Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History* (HE) is the most important of his many books. It created a new literary genre that would have a long and influential history. In an often-quoted statement, F.C. Baur called Eusebius the father of ecclesiastical history, just as Herodotus was the father of historical writing in general.¹ The *Ecclesiastical History* is our single most important source for recovering the history of the first three centuries of Christianity. And it is the centerpiece of a corpus of writings in which Eusebius created a distinctive vision of the place of the Christian church in world history and God’s providential plan.

A book of such significance has attracted an enormous body of commentary and analysis driven by two rather different motives. One was the value of the *HE* as a documentary treasure trove of partially or completely lost works. For a long time, that was the primary driver of scholarly interest. The past two generations have seen the emergence of a second trend that focuses on Eusebius as a figure in his own right, a writer of exceptional range, creativity, and productivity, and an actor on the ecclesiastical and political stage.² How, for example, did current events shape the way Eusebius thought and wrote about the church’s past? And what can his construction of the past tell us in turn about Christian consciousness and ambition during a time of enormous transition? Seen from that angle, the *HE* becomes not a source for history but itself an artifact of history, a hermeneutical redirection that will be applied to other works of Christian historiography in this book.³

¹ Cited in Markus, “Church History and Early Church Historians,” 1.
³ For a similar contemporary shift in the study of non-Christian ancient historians, see Marincola, “Introduction.”
The purpose of this book differs from both of those. It is concerned less with what Eusebius used than with how subsequent tradition used him over the very long period since he wrote his history. To do that we need a baseline of understanding. We can only appreciate the impact of his book—and, at times, its eclipse and obscurity—if there is clarity about what he intended to create and how it must be understood on its own terms. This first chapter, then, offers an introduction to Eusebius’s life; a selective review of his literary production; an account of his core theological and historical vision; and then a more focused examination of the HE, first in its relation to its companion work, the Chronological Canons, then in a description of its structure, composition, and purpose, and finally in a review of Eusebius’s predecessors. The chapter has two purposes: to provide a template for understanding Eusebius’s reception by later ecclesiastical historiography; and to give readers not well acquainted with Eusebius an introduction to him and to the rich and diverse contemporary scholarship on him. Subsequent chapters will carry the story forward from Eusebius’s first successors to contemporary interpretations and debates over Eusebius and his legacy.

EUSEBIUS AS TRANSITIONAL FIGURE

Eusebius of Caesarea, or Eusebius Pamphili (b. ca. 260–264, d. 339 or 340) as he was known in antiquity, was born just as the “little peace of the Church,” the forty or so years of toleration following the rescript of the emperor Gallienus in 260, was beginning. He witnessed and survived the decade of intermittent persecution launched by Diocletian in 303. And he outlived the emperor who restored toleration and took the first steps toward religious establishment.

Eusebius seems to have been a native of Caesarea Maritima in Palestine, the capital of the Roman province of Judea. He spent most of his life there and rarely left, apart from travels inside Palestine and, during the last two years of the persecution, to Phoenicia and Egypt, and possibly Arabia. In the era after persecution

4. Johnson, Eusebius, is an admirably complete, concise, and up-to-date introduction to Eusebius in all of his authorial versatility.

5. Barnes, Constantine and Eusebius, is still the landmark study, despite requiring revision of Barnes’s proposed early dating of both the HE and the Chronicle. His picture of Constantine as a convinced Christian has also met resistance, but my subject is Eusebius, not Constantine. See also Barnes’s more recent Constantine; Lenski, Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine; and the overview of Morlet, “Eusèbe de Césarée.”

6. On the importance of Gallienus’s rescript to Christian bishops (in Eus. HE 7,13) as a watershed in Roman recognition of Christianity, see Barnes, Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History, 100–105.

ended, he occasionally traveled for church business. He adopted his surname (“son of Pamphilus”) out of respect for the scholarly presbyter Pamphilus, ὁ ἐμὸς δεσπότης (my master*), in whose household he apparently lived from a young age. There he was educated and trained in copying manuscripts in the library for which Caesarea would become famous.9 The library was part of Pamphilus’s project of collecting and preserving the works of Origen of Alexandria (ca. 184–ca. 253), who had spent the last approximately twenty years of his life in Caesarea after being forced to leave Alexandria because of difficulties with his bishop, Demetrius.10 Eusebius became a valued collaborator of Pamphilus and worked with him on an apology for Origen after Pamphilus was arrested in 307 during the last persecution. Following Pamphilus’s martyrdom in 310, Eusebius wrote his Life in three books and assumed the role of his successor. There would always be a question about his success in surviving a persecution that took his master.11 The projects of copying and collating manuscripts, and curating Origen’s literary and theological legacy, under the sign of possible martyrdom, left a fundamental stamp on everything Eusebius did throughout a long and productive career.

