

PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne
PLRE	<i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , i
REA	<i>Revue des études augustiniennes</i>
REG	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
RhM	<i>Rheinisches Museum</i>
RIC vii	<i>Roman Imperial Coinage</i> , vii: <i>Constantine and Licinius A. D. 313–337</i> , ed. P. Bruun (London, 1966).
RQH	<i>Revue des questions historiques</i> (Paris, 1866–1939).
SC	Sources chrétiennes
Sirinelli	J. Sirinelli, <i>Les Vues historiques d'Eusèbe de Césarée durant la période prénicéenne</i> (Dakar, 1961).
Soden, <i>Urkunde</i>	H. von Soden and H. Lietzmann, <i>Urkunden zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Donatismus</i> , 2nd edn. (Kleine Texte 122; Berlin, 1950).
Stevenson, <i>NE</i>	J. Stevenson, <i>A New Eusebius</i> , 2nd edn., rev. with additional documents by W. H. C. Frend (London, 1987).
Storch,	R. Storch, 'The "Eusebian Constantine"', <i>Church History</i> , 40 (1971), 145–55.
'Constantine'	
Storch, 'Trophy'	R. Storch, 'The Trophy and the Cross: Pagan and Christian Symbolism in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries', <i>Byzantion</i> , 40 (1970), 105–17.
<i>Studien</i>	F. Winkelmann, <i>Studien zu Konstantin dem Grossen und zur byzantinische Kirchengeschichte</i> (Birmingham, 1993), ed. W. Brandes and J. F. Haldon.
TAPA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
TIR	<i>Tabula Imperii Romani/Judaea. Palaestina</i> , ed. Y. Tsafir, L. Di Segni, and J. Green (Jerusalem, 1994).
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
Wallace-Hadrill	D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, <i>Eusebius of Caesarea</i> (London, 1960).
Winkelmann,	F. Winkelmann, <i>Die Textbezeugung der Vita Constantini des Eusebius von Caesarea</i> (TU 84; Berlin, 1962).
<i>Textbezeugung</i>	
Winkelmann,	F. Winkelmann, 'Zur Geschichte des Authentizitätsproblems der Vita Constantini', <i>Klio</i> , 40 (1962), 187–243 (= <i>Studien</i> , i).
'Authentizitätsprobleme'	

## INTRODUCTION

## 1. THE AUTHOR AND THE WORK

The *Life of Constantine* (*Vita Constantini*, henceforth *VC*) is the main source not only for the religious policy of Constantine the Great (ruled AD 306–37, sole Emperor 324–37) but also for much else about him. It is attributed in the manuscripts to Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea (d. AD 339), who was also the author of the first history of the Church (*Church History*, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, *HE*) and many other works of biblical scholarship, Christian apologetic, and contemporary religious debate.<sup>1</sup> The *VC* is divided into four books, with chapter headings by a later editor (see below, p. 24, § 5). The title by which it is generally known is somewhat misleading, in that while the work certainly has biographical elements, it is better described as an uneasy mixture of panegyric and narrative history (see below, § 6). Many of the details which it records are to be found only here, and since the *VC* presents a view of Constantine that is not only extremely pro-Christian but also, as we can see from comparison with some of his other works, particular to the interests of Eusebius himself, it is not surprising that it has proved extremely controversial. Some scholars are disposed to accept its evidence at face value while others have been and are highly sceptical (§ 2). Indeed, the integrity of Eusebius as a writer has often been attacked and his authorship of the *VC* denied by scholars eager to discredit the value of the evidence it provides, with discussion focusing particularly on the numerous imperial documents which are cited verbatim in the work. In contrast, T. D. Barnes's major book on Constantine, for example, makes substantial use of the *VC*, and the work remains the single most important source for Constantine. Strangely, in view of the amount of attention which has been devoted to it, and to the issues surrounding the reign and policies of Constantine, there is no

<sup>1</sup> There is a Penguin translation of the *HE* by G. A. Williamson, *Eusebius, The History of the Church* (Harmondsworth, 1965), revised with new material and introduction by Andrew Louth (1989). For Eusebius' other works see T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981) (*CE*), especially 164–88.

monograph devoted to the *VC* and only two short commentaries to date, in Italian and Spanish respectively. In what follows we accept the work's Eusebian authorship and aim in the commentary to show in detail how carefully crafted and how complex its construction actually is; only by adopting such a procedure can the whole be understood or the historical value of individual passages properly assessed.

Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, is one of the most prolific and important writers of the early Church.<sup>2</sup> He was much influenced by the theology of Origen, in whose tradition he followed, and whose library he inherited, and he was a major biblical scholar and interpreter.<sup>3</sup> He may have begun his *History of the Church* from the beginnings to his own day before the start of the Diocletianic persecution in AD 303. If so he soon found himself writing against a very different background, as Constantine first revealed himself as a supporter of Christianity and then attacked and defeated his remaining ally and co-emperor, Licinius. Having continued the narrative of the *HE* up to Constantine's victory over Maxentius in AD 312 he adapted it to changing circumstances by revising and updating it in successive editions, adding the final touches after Constantine's final victory over Licinius in AD 324 but apparently before the Council of Nicaea in the following year.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the genre of church history, Eusebius also established that of the Christian chronicle, beginning from creation, while others of his major works, especially the *Praeparatio Evangelica* (*Preparation for the Gospel*, *PE*) and *Demonstratio Evangelica* (*Demonstration of the Gospel*, *DE*), set out his providential arguments for the coming of Christianity, the defeat of paganism and God's plan of salvation.

For Eusebius, Constantine played a central role in this scheme, and the *VC* too is a highly apologetic work.<sup>5</sup> In books I–II he draws in detail on his earlier narrative of the same events

<sup>2</sup> See in addition to Barnes, *CE*, D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Eusebius of Caesarea* (London, 1960); G. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories* (Théologie historique, 46; Paris, 1977); R. M. Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian* (Oxford, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> For Eusebius as a scholar and a writer see Barnes, *CE*, part 2.

