FRANCES M. YOUNG
with Andrew Teal

From Nicaea to Chalcedon

A Guide to the Literature and its Background

Second Edition

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1

The Birth of Church History and its Sequel

I Eusebius of Caesarea

Eusebius sums up an age of transition. His works reflect the Church's movement from being a persecuted minority to being the dominant faith of the Roman Empire, in terms of influence if not yet numbers. It was perhaps the perfect moment for 'the father of Church history' to take up his pen. It was the end of one era, the start of another.

It is natural to think of Eusebius as belonging to the fourth century, for his extant literary output belongs to its early decades. Besides he was involved in the deliberations of Nicaea and subsequent events. But Eusebius was nearing forty by the turn of the century, and in many ways his outlook reflects the presuppositions of the third century. In most of his work an apologetic element can be discerned, and in spite of moving eagerly with political developments, he has seemed unequal in his theological thinking to the new demands and difficulties of the Arian controversy.

However, this in itself makes him a more interesting figure. We can be pretty sure that he spoke for a solid mass of conservative churchmen, facing with dread and uncertainty apparent innovations to their faith, yet welcoming with sincere idealism the conversion of the emperor and the triumph of the Church. In the pages of his works we meet what 'Origenism' had become, the faith of the ordinary educated church leader, surprisingly literal-minded in its approach to scripture and doctrine. In his actions we may see compromise, but if so it was probably born out of a genuine desire for the preservation of the traditional faith and the unity of the Church.

1 Life

Surprisingly little is known of Eusebius' life.[1] He seems to have been born in the early 260s, probably in Palestinian Caesarea, which remained his home throughout his life. Caesarea had been Origen's base for the last twenty years of his life, and it was probably on this account that the city attracted Euse-

1 Barnes (1981) provides a summary chronological table on pp. 277–9; his somewhat quixotic dates have been contested, however, and an alternative chronological scheme may be found tabulated in Carriker (2003), pp. 37–41, following Burgess (1997).

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bius' teacher, Pamphilus, an eager collector of Origen's works. The early career of Eusebius is particularly obscure, apart from his acknowledged devotion to Pamphilus, whose name he took, Εὐσέβιος ὁ Παμφίλου.[2] The house of Pamphilus became a school, based around a remarkable library, probably originating from the collections made by Origen to which Pamphilus tirelessly added material;[3] here he and Eusebius worked in collaboration with one another. Eventually they produced a joint defence of the great scholar to whom they both owed so much.[4] If the collection of quotations to be found in Eusebius' work are anything to go by, the library must have been quite a comprehensive collection,[5] not only of Christian literature, but of a wide range of literature in the Greek language, especially philosophical works. Under Pamphilus, Caesarea also became a centre for the correction of manuscripts, and it was from Eusebius that Constantine later ordered fifty copies of the scriptures for his new churches in Constantinople.[6]

Eusebius grew up in a time of peace. The Decian persecution had faded into the past. The Church was expanding throughout the Empire. He was forty or more when renewed persecution hit the Church with the edict of Diocletian in AD 303. For ten years he lived through Rome's final bitter onslaught on Christianity, and it is from his pen that we have detailed eyewitness accounts of the effects of persecution in Egypt and Palestine. Eusebius apparently toured these areas, and could report many incidents first hand; he and other Christians openly visited those suffering for their faith in prison or in the mines, apparently unmolested. In 307 Pamphilus was imprisoned, and eventually died as a martyr in 310; while in prison he composed his *Defence of Origen* with Eusebius' help. Exactly how Eusebius survived we do not know; he was apparently imprisoned in Egypt (sometime in 311–13), and was later accused of compromising in order to secure his release. In spite of the fact that the library housed many copies and versions of the scriptures – the first target of the authorities – it was apparently not destroyed. We can only conclude that the persecution was carried out somewhat sporadically and unsystematically.

In 313, the persecution ceased and Eusebius became bishop of Caesarea. This position he held for the rest of his life. He must have been nearly seventy when he was elected bishop of Antioch after the deposition of Eustathius. Wisely he

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2 Controversy has raged over the implications of this. Since Photius, some have understood it to mean 'slave of' or 'freedman of' Pamphilus, but the form is probably to be understood as a patronymic, with the implication that Pamphilus adopted Eusebius as his son and heir, and maybe he inherited the library. See Gifford (1903), III.1, pp. vi–xi, for discussion. It remains possible that Eusebius simply took Pamphilus' name after his death as a token of respect.

3 See Carriker (2003); he dismisses the idea that Origen's library was destroyed in the Decian persecution, and suggests that it had probably come under episcopal control prior to Pamphilus' arrival in Caesarea.

4 Their joint *Apologia pro Origene* exists only in Rufinus' Latin version; text: Amacker and Junod (2002).

5 Carriker (2003), p. 311 documents all that we know of its contents from Eusebius' voluminous works. He comments on 'its wealth of religious literature, its dearth of classical history, poetry and oratory, and its strength in Middle Platonic works'.

6 Eusebius, *Vita* iv.36.

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refused the honour, ostensibly on grounds of careful adherence to canon law as established at Nicaea,[7] but perhaps also on account of devotion to his library.

But if he remained bishop of Caesarea, this did not mean that he lived peacefully in an ecclesiastical backwater. His later years as bishop are better known to us, as he became involved in the politics of the newly established official Church, and stormy years they were. At Antioch (Spring 325) his orthodoxy was impugned, and his acquiescence at Nicaea (Summer 325) apparently caused him some embarrassment. However, in spite of the doctrinal conclusions of Nicaea, Eusebius' admiration for Constantine was augmented rather than diminished, and Constantine seems to have recognized the distinction and usefulness of so accomplished a Christian scholar. Immediately after the council, Constantine celebrated the twentieth anniversary of his succession with the bishops present; at the thirtieth anniversary Eusebius would deliver a panegyric in his honour. Immediately before the latter, he took a prominent part in the councils of Antioch and Tyre, proceedings which dealt with the 'ultra-Nicene' bishops, Eustathius and Athanasius; and he wrote at length against Marcellus,[8] deposed around the same time. As a result of this confrontation with the young upstart of Alexandria, not to mention other manoeuvres during his episcopacy, Eusebius has continually faced charges of 'semi-Arianism', or of trimming his sails to fit the political wind. The justice of these charges will be considered later, but in fairness to Eusebius, we should remember that already at the time of Nicaea, he had probably reached sixty, and the Council of Tyre was ten years later. He was an old man, profoundly thankful for the triumph of the Church and perhaps a little out of his depth in the rapidly moving controversies and developments of the new era. It is hardly surprising that an aged and respected bishop with an essentially conservative outlook should find the intense single-mindedness of the young Athanasius distinctly uncongenial, even offensive. All Eusebius wanted was peace in the Church for the triumphant celebration of Constantine's Tricennalia. He lived on to see out Constantine's reign, and died about AD 340, having spanned a significant turning-point in Christian history.

2 The *Ecclesiastical History* and earlier historical writings

One consequence of our meagre knowledge of Eusebius' life is difficulty in the matter of dating his writings, a question to which much scholarly work has been devoted. The matter is complicated by the successive editions and redactions through which his work seems to have passed. The general order of composition can to some extent be established by cross-references, and the dating of certain sections is fixed fairly generally by allusions to the contemporary situation. But his works are massive, and must have been assembled over considerable periods of time.

The *Ecclesiastical History*[9] clearly went through several editions. At one time there was general acceptance of the theory of E. Schwartz that the first edition

7 Eusebius, *Vita* iii.61.
8 Text: Klostermann (1972). See Chapter 2, pp. 56–61.
9 Text: Schwartz (1903–9); Bardy (1952–60). ET Lawlor and Oulton (1932); Williamson (1965/89).