Not long after the end of persecution in 313, Eusebius was consecrated as bishop of Caesarea. His entry into the privileged fellowship of the Christian episcopacy cemented his standing among Eastern bishops who shared his Origenian theological orientation. For the next quarter century until his death, he would be a dominant figure in those circles and a major player in the clerical jockeying for position in relation to the newly sympathetic imperial government. He experienced a severe crisis when his association with the theology of Arius, an Alexandrian presbyter, put him on the temporarily losing side of the battle between Arius and Bishop Alexander of Alexandria. Forever after, the Arian tag would tarnish the reputation of his many books, and the Ecclesiastical History above all.12 In the winter of 324/325, he was provisionally excommunicated during a council of bishops in Antioch, held under the presidency of Bishop Hosius of Córdoba in Spain.13 He was thus under a cloud six months later when he attended the council convened in Nicaea by Constantine. In an awkward letter written afterward to his

11. Ibid., 193–194; Barnes, Constantine and Eusebius, 149.
church in Caesarea, he strove to rationalize his acceptance of the creed of the council, with its buzzword *homoousios* and its (to him) dubious associations. Subsequently he was an avid combatant in the dogmatic polemics sparked by the council.

It was not until this last stage of his long life that Eusebius made the actual acquaintance of Constantine, after the final defeat of Constantine’s Eastern coruler Licinius in 323/324. Timothy Barnes suggested that the bishop and the emperor probably met in person on no more than four occasions. Eusebius made sure his readers were aware of those contacts in his writings, including two speeches and the *Life of Constantine*, written after the emperor’s death and not long before Eusebius himself passed away. So successful was his promotional effort that in modern times he has been reviled as a flatterer and a court theologian, famously denounced by Jacob Burckhardt as antiquity’s first thoroughly dishonest historian. Recent scholarship has done much to correct that picture with a more comprehensive understanding of Eusebius as scholar, apologist, and churchman. By bringing under scrutiny his entire oeuvre, in all its impressive variety, without letting our perspective be skewed by the Constantinian literature, we gain a more accurate grasp not only of Eusebius but of the Christian culture of his day during a time of unparalleled turbulence. Historians often talk of “periods of transition.” If ever the phrase applied, it fits the generation to which Eusebius belonged and to which he is our premier witness.

On the other hand—and this is part of the gain of the rich trove of research that we will encounter in this book—we can also see how much continuity there was in the before-and-after of that era. We have become better at reading Eusebius as he was—already forty years old at the outbreak of the last persecution—without endowing him with a clear-eyed knowledge of the future that he could not have possessed, of the Christian Roman Empire as it would exist by the end of the fourth century under Theodosius. Peter Brown recently suggested that we might imagine Eusebius—and Constantine, and their generation—as limited by “horizons of the possible considerably more narrow than we might suppose,” and that we should perhaps credit Eusebius with no more than a “thin” universalist outlook, for which it was sufficient that Christianity’s victory took visible form in

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15. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 266.
16. Burckhardt, *Die Zeit Constantinus des Großen*, 575: “der erste durch und durch unredliche Geschichtsschreiber des Altertums,” the always quoted passage; elsewhere Burckhardt adds, “He [Constantine] alone fell into the hands of the most disgusting (widerlichsten) of all panegyrists, who completely falsified his image” (346). See Barnes’s contextualization of Burckhardt’s critique in nineteenth-century German and Swiss politico-ecclesiastical history, in *Constantine*, 10–11. It will be quoted again by Carl Schmitt in his defense of Eusebius in *Politische Theologie II*, 69–70.
buildings and laws and selective purging, without the expectation that the world would be made totally clean of idolatrous practices.17