<sup>4</sup> The evidence is set out by T. D. Barnes, 'The Editions of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*', *GRBS* 21 (1980), 191–201, at 196–201, with earlier references; see also A. Louth, 'The Date of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*', *JThS* NS 41 (1990), 111–23; R. W. Burgess, 'The Dates and Editions of Eusebius' *Chronici Canonis and Historia Ecclesiastica*', *JThS* NS 48 (1997), 471–504, at 483–86.

<sup>5</sup> For Eusebius as apologist see Burgess, 'Dates and Editions', esp. 489–91.

in the *HE*, heightening the apologetic tone still further (§4 below), and then takes up the story where he had left off, describing the campaign against Licinius in more detail; he then carries it on, though with thematic interruptions, until Constantine's death in AD 337. Eusebius seems to have left the *VC* unfinished or unrevised when he died himself in May 339, but he had recently written other works relating to Constantine, and closely connected with the *VC*. Chief among these are the speech delivered to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Emperor's accession in AD 335–6, known as the *Tricennialian Oration*, or *Laus Constantini* (*LC*), and a surviving speech—not the only one he wrote—on the dedication of the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 335 (*SC*). Views differ about when he started work on the *VC* (§3 below), but he may have begun collecting some of the material immediately after 324.

As a bishop in Palestine, Eusebius did not know Constantine personally until he attended the Council of Nicaea in 325, and even after that he had few personal dealings with the Emperor. Like that of other churchmen, however, his eagerness to enlist imperial support for the Church steadily grew as Constantine's own interest became clearer. Eusebius was regarded as essentially pro-Arian in sympathy and when he went to the Council of Nicaea he had been formally condemned by an Antiochene synod. His experience at Nicaea led him to support Constantine's formula, but the ecclesiastical politics of the rest of the reign proved complex and Eusebius' own position continued to dictate the manner of his writing and his presentation of the evidence. Even if some material had been collected earlier, his later work on the *VC* was done at a time when the future seemed uncertain so far as church politics were concerned, and one of the aims of the work in its final form was to urge the continuation of what Eusebius claimed to be Constantine's policies on the latter's three sons and successors, who had all been declared Augusti in September 337 after months of uncertainty and even bloodshed.<sup>6</sup> These circumstances must be carefully kept in mind when assessing the historical value of individual passages.

<sup>6</sup> See Averil Cameron, 'Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* and the Construction of Constantine', in S. Swain and M. Edwards, eds., *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1997), 145–74.

## 2. AUTHENTICITY

By far the greater part of the large modern bibliography on the *VC* is concerned with the question of its authenticity.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, few scholars today would attempt to deny that it is a work of Eusebius, particularly in view of the similarities of thought and style between the *VC* and his other works.<sup>8</sup> Recognition of its authenticity invites a reconsideration of Eusebius' presentation of Constantine, as well as of his methods of work. The fact that this also reinstates the *VC* as the major source for Constantine makes a thorough examination of the construction, sources and aims of the work, not just its 'authenticity', long overdue.

Although the manuscripts ascribe the *VC* unequivocally to Eusebius, the extent to which it was known or read during the fourth century is uncertain, despite the fact that by the end of the century the *HE* had been translated into Latin and become a standard work.<sup>9</sup> The *VC* was known to the fifth-century Greek church historians Socrates and Sozomen and others through the lost work of Gelasius of Caesarea. However, it had been eclipsed by the early Byzantine period by fanciful or legendary accounts of Constantine, which served to create a mythical history for the city of Constantinople. Despite this early lack of interest, however, the scholarly attack on the authenticity of the *VC* is largely a modern phenomenon. It was put most forcibly by H. Grégoire shortly before the Second World War,<sup>10</sup> though many of the difficulties had already been seen by others, and counter-arguments advanced.<sup>11</sup> More recently, scholars have generally reacted against this hyper-scepticism, and while recognizing the problems presented by the work, Barnes, for example, has no hesitation in using it as the basis for his picture of a firmly Christian Constantine.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> For a history of the problem see F. Winkelmann, 'Zur Geschichte des Authentizitätsproblems der Vita Constantini', *Klio*, 40 (1962), 187-243 (= W. Brandes and J. F. Haldon, eds., *F. Winkelmann, Studien zu Konstantin dem Grossen und zur byzantinische Kirchengeschichte* (Birmingham, 1993), i); and for a summary see Tartaglia, 13-14.

<sup>8</sup> See Winkelmann, pp. lvii-lxiv. <sup>9</sup> See § 11 below.

<sup>10</sup> H. Grégoire, 'Eusèbe n'est pas l'auteur de la "Vita Constantini" dans sa forme actuelle, et Constantin ne s'est pas "converti" en 312', *Byzantion*, 13 (1938), 561-83; 'La Vision de Constantin "liquidée"', *Byzantion*, 14 (1939), 341-51.

<sup>11</sup> See in particular N. H. Baynes, *Constantine the Great and the Christian Church* (London, 1931; 2nd edn. Oxford, 1972), with Winkelmann, 'Authentizitätsprobleme', 197; summary at Tartaglia, 13-14.

<sup>12</sup> On the *VC*, see Barnes, *CE* 265-71; the strength of Constantine's commitment to Christianity is recognized for instance by R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians in the*

Much of the older hostility to the evidence of the *VC* arose from prejudice. This took several forms, whether stemming from hostility to Eusebius as author or attempting to undermine the image of Constantine as the Emperor responsible for Christianizing the Roman Empire and bringing state and Church together. Some older scholars were suspicious of the work in the light of Eusebius' reputation for Arianism and the controversial place he held in later doctrinal disputes.<sup>13</sup> As a critic of Christianity, Edward Gibbon had already represented Constantine in unfavourable terms, and from the nineteenth century, and in particular after the appearance of Jacob Burckhardt's book on Constantine in 1853,<sup>14</sup> the Emperor came under frequent attack from rationalist criticism, not least via aspersions cast on the reliability and even the honesty of Eusebius. Burckhardt famously wrote that the latter was 'the most objectionable of all eulogists, who has utterly falsified his [i.e. Constantine's] likeness'.<sup>15</sup> This judgement was confirmed for many by the realization that Eusebius had indeed successively (and clumsily) altered what he had written about Constantine in the *HE* as the political situation developed, and in particular as Constantine turned on his erstwhile ally Licinius. It fostered an ultra-sceptical approach to the numerous Constantinian documents contained in the *VC*. But the documents differ in style and language from the main (Eusebian) body of the *VC*, and closer study reveals their similarity in tone and language to other Constantinian pronouncements; moreover, the earlier text preserved in the three *HE* manuscripts and in a London papyrus also confirms their authenticity.<sup>16</sup> Even so, hostility to the Christian Constantine

*Mediterranean World from the Second Century A.D. to the Conversion of Constantine* (Harmondsworth, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> Below, § 11.

