

General Introduction

Eusebius's history ranks as one of the most significant early Christian texts and has had a formative influence on Western culture. It is, arguably, the most important single source for the history of the first three centuries of Christianity, and it has mediated knowledge of the period since it was first disseminated in the fourth century. If the Acts of the Apostles is the canonical narrative of the first decades of nascent Christianity, the work presented here has enjoyed a similarly privileged status as the canonical account of the centuries between the apostolic age and Constantine. Indeed, the fact that historians often speak so naturally of "the church" as a specific entity with a history is due in no small part to the long shadow cast by Eusebius's work. By the end of the fourth century, moreover, "ecclesiastical history" had emerged as a genre of Christian literature. The ecclesiastical histories of Rufinus, Gelasius, and, later, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret all began where Eusebius left off. It is only mildly hyperbolic to say that all subsequent histories of early Christianity can be read as footnotes on and responses to his narrative.

The title of this volume—*History of the Church*—is a nod to convention. The more accurate English translation of the Greek title (*Ekklesiastikē historia*) is *Ecclesiastical History*, and that is the rendering in the discussion and translation that follow. To contemporary readers, the *History* in the text's title may signal a work of objective scholarly research, designed to provide a precise account of the events of the past. Such was certainly the desire of late nineteenth-century

historical science, which imagined the historian's task as reconstructing the past "as it actually happened."¹ Eusebius would also have understood accuracy and truth as incumbent upon a writer of history, but for him and his fourth-century readers, historical writing would have had different conventions. In the translation that follows, the Greek word usually rendered as "history" (*historia*) is translated as "account" or "narrative." In the classical Greek historians like Herodotus and Thucydides, *historia* means "inquiry" and the prose narrative resulting from that inquiry. Like most other prose genres, history had persuasion as its aim. Men of letters were trained first and foremost in the art of rhetoric, and a rhetorical education meant learning how to deploy tropes, topoi, and figures of speech to create beautifully persuasive texts. In a sense, ancient historians took for granted what Hayden White had to teach contemporary historians—that history is in the first instance literature. Histories are carefully crafted narratives that "emplot" the past as tragedy and triumph, decline and fall, comedies of errors, and so forth.² It is one of the primary goals of this volume to present the *Ecclesiastical History* in a way that helps contemporary readers understand and appreciate its literary dimensions.

The first term in the title, the adjective *Ecclesiastical*, represents what Eusebius took to be the innovative contribution of his work. The title is sometimes translated as *History of the Church*, as though we are about to read a history of an institution. This is not wholly inaccurate, as the church and churches (individual Christian communities) are protagonists in Eusebius's narrative. *Historia* was an inquiry, and by using the adjective "ecclesiastical" Eusebius signals the mode of that inquiry. For Eusebius, the inquiry is "ecclesiastical" because it is a normative practice guided by the orthodox rule of faith. But "ecclesiastical" also points to a way of writing that is the iceberg-tip of a way of knowing and thinking.

1. The phrase is used by Leopold von Ranke and is often cited as a kind of motto for nineteenth-century historical science; Ranke, "Vorrede," in *Geschichten der römischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514* (Leipzig, 1885). On the influence of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Continental historiography on the study of early Christianity, see E. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 9–28.

2. On historical writing as the "emplotment" of material in various types of narrative, see the classic essay of Hayden White, "Interpretation in History," *New Literary History* 2 (1973): 281–314.

It is, to use the Foucauldian term Averil Cameron so usefully borrowed to describe the power of early Christian rhetoric, a “totalizing discourse.”³ The first sentence of the *Ecclesiastical History* runs to 166 words as Eusebius summarizes the vastness of his inquiry: from apostles to bishops to heretics to books to martyrdoms. It claims to be, in effect, nothing less than a “handbook to the truth.”⁴

EUSEBIUS: LIFE AND WRITINGS

Any account of Eusebius must acknowledge how little we really know of his life. Eusebius provides very few autobiographical details in his extant works. He wrote a *Life of Pamphilus*, about his beloved teacher, in which he probably included some autobiographical material, but this text has not survived. His successor as bishop of Caesarea, Acacius, wrote a *Life of Eusebius*, but, thanks in part to the fact that both Acacius and Eusebius came to be considered “Arian” heretics, this work has been lost. Nevertheless, a basic sketch of his career and a chronology of his works are possible.

Before the Episcopacy: Eusebius's Intellectual Pedigree

Eusebius was born in the first half of the 260s C.E., and he is usually assumed to have been a native of Caesarea Maritima, the city of which he would later become bishop. Caesarea, as its name suggests, was a Roman city. It had been the site of a Hellenistic port town, Strato's Tower, and when the town was granted to Herod the Great, he renamed the city in honor of his patron, Caesar Augustus, and enlarged the harbor. The new Caesarea became a major intermodal transportation center and, beginning in 6 C.E., the provincial capital of the province of Judaea (reorganized subsequently as Syria-Palaestina and later, Palaestina Prima). The Christian community in Caesarea was a minority—a visible minority, but a minority nonetheless—within a diverse population of Hellenes, Romans, Jews, and Samaritans.