**Literary Production**

Only a brief and selective survey of Eusebius’s literary production is possible here, for the sake of illustrating its diversity and some of its underlying themes, as well as to give a sense of where the HE fits into the whole. An important circumstance for Eusebius’s work is its setting in Caesarea, with its vigorous commercial, religious, and intellectual life, and vibrant Jewish, Samaritan, and Christian communities coexisting with Greco-Roman paganism.18 Eusebius must certainly have interacted in some fashion or other with the Jewish community and its famous academy, founded about the same time as Origen’s arrival.19 Origen’s tenure there had dramatically raised Caesarea’s profile as a center of Christian intellectual activity. Major archaeological work at Caesarea Maritima has recovered remains of the great expansion since Herod the Great’s development of the place formerly known as Straton’s Tower.20 We must always keep in mind the presence of those religious and intellectual others in Caesarea, Jews above all, when we read Eusebius’s books.

Eusebius’s writings can be organized into five broadly different groups. First, there is his biblical scholarship,21 for which he was prepared by his years copying and collating biblical manuscripts on the basis of the Hexapla, Origen’s great synopsis of Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible or Christian Old Testament. Manuscripts still survive with his name and that of Pamphilus listed in the colophons.22 Then there are instruments for biblical study, such as the gazetteer of biblical place-names called the *Onomasticon*, an invaluable handbook with apposite annotation.23 Works like the *Onomasticon* played a role in promoting pilgrimage to Palestine once persecution ended and Constantine’s building program commenced.24 There is also Eusebius’s ingenious synoptic index of the contents of the four gospels, commonly called the *Gospel Sections and Canons*, which distinguished and numbered individual pericopes in the Gospels and organized them in tables,

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24. Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, 12, gives unique credit to Eusebius for promoting Roman Palestine as a pilgrimage site.
facilitating quick identification of parallel passages.\textsuperscript{25} As commentators have noted,\textsuperscript{26} Eusebius’s fondness for tabular layouts is something that may have been nurtured by his intimate familiarity with the Hexapla. In addition he wrote treatises on controverted passages in the Bible, such as his Gospel Questions and Solutions, on the resurrection accounts and the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke, in the literary genre known as problems and solutions.\textsuperscript{27} Finally, there are the two massive commentaries on the Psalter and on the book of Isaiah, both from soon after 325, and which Eusebius may have singled out for treatment because of his special interest in the fulfillment of prophecy, in debates with Jews and pagans. Both works show his attention to textual variations as documented in the Hexapla and demonstrate his characteristic blend of literal and spiritual interpretation, which tends to avoid Origenian theological speculation in favor of grounding the texts in a continuous, providential history.\textsuperscript{28}

A second cluster consists of the apologetic works: the General Elementary Introduction, in its present form a collection of Old Testament prophetic extracts in four books out of an original nine, written while persecution was still underway; the massive twin apologies the Proof of the Gospel (DE) and the Preparation for the Gospel (PE) from the years after the end of persecution in 313, the former chiefly against the Jews and written to prove the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in Jesus and in Christianity, the latter chiefly to show the priority, and therefore the superiority, of Christianity to Hellenism and to Judaism as well; and the late work the Theophany, which survives only in a Syriac translation. All of these works illustrate Eusebius’s reliance on the piling up of quotations and extracts, a method made to order for one with the resources of Pamphilus’s library at his disposal. It was his intention, he says in the Preparation for the Gospel, “not [to] set down my own words, but those of the very persons who have taken the deepest interest in the worship of those whom they call gods, so that the argument may stand clear of all suspicion of being invented by us” (PE 1.5.14, trans. Gifford). The PE is especially notable for its articulation of a grand integrative vision of Christianity and the classical tradition.

A third cluster we may loosely call historical works, though it includes the Apology for Origen and the Martyrs of Palestine as well. The universal history conven-
tionally called the *Chronicle* is rightly paired with the *Ecclesiastical History*, which took the *Chronicle* as its point of departure (*HE* 1.1.6). Both works are discussed in detail in the next two sections, so no more will be said about them here, except that they too rely on quotations from sources. The degree to which their apologetic agenda coexists with their scholarly ambitions is considered below. The dating of both works is similarly debated and cannot be treated here, except to say that in their finished form they both ended with Constantine’s unification of the empire after the defeat of Licinius, his last imperial rival.