<sup>14</sup> J. Burckhardt, *Die Zeit Constantins des Grossen* (Basel, 1853; 2nd edn. 1880); trans. M. Hadas, *The Age of Constantine the Great* (London, 1949). Cf. Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ii, chs. 18 and 20; Gibbon is well aware of the 'silences' and distortions in the *VC*.

<sup>15</sup> *Age of Constantine*, 260; cf. 261, 'odious hypocrisy'.

<sup>16</sup> Below, § 4b; for a good survey and defence of authenticity see also Charles Pietri, 'Constantin en 324: Propagande et théologie impériales d'après les documents de la *Vita Constantini*', in *Crise et redressement dans les provinces européennes de l'Empire (milieu du III<sup>e</sup>-milieu du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle ap. J. C.): Actes du colloque de Strasbourg (décembre 1981)* (Strasbourg, 1983), 63-90 (repr. in C. Pietri, *Christiana Republica, Éléments d'une enquête sur le christianisme antique* (Collection de l'École française de Rome, 234, 3 vols.; Paris, 1998), i. 253-80.

continues to inform some modern historical writing.<sup>17</sup> The debate is of great historical importance, for the *VC* is frequently the only source for a particular document or a particular statement,<sup>18</sup> and the work as a whole is of primary importance for any judgement on Constantine's reign.

There are nevertheless real problems about the construction and content of the *VC*.<sup>19</sup> Many scholars have argued for a Eusebian core overlaid with later interpolations, dating either from the reign of Constantius II or from later in the fourth century. But most of the argument is inconclusive and fails to recognize Eusebius's apologetic aims. The many inconsistencies and irregularities of form (see below), are explained by Barnes by a modified version of the thesis put forward by G. Pasquali in 1910, according to which the work went through two distinct stages in the writing before being left unfinished by Eusebius on his death.<sup>20</sup> The fact that it frequently uses material from the *HE* and *LC*, especially in books I and II, taking over many extracts verbatim, has often been held to be an indication of a later compiler at work. However self-reference is very characteristic of Eusebius as a writer, and he clearly had the *HE* (as also the *LC*) to hand while writing this part of the *VC*, in order to revise his earlier narrative in the light of later experience.<sup>21</sup> The detailed account of Constantine's vision in 312 which is so prominent in

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. T. G. Elliott, 'Eusebian Frauds in the *Vita Constantini*', *Phoenix* 45 (1991), 162-71.

<sup>18</sup> For a defence of Eusebian reliability see T. D. Barnes, 'Panegyric, History and Hagiography in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*', in R. Williams, ed., *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge, 1989), 94-123, at 114-15, with 'The Two Drafts of Eusebius's *Vita Constantini*', in T. D. Barnes, *From Eusebius to Augustine: Selected Papers 1982-1993* (Aldershot, 1994), xii, and see below, § 10.

<sup>19</sup> For summaries see Winkelmann, pp. liv-lvi; Tartaglia, introd., 14-17, and see Barnes, 'Panegyric', 98-102 ('doublets and inconsistencies').

<sup>20</sup> G. Pasquali, 'Die Composition der *Vita Constantini* des Eusebius', *Hermes* 46 (1910), 369-86, developed by Barnes, 'Panegyric', supplemented by his 'Two Drafts'; see also Winkelmann, p. lvi-lvii, and Tartaglia, 17. Barnes argues (reversing the sequence proposed by Pasquali) that the work began as a continuation of the *Ecclesiastical History*, some time after 324, and subsequently took the form of a panegyric on Constantine's death in 337 (Barnes, 'Panegyric', 110-14), only to be expanded again and left unfinished by Eusebius at his death. For discussion see Averil Cameron, 'Construction', and see §§ 3 and 6 below.

<sup>21</sup> On the use of the *HE* in the *VC* see S. G. Hall, 'The Use of Earlier Eusebian Material in the *Vita Constantini*', I. 58-59', *Studia Patristica*, 24 (1993), 96-101; 'Eusebian and Other Sources in *Vita Constantini* I', *Logos. Festschrift für Luise Abramowski* (Berlin, 1993), 239-63, and cf. H. A. Drake, 'What Eusebius Knew: The Genesis of the *Vita Constantini*', *CP* 83 (1988), 24 on the *LC* and the *Theophany*.

the *VC* (I. 28. 9) is absent altogether from the *HE*. It is of course conceivable that the later narrative does, as Eusebius claims,<sup>22</sup> derive from personal conversation with the Emperor himself,<sup>22</sup> but it is also important to realize that it represents the mature reflection of Eusebius on Constantine's divinely inspired rise to power and supplies a structural and ideological need at this point in the narrative. Similar considerations explain the differences of emphasis between the narrative in *HE* of Constantine's campaigns against Licinius and the account given in *VC* I. 48-II. 18; writing with apologetic purposes at the end of Constantine's reign, Eusebius has produced in the *VC* a version which justifies Constantine's action against his co-emperor, former ally and fellow supporter of Christians, and sharpens the allegations of Christian persecution against Licinius which had already been added to the *HE* when it was hastily reissued shortly after the final victory of Constantine in 324.<sup>23</sup> In so doing he defends Constantine against the accusation of having broken his alliance more than once,<sup>24</sup> and presents the whole narrative in heavily ideological and religious terms, stressing Constantine's role as the new Moses leading the Christian people out of the tyranny of persecution.<sup>25</sup> Acceptance of the date of 316 for the battle of Cibalae instead of 314 removes the problem perceived by some earlier scholars that *VC* I. 49 seems to make Constantine's war against Licinius start after his Decennalia in 315.<sup>26</sup> For similar reasons, Maxentius too emerges in the *VC* as an open persecutor, whereas at *HE* 8. 14 he is described as a counterfeit Christian. This part of the *VC* is less a sober historical account than a rhetorical justification of Constantine's rise to power written from the Christian point of view and with an eye to the political issues of the end of the reign. In the *VC*, Constantine's father, Constantius, emerges as a pious monotheist, indeed almost a Christian, in sharp contrast to his clearly pagan role in the Latin panegyrics which are much more closely contemporary with the events.<sup>27</sup> A further difficulty stressed by Grégoire, namely the apparent confusion of Maximian and Maximin at *VC* I. 47,<sup>28</sup> can also be