Eusebius was well educated, and one can reasonably assume that he had had a traditional education in grammar and rhetoric. Caesarea

3. A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 220–22.

4. Cameron, 220.

would have been an easy place to find an education in classical rhetoric. Eusebius offers some additional hints about his earlier life in the eighth book of the *History*, which he wrote when he was a bishop in his fifties. Consequently, the autobiographical glimpses Eusebius does permit reveal how the middle-aged bishop wished readers to view his earlier life. That life is presented in terms of a common trope: the young philosopher's "hearing" of philosophical masters. The trope served the important social function of establishing one's intellectual pedigree. This pedigree consisted of diachronic and synchronic relationships. One established connections across time by reading the works of ancient masters and training in specific traditions of interpretation (e.g., establishing one's bona fides as a Platonist through Platonist readings of Plato, or as a rabbi by studying Torah and mastering the art of halakhic interpretation). Relationships with immediate predecessors and contemporaries (not to mention dissociation from rival intellectuals) also mattered. The trope of the "philosophical pedigree" would have been familiar to Eusebius in several texts he is known to have read, such as Justin Martyr's description of his studies with Hellene philosophers in the *Dialogue with Trypho*. A more direct parallel to Eusebius's work can be found in Porphyry of Tyre's *Life of Plotinus*, a philosophical biography in which Porphyry tells a story of his teachers, fellow students, friends, and enemies.

The *Ecclesiastical History*, then, functions in part as Eusebius's pedigree as an intellectual. Eusebius connects himself across time to his intellectual progenitors by quoting and cataloguing their works. He repeatedly displays himself not only as a student and reader of the ecclesiastical tradition, but as its physical custodian. Although Eusebius seems to offer a comprehensive or globalizing account of early Christian writers and writings, the texts he quotes and the progenitors with whom he would establish his pedigree are those he possesses in his library. His collection was large and significant, but certainly not comprehensive or universal: Eusebius knows of almost no writings and writers from the West, he possesses more writings from Alexandria, Palestine, and Syria than other locales, and certain writers predominate (e.g., Dionysius of Alexandria, Origen, Philo, Josephus). Eusebius's pedigree also reflects particular contemporary concerns—disputes over the legacy of Origen, for instance, and the emergent "Arian" controversy.

In the eighth book of the *Ecclesiastical History* Eusebius offers a portrait of the intellectual landscape of his youth and early career. He describes a number of intellectual circles—or what are often termed schools—in the cities of Syria, Phoenicia, and Egypt. A late ancient philosophical or rhetorical “school” is best imagined as a set of relationships. A “school” was centered around a master philosopher or rhetor. His or her inner circle, the *gnorimoi*, consisted of the master’s closest followers; apprentices or a modern professor’s research and teaching assistants provide a loose analogy. A master’s lectures were often open for others to attend—one might, before deciding to become an intimate follower of a particular teacher, attend these lectures as an *akoustēs*, or “hearer.”⁵

The first intellectual progenitor Eusebius mentions in the *History* is Dorotheus, a “learned man” and presbyter of Antioch during the episcopacy of Cyril (280s–290s C.E.). According to Eusebius, Dorotheus had received traditional instruction in grammar and rhetoric and had learned to read biblical Hebrew. A eunuch, he entered the imperial bureaucracy as the director of the imperial dye-works in Tyre. Eusebius says that he heard Dorotheus delivering homilies. The verb Eusebius uses to describe his relationship with Dorotheus (*egnōmen*, “we came to know”) is the same as that used to describe his “coming to know” his master, Pamphilus. During the years of the Diocletianic persecution, other Christian intellectuals passed through Caesarea as well. This is how Eusebius “came to know” Meletius, a bishop of Pontus known for his erudition and rhetorical skill who resided in Caesarea for seven years during the persecution.

Eusebius’s most important intellectual “father,” however, was the polymath Pamphilus of Caesarea. Eusebius describes Pamphilus as a “philosopher.” For Eusebius, a true (i.e., Christian) philosopher was an ascetic intellectual. In the *Martyrs of Palestine*, Eusebius describes Pamphilus’s circle of students. The core group of followers, including Eusebius, may have resided together in Pamphilus’s home (*Martyrs*

5. For an excellent account of philosophical and rhetorical “schools” in late antiquity, see E. Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). For an account of traditional introductory education and grammatical training, see R. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

4.8). Eusebius names some of his fellows. Apphianus, a young native of Lycia, had left legal studies in Berytus, against his family's wishes, to study with Pamphilus. Eusebius also mentions Porphyry, a slave who worked as a scribe in Pamphilus's household and who was executed along with his master when he spoke out at Pamphilus's trial (11.1, 15).