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consisting of eight books appeared in approximately 312; that Book IX was added in 315, Book X in 317; and that a final edition appeared about the time of Nicaea, when the character of the references to the Emperor Licinius was changed to conform with his downfall. It is generally agreed that the final complete edition dates from 325–6, and that the final books underwent substantial modification over a period; but a number of investigators have tended to put the date of the first edition, consisting of only seven books, much earlier, even prior to 303,[10] and to posit considerable revision of these earlier sections in later editions – indeed, Grant characterized the work as a 'process'.[11] The early dating has subsequently been challenged, and substantial reasons advanced for regarding it as unlikely that there was an edition prior to 313, the first version consisting of eight books.[12] The considerable differences between Books I—VII and the subsequent material[13] may be accounted for by suggesting that Eusebius was inspired to write the history when he realized that the Great Persecution was the Final Persecution; so Books I—VII trace the history up to its brink, while VIII (and eventually VIII—X) tells of the course of persecution and deliverance from it.

Prior to the *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius composed the *Chronicle*,[14] and arguments about the dating of both revolve around the various editions of this earlier compilation.[15] The Greek original is no longer extant, though part of the work survives in translations: an Armenian version perhaps renders a somewhat abbreviated Greek edition,[16] while Jerome's Latin explicitly brought it up to date and incorporated more Western material. The missing first part apparently consisted of a continuous prose narrative of the histories of various nations, made up largely of excerpts from accounts accessible to Eusebius with some attempt at cross-reference; the second part, known as the *Chronological Tables*, is a note-form summary in parallel columns, a tabulated conspectus which brings into line the different systems of dating and displays the parallel development of the major peoples of the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean areas. The idea of such a table was probably Eusebius' own, and may have been inspired by the parallel columns of Origen's *Hexapla*.[17]

Chronological schemes had been attempted before, but Christian versions, such as that by Julius Africanus, had been constructed in the interests of apol-

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10 For example Wallace-Hadrill (1960); Grant (1980); Barnes (1981) even puts it before 300.

11 Grant (1980), p. 10.

12 Louth (1990); Burgess (1997).

13 Well summarized in Louth (1990), who also accounts for it along the line here suggested. See further discussion in Tabbernee (1997).

14 Text: Karst (1911); Helm (1913).

15 Some have argued that the *Tables* originally ended in 303, or even earlier (Barnes 1981), and like the *History* went through successive editions – hence the interconnections over the issue of dating. See Wallace-Hadrill (1955) and Burgess' critique (1997). Grant (1980) exploits differences between the two works to discern changes made to the early books of the *Ecclesiastical History*.

16 See Mosshammer (1979) for discussion of the textual issues and Eusebius' sources; Burgess (1997) contends that the same version underlies both the Armenian and Jerome's translation.

17 Noted first by Barnes (1981); developed by Grafton and Williams (2006).

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ogetic and eschatology – to show that Moses and the prophets lived before Plato by whom they were plagiarized, and to fit everything from creation to incarnation into 5,500 years on the assumption that after 6,000 years would come the Millennium, the Great Sabbath. Moses' priority continued to matter to Eusebius; indeed his chronographical investigation may have been stimulated by Porphyry's challenge to the consensus that synchronized Moses and Inachus (500 years before the Trojan War)[18] – Porphyry had brought Moses' date back even earlier, to 800 years prior to the fall of Troy. Eusebius himself reduced the priority to 350 years, making Moses contemporary with Cecrops, the first king of Attica. He also calculated on the basis of Septuagintal information 5,199 years between Adam and the incarnation, noting that the Hebrew was different. These two moves undercut the millenarian scheme. Eusebius was necessarily dependent on predecessors for material – in fact it has been noted that in general he tends to be more reliable when dependent on documentary evidence for the past than when recounting events of his own day – but he did his own comparative research; and he tolerated a degree of doubt, given the differences between versions of the Bible and the difficulties in using historical documents – he simply could not reconcile the long time spans in Egyptian and Chaldean sources with biblical material. He quoted Acts 1.7, about not knowing the times or seasons, to allow for investigation and uncertainty.[19]

Yet, for all this scholarly attention to detail, Eusebius cannot be entirely absolved of the charge of distortion for the sake of propaganda.[20] His principal interest can be discerned in the fact that by the time of Augustus the parallel columns were reduced to two: only imperial and Christian chronology now mattered. Yet living in Palestine, Eusebius must have been all too aware of the neighbouring Persian Empire, and other works show that he knew of Christian missions outside Roman boundaries. It is hard not to conclude that Eusebius' *Chronological Tables* were deliberately framed to fit one of his favourite apologetic themes – namely the providential coincidence of the incarnation and the establishment of world peace under Augustus.

In his prologue to the *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius states that it is an amplification of the information collected in the latter part of the *Chronological Tables*.[21] It seems then that the *Ecclesiastical History* arose naturally out of the *Chronicle* as Eusebius' next major project. This background helps us to understand the somewhat strange divisions of material in the *Ecclesiastical History*: the work evolved out of chronography, and so chronological rather than logical sequence is followed. The imperial succession provides one framework of the narrative, and information about Christian leaders like Justin Martyr and Origen is divided up and put in different sections under the reigns of different emperors. Eusebius states in his preface, probably added at the end as a review of what he has done

18 Burgess (1997), p. 489; the Appendix prints Eusebius' Preface – Burgess notes that the first word is 'Moses', and Eusebius immediately sets out the problem of Moses' date.

19 William Adler, 'Eusebius' *Chronicle* and its legacy' in Attridge and Hata (1992).

20 *Pace* Barnes (1981), who dates the *Chronicle* to the third century and regards the early Eusebius as primarily a scholar, admittedly limited by his resources, who only took up apologetic as the peace of the Church was shattered after 303.

21 *HE* I.i.2.

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rather than an anticipation of what he intended to do,[22] that his purpose is to trace the lines of succession from the holy apostles, the names and dates of the heretics, the calamities which have overtaken the Jews since their conspiracy against the Saviour, and the persecutions and heroic martyrdoms suffered for the faith. These other subjects tend to impose their own schemes, and the various episcopates interlock with the imperial reigns. The result is an apparent confusion of order and subject, which is somewhat bewildering to the reader.

Eusebius was first and foremost a scholar, not of the clear thinking philosophical type,[23] nor with an overriding commitment to objectivity given his apologetic interests, but still an antiquarian who loved to sort evidence and amass information. His attention to detail can amount to pedantry.[24] As a historian, he was not very imaginative; but from posterity's point of view, his chief asset is his love of documents, of quoting the actual texts to demonstrate what he was recording. Attention is drawn to the nature of his work by the fact that a modern selection of texts illustrating Church history is entitled *A New Eusebius*.[25] Without Eusebius, our knowledge of the early Church would be considerably impoverished.[26] Apart from some oral resources, his repertoire was almost certainly limited to the literary works and dossiers of letters contained in the libraries of Caesarea and Jerusalem, but that was a substantial resource.[27] He had problems dating and evaluating his material, and his perspective is anachronistic, projecting back the Church he knew in his own time.[28] To some extent, we can correct and amplify his information from other works available to us, though this is not always the case and then his inadequacies become tantalizing: what exactly did Paul of Samosata teach and why was he condemned? Eusebius preserves details of his immoral life and anti-ecclesiastical conduct, but never fully explains his heretical doctrines, simply implying a link with Ebionites and Artemon.[29] Maybe he doubted the 'usefulness'[30] of recording false teachings, since he is equally vague about most heresies; but he also thought that heresies were short-lived, and so needed little discussion.[31] For all his inadequacies, however, Eusebius is indispensable: he provides us with our only fragments of Papias' writings, in spite of his somewhat derogatory opinion of his intelligence; and to him we owe the survival of very early martyrologies, and extracts from such important figures as Melito of Sardis and Dionysius of Alexandria. Besides this, he lists the works of the more important ecclesiastical

22 Grant (1980).

23 Barnes (1981, p. 100) calls him 'philosophically confused'; but Lienhard (1999) and Robertson (2007) challenge the common estimate of Eusebius' theology as unsophisticated – see further below.

24 Kofsky (2000), p. 251.

25 Stevenson (1957).

26 Lawlor reckoned that half the quotations in the *HE* would be otherwise unknown to us; see Lawlor and Oulton (1927), II, p. 19.