<sup>22</sup> See on I. 28-32; cf. III. 12.

<sup>24</sup> See on II. 9. 4 and below, § 9.

<sup>26</sup> § 9 below; see however II. 9. 4 and notes *ad loc.*

<sup>27</sup> See *VC* I. 13-18 and see on I. 13-18, 17. 2, 32.

<sup>28</sup> See Winkelmann, p. lvi; 'Authentizitätsprobleme', 217, 230-1; and see note on I. 47.

<sup>23</sup> *VC* I. 51-II. 2; cf. *HE* 10. 8-9.  
<sup>25</sup> § 7 below.

explained on closer analysis of the relation of *VC* to *HE*. Like the *VC*'s modern critics, the author of the chapter headings has failed to see that these chapters are a patchwork drawn from different parts of the *HE*, with a logic of their own which makes a reference here to Maximian explicable even if apparently out of chronological context. These extracts from the *HE* are not therefore to be read as later interpolations<sup>29</sup> but as part of a deliberate reworking of his earlier version by Eusebius himself. While the theoretical possibility of interpolations into a Eusebian original either here or at other points in the text cannot indeed be entirely excluded, there are few if any certain examples. Thus at *VC* IV. 57, where there is a lacuna in the manuscripts, the Geneva edition contains a passage in square brackets concerning a peace treaty with Persia, and introducing the description of Constantine's mausoleum; this may be a later interpolation based on the brief information in the chapter heading.<sup>30</sup> The phrase 'even now', used of Constantine's tomb in IV. 71, has also given rise to suspicion.<sup>31</sup> But the doubts attached by some scholars to the alleged anti-pagan measures of Constantine described in books III and IV are less justified, as is the suggestion that the famous phrase 'bishop of [or for] those outside [the Church]' is not Eusebian.<sup>32</sup>

The case for most of the alleged interpolations has failed to take Eusebius' working methods sufficiently into account. We may accept that the *VC* as a whole is his work, and indeed Pasquali argued that he himself had altered and developed his own earlier draft as circumstances changed. In almost no case are real anachronisms demonstrable, while despite the general unevenness of the work, stylistic analysis shows a striking homogeneity of minor usages. Admittedly, the *VC* is often clumsy, repetitive,<sup>33</sup> and even at times contradictory, but it demands to be understood in the light of a close analysis of its structure and of Eusebius' writing practice. It is hardly possible to imagine another writer so closely in touch with the latter as to have been able to compose the *VC* and pass it off as Eusebian.

<sup>29</sup> See 'Authentizitätsprobleme', 206, 217-18.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 233; see on IV. 56-7; for the MSS and editions of the *VC* see § 12 below.

<sup>31</sup> See on IV. 58-60.

<sup>32</sup> *VC* IV. 24; see 'Authentizitätsprobleme', 234-46.

<sup>33</sup> For example, II. 20-1 seems to summarize the document cited in full at 23-42 but see note.

Moreover, the work closely fits the circumstances of the immediate aftermath of Constantine's death. We must find other reasons for its comparative obscurity after Eusebius' death than the hypothesis that it is substantially the work of a later author.

### 3. DATE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF COMPOSITION

The structure of the *VC* has suggested either that Eusebius left it unfinished, or that it went through several stages of composition, or both. In Pasquali's view it started as an encomium, composed immediately after Constantine's death on 22 May 337, and was converted into an apologetic work of wider scope in response to the events which followed, which included the dynastic murders of summer 337, the restoration of Athanasius from exile, and the proclamation of Constantine's three sons as Augusti on 9 September. Left unfinished at Eusebius' death (probably May 339, but dated by Pasquali to 338), it was published with chapter headings by an editor, perhaps Eusebius' successor Acacius. Barnes proposes the reverse order of composition on the basis of the chronological range of the documents included, which begin after Eusebius has recounted Constantine's victory over Licinius in 324, and envisages Eusebius as collecting material for the 'narrative history' from soon after this date.<sup>34</sup> He rightly emphasizes that the present work must be read in close conjunction with the other writings of the later years of Eusebius. These included, besides the *LC* and *SC*, the polemical *Contra Marcellum* and the *Ecclesiastical Theology*, provoked by the return from exile of another of Eusebius' ecclesiastical opponents.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, the need for a more formal panegyric account came later, with the thirtieth anniversary and subsequent death of the Emperor, rather than at an earlier stage. Finally, H. A. Drake has argued (mainly on the basis of book IV) that the *VC* was first conceived in 335 and that Eusebius was collecting material for it with the Emperor's encouragement when he was in Constantinople in 336.<sup>36</sup>

*VC* IV. 60-72 describe Constantine's last illness, baptism, death, and burial, and on that basis it has often been supposed

<sup>34</sup> Barnes, 'Panegyric', 'Two Drafts', with Cameron, 'Construction'.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Barnes, *CE* 264-5.