Pamphilus himself came from Berytus, present-day Beirut, where he began his education (*Martyrs* 11.3). Pamphilus appears to have been a man of means—we hear of no patrons. A Byzantine source claims that Pamphilus then moved to Alexandria to study scripture with the teacher Pierius.⁶ He then—perhaps in conscious imitation of his hero, Origen, or to be closer to family interests in Berytus—relocated to Caesarea where he was made presbyter by Bishop Agapius, Eusebius's immediate predecessor (*HE* 7.32.24–25). In Caesarea, Pamphilus came to possess (exactly how is unknown) portions of Origen's personal library—including autograph copies of the *Hexapla*. Again, in imitation of Origen, Pamphilus made a career of studying biblical texts and editing biblical manuscripts. He also worked on collecting and copying additional works of Origen. As a member of Pamphilus's circle, Eusebius thus considered himself an intellectual descendant of Origen: hence, Eusebius's long biography of the Alexandrian in book 6 and his keen interests in Alexandria and Alexandrian materials throughout the *History*.

The Diocletianic Persecution

Eusebius would have been in his late thirties or early forties when Diocletian's persecution began in 303 C.E. Eusebius's accounts of the persecution in books 8 and 9 of the *History* and in the *Martyrs of Palestine*, and the works of his contemporary, the Latin rhetorician Lactantius, are the key sources and continue to serve as a kind of “canonical” account of the persecution. From Lactantius, we learn that the first anti-Christian measures were promulgated on 23 February 303. According to Eusebius, these orders included the demolition and confiscation of church buildings and property, the burning of Christian writings, loss of social rank, and the enslavement of members of the imperial household who persisted in their profession of Christian-

6. Photius, *Library* 118.

ity (*HE* 8.2.4). This was followed by orders to arrest clergy and direct them to sacrifice (8.2.5). In book 8 of the *History*, Eusebius recounts martyrdoms throughout the Eastern provinces. According to Eusebius, the persecution ended abruptly in 311, when Galerius issued a deathbed recantation (8.16–17). Maximinus Daia, Galerius's junior imperial colleague and ruler of the diocese of Oriens (e.g., Syria, Phoenicia, Palestine, Egypt), feigned obedience to Galerius's orders, but quickly resumed the persecution in his territory. It ended only when Licinius defeated Maximinus to become sole imperial colleague in the East in 313 C.E. Eusebius preserves a version of the joint order issued by Constantine and Licinius in 313 C.E. (a.k.a. the Edict of Milan) that reiterated Galerius's rescinding of the persecuting orders and decreed the restitution of church property—in effect, a return to the *status quo ante*.

Eusebius had direct experience of the persecution; several members of his intellectual circle were martyred, including Pamphilus (see *Martyrs* 7, 11). He visited the confessors who had been condemned to the mines at Phaeno (present-day Wadi Faynan in Jordan; *Martyrs* 13), and spent time with confessors and martyrs in the Thebaid. During Eusebius's conflicts with Athanasius, the confessor Paphnutius claimed to have been with Eusebius in prison, and accused him of having lapsed—that is, capitulating to the persecutors' demand to offer traditional sacrifice—while in the Thebaid.

Eusebius's *Collection of Ancient Martyrdoms*, a compendium of second- and third-century martyrdom texts, was probably compiled during the persecution. He draws upon it in the *History* several times. Eusebius also wrote the *General Elementary Introduction* in this period. The work is a collection of biblical “proof texts,” which would have functioned both as an introduction for students to specific traditions of biblical interpretation and as a source for other works, like the *Gospel Demonstration* and the runs of biblical proof-texting we see in book 1 of the *Ecclesiastical History*.

Eusebius, together with Pamphilus, probably composed the *Apology for Origen*, a six-book defense of Origen's orthodoxy, between 307 and early 310 C.E. Origen's orthodoxy was under attack from a number of directions at the end of the fourth century, but the immediate goad may have been the arrival in Caesarea of anti-Origenist Egyptians who had been brought from the mines in Phaeno to the provincial

capital for execution.⁷ Eusebius helped his mentor, Pamphilus, compose the *Apology* while the latter was in prison. Eusebius added the sixth book on his own after Pamphilus's death.⁸

Finally, several marginal notes in later biblical manuscripts show that Pamphilus and his circle continued an ongoing project—the collation of biblical manuscripts against Origen's *Hexapla*—during the persecution. In the famous Codex Sinaiticus, for example, a note to 2 Esdras reads: "Collated against a very old copy corrected by the hand of the holy martyr Pamphilus. At the end of his copy appears an autograph attestation, which reads as follows: 'Copied and corrected from the Hexapla of Origen. Antoninus collated; I, Pamphilus, corrected.'" The text of Esther in Sinaiticus was also collated against a copy prepared by Pamphilus and his students; a note reads: "Copied and corrected from the Hexapla of Origen, as corrected by his own hand. Antoninus, the confessor, collated; I, Pamphilus, corrected the volume in prison."⁹

Eusebius as Bishop of Caesarea

Eusebius appears to have become bishop of Caesarea almost immediately after the cessation of the persecution; he was in his early to mid-fifties. He gives no indication that his predecessor, Agapius, had died as a martyr. Eusebius's status as a "confessor," someone who had suffered under the persecuting ordinances but survived, might have also helped his election.