27 Nautin (1961); Carriker (2003).

28 Barnes (1981).

29 For discussion see Grant (1980), pp. 92–3.

30 Eusebius insists on the utility of the material he quotes and his overall project: Grant (1980), p. 23.

31 Grant (1980), p. 85.

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authors, and provides a chronological scheme, which, though needing some modification, remains a basic guide for reconstructing the general sequence of events in Church history from New Testament times to his own day.

Eusebius is chiefly known for his work on Church history. Yet here, as well as in his theology, modern scholarship has made him the butt of criticism. He has been accused of deliberate distortion of facts and mutilation of documents;[32] the tendentious character of his work, his lack of judgment and insight, his disregard for social and political factors, have all been remarked. In particular, the value of his accounts of the events of his own time has been the subject of much dispute. Books VIII—X of the *Ecclesiastical History*, and the associated pamphlet, the *Martyrs of Palestine*, are concerned with the progress of the persecution years. The *Martyrs of Palestine* exists in two recensions, a longer version only extant in Syriac, and a shorter Greek version, appended in four manuscripts to Book VIII of the *Ecclesiastical History*. Eusebius claims to have been an eyewitness of many of the events described, and for the effect of persecution on the Christian population they are invaluable contemporary documents. But when it comes to detail, reconstruction of the chronology of the persecution from Eusebius' account is extremely difficult,[33] and inscriptions cast doubt on the reliability of Eusebius' transmission of contemporary rescripts.[34] The whole account is influenced by Eusebius' point of view: Licinius, for example, is blackened after being hailed as a hero, and the actions of Maximin are distorted to comply with Eusebius' vicious judgment on his character as persecutor. Eusebius' honesty has been impugned; he deliberately rewrote imperial history to suit his own purposes, it has been claimed.

Perhaps, however, his qualities as a historian should be judged in the light of contemporary norms rather than by modern standards. The thing that makes Eusebius dull and difficult to follow is the very methodology which distinguishes his work from pagan historical writing. History was a literary form, 'a rhetorical work with a maximum of invented speeches and a minimum of authentic documents'.[35] But Eusebius, although an educated man, did not attempt to follow the traditional path of Thucydides and Livy. Of course Eusebius was not working entirely in a vacuum. In various ways the works of pagan historians and philosophers anticipated his interests. Disciples of Aristotle wrote histories based on 'successions', showing how one master followed another in a particular subject (for example Aristoxenus' *History of Music*); and Diogenes Laertius in his *Life and Opinions of the Philosophers* mixes biography with explanations of doctrines, lists schools and heads of schools, and discusses *haireseis* (divergent opinions). So Eusebius' lists of bishops had pagan precedents, as did his discussion of heretical sects.[36] Furthermore Eusebius' overall understanding of history was framed as a reaction to what his pagan predecessors had made of

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32 Lawlor estimated that over fifty non-biblical quotations are mutilated, though this he attributed to incompetent copyists employed by Eusebius to transcribe passages. See Lawlor and Oulton (1927), pp. 20–5. For numerous examples of exclusions, distortions and falsifications, see Grant (1972, 1975, 1980).

33 Lawlor (1912); and the debate between Baynes, Lawlor and Richardson (1924–5).

34 See Grant (1972, 1975, 1980) for this and the following points.

35 Momigliano (1963); amplified by Markus (1975).

36 Bardy (1952–60), Introduction, vol. IV, p. 79.

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it all: fate and fortune had been their preoccupation, free will and providence is Eusebius' answer.[37] However, in his reliance on documentary evidence, in his refusal to produce creative writing, he was inventing a new kind of historical presentation. He himself claims to have been 'the first to venture on such a project and to set out on what is indeed a lonely and untrodden way',[38] and for this reason he begs the pardon of his readers for his deficiencies. He had no precedent to follow, because this history was not a study of human politics or military strategy; it was not written to please or exhort. It was intended to convince of the truth of Christian claims, and thus introduced the methods of a controversialist into historical composition. Its purpose was apologetic;[39] and so evidence is piled up to prove points, and an erudition is displayed which is not found in pagan historical writing. Perhaps, as Momigliano suggested,[40] Eusebius anticipated the development of modern historiographical methodology, based on careful documentation.

Eusebius relied on evidence because he was an advocate seeking to establish truth and convince his readers of it; he had no intention of being impartial. His work was that of a Christian theologian presenting events as a history of salvation; in this respect, he followed in the tradition of Jewish historical writing, as found in scripture, and to some extent in Josephus. It is not surprising that, having developed his theory of the historical process, he should see events in the light of his conclusions. He was presenting the triumph of orthodoxy against heresy, of Christianity over idolatry; he was bearing witness to the judgment of God and the providential activity of the divine Logos, as discerned in the events of history. Inevitably, distasteful facts were suppressed, like the pervasiveness of millenarian beliefs in the second century;[41] inevitably awkward facts were distorted – he would not attribute persecution to the 'good emperor', Marcus Aurelius. Judgments were passed and revised in the light of his Christian prejudices, as in the case of Licinius. Eusebius was certainly not an objective historian in the modern sense; he was a propagandist. Yet his search for facts and his desire to present evidence was in itself ahead of his time. Eusebius set a precedent and evolved a pattern that was to become standard for writing ecclesiastical history. Most of his successors made no attempt to replace his work, but rather continued it and brought it up to date – surely a testimony to their estimate of his achievement.

3 Apologetic works

The *Church History*, whatever its date, was just one of Eusebius' many projects. His first truly apologetic work was *Against Hierocles*,[42] a hasty answer to an

37 Chesnut (1977), chapters 1 and 2.

38 *HE* i.1.2.

39 *Pace* Barnes (1981); see Arthur J. Droge, 'The Apologetic Dimensions of the *Ecclesiastical History*' in Attridge and Hata (1992).

40 Momigliano (1963).

41 Grant (1980), pp. 131–6, argues that Eusebius changed his mind about the canonicity of the Johannine Apocalypse, and so also his estimate of Papias' intelligence.

42 Text: Forrat with des Places (1986); ET Conybeare (1921).

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imperial official who launched an attack on Christianity just prior to the outbreak of persecution. At some point (303 or 313?), in reply to Hierocles' attempt to convince people that Jesus was outclassed by Apollonius of Tyana, Eusebius subjected Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* to detailed criticism.[43] The *General Elementary Instruction* in ten books (mostly lost) seems to have been directed at interested outsiders, but may have been a substitute for catechetical instruction after the congregating of Christians was banned.[44] The period of persecution also saw the production of the *Defence of Origen*,[45] the *Life of Pamphilus*, and the massive answer to Porphyry's great work *Against the Christians*, mostly lost but all referred to in other works. Eusebius' large extant works of apology, the *Praeparatio Evangelica*[46] and its accompanying *Demonstratio Evangelica*,[47] probably date from post-persecution days, though some passages suggest that persecution was still in progress, or at least might be expected again in the near future.[48]

Whatever the exact date of these huge compilations, many of the governing ideas had probably been worked out already. Much of the *Demonstratio*, we can see, is based on the extant *Prophetic Eclogues*,[49] a collection of Old Testament texts fulfilled in Christ, which constituted Books VI–IX of the *General Elementary Instruction*. With revised dating the question of priority may be less clear than it once seemed, but theories sketched in the *Ecclesiastical History* are certainly developed and proved in greater detail in these volumes. In fact, the more one reads Eusebius, the more one is struck by his ability constantly to restate the same arguments and reuse the same material in a new context. The culmination of the process is seen in the *Theophania*,[50] probably written late in life and declaring in final form the proofs of the superiority of Christianity which had concerned Eusebius throughout his life. We even find the familiar Eusebian arguments in his panegyric delivered at Constantine's Tricennalia.

The historian was at heart an apologist,[51] and his apologetic interests are given their full scope in the *Praeparatio* and *Demonstratio*.[52] The character of these works is similar to that of his historical writings, relying heavily on extracts from the wealth of material in his library. One could imagine him reproducing his card index with connecting sentences; without such convenient aids, his labours, or those of his scribes, must have been considerable – checking references in a roll

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43 See Forrat with des Places (1986) for a full discussion and introduction to this text and its date.