A special note is necessary here about the *Martyrs of Palestine* (*MP*), which has intimate but complex connections with the *Ecclesiastical History*. The *MP* exists in two different recensions, one of them longer than the other. The longer one (here L) survives complete only in a Syriac translation that was discovered and published in the nineteenth century. The shorter one (here S) exists in Greek and is found in some of the manuscripts of the *HE*.29 This book accepts the following reconstruction of the history and standing of the *MP*: that L is the older of the two recensions; that it preceded the composition of the *HE* as Eusebius’s report on the martyrdoms he himself witnessed in Palestine up to late 311 (*MP* Pref.8); that L was adapted to produce the shorter version, S, for book 8 of the *HE*;30 but that S was later removed, after persecution ended definitively in 313, and left to survive separately, being found in different locations in manuscripts of the *HE*.31 I decided at the beginning of my research for this book that the *Martyrs of Palestine* would not be considered, insofar as it seems essentially to constitute a separate work, albeit a very important one, both for its historical value and for its role in fostering a literary tradition of its own, what has been called “collective biography.”32 We will encounter literature of that type in chapter 3, in the East Syrian tradition. But it seems to be something qualitatively different from “ecclesiastical history.” In general, I agree with the opinion of Jörg Ulrich that “there must have been an awareness of the difference between historiography and hagiography.”33

In a fourth category are the late controversial tracts that Eusebius wrote as part of the dogmatic dueling in the wake of Nicaea, *Against Marcellus* and *On Ecclesiastical Theology*.34 They too use quotation and refutation, the former more than the latter. They will make only infrequent appearances in this book. Their relevance here is chiefly that they show Eusebius as wholly invested in a world of ecclesiastical and dogmatic conflict that he and his contemporaries certainly did not invent but that took on new intensity now that the Roman state had an investment in the outcome. I admit to sharing at times the impatience expressed by some of Eusebius’s continuators as they recount the perpetual fighting over doctrine. And yet identifying and vindicating orthodoxy is one of the central purposes of the *HE*.

A fifth and final category consists of the very late works devoted to celebrating the new order coming into being under the sole reign of the first Christian emperor. The *Treatise on the Holy Sepulcher* (SC) (September 335), on Constantine’s church over the burial place of Christ, and the *Oration in Praise of Constantine* (LC) (July 336), on the occasion of the emperor’s thirtieth anniversary, have come down to us bundled in the manuscripts as a single address but now recognized as two distinct works.35 The *Life of Constantine* (VC), in four books, was written, it seems, rather hurriedly after the emperor’s death in 337 and perhaps left incomplete at the time of Eusebius’s own death two years later. The speeches and the *Life*, along with Constantine’s *Oration to the Assembly of the Saints*, were Eusebius’s bid “to make himself the authoritative interpreter of the Christian emperor Constantine.”36 Like some other works by Eusebius, the *Life of Constantine* is a bit of a genre buster, a “literary hybrid”37 of biography, encomium, hagiography, and—with its reliance on documents—something of a work of history, as Eusebius notes in the *VC* in quoting a decree of Constantine to the provincials of Palestine, “both so that the actual text of this decree may survive through our history (*tēs historias*) and be preserved for those after us, and in order to confirm the truth of our narrative” (VC 2.23.2, trans. Cameron and Hall).

It is this triad of works that is most often in question when people speak about Eusebius’s “political theology.” The term itself has a confusing plasticity, being applicable to all manner of political attitudes and policies, from right-wing legitimation to left-wing social and ideological critique. When the term first came into use after