The decade or so after he became a bishop (i.e., the mid-310s to the mid-320s) was a particularly productive time for Eusebius. It was during this period that he wrote his great apologetic diptych, the *Gospel Preparation* and the *Gospel Demonstration*. The *Gospel Preparation* runs to fifteen books and treats a number of classic themes of early Christian apologetic (e.g., critique of traditional mythologies and ritual practices; the chronological priority of Moses over Greek philosophers; demonology; critiques of the Hellenistic philosophical schools).

7. *Martyrs* 7–8; *Apology for Origen* 12–17; Photius, *Library* 118.

8. Photius, *Library* 118; Jerome, *Illustrious Men* 75.4.

9. Text in Pierre Nautin, *Origène: Sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977), 322–23; translation and discussion in Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 184–85.

The *Gospel Demonstration* aimed to show that not only had Jesus fulfilled biblical prophecies, but, in Eusebius's own time, once the Diocletianic persecution had ended, biblical prophecies were continuing to be fulfilled.¹⁰

As bishop, Eusebius was well networked. In Laodicea, Theodotus became a fast friend. Eusebius dedicated the *Gospel Preparation* to him. In 325, when Eusebius was placed on "theological probation"¹¹ at the Council of Antioch preceding the famous Council of Nicaea, Theodotus was one of two bishops—the other was Narcissus of Neronias—to side with Eusebius.

Eusebius was also aligned with several "Lucianists"—that is, bishops who had formerly been students of the scholar Lucian of Antioch.¹² The most famous of these was Eusebius's namesake, Eusebius of Nicomedia, or Eusebius the Great, as the bishop of Caesarea termed him. Eusebius of Nicomedia was a relative of Constantia, sister of Constantine and wife of the eastern emperor Licinius. After the persecution, he was first bishop of Berytus, but was soon promoted to Nicomedia. Eusebius's most durable ally was Paulinus, another Antiochene, who became bishop of Tyre at around the same time that Eusebius became bishop of Caesarea. To him Eusebius dedicated the tenth book of the *Ecclesiastical History*, the *Onomasticon*, and the panegyric on the dedication of a new basilica in Tyre that appears in book 10 of the *History*. These alignments and friendships became significant in the flurry of alliance building and ecclesiastical politicking surrounding the dispute between Arius and Alexander of Alexandria.

Eusebius's Theology and the "Arian" Controversy

The *Ecclesiastical History* was conceived and written between 313 and 324,¹³ before the Council of Nicaea. To understand Eusebius's theology in this context some background is necessary. The Council of Nicaea had been prompted by a dispute between Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, and Arius, one of his presbyters. The primary theological issue at stake was how to conceptualize the relationship between the

10. *DE*, pr.

11. The apt phrase is Aaron Johnson's in *Eusebius* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 21.

12. Philostorgius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.14–15.

13. On the date of the *HE*, see the excursus on "editions" below.

Father and the Son. Arius emphasized the ontological distinction between the Father and the Son. If the Father is truly and essentially God, then, Arius held, he must be uniquely unbegotten, ungenerated, and without beginning. The Son has nothing “proper to God,” but is God because the Father has made him as a perfect image of himself. The Father and Son exist on different ontological levels and as distinct, bounded beings (*hypostases*).¹⁴ Alexander’s theology emphasized the eternal co-relation of Father and Son: if the Son is the *Father’s* Son, Wisdom, and Logos, then the eternal and unchanging Father must always exist in relation to an eternal Son, Wisdom, and Logos. Alexander agreed that the Son was “begotten” and the Father “unbegotten,” but argued that this difference must not be understood temporally or spatially: “Always the Father, so always the Son,” was Alexander’s watchword.¹⁵ Alexander excommunicated Arius around 318 or 319, and Arius appealed in person and by letter to other bishops in the East.

Eusebius’s reputation as an “Arian” derived, first, from the fact he had written to Alexander and others in support of Arius when Alexander excommunicated the presbyter. Moreover, after the Council of Nicaea, he became an influential part of the “Eusebian alliance” that succeeded in deposing Athanasius of Alexandria, Eustathius of Antioch, and Marcellus of Ancyra. Although the alliance takes its name not from Eusebius of Caesarea, but Eusebius of Nicomedia, the former was critical in orchestrating Eustathius’s demise in 327 or 328, took a leading role in the Synod of Tyre in 335, which deposed Athanasius, and contributed two theological tracts that helped in deposing Marcellus of Ancyra in 336.¹⁶ Eusebius of Nicomedia was portrayed by Athanasius as the leader of an Arian cabal (he terms them Eusebians and Ariomaniacs). In fact, the “Eusebians” did not share identical theologies, and none, in fact, seem to have taken any theological cues from Arius. The

14. On Arius’s theology as described here, see the fragments of his theological poem the *Thalia* and the summary in Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 54–56.

15. On Alexander’s theology as described here, see his *Encyclical Letter to All Bishops* (Opitz, Urk. 4b) and *Letter to Alexander* (Opitz, Urk. 14) and discussion in Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 43–52.