44 Barnes (1981), p. 168.

45 Amacker and Junod (2002).

46 Text: Mras (1982–3); des Places (1974–91); ET Gifford (1903).

47 Text: Heikel (1913); ET Ferrar (1920).

48 *Dem. Evang.* iv.16; viii.l.

49 Text: Migne, *PG* 22.

50 *Theophania*: Greek fragments – Gressmann (1904); full text only in Syriac; ET Lee (1843).

51 Frede (1999) warns against treating everything Eusebius wrote as apologetic – so diffuse a notion becomes meaningless; on the other hand, Eusebius himself can use the term both in a narrow sense for a definite literary genre, and also for anything that defends Christianity.

52 For a detailed study, see Kofsky (2000).

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cannot have been easy, and the non-scriptural writings were unlikely to be in codex form. The *Praeparatio evangelica* and its companion volume are massive works reflecting massive research, not just in Christian archives, but in much of Greek prose literature. The central themes of traditional apology are given support from the very words of the opposition, the anti-Christian Porphyry being cited with remarkable frequency and at great length. Eusebius' method, though invaluable to posterity, is not conducive to readability. He is more of an editor or compiler than an author; to a greater extent even than in the *Ecclesiastical History*, he seems dominated by his vast resources of material. Yet scholars interested in tracing the lost works of pagan philosophers and historians cannot be too grateful to Eusebius.[53]

The impression given by these works, then, is that Eusebius was setting out to confirm the Church's position, rather than discover new ideas and insights. He prefers to reproduce the thoughts and statements of others. Yet it has been argued that Eusebius has given apologetic a new and original historical perspective. This is based on the frequency with which Eusebius presents the primitive religion of the Hebrews (by which he means the biblical patriarchs) as the perfect ideal restored in Christianity.[54] In the light of this, it is claimed, we can stand back and see beneath the mass of detail an overall vision of the religious history of humanity,[55] inspired partly by Porphyry's theory that a purer and simpler worship of the heavenly bodies preceded the development of bloody sacrifices and the deification of heroes and natural forces, partly by the traditional Christian explanation of idolatry and polytheism as the seductive activity of evil demons. This overall picture may be summarized as follows: at the time of the Fall, humanity had turned from the true God to worship the material. At first, they had worshipped the stars, which were at least heavenly bodies, but then they had gone on lowering their sights, worshipping the elements, natural forces and finally their own famous ancestors, as gods. The evil demons had made the most of human free will and encouraged their downfall with their seductive temptations. Thus polytheism had evolved. Meanwhile, the Logos had undertaken the salvation of humankind, and revealed the true religion to Abraham and his successors; but their descendants had lost the vision, and Moses was chosen to establish a legal set-up which would preserve the essential features of the true religion in symbols, in a materialist form which weak and sinful human beings could grasp. So we find polytheism and Judaism, both materialistic, both the result of human folly and ignorance, but one deriving from a divine attempt to save humanity from the worst excesses. Then, at a carefully prepared moment in history, and in fulfilment of the prophecies given to the Jews, the Logos came himself in the flesh to reveal again the true religion and re-establish purity and faith among all nations. Thus Christianity came into

53 Gifford (1903) lists the fragments for which we are indebted to Eusebius; it is a very remarkable collection, including virtually all we know of Numenius the Pythagorean, and the Platonist Atticus, not to mention the extracts from Philo Judaeus and Porphyry; see also Carriker (2003).

54 *Praep. Evang.* vii; *Dem. Evang.* i.

55 For discussion of Eusebius' historical ideas, I am much indebted to Sirinelli (1961). See also the similar account in Chesnut (1977), chapter 4. Kofsky (2000) draws attention to some of the inconsistencies and difficulties inherent in this overall account.

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being, not as an innovation, but as a return to the primitive religion which was alone pure and true. Basically Christianity for Eusebius is a revelation of the right way to worship the one true God, and in this respect is distinguishable from all other religions.

It is hardly Eusebius' main purpose to present this history, and he never quite succeeds in bringing it out with perfect consistency; the status of the primitive astral religion varies, as well as his estimate of Moses' role. Ideas of this kind, however, certainly seem to underlie his material; and to spell them out helps to make sense of his apologetic works. Into the scheme Eusebius incorporated the classic apologetic weapons,[56] in particular the old accusation that all Greek knowledge, religion and philosophy had been plagiarized from the barbarians. He acknowledges, like so many Christians before him, that Plato had discovered the truth, though he got it from Moses. He repeats traditional arguments against astrology and belief in fate; he uses standard attacks to expose the error of each school of philosophy. He explains the source of oracles, and their cessation at the time of Christ, in terms of the battle between the Logos and the evil demons. He incorporates the long-standing Christian argumentation from the evidence of prophecy and its fulfilment. No available stone is left unturned in the endeavour, on the one hand to discredit paganism in both crude and more sophisticated forms, and on the other hand to answer the standard charges against Christianity, that Christians abandoned their ancestral religion for a new superstition, and that they fell between two stools in being neither Jew nor Greek.[57] It is arguable that having already answered Porphyry's *Against the Christians* blow by blow, he was here presenting a more general case for Christianity against the background of Porphyry's attack, and utilizing Porphyry to bolster his own argument.[58]

Yet through all the mass of documentation and argumentation, it is possible to discern an understanding of providence in human history which has convinced Eusebius of the truth of Christianity. What impresses him most, and has contributed to the scheme already outlined, is (i) the fulfilment of prophecy, (ii) the miraculous success of Christianity and (iii) the evidence of providential coincidence. To each of these arguments Eusebius constantly returns, and it is worthwhile to look briefly at each theme.

(i) In the *Eclogae propheticae* and the *Demonstratio*, the argument from prophecy is used with force. Jesus Christ was the only one who fulfilled the prediction of another prophet like Moses, the only one to establish a new covenant and set up a new law. He alone was the fulfilment of the prophecies.[59] Eusebius draws on traditional Christian proof-texts, and for him the Old Testament scriptures are divinely inspired oracles which, being fulfilled in Christ, constitute proof of

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56 Plagiarism: *Praep. Evang.* x; Moses' priority: *Praep. Evang.* xi—xiii (cf. *Theophania* ii, 44f.); fate and astrology: *Praep. Evang.* vi; anti-philosophers: *Praep. Evang.* xv; oracles: *Praep. Evang.* iv—v; prophecy: *Dem. Evang., passim.*

57 This is stated as the purpose of the two works in the opening prefaces to the *Praeparatio* and the *Demonstratio.*

58 Kofsky (2000), pp. 250–75, has a useful account of the relationship between Porphyry's *Against the Christians* and Eusebius' purpose in the *Praeparatio* and *Demonstratio*.

59 *Dem. Evang.* i.7; iii.2.

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the Christian claims. 'The new scriptures shall prove the old, and the gospels set their seal on the prophetic evidence.'[60]

However, in Eusebius' estimate of Moses, we find all the ambiguity of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Without Moses, there would have been no record of the ideal religion of the patriarchs; without Moses, there would have been no prophecies. Moses was indispensable – and yet he was the originator of Judaism. The Jews to whom the scriptures belonged were the implacable enemies of Christianity; their charges had to be met. Besides, Christians, while accepting the scriptures, refused in certain crucial respects to obey their directives. Eusebius appreciated the force of these facts, and in the *Demonstratio* he set out to account for them.

By way of explanation, he utilizes the estimate of the Jewish law traditional since Paul. The legal system, the polity, established by Moses had a pedagogical purpose; it was not the whole truth about God and his worship – it was a prophetic symbol, and when the truth came, the symbol had to be done away with. Besides this, Eusebius produced a number of very practical objections to the suggestion that Gentiles as well as Jews were to obey the law; all nations, for example, could not travel to Jerusalem to perform sacrifice.[61] Moses was a lawgiver for the Jews; Jesus Christ was like Moses, in that he too was a lawgiver, but his law was superior; it was universal and replaced the Mosaic code which was now obsolete.