its modern retrieval by political theorist Carl Schmitt, it carried the conservative sense of a legitimation system for a political order. As we will see in the last chapter of this book, Schmitt gave it that connotation at the expense of the reputation of Eusebius himself. In Eusebius’s era the political order in question was the ecumenical monarchy of the Roman Empire, as opposed to other regime types with which ancient thinkers were familiar. The two orations and the Life of Constantine were scarcely the only works of Eusebius whose contents lent themselves to ideological service, as the Chronicle, the PE, the DE, and the HE all demonstrate. But the Constantinian writings display a political theology of an exceptionally developed kind. We will take up that subject in the next section. Here we are considering only what place the Life of Constantine in particular will have in this book. Eusebius’s continuators will sometimes treat the Life of Constantine as a virtual continuation of the Ecclesiastical History, an easy assumption to make, considering that the first two books of the VC deal in much greater detail with events and persons already encountered in the HE. One topic in particular that will intrigue later generations is not mentioned in the HE at all but only in the VC: the story of Constantine’s conversion and baptism. Popular interest in Constantine’s conversion and baptism will grow apace, even though the VC itself will experience relative eclipse not long after its composition, considered “nothing short of a publishing disaster,” “an outlier,” without discernible influence on fourth-century traditions about Constantine.38 The most plausible explanation for its unpopularity is the supposed Arian tinge of its theological orientation and its association of Constantine himself too closely with Arianism.39 It also had little to say about aspects of Constantine’s life that especially intrigued later generations of readers in the Greek Christian world, which much preferred the hagiographic lives of the first Christian emperor that became staple reading during the Byzantine period.40 Unlike the HE and the Chronicle, the VC would not be translated into Latin until the end of the Middle Ages.

What does that mean for the place that the Life of Constantine will have in this book on the reception of Eusebius’s Ecclesiastical History? It can only play a supporting role, since the present book is primarily about “ecclesiastical history” and only secondarily about Constantine. But the VC can scarcely be avoided, given the

39. Winkelmann, “Einleitung: Testimonia veterum,” in Über das Leben des Kaisers Konsantin, XXVII–XXVIII. In his comments on the Life of Constantine in his Bibliotheca (cod. 127), the patriarch Photius will give special emphasis to the circumstances of Constantine’s deathbed baptism and will criticize Eusebius’s evasiveness about Arianism.
40. Kazhdan, “‘Constantin imagine’,” identifies four dominant themes in the legendary lives from the ninth and tenth centuries: the circumstances of Constantine’s conception and birth in humble circumstances, his youthful life in the court of Diocletian, legends about the cross, and Constantine’s escape from Persian captivity, to which he adds a fifth, legends concerning the divine founding of Constantinople; Lieu, “From History to Legend.”
links between it and the HE, and the fact that the final form of the HE culminates in Constantine’s ascendency to sole rule. A Christian emperor and a Christianizing empire will therefore be integral to what we are going to call Eusebius’s “theo-political vision,” even if Christian emperor and empire do not dominate the HE as they do the Constantinian literature. The Life of Constantine will therefore become relevant when later Christian historiography writes about Constantine in ways that sound as though they derive from the HE but in fact do not.

Eusebius’s Theo-political Vision

The reception history of Eusebius’s Ecclesiastical History involves more than the formal study of “ecclesiastical history” as a historiographical genre. It also involves the substantive vision of God and history/God in history that animates the HE and with which future ecclesiastical historians will have to come to terms—whether to accept it, to criticize and revise it, or to ignore it altogether. A conventional theological vocabulary might call that vision salvation history, a category that certainly captures a feature of Eusebius’s thinking, especially of his biblical interpretation. It could also fairly be called a theology of history. I prefer to describe Eusebius’s fundamental orientation as a theo-political vision, a category admittedly more in vogue in contemporary theology than in scholarship on late antiquity. By it I mean that the vision is powerfully providentialist in its view of history, that it embraces the political realm as an essential and not merely incidental theater of divine action in the world, and that the two, the theological and the political, are grasped as intimately and inseparably connected—though the former claims superiority over the latter in the order of being. We could also call such a vision a political theology. While the Constantinian writings do embody a political theology, their encomiastic character makes them an inadequate optic for examining Eusebius’s thought as a whole, as we have already said. Because several of Eusebius’s other writings reveal politically resonant assumptions and aspirations without being true vehicles for political theology as such, I am therefore adopting the hyphenated term “theo-political” as a convenient rubric under which to consider ideas that are dear to Eusebius in many of his authorial endeavors, whether as scholar, apologist, or controversialist.

There are four distinct but related elements that together make up Eusebius’s theo-political vision. They are not evident in equal measure in all of his writings,

41. E.g., Ulrich, Euseb von Caesarea und die Juden, 133–154; Hollerich, Eusebius of Caesarea’s “Commentary on Isaiah,” 67–74, 87–102; Sirinelli, Les vues historiques d’Eusèbe de Césarée, while not about salvation history by that name, considers Eusebius’s effort to fashion a history of civilization under the pedagogy of the Logos, such that the history of civilization seems almost equated with the history of salvation.


