor's most important attitudes: the idea that God had chosen him to bring peace and unity, an unyielding belief in the common destiny of Church and Empire, a concern for moral uplift. But Eusebius had themes of his own, well identified by the author of a recent study as "persecution, church building, the fate of pagan temples, God's choice of Constantine."[50] Though there is evident overlap, historians must remain alive to a difference in priorities between the two. It seems clear that the bishop

47. See Pasquali, "Die Composition," pp. 369–79. Barnes, *Constantine*, p. 141, postulated Eusebius' use of assistants to explain a similar pattern in the *Hist. Eccl.*, where he concluded that "it is unwise to rely on Eusebius' reports as reproducing exactly the precise tenor, or even main purport, of lost evidence."

48. So Barnes, *Constantine*, p. 104.

49. See, e.g., M. Harl's conclusion ("A propos d'un passage du *Contre Eunome* de Grégoire de Nyssa, ἀπόρροια et les titres du Christ en théologie trinitaire," *RecSR* 55 [1967]: 222, n. 20) about Eusebius' presentation of Numerius in *Praep. evang.* 11. 18. 15: "Malgré le titre qu' Eusèbe a donné au fragment . . . , il n'est pas du tout sûr que Numénius ait voulu parler de la génération du Deuxième Dieu à partier du Premier Dieu. Il est intéressant qu' Eusèbe ait cru (ou ait voulu croire) qu'il en était ainsi." Pietri, "Constantin en 324," p. 69, writes of Eusebius' claim (*VC* 4. 25) that Constantine outlawed all forms of sacrifice: "Bien entendu, le biographe a peut-être interprété, au plus favorable de ses thèses, des lois plus nuancées dont il ne citait pas le texte."

50. Cameron, "Eusebius," p. 85.

could not conceive of a Christianity as open to traditional influences and as flexible as Constantine envisioned.

Eusebius and Constantine spoke a common language. But—at least on this crucial point—it may have been just enough of a common language for them completely to misunderstand one another.

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