The replacement of the law, however, was not to detract from the scriptures as a book of prophecy. The Mosaic writings were divinely inspired and had the truth enshrined in them; they were to be carefully distinguished from other oracles and prophetic writings, whose source was the demons.[62] The Jews had failed to see the truth when it had been unveiled in Christ; therefore their nation and polity was destroyed by the Romans under the providence of God. In fact this had been predicted in veiled terms in their own prophecies. Clinging to the materialist symbol, they failed to discern spiritual reality and made permanent what was intended to be an interim measure. Christianity was the revelation of the reality behind the symbol.

Thus the argument from prophecy, also used to good effect in the *Ecclesiastical History* as well as the *Eclogae propheticae*, was presented in his apologetic works as still standing; clearly Eusebius found it a forceful one.

(ii) The miraculous success of Christianity was another compelling fact in Eusebius' eyes. The argument becomes more and more forceful with the progress of political developments; but already before the final triumph of Constantine it was being utilized. The rapid spread of the gospel to all lands and nations, the conversion of humanity from 'devilish polytheism in all its forms', were described with enthusiasm in the *Ecclesiastical History*.[63] Still more would Eusebius wax eloquent in his more political works, when his readers could be encouraged to step on the band-wagon of the triumphant Church with its magnificent imperially supported new buildings and multitudinous congregations. Yet it was the miraculous success of the gospel in its early days which

60 *Dem. Evang.* iv.15.
61 *Dem. Evang.* i.3.
62 *Dem. Evang.*, introduction to Book v.
63 *HE* ii.3.

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remained one of Eusebius' chief weapons against pagan scoffers. If Christianity was a massive hoax perpetrated by the disciples of a false magician, how could it have survived as a pure philosophy of life requiring abstemious and sacrificial behaviour from its adherents? How could illiterate, Syriac-speaking rustics have pulled off such a hoax on the sophisticated Graeco-Roman world? Why should people be prepared to die for something they knew to be false? Eusebius is perhaps at his most forceful in developing these particular arguments,[64] and he recognizes this by reproducing them in the *Laus Constantini* and again in the *Theophania*.

(iii) The evidence of providential coincidence was for Eusebius the most powerful argument of all. One of the features of Eusebius' concept of historical development is his identification of Christianity with civilization and peace. Idolatrous humanity is depicted as savage and barbarous; and the establishment of civilized peace under Augustus is not merely coincidental with the incarnation, but almost consequent upon it. Two great powers sprang up together to give peace to all,[65] the Roman Empire and the Christian Church; this miracle is attributed to the work of providence providing conditions for the rapid spread of Christian missions, and the overthrow of polytheism.

But what then of the persecutions? If the peace of Rome and the peace of the Church are to be almost identified, how is the conflict between the Church and the Empire to be explained? Eusebius seems to have tried various methods of accounting for this. In the *Ecclesiastical History* the earlier persecutions are attributed to 'bad emperors', or to the misleading of 'good emperors' by wicked advisers. God allowed occasional confrontations in order to prove that the Church did not owe its success to the connivance of the secular power. God permitted persecution so that the glorious deeds of the martyrs might shine forth as yet another proof of the power of Christianity, overcoming even death. But how was Eusebius to face and justify the final bitter onslaught?

Eusebius begins his account of the great persecution[66] by a description of the peace and success of the Church in the years immediately preceding it. These were the early years of his life. He had not experienced the days of suppression; he saw the authorities tolerating large congregations and great church buildings. On looking back, however, he decided that outward success must have sapped the spiritual strength of the Church; abuse and disagreement, hypocrisy and worldliness had taken over. So God fulfilled the warnings of the prophets, and in his own time Eusebius saw churches in ruins, scriptures in flames, bishops in hiding and the faithful in prison. This was God's judgment on the Church, purifying and chastening it. Later he reverts to old theories of 'bad emperors', as the persecution inexplicably drags on; and eventually he sees confirmation of this in the terrible misfortunes which overtook the persecuting princes, and the success of the Christian sympathizer, Constantine.[67] Finally he comes to see the sequence of events as a demonstration of divine judgment in history, preparing the way for the glorious climax in Constantine's

64 *Dem. Evang.* iii.
65 *Theophania* iii.2, and frequently.
66 *HE* viii.1.
67 *HE* viii.13–16.

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victory and the establishment of peace on earth.[68] His long-standing views on providence had been vindicated by the political events of his own lifetime. The unity of Church and Empire was fully realized. What greater proof could there be of the truth of Christianity?

4 Political writings

Constantine was the most convincing proof in Eusebius' eyes; it was that fact which clinched his apologetic argument. Now perhaps we can understand Eusebius' attitude to the emperor. We can hardly wonder that in panegyrics like the *Laus Constantini* he comes close to blind adulation and Constantine's personal faults are ignored. Not only is this consistent with the conventional form of panegyric, but it was inevitable in view of the significance of Constantine as confirmation of Eusebius' religious convictions. Eusebius may be criticized for short-sightedness in his unqualified surrender to imperial glory, but nevertheless it is utterly comprehensible in the light of his understanding of divine activity in history.

It is also comprehensible in the light of contemporary culture. Eusebius foreshadowed the imperial theology of the Byzantine Empire in his descriptions of Constantine's role. In his panegyrics, the empire on earth is seen as an imitation of God's sovereign rule in heaven. Imperial epithets are used of God and divine epithets of the emperor. Monarchy alone ensures peace; democracy means anarchy. So there is one God and one emperor under God.[69] Close parallels have been traced between such views and the theory of kingship developed by Hellenistic philosophy, as found in Plutarch and Diotogenes;[70] and similar vocabulary is found in pagan panegyrics.[71] Eusebius has taken up and Christianized the theory of kingship found in the popular philosophy of his day. Constantine has become the ideal 'philosopher-king',[72] who has the right to rule others because he has learned to govern his own unruly passions; he is depicted as ascribing all his success to God, refusing excess flattery, caring nothing for his gorgeous apparel, for the paraphernalia of his office, for the sheer power of his position. His humility, generosity and piety are stressed, and direct communication with the Logos is attributed to him. Thus he becomes the example and teacher of his subjects, as well as their ruler; like a radiant sun, he illuminates the most distant subjects of his empire. When Constantine feasts the bishops, it is like feasting in the kingdom of God. Eusebius comes near to seeing in Constantine a new manifestation of the Logos on earth. In adopting the language of the imperial cult, Eusebius oscillates between exaggerating the specifically Christian aims of the emperor, and suppressing distinctively Christian themes in the interest of achieving religious unity and consensus in the Empire – in other words, he readily became a spokesman for what seems to

68 *HE* ix.8.

69 *Laus* i—iii.

70 Baynes (1933/55).

71 Setton (1941); see also Chesnut (1977), chapter VI.

72 Philosopher-king, etc.: *Laus* v; *Vita* iv. 48. Teacher: *Vita* iv. 29. Sun: *Laus* iii. Feast of the Kingdom: *Vita* iii.15.

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have been Constantine's general religious policy.[73] Eusebius' attitudes were not unrealistic at the time, and as yet the dangers of the subservience of the Church to its political masters was not apparent.