16. On Eusebius’s roles in these events, see the important study by S. Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy*, 325–345 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

“Eusebians” found common cause with Arius because, even before his conflict with Alexander, their own theologies likewise emphasized an ontological distinction between the Father and Son. The “Eusebians,” like Paulinus of Tyre, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Eusebius of Caesarea, all expressed consternation at Alexander’s seeming desire to compromise God the Father’s unique divinity by positing a second unbegotten being.¹⁷

So, then, when Eusebius states that the *Ecclesiastical History* “shall begin from nowhere else than the beginning of the divine economy relating to our Savior and Lord Jesus, God’s Christ” (1.1.1), he is hanging his narrative on a theology that was being contested at the time of writing. Eusebius shared with Alexander and others a tendency to emphasize the close relation of Father and Son by stating that the Son is something “from” the same something the Father also is. In the letter Eusebius sent to Caesarea on his way home from the Council of Nicaea, for example, he quotes the creed of Caesarea, which emphasized “God from God,” “Light from Light,” “Life from Life.” Arius posited such a great ontological difference between the Son and Father that he asserted the Son could not comprehend the Father’s essence. Eusebius, by contrast, emphasizes the reciprocal comprehension of the Father and Son (see, e.g., 1.2.2). At the same time, though, Eusebius has no problem describing the Son as a “second cause” of creation after the Father (1.2.3) and “second after Him” (1.2.5) and uses metaphors that suggest a hierarchical distinction between Father and Son (e.g., “servant of the unspoken will of the Father,” “commander” of the army in heaven”; 1.2.3).

In the texts Eusebius was writing in the period before the Council of Nicaea, which included the *Ecclesiastical History*, the *Gospel Preparation*, and the *Gospel Demonstration*, he appears most concerned about theologies that he feels suggest division, change, or “parts” in

17. On the Eusebian alliance and the theologies of its members, see D. Gwynn, *The Eusebians: The Polemics of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the “Arian controversy”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); M. DelCogliano, “Eusebius of Caesarea on Asterius of Cappadocia in the Anti-Marcellan Writings: A Case Study of Mutual Defense within the Eusebian Alliance,” in Aaron P. Johnson and Jeremy Schott, *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations*, Hellenic Studies 60, Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2013), 263–87.

the divine essence. Thus, whenever Eusebius asserts the sameness and close relation between Father and Son, he often follows with a caveat; in the *Gospel Demonstration*, for instance, he writes that the Son is “God from God, put forth from the being of the Father, not by a partaking or a cutting or a division, but unspeakably.”¹⁸ Even after the Council of Nicaea, Eusebius’s greatest objection to the introduction of the term *homoousios* (the same in being/essence) was his fear that it could be taken as implying that the Son was somehow a “piece” of the Father’s essence.¹⁹

Eusebius also emphasized the mediating role of the Logos. In Eusebius’s thought, God the Father is ontologically distant from creation. The Logos mediates between the transcendent Father and creation. The Logos served as the demiurge in the creation of the cosmos, and, in turn, has revealed God to humanity throughout history. The incarnation is the mediating act par excellence. Salvation is possible because the incarnate Logos helps to bridge the ontological gap between the Father and creation. Because “the kind of being that pertains to him is twofold” (*HE* 1.2.1), as Eusebius puts it—that is, because the incarnate Christ is both like humans and like the Father—he is able to “show” God to humans and elevate humans toward the divine. Hence, Eusebius has a predilection for “image” language—the Logos is repeatedly described as “showing” and “revealing” and as a likeness or image of the Father.²⁰

Eusebius, Constantine, and Empire

Eusebius is known for certain to have been in Constantine’s presence on only two occasions. The first was at the Council of Nicaea in May–June 325. Over a decade later, Eusebius delivered an oration in Constantinople on the occasion of the emperor’s *tircennalia*, the thirtieth anniversary of his reign, in 336. Eusebius does claim to have spoken in Constantine’s presence on other occasions, but, all told, he cannot

18. *DE* 4.3.13 (trans. in Colm Luibhéid, *Eusebius of Caesarea and the Arian Crisis* [Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1981], 36–37).

19. Eusebius, *Letter to the Caesareans* 5; English translation available in *NPNF* 4:74–76.

20. On the mediating role of the Logos in Eusebius’s theology, and its relationships to other theologies of mediation, see J. Robertson, *Christ as Mediator: A Study of the Theologies of Eusebius of Caesarea, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Athanasius of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

have spent a great deal of time with the man. Anyone reading the *Life of Constantine*, however, would have the impression that Eusebius was close to Constantine—that he was perhaps even, as he has sometimes been called, a kind of “court theologian” or Constantine’s “official biographer.” This is as Eusebius intended it: the *Life* consistently overemphasizes his relationship to the emperor and the court, and his strategic deployment and framing of documents make it appear that he had unique access to and insight about Constantine.