43. E.g., Cavanaugh, Theopolitical Imagination.
as our literary survey has already indicated. Nor do they exert comparable influence at each stage of Eusebius’s life and works.\textsuperscript{44} No one, I think, would dispute that they are fundamental to his thought. I will comment briefly on each.

- The Bible, seen as a divinely revealed decoding key to history as the \textit{oikonomia} of the Logos
- The participatory metaphysics of Origen and the Platonic tradition
- A historically based anti-Jewish apologetic well suited for a Christian church in a liminal state, uncertainly poised between persecution and patronage
- A conception of sacred kingship that was virtual \textit{Gemeingut} in late antiquity

We have already emphasized that current research on Eusebius resists an anachronistic framing of him and his theology as political tools in the hands of a ruthless despot, once upon a time an easy enough caricature, as if he and Constantine were foreshadowing Talleyrand and Napoleon.\textsuperscript{45} But Eusebius was a bishop before he was a royal panegyrist, and a scholar-apologist before either. The church he served was front and center in his thinking, far ahead of the empire as such.\textsuperscript{46} In a brilliant essay entitled “Eusebius of Caesarea, Origenist,” Charles Kannengiesser showed how Eusebius’s literary production, even the works that seem soaked in political theology, were fundamentally animated not by politics but by Christian faith and by Platonic idealism.\textsuperscript{47} In Eusebius’s \textit{Commentary on Isaiah}, written in the full glow of the unification of the empire under Constantine, he called the church “the godly polity” (\textit{to theosebes politeuma}) or “city of God” (\textit{polis tou theou}), a usage not different from Augustine’s \textit{civitas Dei}, and like Augustine’s, an inclusive reality with a preexistence in Israel before its full disclosure after the Incarnation.\textsuperscript{48} In the peroration to his dedication address for the rebuilt cathedral at Tyre, found at the end of the \textit{HE}, Eusebius hailed his friend Bishop Paulinus of Tyre as one in whom “the entire Christ himself has taken his seat (\textit{autos holos engkathētai Christos})” (\textit{HE} 10.4.67), a theological validation of the highest kind. The speech also praises the emperors (plural) as “most dearly beloved of God,” but

\textsuperscript{44} I do not attach great importance to questions of development in Eusebius’s thinking. Too many of his works are hard to date with precision, a circumstance that invites circular arguments, and the diversity of genres in which he worked makes substantive comparison tricky.

\textsuperscript{45} Seeing Eusebius and his theo-political vision as a cipher for later subordination of Christianity to the state is a recurring move in modern Christian theology. See chapter 7 below.

\textsuperscript{46} Hollerich, “Religion and Politics in the Writings of Eusebius of Caesarea.”

\textsuperscript{47} Kannengiesser, “Eusebius of Caesarea, Origenist.”

\textsuperscript{48} When I was presenting the proposal for my dissertation on the \textit{Commentary on Isaiah} to Armando Momigliano, who had agreed to be a reader, he wondered what Eusebius would have to say about Constantine as a new Cyrus (cf. Isa 45:1). His question about Constantine in Eusebius’s exegetis became a foil of sorts against which I defined my thesis, since it was the church and its clergy rather than the empire per se that was the central focus of the commentary.
their value is based on their brutal work as the instruments by which God purged and cleansed the world of the harm wrought by the persecuting tyrants (HE 10.4.60). This is no more than the Pauline vindication of the one who bears the sword as God’s avenging servant (Rom 13:4). It is true that Eusebius’s account of Constantine’s defeat of Maxentius in the victory of the Milvian Bridge is presented in terms of a typological comparison with the destruction of Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea (HE 9.9.5–9), a comparison that will receive much fuller elaboration in the Life of Constantine. But the point of the typology in the HE is the emplotment of a military victory in a civil war into a biblically based narrative of divine deliverance. Contemporary history thus validates biblical prophecy in a kind of feedback loop, not primarily to glorify Constantine himself, but as a response to contemporary doubters who, Eusebius admits, regard the Exodus narrative as a “myth.”