This discussion assumes that the dossier of works concerned with Constantine is genuine, but in fact it has been the subject of much controversy. The four books of the *Vita Constantini*[74] constitute a seemingly unfinished work of ambiguous genre – an encomium, written after the death of Constantine to celebrate his achievements, which then transmutes into something like the *Ecclesiastical History* with inserted documents. The work is tendentious, suppressing uncomfortable facts and exaggerating the emperor's Christian virtue. However, the author states that he is only concerned to present 'those royal and noble actions which are pleasing to God, the Sovereign of all',[75] because it would be disgraceful if the evil deeds of a Nero should be given fine rhetorical treatment, while Constantine's goodness were passed over in silence. In other words, he is writing in the traditions of imperial panegyric, and there is no pretence at exhaustive biographical treatment. He is to give an account only of circumstances which have reference to Constantine's religious character.[76] So maybe the author should not be dismissed as a dishonest historian on the basis of the omissions and distortions of this particular work. To this work are appended a speech by Constantine (*Ad Coetum sanctorum*), the panegyric which Eusebius offered to the emperor on the occasion of the Tricennalia, and a treatise dedicated to the emperor describing the great new church he built over the Lord's sepulchre in Jerusalem. The latter two works are together known as the *Laus Constantini*.[77]

But was Eusebius the author of the *Vita Constantini*? Are authentic documents preserved within the encomium and appended to it? A long history of doubt has largely been laid to rest.[78] It is noticeable that some passages of the *Vita* are closely paralleled in the *Ecclesiastical History* and the *Laus*; and we have already remarked on Eusebius' propensity for reusing material. A. H. M. Jones noted that a papyrus (*PLond.* 878) is a contemporary copy of the edict quoted in *Vita Constantini* ii.27–28;[79] there being no doubt about the authenticity of this document, the implication is that the rest are genuine. Jones further remarks that he finds it 'difficult to believe that a later forger would have troubled to search out the original of old documents and copy them *in extenso*', so adding weight to the accumulation of arguments against posthumous forgery. But the work is

73 Drake (1976). Barnes (1981) contests the widespread notion that Eusebius became an adviser to Constantine – he only met him four times, it would seem, and few of the letters were specifically personal. But that Eusebius endorsed Constantine's policies and articulated them seems incontestable.

74 Texts of the *Vita Constantini* and the *Laus Constantini*; Winkelmann (1975); ET of *Vita* – Cameron and Hall (1999); of *Laus* – Drake (1976).

75 *Vita* i.10.

76 *Vita* i.11.

77 Drake (1976) and Cameron and Hall (1999) have useful discussions of both the critical and historical problems of these texts.

78 Baynes (1929) discusses all the objections and argues for their authenticity in the very full footnotes.

79 Jones (1954).

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certainly not a documentary history of what actually happened; Eusebius was creating a portrait to set the record straight, embracing the techniques of apologetic and hagiography as well as panegyric.[80]

The emphasis and style of Eusebius' writings on the emperor is very much in line with his previous work and his most important ideas. Constantine, like Moses, had direct experience of God before becoming priest, legislator and teacher.[81] Called by God, he has come to fulfil his destiny, as the final proof of God's activity in history, judging the wicked and overcoming evil and idolatry in all its forms and ensuring peace in the world and in the Church. The consonance of this with Eusebius' views on providence may explain the exaggerated view of Constantine's measures against idolatry and his glossing over the nature and seriousness of the doctrinal disputes in the Church. It is interesting that concerns similar to those of Eusebius are reflected in Constantine's speech and can be found in many of his rescripts: the desire for peace in the Church, the assertion of the superiority and truth of Christianity, the arguments against polytheism and philosophy, the justification of the incarnation. Eusebius was prepared to make himself the mouthpiece of the imperial policy,[82] to respond to Constantine's attempts at rapprochement between pagan and Christian, to give Constantine a special place in relation to the Supreme God even at the expense of playing down distinctively Christian ideas, not simply because he was an abject time-server, but because Constantine's advent confirmed his theology and his philosophy of history.

All this serves as a reminder that during the years of the Arian struggle, there were other issues at stake which seemed far more important. For Constantine and Eusebius, the primary issue was Christianity's claim to be the truth in the face of the pagan majority. It was this which made the unity of the Church so vitally important to both. Internal squabbles undermined their overall purposes. The actions and compromises of both are explained by this background. It is far from surprising that Eusebius' accommodating attitudes commended themselves more to the emperor than Athanasius' intransigence. The bishop of Caesarea stood for inclusiveness; the bishop of Alexandria for exclusiveness.

5 Eusebius' Christology

The part played by Eusebius in the Arian controversy and the proceedings at Nicaea has been the subject of much discussion by historians and theologians alike.[83] Eusebius' Christological position cannot be exactly identified with that of either side in the dispute. He thought in terms of one transcendent Supreme God, incomprehensible and inexpressible, who mediated the divine self to the world through the Logos. This Being he regarded as divine, but not God in the

80 Averil Cameron, 'Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* and the construction of Constantine', in Edwards and Swain (1997).

81 Cameron in Edwards and Swain (1997).

82 See Drake (1976) and Storch (1971).

83 On Eusebius' Christology, see Luibheid (1978); Hanson (1985), pp. 253–6, (1988), pp. 46–59; Lienhard (1999); Delcogliano (2006), pp. 471–6; Parvis (2006); Robertson (2007).

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same ultimate sense as the God from whom he genuinely derived his being; the ultimate source of all things was not divided or reduced by the generation of the Logos, which was beyond human comprehension – he was the 'perfect creation of a perfect Creator'.[84] To this extent, Eusebius was Arian in tendency, though he certainly did not subscribe to the Arian conclusion that the Logos was mutable or made out of nothing.[85] This 'second God' was produced from the First Cause, and fashioned after his image,[86] 'the living image of the living God'.[87] Eusebius was convinced of the Son's perfection and changelessness, even in the context of the incarnation, and this belief had the same quasi-docetic results in some of Eusebius' statements as appear in anti-Arian exegesis;[88] the Logos himself did not suffer on the cross, but only his body. However, Eusebius could see nothing wrong, it seems, in believing in a hierarchy of divine beings; a radical distinction between divine and non-divine did not appear on his map of the universe.

Nevertheless, he did believe in a *de facto* distinction between the one Supreme God to whom worship should be offered, and all other inferior spiritual beings, whether angels or demons, who should not receive worship.[89] Where was the Logos to fit into the monotheism versus polytheism debate? Eusebius apparently follows traditional 'Origenist' patterns and fails to see the problems involved. There is a fundamental tension between his monotheism and his Christology. 'Even the only-begotten of God and the first-born of the whole world, the beginning of all, commands us to believe his Father alone true God, and to worship only him.'[90] Yet the Logos is also to receive worship, for he is God's vice-gerent, his image and his instrument, a second Lord.[91] Eusebius goes to a great deal of trouble to prove that there is only one God, and so there can only be one Logos; but one God plus one divine Word, on the face of it, makes two divine beings, both of whom are to receive worship. One feels that Eusebius can easily be charged with ditheism, especially in the rhetorical and loose expressions of the *Theophania*.

Eusebius may thus appear a little confused and self-contradictory in his assertion of the uniqueness of God, while defending the divinity of the Word and his right to receive worship. His position may be comprehensible in terms of the Platonic/Origenist heritage on which he drew. Already the second-century Neo-Pythagorean Numenius had spoken of a second God, and Eusebius is

84 *Dem. Evang.* iv.2.

85 *Dem. Evang.* v.1. Robertson (2007) notes that Eusebius did not like the idea that anything was created out of nothing, for nothing comes from nothing (a Greek commonplace) – rather everything was '*ek Theou*', or made from God's will, in the sense that God was the ultimate First Cause. This puts a different perspective on the ways in which Eusebius shared and did not share ideas with Arius and other associates.

86 *Praep. Evang.* vii.12, 13, 15. Eusebius quotes Philo as well as proof-texts from the scriptures.

87 *Dem. Evang.* v.1.

88 *Dem. Evang.* iv.3, 13. See below, pp. 63–4.

89 *Praep. Evang.* iv.10, 17, 21.

90 *Praep. Evang.* vii.15.

91 *HE* i.2.