But the *Life of Constantine* was written near the end of Eusebius’s own life—it may have been left unfinished when he died in 339/40, in his mid- to late seventies. By contrast, when the *Ecclesiastical History* was being written—between the end of the persecution in 313 and late 324,²¹ when Constantine had eliminated Licinius to take control of the Eastern provinces—it could not have been clear to Eusebius exactly how the “Constantinian Revolution” would turn out. Recent scholarship, however, has been helpful in showing that most of Eusebius’s writing is not focused myopically on Constantine and his dynasty. This is true of the *History*. Even though the work ends, chronologically, in the reign of Constantine, “Constantine” is certainly not the central subject of the narrative, nor is he its climax or resolution.²² In laying out the plan of his work, Eusebius says that he will conclude with “the gracious and kind relief of our Savior that came at last”—that is, the providential end of the persecution (*HE* 1.1.1). Constantine enters the story in books 8 and 9, where he and Licinius serve in parallel as God’s chosen instruments for the ultimate punishment of the tyrant-persecutors Maxentius and Maximinus, respectively. In book 10, of course, Constantine eradicates Licinius after he, too, becomes a persecuting tyrant. The architect of all this action, however, is God’s providence and the divine economy, as they have been the driving force behind events throughout the entire narrative. In sum, Constantine is significant, and Eusebius praises him in no uncertain terms, but the *History* is not itself an encomium of Constantine or the Neo-Flavian dynasty.

The *History* is, however, a story about the progress of the church within the context of the Roman Empire. Before he wrote the *History*,

21. On the complexities concerning the date of the *HE* and its various “editions,” see the excursus below.

22. Johnson, *Eusebius*, 104.

Eusebius had composed the *Chronological Canons*, which presented a synoptic comparison of the timelines of various empires. The text made a visual argument; as time and the *Canons* progress, the number of timelines decreases, until one remains—that of the Roman Empire.²³ For Eusebius, the story of the church and the story of Rome did not just “happen to” overlap. The peace and security brought by Roman domination was part of the divine economy.²⁴ The fates of individual emperors, moreover, hinge on not disturbing this providential arrangement. In the *History*, good emperors take a laissez-faire attitude toward the church and show respect toward ecclesiastical men. Bad emperors persecute. Here, too, the divine economy makes use of the empire for the benefit of the church, as Eusebius contends that God permitted persecutions to chastise and correct his flock (e.g., *HE* 8.1.7–9).

Focusing on “Constantine” and “Rome” may, however, obscure just how important the political economy of empire is to Eusebius’s work. Eusebius’s works are imperial texts. By this I do not mean that his writing always has the emperor or imperial politics in view. Rather, I mean that we must recognize that Eusebius’s writing was suspended within—“textured by”—the material realities of empire. To call Eusebius’s writing imperial is, then, to say that it has a particular “feel,” a particular poetics. This poetics includes a set of figures of speech grounded in the geopolitics of empire. Eusebius repeatedly uses the language of invasion and colonization, for instance, and his spatial imagination divides the world into province and metropolis.

The space of empire, in turn, made possible the transnational literary culture(s) within which the *Ecclesiastical History* was produced. The scribal labor force, concentrated in major metropolises, produced volumes that then circulated through networks of friendship and patronage, via the same roads and waterways as other resources in the empire. The history of the *Ecclesiastical History* can be told as a story of the social relations of production (relations embodied in roads, harbors, and so forth) that bound Caesarea to the towns and villages of Palestine and other urban centers, such as Tyre, Laodicea, Alexan-

23. On the use of specific book forms and page layouts in the *Chronological Canons*, see Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book*, 133–77.

24. See *HE* 1.2.23, argued even more forcefully in *Gospel Demonstration* 3.7 [139d–141b].

dria, and Antioch. Such a narrative would include the “transnational” travels of Origen, Origen’s intercity and interprovince patronage relationship with Ambrose; Pamphilus’s efforts to acquire manuscripts of Origen’s works from other locales; the migration of Anatolius, the Aristotelian philosopher and mathematician, from Alexandria to Caesarea after the demise of Zenobia’s Palmyrene kingdom (*HE* 7.32.6–21), and, of course, Eusebius’s drawing together of sources for his literary projects, his sending of dedication copies of texts to friends and patrons such as Paulinus of Tyre (10.1.1; 10.4 ff.) and Theodotus of Laodicea,²⁵ and the dossier of missives so integral to the *Life of Constantine*. All of Eusebius’s sources could be plotted as vectors within, and constitutive of, the space of imperial power and economy.

Death

Eusebius was probably dead by 341. Caesarea was represented by his successor, Acacius, at the “Dedication” Council of Antioch in that year. The fifth-century historian Socrates places Eusebius’s death after Constantius II banished Athanasius of Alexandria in 339 and just before the death of Constantine II in 340 (Socrates, *HE* 2.4–5). He probably died, then, in late 339 or early 340.

BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE *ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY*

Chronology

Eusebius acknowledges that the basic chronological framework for the *Ecclesiastical History* comes from his previous work, the *Chronici Canones* (“*Chronological Canons*” or “*Time Tables*”; *HE* 1.1.6). A first version of the *Chronological Canons* was probably completed ca. 308–ca. 311. Richard Burgess, whose studies of Eusebian chronography remain absolutely fundamental, describes the work as “set[ting] forth all known world history from the birth of Abraham . . . to Constantine’s *vicennalia*, celebrated in Nicomedia on 25 July 325.”²⁶ The work presented,

25. *PE* 1.1.1.