The fundamental source of Eusebius’s theo-political vision is the Bible, particularly those books with a broadly historical orientation: the Deuteronomic history; the major prophets; Daniel; the Gospels; Paul’s letters to the Romans and Galatians; and especially the Acts of the Apostles. Doubt has been raised as to the precise literary influence of Acts on the early books of the HE. Without wanting to proclaim Acts as the first church history, an honor that surely belongs to Eusebius, there are nevertheless clear thematic affinities between Acts and the HE, such as an openness to the positive role of the Roman Empire, a prudent reserve about apocalyptic eschatology (Jesus’s parting admonition to his disciples, “It is not for you to know the time or the hour” [Acts 1:6], is quoted approvingly by Eusebius in the preface to the Chronicle), and universalism, as expressed in the Pentecost account, which Eusebius invokes to great effect in describing the Council of Nicaea—a “universal council” (synodon oikoumenikēn), the first such use of that phrase—in the Life of Constantine (VC 3.6–8). Above all there is the shared commitment to salvation history: Richard Pervo noted that it is more or less universally accepted that “Luke’s principal theme is the continuity of salvation history.”

So too with Eusebius, though Eusebius differs from Luke in his concern to backdate salvation history to Abraham rather than to make Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost the narrative point of departure. That history was under the dispensation of the Logos, who revealed its inner meaning by the prophets. In the

49. “To which as a myth very many gave no faith, yet were they worthy of faith to the faithful” (HE 9.9.4, trans. Oulton). See Hollerich, “Myth and History in Eusebius’ De Vita Constantini.”
50. Markschies, “Eusebius liest die Apostelgeschichte.”
52. Eus. VC 3.6.1 (83.18, ed. Winkelmann).
preface to the *Proof of the Gospel*, Eusebius credits biblical prophecy with a pur-
view that embraces the whole sweep of human affairs, secular as well as religious. The passage bears quoting:

What sort of [prophetic] fulfillment, do you ask? They are fulfilled in countless and all kinds of ways, and amid all circumstances, both generally and in minute detail, in the lives of individual people and in their corporate life, now nationally in the course of Hebrew history, and now in the lives of foreign nations. Such things as civic revolu-
tions, changes of times, national vicissitudes, the coming of foretold prosperity, the assaults of adversity, the enslaving of races, the besieging of cities, the downfall and restoration of whole states, and countless other things that were to take place a long time after, were foretold by these writers.56

Eusebius’s *Commentary on Isaiah* is constantly taken up with finding the fulfillment of prophecy in “the course of events” (*hē ekbasis tōn pragmatōn*). “Literal” (*kata/pros lexin*) interpretation of prophecy meant finding fulfillment in observable historical events. “Spiritual” (*kata/pros dianoian*) interpretation typically meant the meaning of those events, which for Eusebius could be grasped only transcenden-
tally, in terms of the divine plan.57 Thus there was always an “inside” and an “outside” of events, the former of which was known only to faith, in what Peter Brown has recently called “the charged pairing of invisible and visible.”58

The second element in Eusebius’s theo-political vision consists of his immense debt to Origen, beginning with Eusebius’s appropriation of a theistic metaphysics derived most immediately from Middle Platonism, in which a secondary divine principle links the source of all being to the rest of reality.59 Eusebius routinely called the Logos such a secondary principle, at least until Nicaea disallowed it.60 Then there is Eusebius’s adoption of a spirituality that treated asceticism and intel-
lectual inquiry as kindred enterprises—“the philosophical life” embraces both, as Eusebius saw modeled concretely in Pamphilus. Origen held to a doctrine of the church that recognized apostolic tradition as foundational, but according to which that tradition was preserved and protected by a hierarchy of talent and holiness which was by no means coterminous with ordination.61 Charles Kannengiesser has pointed out the proximity between what Eusebius says about apostolic tradition in the beginning of the *HE* and what Origen says about it in the celebrated preface to