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responsible for preserving the vast majority of Numenius' fragments.[92] In both cases the need for a secondary divine being arose from the classic problem of the Platonic–Pythagorean tradition, the need for some ontological connection between the One and the Many. Like Origen, Eusebius cast the Logos in this mediatorial role: God is the One who utterly transcends the Many; the Logos is both One and Many, being the image of God and at the same time pervading all things. He is the Neoplatonic World-Soul;[93] the instrument through which God created and sustains the world, and the mediator who reveals and displays providential love in his direction of the world and its history. This account of the Logos' mediation in Eusebius has been challenged, but also refined, by the insistence that Numenius was not necessarily the source, but rather provided 'corroboration for what Eusebius believed to be correct Christian doctrine', ultimately deriving from scripture; as mediator the Logos had to be both similar to and different from both God and creatures.[94]

The Logos then could in no sense be identified with God; to admit that he was 'of one substance with the Father' in the sense of having a common identity was to undermine both God's uniqueness and the mediatory position of the Logos. The Logos 'was necessary because the uncreated and immutable substance of Almighty God could not be changed into the form of a man'.[95] So close did Eusebius come to denying his own belief in the changelessness of the Logos. No wonder he found the language of the Arians more in line with his conservative thinking. As far as he was concerned, the Logos must remain an intermediary link between God himself and the beings he had created.

One reason for Eusebius' failure to appreciate the position of the anti-Arians was his soteriological outlook. Eusebius was an intellectual Christian. 'We have been delivered by the grace and beneficence of Almighty God, by the ineffable power of our Saviour's *teaching* in the gospel, and by *sound reasoning*'; 'we have received these proofs after subjecting them to the tests and enquiries of a critical judgment.'[96] Such sentences have at times been regarded as witnessing to Eusebius' conversion, though he may well have been born and brought up a Christian. Nevertheless, they do make the point that his faith was the reasoned faith of an intellectual who found the Christian account of things more convincing than that of its rival religious philosophies. He seems not to have been driven by deep religious passions. As von Campenhausen suggested, monotheism and morality was the heart of the gospel for Eusebius.[97] The work of Christ was that of teacher and revealer pointing the way to the true religion and overcoming ignorance and idolatry. It is true that Eusebius uses and interprets the imagery of sacrifice to explain Christ's death, which he sees as a triumph over the opposing powers of evil. He even describes salvation as deification,

92 des Places (1975).

93 Ricken (1967); Lyman (1993). Luibheid (1978) probably fails to take Eusebius' Platonist and Origenist background seriously enough; though Kannengiesser probably overdoes the tracing of Origenist elements in every aspect of Eusebius' work in 'Eusebius of Caesarea, Origenist' in Attridge and Hata (1992).

94 Robertson (2007), p. 41.

95 *HE* i.2.

96 *Praep. Evang.* ii.4; *Dem. Evang.* iii.4.

97 von Campenhausen (1963), chapter V.

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using a word similar to Athanasius' θεοποίησις (*theopoiēsis*).[98] But always the conventional images are expounded in such a way as to account for the death of Christ within Eusebius' understanding of his revelatory function; the providential oversight and progressive education of wandering humanity involved conquering the powers of evil, destroying false religion, and cleansing human beings of their sins and weaknesses.[99] For Eusebius the important result of the coming of the Lord remained fundamentally the establishment of the true religion, the revelation of the true God over against the error and vice of idolatry. This is particularly apparent if we contrast the main emphasis of the argument of the *Theophania* with that of Athanasius in the *Contra gentes* and *De incarnatione*, even though the similarities are striking.[100] Unlike Athanasius, Eusebius did not argue from Christ's revelatory and redeeming work to his essential, undiluted divinity; in fact this would undercut the ability of the Logos to act as an intermediary. A second Lord might become incarnate, whereas this was inconceivable for the transcendent First Cause. An image can reveal without being identical with the original; a deputy can act with the delegated powers of his superior. Eusebius' position was far from unreasonable within the terms of his own understanding of Christian salvation, just as it was acceptable within the terms of contemporary thought. But it belonged to the third-century world, to a hierarchical understanding of the spiritual world which many would go on assuming for some decades.[101] Now, however, Arius had raised new questions and forced on the Church a more sophisticated and critical statement of its claims. Was Christ really divine? How is divinity to be defined? In what sense if any at all, is the Logos to be regarded as God? Eusebius' prime concern was to envisage how the Logos mediated God. Arius spoke a language he understood; his opponents seemed to confuse his carefully conceived scheme. So he championed Arius and found himself excommunicated at a synod in Antioch in 324.

The hints and silences in the accounts of the proceedings at Nicaea are particularly tantalizing. Eusebius describes the occasion in the *Vita Constantini*, and in a letter to his church at Caesarea he tells how agreement was reached on the creed.[102] From these accounts it might be concluded that Eusebius himself gave the opening address; then later he produced the traditional baptismal creed of his church as a possible compromise document, and accepted the addition of certain terms, with which he found it hard to agree, only when they had been carefully expounded to his satisfaction by the emperor. But the course of events seems to have been somewhat compressed and distorted in the accounts he

98 *Dem. Evang.* iv.14. For Athanasius' use of the concept, see below, pp. 55, 62, 64.

99 *Dem. Evang.* iv.12.

100 See below, pp. 51–2.

101 Weber (1965) suggests that Eusebius' position is pre-Nicene and entirely in line with tradition; Athanasius and Marcellus were the innovators. Ricken (1967), Luibheid (1978) and Lienhard (1999) agree that he was not a creative genius, but is one of the best documented examples of a theological school that dominated the Greek East for much of the fourth century, with variant forms in Arius, the Eastern councils and the homoiousians. See further pp. 21, 24–5, 41.

102 Preserved by Athanasius in his *De decretis Nicaenae Synodi*; see below, Chapter 2 references, p. 65 n. 120, 121.

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gives. To many it has seemed a fair stretch of the critical imagination to take the Nicene creed as a revised version of the Caesarean creed quoted by Eusebius,[103] and it is far more likely, especially in view of his recent condemnation at Antioch, that Eusebius produced his creed to rehabilitate himself. It undoubtedly represented the traditional faith of the Church and cleared his name, but it had no relevance to the theological matter in dispute.

Eusebius eventually signed the new creed, with its *homoousion*, presumably in deference to the emperor's wishes and for the sake of peace in the Church; but in his letter to his church, his embarrassment is evident. Does this mean that Eusebius sacrificed principle to political expediency?

Such a judgment is probably unfair. The Christological section of the *Demonstratio evangelica* suggests that Eusebius disliked 'substance' terminology, because of the danger of its being understood in a materialist sense.[104] His analogies concentrate on the fragrance emanating from an object, or a ray of light issuing from its source; and even these he describes as earthly images, illustrations far transcended by theology which is not connected with anything physical. The Son was begotten unspeakably and unthinkably.[105] He certainly accepted that the Logos was derived from the Father in a unique sense – the father–son relationship is not, after all, the same kind of thing as the craftsman–artefact relation; but in God's case the manner of the Son's generation surpassed human understanding. So, in spite of his distrust of the terminology produced, Eusebius was prepared to be accommodating, if only others would make concessions too. If we compare the *Demonstratio* with his later dogmatic treatises, it is clear that the signing of the Nicene Creed made no basic change to his Christology.

In the old days of controversy, it is hardly surprising that some condemned Eusebius, others tried to defend the 'father of Church history' from the charge of heresy. Clearly Eusebius' position was neither on one side nor the other, and like Constantine himself, in some bewilderment, he acted primarily in the interests of Church unity. He wanted to steer a middle course. What then of the sequel to Nicaea? Was Eusebius similarly motivated in his subsequent actions?

Nicaea produced a formula; the problem now was its interpretation[106] – that was how it seemed by hindsight. But at the time, Eusebius was involved in proceedings against Eustathius, Marcellus and Athanasius on grounds, it seems, not directly associated with the Nicene Creed as such. The rights and wrongs of the case brought up at Tyre are far from clear. If Athanasius' works seem to prove that all the charges were trumped up, nevertheless his own followers were equally unscrupulous, and we cannot doubt that there was suppression and distortion of the evidence on both sides. No compromise was possible, and the only way of ensuring peaceful and successful celebrations for the thirtieth year of Constantine's reign was to remove the most intransigent customer. If it were not for Athanasius, the dream of Church unity might be realized, and this

103 Kelly (1950), pp. 217ff.; though Eusebius' account has been reinstated by Parvis (2006), acknowledging a debt to Vinzent.