26. R. Burgess, “The Dates and Editions of Eusebius’ *Chronici canones* and *Historia ecclesiastica*,” *JTS* 48 (1997): 471–504; the quotation here is from Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronography* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1999), 21.

synoptically in vertical columns, the chronologies of the reigns of a variety of Mediterranean and Near Eastern kingdoms. As one moved forward in time, the number of columns decreased, until one column remained—that of the Roman Empire. This was a visual argument: Eusebius wished to show that all of history had providentially arrived at a synchrony of the Roman Empire and the advent of Christ. Unfortunately, the *Canons* have not survived in Greek, and the precise structure and original mise-en-page of the work must be inferred from the extant Armenian version and Jerome's Latin version (which also extends the *Canons* to 379 C.E.). The portion of the *Canons* that corresponds to the period covered by the *History* reads like a kind of annotated timeline, with brief references to key events and major figures.²⁷

At the beginning of the *History*, Eusebius says that he aims to “preserve, if not all the successions, at least those of the most especially renowned of our Savior’s apostles in each of the churches which are even now thought prominent” (*HE* 1.1.4). He then states he has done this in the *Canons*, but that the *History* will provide a “fuller narration” (*HE* 1.1.6). In other words, Eusebius uses the *Canons* as a sort of outline for the writing of the *History*. He structures the *History*, like the *Canons*, on the regnal years of Roman emperors, with which he synchronizes the tenures of the bishops of key sees: Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The “flesh” that Eusebius places on these chronological “bones” are the words he has gleaned from “ecclesiastical men.” As he puts it, “Whatever they have mentioned here and there that we think is profitable for the subject at hand, we have collected, picking the words that are useful from the ancient writers themselves, like the flowers of verbal fields, and we shall try by means of a historical composition to make of them a single body” (*HE* 1.1.4).

The Themes Announced in Book 1

The *History* opens with a single long sentence stating the themes that Eusebius will cover in his narrative. They are the apostolic succession/episcopal successions, ecclesiastical literature and men of letters, heresiology, the fate of the Jews/supersessionist theology, persecution and martyrdom, and ultimate triumph.

27. On the significance of the format of the *Chronological Canons*, see Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book*, 133–77.

THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION/EPISCOPAL SUCCESSIONS

The successions of the holy apostles along with [an account of] the times extending from our Savior to our own day; . . . how many governed and presided over [ecclesiastical] affairs with distinction in the most famous communities . . .

Eusebius understood bishops to be the successors to the apostles. The bishop's authority was sovereign in his see. Eusebius's account of episcopal successions played an important role in helping to construct and perpetuate an orthodox ideology of apostolic succession and the monarchical episcopate. The notion of "apostolic succession"—the idea that authority is transmitted from the immediate disciples and apostles of Jesus to their providentially chosen successors—is present in texts as early as the canonical book of Acts (late first–early second c. C.E.). In the second book of the *History*, Eusebius quotes and references those sections of Acts that articulate the notion of apostolic succession. Eusebius also highlights the Ignatian corpus and the Martyrdom of Polycarp. For modern scholars, these "proto-orthodox" texts provide evidence for the emergence (not without contention and contestation) of a monarchical episcopate—that is, the concept that the apostolic succession is embodied by a single apostolic successor in each Christian community, the bishop. Eusebius's selection and presentation of his sources have the effect of making the monarchical episcopate seem a natural and linear development.

ECCLESIASTICAL LITERATURE AND MEN OF LETTERS

. . . how many in each generation served as ambassadors of the Divine Logos, either in unwritten form or through written compositions . . .

The *Ecclesiastical History* is above all a story of Christian writers and their writings. In his introduction, Eusebius states that he is interested in famous ecclesiastical men who have written and those who have not. This distinction can be found in accounts of other traditions. The late third-century philosopher Longinus, for example, divided philosophers into two groups: those who wrote and those who did not

(*Life of Plotinus* 20). By writing the history of the church as a story about writers and writings, Eusebius, in effect, constructs that history as the history of a literature. When Eusebius mentions those whose contributions are unwritten, he does so in a way that nonetheless folds them into this literature. Perhaps the best case in point is Jesus. After offering a basic account of Christology and a synopsis of the gospel narratives in book 1, Eusebius closes the book by quoting in full an apocryphal letter exchange between Jesus and the king of Edessa. In the *History*, Jesus, too, is an ecclesiastical writer.

HERESIOLOGY

... the identities, number, and dates of those who, thanks to a yearning for innovation, drove on to the heights of error and proclaimed themselves the introducers of what is falsely called knowledge and mercilessly attacked Christ's flock like vicious wolves ...