59. *PE* 11.14–19 is devoted to Greek philosophical sources on a second divine cause, esp. 11.18, consist-
ing of fragments from Numenius.
60. *DE* 4.5.3, 4.7.2, 5.Pref.20, 23; *HE* 1.2.3, 5, 9.
61. Trigg, “Charismatic Intellectual,” 10, citing inter alia Origen’s reference in the opening of his *Commentary on John* 1.9–12 to the Levites, priests, and high priests devoted to the service of the Word, gradations that do not in Origen’s mind correspond to ecclesiastical offices.
his treatise *On First Principles*. As Origen's and Pamphilus's heir, Eusebius can be seen as an exemplar in his own right of the scholar-bishop. We can leave to late medieval and Reformation-era polemics the concept of a “fall of the church” from its primal purity. But one unhappy effect of the bishops’ transformation into officials in a church of the empire may have been the loss of centers of study like the one inspired by Origen's legacy in Caesarea. Eusebius straddled that transition. To Origen, furthermore, Eusebius also owed an understanding of the Roman Empire as a peacemaking pathway for the gospel, although here too Eusebius will take that openness much farther than Origen. Finally, it was from Origen that Eusebius received the philological and hermeneutical tools that Alexandrian scholarship provided for understanding divine revelation, which Origen had insisted was a single unified whole in both Old and New Testaments.

Origen’s centrality in the *HE* is indisputable: he dominates book 6, just as Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria dominates book 7, they as a matched pair representing Eusebius’s ideal types of the charismatic teacher and exegete, and the scholarly bishop/pastor. As we noted, Eusebius assisted Pamphilus in the composition of an apology for Origen, adding a sixth book to the original five after his master’s death in 310. Eusebius's and Pamphilus's labors on behalf of Origen's legacy, and Eusebius's life of Origen in book 6 of the *Ecclesiastical History*, will constitute one of the most precious—and at times controversial—elements in the reception of the *HE*. Origen's name will never cease to spark reaction. In sum: “There should be no doubt that *Ecclesiastical History* is the most Origenian of Eusebius’ apologetic works handed down to us.”

All of that being said, anyone who comes to Eusebius after reading Origen will encounter a very different intellectual sensibility. Most obviously, Eusebius could not match Origen’s speculative abilities. It’s not that Eusebius wasn’t interested in the deep things of the spirit. As readers of the *Preparation for the Gospel* know, he was intensely engaged in issues of epistemology, ontology, ethics, and eschatology, as shown by his massive excerpting of texts by both Christians and Hellenists, Plato above all. But he preferred quotation to argument—more correctly, he treated quotation itself as a form of argument. As a rule, he avoided speculation over issues, especially involving eschatology, that were controversial among

66. Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors*, examines how Eusebius’s manipulation of quotations of Jewish authors serves his theological and apologetic agenda.
his fellow Christians. He does not, for example, endorse Origen’s speculations about universal salvation. His own declared beliefs appear to presume an irreversible posthumous divide between the saved and the damned. At times Origenist doctrines are introduced as alternative theories, via impersonal allusions like “some say” (phasis tines) or “another might say” (allos d’an eipoi), as in his Commentary on Isaiah, which Eusebius wrote with Origen’s own commentary at his side.

But more than reluctance to touch hot-button topics is at work here. Eusebius was clearly more attuned to the historical and the concrete, and ultimately to the political, than Origen was. It is not easy to conceive of Origen creating works like the Onomasticon, the Chronicle, or the Ecclesiastical History. Lorenzo Perrone has suggested that their different orientations reflected Eusebius’s awareness of the new cultural situation created by the end of persecution, and hence he was more open to an engagement with classical culture, and also more attuned to strictly literary activity “as an ‘ecclesiastical writer’ and as a Christian philologos.” Did Eusebius’s lifelong residence in Palestine also dispose him to be more interested in the concrete evidences of Christianity’s origins, and of course of Judaism as well? (That interest had its dark side of course, as we will see.) Origen was not uninterested in empirical confirmations of biblical narratives when they came to his attention. But he didn’t design entire books around them. When Origen speculated at the end of Against Celsus about the possibility of a universal ethic (contrary to Celsus’s scorn), he projected it into a possibly very distant—even otherworldly?—future, whereas Eusebius was ever on the lookout for signs of world-historical convergence, in the records of the past or in anticipations of the future. Origen surely welcomed favorable signs of the times. It is probably the two letters that Eusebius says Origen wrote to the emperor Philip (244–249) and his consort that are the source of Eusebius’s description of Philip’s request to attend the prayers on

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71. Perrone, “Eusebius of Caesarea as a Christian Writer,” 528–530, offers a subtle revision of Kannengiesser’s portrait by noting that Eusebius departs from Origen’s devotion to the spoken word as a medium for approaching the Bible.

72. Origen, Contra Celsum 8.72.