<sup>36</sup> Drake, 'Genesis'.

that the work as a whole was not written until after the Emperor's death.<sup>37</sup> However, while the references in the introduction and conclusion to Constantine's three sons as Augusti must indeed postdate 9 September 337, they could be additions to an already existing work or work in progress.<sup>38</sup> A *terminus ante quem* for Eusebius' composition is provided by his own death in May 339.<sup>39</sup>

Whatever the genre or genres of the *VC* (on which see below), books I–III at least are arranged in broadly chronological fashion, and despite its rather untidy arrangement of subject-matter, book IV continues the narrative up to Constantine's death and burial. It is noticeable that while standard panegyric themes reappear in book IV, it is the earlier portion of the *VC*, covering Constantine's reign up to the victory over Licinius in 324, which shows the closest relation to Eusebius' earlier narrative in the *HE*, that is treated in the most formal panegyric style. For these years, while Constantine ruled in the west, Eusebius had no personal knowledge of the Emperor or much access to official material, and his dependence on his own earlier narrative was therefore also the greater. Equally strong was his desire to correct and supplement it with new interpretations and rhetorical flourishes. From II. 19 on, however, the treatment broadens out considerably: the formal panegyric elements diminish and the comparison of Constantine with Moses (see below) is no longer sustained; on the other hand the inclusion of documents, which is one of the most striking features of the *VC*, now begins. This change in the nature of the narrative coincides with Eusebius' account of the Council of Nicaea in 325, which was probably the first occasion on which Eusebius had encountered the Emperor personally. It is also worth noting that for the narrative of events after 325–6 all the documents included, with the exception of IV. 9–13, the letter to Shapur, have a direct connection with Eusebius himself, or would have come to him naturally as an eastern bishop.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Drake, 'Genesis', 20–1; cf. Averil Cameron, 'Eusebius and the Rethinking of History', in E. Gabba, ed., *Tria Corda: Scritti in onore di Arnaldo Momigliano* (Como, 1983), 71–88, at 87, corrected by Drake, 'Genesis', 28, and see Barnes, 'Panegyric', 113, with n. 66.

<sup>38</sup> *VC* I. 1. 3; IV. 69. 2; see Tartaglia, 15.

<sup>39</sup> See Barnes, *CE* 263.

<sup>40</sup> See B. H. Warmington, 'The Sources of Some Constantinian Documents in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History and Life of Constantine', *Studia Patristica*, 18/1 (1986), 93–8, and below, §4*b*.

The question of which parts were written first is not straightforward. Drake argues for book IV,<sup>41</sup> but this seems unlikely, as books I–III, and in particular I–II are far more polished. Book IV shows traces of Eusebius' stays in Constantinople in 335 and 336. It contains several self-references (see below), and mentions the speeches which Eusebius wrote for the dedication of the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem in 335 and for Constantine's Tricennalia in 335–6.<sup>42</sup> At IV. 32, 46 Eusebius announces his intention of attaching these speeches to the *VC*;<sup>43</sup> it is natural therefore to see these works as forming a group close in date to each other. *LC* 18. 1–3, 11. 7, together with *SC* fin., suggest that Eusebius was thinking of a historical work about Constantine when these passages were written. He also refers to personal observation in Constantinople at IV. 7 and 50, and anecdotal material in this book might come from personal experience, for example, IV. 30, 48 and the account of the marriage of Constantius II at IV. 49.<sup>44</sup> However, these provide no more than *termini post quem*, and show only that Eusebius' stays in Constantinople affected the nature of this part of the *VC* by providing him with the personal details that are so lacking in the early parts; compare the striking description of the Emperor's entry at the opening of the Council of Nicaea and the telling details about the dinner-party to which the bishops were invited when the Council ended, both of which for all their literary overtones clearly derive from Eusebius' own experience.<sup>45</sup> The Council of Tyre of 335 which exiled Athanasius under Eusebius' own presidency, and its aftermath in Constantinople, are passed over with barely a mention,<sup>46</sup> but it is clear that Constantine's policies (and his own) needed a defence, and Drake indeed argues that he had the Emperor in view in writing. In any case, the restoration of Athanasius after Constantine's death in 337 would have made a renewed apologia an absolute imperative.

<sup>41</sup> Drake, 'Genesis', 31; cf. 30, attributing the initiative to Eusebius himself, on his visit to Constantinople in the autumn of 335.

<sup>42</sup> See IV. 33, 45, 46.

<sup>43</sup> In the MSS the *VC* is followed by the *Oration to the Saints* (described as Bk. V in two of them), *LC* and *SC*; the speech described at *VC* IV. 46 is not however the one which is now attached; see IV. 33, 46 and notes; T. D. Barnes, 'Two Speeches by Eusebius', *GRBS* 18 (1977), 341–45.

<sup>44</sup> See Drake, 'Genesis', 25–7, 29, arguing for a further visit to Constantinople at Easter 337.

<sup>45</sup> III. 10, 15.

<sup>46</sup> IV. 41, with note.

IV. 68, at least, was clearly written after the dynastic murders of the summer months of 337, for it omits all reference to the promotions of the unfortunate Dalmatius and Hannibalianus which took place at the same time as the allocations to Constantine's sons,<sup>47</sup> and much of the ecclesiastical emphasis in the work, especially its stress on the validity of councils, can be explained in relation to the danger which the restoration of Athanasius and Marcellus in the same year represented to Eusebius and his ecclesiastical views. Most telling, however, are the opening and closing paragraphs of the work, which advocate the continuance of Constantine's policies under the new regime by representing him as still ruling from heaven through his three sons on earth, much as Constantine's father Constantius had been depicted in the Latin panegyrics as conscious and rejoicing in heaven at the rule of his sons.<sup>48</sup> If Eusebius began the *VC* as a panegyric of Constantine along more or less conventional, though Christian, lines, the events of summer 337 presented a drastically changed situation, and a real need to justify Constantine's policies and demonstrate the truth of Eusebius' interpretation.<sup>49</sup> The new Augusti had shown how ruthless they could be, and whatever personal misgivings he may have had about the chances for a tripartite reign, it was in Eusebius' interests to urge harmony and continuity with the policies of their father, at the same time presenting his own interpretation of what those policies had been. At the end of the year 337 the future of the Constantinian Empire must have seemed very far from certain.