104 For the following discussion I am indebted to Stead (1973).

105 *Dem. Evang.* iv.3; v.1.

106 Athanasius, *De Decretis Nic. Syn.* 3. Socrates, *HE* i.23.

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was fundamental to Eusebius' political theory and historical philosophy. So Athanasius was condemned at Tyre. In the case of Marcellus, Eusebius took up his pen, replying to Marcellus' attack on his own theology in *Against Asterius*.[107] In the hasty work, *Contra Marcellum*, long quotations from Marcellus are left to speak for themselves with little real attempt at refutation;[108] but *De ecclesiastica theologia* spells out the sort of theology prevalent in the Greek East at the beginning of the fourth century, steering a course between Arius and Marcellus.[109] Eusebius' insistence on the mediatory position of the Logos is reinforced.[110] It was all too obvious to Eusebius that Marcellus' theology was wrong and dangerous, and that his own position represented the traditional theology of the Church. This only goes to prove Eusebius' essential conservatism. The other work of his old age, the *Theophania*, shows that throughout his life Eusebius was more concerned with upholding the true religion against polytheism than in refining his somewhat confused and anachronistic understanding of the relationship between God and the Logos. His heart lay in the defence of a united Church, and the promulgation of the truth of Christianity, whose success he regarded as the goal of the historical process.

6 Eusebius as a biblical scholar

One surprising consequence of the later dating of Eusebius' major works is that it suggests that he produced virtually no composition of his own until after the death of Pamphilus, when he was around fifty years old and bishop of Caesarea. The nature of the community around Pamphilus perhaps provides some explanation.[111] Pamphilus was not just a collector of books, but one who engaged in collation, correcting and copying, who prepared and gave away copies of the scriptures, and engaged his disciples in this oral and collaborative process. Over years Eusebius doubtless worked alongside him, built up experience and studied the *Hexapla*. Perhaps it was not until after persecution, with Pamphilus gone, that he realized the need to justify Christianity, and embarked on a different kind of 'collation', namely, the composition of the great 'mosaics' of quotations already described, and his constant revisions, projects to which the army of scribes would have had a crucial contribution to make. As bishop he probably ceased to be physically involved in hands-on book production, employing many assistants – hence his ability to undertake the mammoth task of supplying fifty copies of the scriptures for Constantine's new churches in Constantinople.

Like Origen, Eusebius allowed for multiple possibilities, and set things side by side for investigation: here the *Hexapla* was probably an important influence, a work to be used as a 'treasury of exegetical materials, some of them perplex-

107 Text of *Contra Marcellum* and other doctrinal works: Klostermann (1972). For Marcellus, see Chapter 2, pp. 56–61.

108 Parvis (2006) follows Vinzent (1997) in suggesting that this was the dossier used to condemn Marcellus at the Synod of Constantinople.

109 Lienhard (1999), though see the critique in Parvis (2006).

110 Robertson (2007), pp. 99ff.

111 On Pamphilus and book production, see Grafton and Williams (2006).

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ing, rather than an effort to provide a stable, perfect text of the Bible'.[112] So one of Eusebius' great contributions was to conceive of systems for the organization of information for easy reference and retrieval. His first endeavour of this kind is likely to have been the Gospel Canons, tables which enabled those studying the Gospels to identify parallel passages.[113] Yet for Eusebius the New Testament was the authentic record of the historical Jesus, and he faced seriously the discrepancies between the Gospels, seeking to explain them in *Gospel Questions and Solutions*,[114] assuming that a historical explanation could be found. Another example of his predilection for sorting things is the *Onomasticon*,[115] alphabetically arranged lists of biblical places intended to help with site identification. The lists group references in the Pentateuch, book by book, and then the history books of the Old Testament, sometimes adding Gospel sites but by no means comprehensively, which has given rise to the notion that Eusebius took over a Jewish compilation. It seems that Eusebius meant it to be an exegetical aid, not yet foreseeing the need for a pilgrims' handbook.[116]

We possess little of Eusebius' exegetical work, though he was renowned in his day as a student of the Bible. Considerable fragments of a *Commentary on the Psalms* and a *Commentary on Isaiah* had been found in the Catenae, but there was little else of significance before the discovery of an almost complete copy of the latter in a manuscript in Florence.[117] On the whole it confirms previous conclusions regarding Eusebius' Old Testament exegesis, which were based on his treatment of Old Testament texts in the *Prophetic Eclogues* and the *Demonstratio evangelica*. Several features are striking: first, his frequent discussion of Greek versions other than the LXX, and occasional reference to Hebrew – he must have worked with the *Hexapla* beside him;[118] second, his understanding of the literal meaning of a prophecy as its fulfilment in a later historical event. Occasionally in the *Demonstratio* he offers two interpretations, literal and figurative – an example is provided by the prophecies of peace at the coming of Emmanuel: literally they refer to the peace of the Empire at the time of the incarnation, figuratively to the peace of the individual soul who receives 'God with us'.[119] In the *Commentary on Isaiah* it is clear that Eusebius' prime interest is in discerning God's activity in the world rather than seeking an individualist or intellectualist spirituality – here is his main difference from Origen. Eusebius

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112 Grafton and Williams (2006), p. 170.

113 See Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 26th edn, pp. 73–8, along with the marginal annotations.

114 Epitome and fragments of the *Quaestiones Evangelicae* in Migne, *PG* 22.

115 Text of the *Onomasticon*: Klostermann (1904). ET and commentaries will be found in Freeman-Grenville, Taylor and Chapman (2003), which places an ET of Jerome's Latin version alongside that of Eusebius, enabling a comparison of differences between the 320s and 380s; and Notley and Safrai (2005), which sets out the Greek and the Latin with English in three columns.

116 Wilken (1992); Walker (1990) underlines the difference between Eusebius and Cyril of Jerusalem in attitude to the Holy Places; see further below, p. 191.

117 Möhle (1934) reported the find of the *Commentary on Isaiah*. Text: Ziegler (1975). See also van Cangh (1971, 1972).

118 Though Hollerich (1999), pp. 80–1, notes that his access to Hebrew was through the literal translation of Aquila, so he may have used the *Tetrapla*.

119 *Dem. Evang.* vii.1.

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distinguished between direct and veiled predictions, the latter notion permitting not only the treatment of the text as prefigurative but also, at times, a rather arbitrary application of texts to future events through the use of allegory to unpack metaphors and the symbols found, for example, in numbers, animals and natural phenomena. For Eusebius, Old Testament history was a living reality, fulfilled in the present. It has been suggested[120] that the *Commentary on Isaiah*, written soon after the Nicene Council in 325, gives a better insight into Eusebius' overriding interests than the panegyrical works on Constantine – for it focuses more on the ecclesiastical than the imperial, depicting the Church as embodying the 'godly polity' prefigured in scripture, and bishops as leaders of the visible and concrete ecclesiastical community foreseen by the prophets.

Eusebius inherited Origen's critical spirit rather than his bent for allegorical exegesis. But he was also heir to Origen's intellectualist approach, which, though open-minded towards the culture and learning of the pagan world, still saw Christianity as the truth to be defended. From Origen came his concept of the universe as the home of a hierarchy of spiritual beings, and his understanding of the Logos as the intermediary between the transcendent God and his multifarious creation. From Origen came his avoidance of crude millenarian beliefs and his concentration on the moral education of humanity by the Logos. The chief difference was that, whereas Origen emphasized the progress of the individual soul, Eusebius saw this education as a long-term evolutionary process worked out in the course of history.[121]

Thus the concrete historical reality of the Christian Church was of far greater significance to Eusebius than to his theological master; and he it was who became the first ecclesiastical historian. He also became the first theoretician of Byzantine 'Caesaro-papism'. He had his faults – his tendency to suppress awkward information, his over-enthusiastic response to Constantine, his conservative mentality in theology; but at least he pioneered the writing of Church history, and others were able to follow where he had led.

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120 For a full discussion of Eusebius' *Commentary on Isaiah*, see Hollerich (1999).

121 Kannengiesser in Attridge and Hata (1992).

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