"Heresy" and "orthodoxy" are mutually produced; put simply, in constructing a story of the church, Eusebius must also tell the story of its others. Eusebius inherited an already developed heresiological tradition. His most important source and influence is Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons (fl. 170s–190s C.E.). His *Against Heresies* is Eusebius's main source for his accounts of second-century heresies and heretics in the first five books of the *History*. (The other is a dossier of anti-Montanist treatises; see the discussion of these in the introduction to book 5.) The full title of Irenaeus's work was *Refutation and Overthrow of What Is Falsely Named Knowledge (Gnōsis)*. The work presented a variety of second-century thinkers and traditions as belonging to a single heretical trajectory—usually termed Gnosticism in modern scholarship. Irenaeus was not the only influential heresiologist of the second century. Tertullian and the author of the Ps.-Hippolytus, *Against Heresies*, for example, also produced important treatises against many of the same figures and traditions that Irenaeus identified/attacked. The representation of heresy in these texts has remained extremely durable. Recent scholarship has worked to denaturalize second-century heresiological rhetorics and disaggregate the variety of figures and ideas that orthodox heresiology presents as monolithic. The result is a much more nuanced portrait of second-century "Christianities." These "heresies" are now seen as a variety of theological and exegetical trajec-

ries whose relationships are much more complex than the binarism suggested by orthodox heresiologists. Nonetheless, Irenaeus and his heritors unavoidably haunt the study of early Christianity.

Eusebius reiterates several key features of Irenaeus's heresiology. First, orthodoxy is original and precedes heresy. Heresies are understood to consist of ever-multiplying deviations from an orthodoxy that, while progressing through time, nonetheless remains singular and fixed. Second, heresies originate with specific founders/authors. While orthodoxy is transmitted whole and unaltered from Christ to the apostles to their legitimate apostolic successors, heresies have their origins in the jealousies, innovative thinking, trickery, and confusion of specific individuals. The distinction between heresy and orthodoxy is also defined in terms of the different sorts of agency that apostolic authorities and heresiarchs are described as having. Orthodoxy, the truth authored by God, is *handed down* and *preserved* by apostolic *tradents*; heresy is *made up* and *introduced* by heretics who would arrogate *authorship* for themselves. Third, heresies proliferate and can be traced genealogically from one heresiarch to the next. Orthodoxy, embodied in the apostolic succession, could be represented as a single, unbroken line; heresy, embodied in the entropy of an ever-growing list of heresies, could be represented as a rhizomic growth.

The Irenaean model of heresiology served Eusebius's globalizing narrative well because it was so adaptable. Earlier heresiology constructed heresy as *both* singular and identifiable, a shadow succession to orthodoxy that could be traced genealogically, *and* that which is fundamentally variegated and changing. It was easy, therefore, to extend the heresy/orthodox binary to categorize and manage new varieties of Christianity in the centuries after Irenaeus. This is precisely what Eusebius does in the *History*.

FATE OF THE JEWS/SUPERSESSIONIST IDEOLOGY

*... what befell the whole Jewish people right after their plot against
our Savior ...*

Eusebius propounds a supersessionist, or "replacement," ideology; that is, he understands the Christian church to have "replaced" Israel as God's people, and the "new covenant" of the gospel to have superseded

and abrogated the “old covenant” of Mosaic law. Supersessionist ideology antedates Eusebius, and he would have been familiar with supersessionist thought in several sources he is known to have possessed, including the Letter of Barnabas and Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho*.

Eusebius is noteworthy for the intensity of his insistence that Roman rule in Judaea and, in particular, the effects of the Jewish War of 66–73 and the Bar Kochba revolt of 132–36 were divine vengeance for the death of Jesus and the persecution of the apostles. He presses this argument in book 2 and especially in book 3, where he quotes vivid passages from Josephus describing starvation and cannibalism during Titus’s siege of Jerusalem.

Eusebius lived in a multiethnic city and was metropolitan bishop of Palestine, a territory that included the ancestral land of the Jews and a sizable Jewish population. During Eusebius’s lifetime, Caesarea was an important center of rabbinic Judaism. The great Caesarean rabbi Abbahu was a contemporary of Eusebius’s teacher, Pamphilus. Given the prominence of Caesarea’s Jewish intellectuals, it might be surprising that contemporary Jews appear so infrequently in Eusebius’s works. Contemporary Jewish exegetes and exegeses do sometimes appear in Eusebius’s writings.²⁸ Eusebius’s Jews, though, are “textual Jews” or, as Andrew Jacobs puts it, “biblical Jews”—carefully historicized constructions of Jews placed conveniently in the past that serve as foils for supersessionist ideology.²⁹

But Eusebius’s supersessionism was not an intellectual abstraction. Proprietary claims that Christians were the true Israel and the genuine inheritors of God’s promises had “real” Jews and a “real” Judaea in view. Eusebius’s supersessionist ideology buttressed claims about territory. Eusebius was instrumental in helping to construct Roman Palestine as a Christian Holy Land. God had promised the land to the people of Israel; that territory, like the Hebrew Bible, was now overwritten and reterritorialized as Christian.

28. Perhaps in particular when he refers to Jewish exegeses as *deuterōseis*, by which he might be aiming to translate the Hebrew word *Mishnah*, which means “teaching,” but its root can also form the word for “repetition” (i.e., of traditions), which is what Eusebius seems to have in mind in passages like *Commentary on Isaiah* 1.21–22 and *Gospel Preparation* 12.4.

29. Andrew Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).