The *VC* is a clearly a work of apologetic, but it may not have had a single object; rather, the various purposes which it might serve may only have become clear as events developed and as it underwent successive stages of writing. Eusebius is not a polished writer, and we should not suppose that all the infelicities can be accounted for simply by assuming that he left it unfinished. More likely, perhaps, in view of the way in which he made the work function as a 'Mirror for Princes', offering covert advice to the sons of Constantine, is the view that it was expanded in some haste to suit particular needs.

<sup>47</sup> *Ongo*, 35; see §9 below.

<sup>48</sup> I. 1. 3; IV. 72; cf. *Pan. Lat.* 7 (6), AD 310, 14. 3-4.

<sup>49</sup> See §6.

## 4. SOURCES

Where did Eusebius find his material for the *VC*? Winkelmann's index (pp. clv-clvii) lists 'writings used'; the list contains forty biblical passages, eight legal texts, eight literary texts and thirty-nine passages from Eusebius' own works. His separate list (p. ccxxx) of sources for the documents attributed to Constantine in the *VC* adds six biblical, two Eusebian, and two other references. Eusebius was an old hand at documented history, as is shown by the *HE*, *PE*, and *DE*. In the *VC* he treats the Constantinian documents in a way directly comparable with his treatment of sources in these earlier works:<sup>50</sup> narrative is deduced from Constantine's words and then the document itself is presented. Much of his source-material, however, is embedded in narrative or in rhetorical prose without acknowledgement. This is conspicuously the case with his use of his own earlier writings and must be presumed for much else.

Winkelmann's lists, though invaluable, are in some respects misleading and incomplete. Some of the references are to texts possibly alluded to rather than positively used, or to biblical passages alluded to for conventional moralistic or rhetorical reasons rather than as sources for historical construction. Further, much more of the narrative is generated from the sources than such a list of quotations and allusions betrays, and there are clear cases where wording is derived from the earlier Eusebian writings but not recorded in Winkelmann's lists. We may classify the actual sources used by Eusebius as follows.

(a) *Eusebius' own writings*

Substantial passages are cited with little or no change, especially from *HE* and *LC*. At the same time important variations occur, of which we give some examples here.<sup>51</sup> *HE* included the campaigns against Maxentius, Maximin Daia, and (in the hurried last edition) Licinius. This material is freely drawn upon in the *VC*, but with adjustments. In the *VC* the campaign against Maxentius is led by the cross-shaped standard, not mentioned in the *HE*; this plays a leading part in the new reading of Constantine and leads Eusebius to adjust his earlier narrative in

<sup>50</sup> See Grant, 22-32.

<sup>51</sup> See for what follows Hall, 'Eusebian Material'; 'Eusebian and Other Sources'.

I. 37. 1. Similarly the campaign against Licinius is greatly expanded, with eyewitness material, legend and material about the standard.<sup>52</sup> More interestingly, features of the description of Maximin's activity, omitted in the account of Maximin in I. 58–9, now turn up in the account of Licinius: the advice of prophets and oracle-mongers in the account of Licinius in II. 4. 2–4 resembles *HE* 9. 10. 6; the retreat of Licinius to his homeland in II. 11. 1 also resembles *HE* 9. 10. 6; and the idea of a second more culpable and cowardly war is not attributed to Licinius in *HE* as it is in *VC* II. 11–12, but may derive from *HE* 9. 10. 13–14, which is concerned with Maximin. All this suggests both a thoughtful and meticulous use of Eusebius' earlier text, and a careful editing process. Again, the crimes of Licinius at *VC* I. 51–4 are largely derived from the hastily compiled list in *HE* 10. 8. 10–11, but the beginning is now altered to emphasize his ban on episcopal councils, which had been last and least in *HE* 10. 8. 14. This reflects the ecclesiastical concerns of 337–8, when the conciliar decisions of the eastern bishops were threatened by the restoration of Athanasius and Marcellus to episcopal sees from which they had been formally deposed, and matches Eusebius' high regard for councils in the *VC* generally. In III. 33 the recovery of the tomb of Christ and the building of a great church over it are described in words lifted from *LC* 9. 16. But the description is overlaid with the idea that this is the New Jerusalem prophesied in Scripture, and reflects Eusebius' intense concern with that complex of buildings (III. 25–40) and with the Council of Jerusalem (IV. 41–7); so much so, indeed, that the Eusebian source of the text in *LC* 9. 16 has not been noticed by Winkelmann or his predecessors.

Eusebius has wasted little of his previous work. On the other hand, he does not use passages twice, but on returning to a source picks up exactly where he left off. He does not use the material in the order in which it stood before, but appears to work through parts of *HE* 8–10 and *LC* 8–9 systematically extracting what is useful. Much of his apparently independent material can be understood as development of what he had written earlier. His omissions and variations can also often be understood in relation to his purposes in writing the *VC*. This

<sup>52</sup> II. 5, 6. 1, 6. 2, 10. 2.

use and manipulation of Eusebian material might seem to indicate that some other author was at work. But the procedures are not out of keeping with the way Eusebius uses his sources in the *HE*.<sup>53</sup>

The parts based wholly or partly upon *HE* and *LC* are as follows:

- I. 13–18 and I. 22–4 use material from *HE* 8. 13. 10–14.
- I. 33. 1 follows *HE* 8. 14. 1–2.
- I. 33. 2 follows *HE* 8. 14. 14 (cf. *LC* 7. 7).
- I. 34 follows *HE* 8. 14. 17.
- I. 35–6 follow *HE* 8. 14. 3–6.
- I. 37–40 follow *HE* 9. 9. 2–11.
- I. 40–1 partly follow *LC* 9. 8–9.
- I. 41. 3 is based on *HE* 10. 5. 2–17.
- I. 42 is based on *HE* 10. 5–7 (cf. also *LC* 9. 14, 19).
- I. 44–5 is based on documents in *HE* 10. 5. 15–17. 2.
- I. 47. 1 follows closely *HE* 8. 13. 15.
- I. 48–50.2 follow *HE* 10. 8. 1–6.
- I. 50. 2–51. 1 follow *HE* 10. 8. 7–8.
- I. 52, 54. 1 follow *HE* 10. 8. 10–12.
- I. 54. 2–56. 1 follow *HE* 10. 8. 11–14.
- I. 56. 2 follows *HE* 10. 8. 9.
- I. 57. 1–2 follow *HE* 8. 16. 2–4 and 8. 17. 1.
- I. 57. 3 is based on *HE* 8. 17. 1.
- I. 58. 1–2 is based on *HE* 8. 14. 13–14 (cf. also 8. 14. 8–9 and *LC* 7. 7).
- I. 58. 3 follows *HE* 9. 10. 2–4.
- I. 58. 4–59. 1 is based on *HE* 9. 10. 14–15.
- II. 1. 1–2 follows *HE* 10. 8. 2 (cf. 10. 9. 3).
- II. 1. 2–3. 2 follow *HE* 10. 8. 14–9.3 (cf. 10. 9. 5).
- II. 16–18 is based on *LC* 9. 8.
- II. 4. 2–4, 11. 2 uses the theme of *HE* 9. 10. 6.
- II. 11. 1 perhaps follows *HE* 9. 10. 6.
- II. 11. 2, 15–16 may reflect *HE* 9. 10. 1–4.
- II. 19. 1 may follow *HE* 9. 11. 1.
- II. 19. 2–20. 1 follow *HE* 10. 9. 6–8.

<sup>53</sup> See e.g. the case of the paraphrase of the Martyrdom of Polycarp (*HE* 4. 15. 1–46), or the adjustments apparently made in the various stages of composition of *HE* itself, as when the name of Licinius is suppressed in the decree of toleration of Galerius, when the final chapters about Licinius' persecution are added (*HE* 8. 17. 3–4).

- III. 26. 5-7 develops *HE* 10. 4. 26-7.  
 III. 33 develops *LC* 9. 16.  
 III. 41 follows *LC* 9. 17.  
 III. 50 follows *LC* 9. 14-15.  
 III. 54. 4-55. 4 follow *LC* 8. 1-7.  
 IV. 17-19 partly follow *LC* 9. 10-11.  
 IV. 40. 1 may develop *LC* 3. 2.

(b) *Imperial documents*

Eusebius had already included a number of earlier Constantinian documents in *HE* 10,<sup>54</sup> and in the *VC* he cites the Greek text of fifteen, beginning in book II in the year 324, after the account of Constantine's victory over Licinius.<sup>55</sup> Many of these are letters of Constantine addressed to bishops or churches, but they also include three letters addressed more widely, and a letter from Constantine to Shapur of Persia.<sup>56</sup> No less than seven of the letters were either addressed to Eusebius himself, or to him in company with other bishops, or concerned him directly;<sup>57</sup> these documents are of very varying import, ranging from the personal to matters of high policy. Eusebius sometimes claims to have by him originals signed by the Emperor,<sup>58</sup> and some of these presumably came to him in Greek. Documents were sometimes distributed in both Latin and Greek, or Eusebius might have a Latin copy which he translates.<sup>59</sup> Latinisms and signs of chancellery arrangement, especially in the documents cited in book II, and issued after Constantine's victory over Licinius in 324, confirm their official origin, even though the subject-matter and sentiments expressed by the

<sup>54</sup> *HE* 10. 5. 2-14 (cf. Lact., *DMP* 48), 15-17, 18-20, 21-4; 6; 7.

<sup>55</sup> II. 24-42, 46, 48-60, 64-72; III. 17-20, 30-2, 52-3, 60, 61, 62, 64-5, IV. 9-13, 35, 36, 42. For the documents in the *VC* see S. Corcoran, *The Empire of the Tetrarchs: Imperial Pronouncements and Government AD 284-324* (Oxford, 1996), 20-1, who also discusses in detail the nature, provenance, and style of imperial documents and legislation, including those of Constantine, from 284 to the end of the tetrarchic period in 324.

<sup>56</sup> II. 24-42; 48-60; III. 64-5; these are listed by Corcoran, *Empire of the Tetrarchs*, Appendix D, 315-16, and see P. Silli, *Testi Costantiniani nelle fonti letterarie (Materiali per una Palengenese delle Costituzioni Tardo-Imperiali)* iii (Milan, 1987), nos. 16, 17, 19. For the similarities and differences between letters and edicts see Corcoran, *Empire of the Tetrarchs*, 198-203, and for the letter to Shapur (IV. 9-13) see *ibid.* 316, and Silli no. 34.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. III. 60-2, on the possibility of Eusebius moving to the see of Antioch.

<sup>58</sup> II. 23. 3; 47. 2.

<sup>59</sup> II. 23. 1 (Latin and Greek); II. 47. 2; cf. also *HE* 8. 17 and elsewhere (Latin copy).

Emperor must have seemed novel.<sup>60</sup> Some letters Eusebius received personally, or concerned matters in which he was intimately involved, like the episcopal election at Antioch.<sup>61</sup> Others would be sent to him as metropolitan of Caesarea, either because they were widely circulated to church leaders or because they affected his jurisdiction, which included Jerusalem.<sup>62</sup> Others he may have acquired from a friendly official.<sup>63</sup> He also quotes the inscription on Constantine's statue in Rome and the text of the prayer of the army, and refers to Constantine's speeches and letters.<sup>64</sup>

All but one of the letters are on religious or ecclesiastical subjects.<sup>65</sup> If they are not addressed to Eusebius personally, most touch so closely on church affairs that they would naturally fall into the possession of an active metropolitan bishop. There is also a fragment or extract from a letter to the Persian king in IV. 9-13. The absence of heading and formal greeting in this single case suggest that Eusebius obtained the extract from an unusual source, perhaps an imperial official, or perhaps a previous written account such as that apparently in use in IV. 1-7; the original, he says (IV. 8), was in Latin. Of the documents, eight belong to the period from 324 to 326, and the rest include six sent to Eusebius himself, hence needing no effort on his part to obtain them.<sup>66</sup> B. H. Warmington has named an imperial notarius called Marianus as the likely source of the imperial documents and of some information about them; he is the official enthusiastically praised by Eusebius in IV. 44, and probably also in II. 63, 73.<sup>67</sup> Eusebius also states or implies that he has more letters at his disposal than he presents in his present work,<sup>68</sup> and

<sup>60</sup> So Pietri, 'Constantin en 324', 71-2; Pietri envisages Eusebius making a selection carefully chosen to illustrate Constantine's religious views and policy in the tense atmosphere after his death.

<sup>61</sup> II. 46; III. 61; IV. 35, 36 (personal receipt); III. 60. 3 (Antioch).

<sup>62</sup> So presumably III. 17-20, 64-5; IV. 42. Jerusalem: III. 29. 2, 51. 1.

<sup>63</sup> II. 63; perhaps IV. 9-13.

<sup>64</sup> I. 40. 1 (inscription); IV. 20 (prayer); III. 12, 22-4; IV. 29, 32, and 55 (speeches and letters).

<sup>65</sup> The documents are listed by Barnes, 'Panegyric', 111-13, with the comment that Eusebius' selection is a very personal one (p. 111) and the suggestion that he was collecting them in 325 and 326, but not later.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 113.

<sup>67</sup> Warmington, 'Sources', 93-8, and see Barnes, 'Panegyric', 113.

<sup>68</sup> III. 24. cf. IV. 27. 3.

we have already noticed that some of the narrative in I. 44–5 depends on documents used in the *HE*.

The evidence for Constantine's documentary and literary output as a whole is presented and discussed in a fundamental study by H. Dörries.<sup>69</sup> He lists fifty-six letters and decrees gathered from a wide range of literary sources, especially the historical writings of Eusebius, polemical tracts of Athanasius, and the anti-Donatist collection of Optatus.<sup>70</sup> Of these fifty-one are attributed to Constantine personally, or are issued in his name. All except one are concerned with religious or ecclesiastical affairs. There would have been similar documents on other subjects, which did not interest these writers, which are lost. The letters and decrees exhibit an intense and personal involvement in the subjects they deal with. Constantine writes as one who is totally committed to the church and the Gospel, the brother and colleague of bishops, with a strong sense of personal mission and desire to satisfy God. While interpreters from Burckhardt onwards who denied that Constantine was a religious Christian regarded many of the documents as inauthentic, it is now more usual to accept the letters as mostly or entirely genuine (Baynes, Lietzmann, Jones, Barnes).<sup>71</sup> The unusually personal tone, seen by some as a sign of falsification, is remarkably similar over a range of documents from diverse sources, and it would be very strange if official documents were forged in so personal and improbable a style.<sup>72</sup> The ideas expressed and the literary style are generally consistent not only with the other letters but with the other documents, including for instance the Constantinian letters in Optatus' *Appendix*.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, they differ in style from the main text of the *VC*, while in several cases it is clear that Eusebius is using a document which does not precisely fit the interpretation which he puts on it. Finally, the authenticity of one of the most hotly contested documents, the

<sup>69</sup> H. Dörries, *Das Selbstzeugnis Kaiser Konstantins* (Abh. d. Akad. d. Wiss. in Göttingen, philol.-hist. Kl. 3, 34; Göttingen, 1954); see also H. Kraft, 'Kaiser Konstantins religiöse Entwicklung', *Beiträge zur historischen Theologie*, 20 (1955), 160–201.

<sup>70</sup> Dörries, *Selbstzeugnis*, 16–128; for the Constantinian documents collected in the appendix to Optatus's *History of the Donatist Controversy* see the annotated translation by Mark Edwards, *Optatus: Against the Donatists* (Translated Texts for Historians, 27; Liverpool, 1997).

<sup>71</sup> See Tartaglia, 17–21, with a survey of earlier opinions.

<sup>72</sup> See O. Seeck, 'Die Urkunden der Vita Constantini', *Zeitschr. für Kirchengeschichte*, 18 (1898), 321–45, at 330.

<sup>73</sup> See further Heikel, intro., pp. lxvi–ciii.

letter at II. 24–42, has been remarkably confirmed by the discovery of part of the text in an official papyrus contemporary with or earlier than the writing of the *VC*.<sup>74</sup>

In addition to citing the documents themselves, it is clear that Eusebius uses their content to generate his own account. For example, IV. 8 may contain nothing more than is deduced from IV. 9–13. The alleged embassy to Persia may be deduced from the mere existence of a letter, the exchange of gifts from its friendly tone, and the report of multitudes of Christians in the Persian domain follows directly from IV. 13. Constantine is described as being 'quite a young boy' at the tyrant's court (I. 12. 1), perhaps because this is implied by his own words in II. 51. 1. As Emperor, Constantine crosses from his father's domain to Britain, 'enclosed by the edge of Ocean', in I. 25. 2, perhaps only because he himself says that his campaign of liberation began 'from that sea beside the Britons' (II. 28. 2), and 'from the shores of Ocean' (IV. 9). The beneficial laws summarized in II. 20–1 appear to be described on the basis of Constantine's provisions in II. 30–41; though there is also the possibility that they come from a parallel letter to the churches, described but not cited at II. 23. 2. While I. 52 begins with an item of persecution derived from *HE*, most of it could be deduced from the decree of restitution (see II. 30–8). In such ways Constantine's letters may themselves have provided significant parts of Eusebius' surrounding text. Sometimes Eusebius claims to describe or summarize letters not presented in the text, and he may be telling the truth;<sup>75</sup> however, such claims should be treated with reserve, since he might base such statements on general probability without any specific information at his disposal. At III. 59. 3–5 he is disarmingly frank about the embarrassment which might be caused to living persons if the Emperor's words of eighteen years or so past were to be published, and he is no doubt to be believed.

150 Constantinian laws are collected by Dörries, chiefly from *CTh* but also from *CJ* and elsewhere, and there is a complete list of those known from literary sources by P. Silli.<sup>76</sup> Not all of

<sup>74</sup> A. H. M. Jones, and T. C. Skeat, 'Notes on the Genuineness of the Constantinian Documents in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*', *JEH* 5 (1954), 196–200.

<sup>75</sup> See III. 22–3.

<sup>76</sup> *Selbstzeugnis*, 162–208; cf. Silli, *Testi Costantiniani*. For Constantine's legislation up to 324, the end of the tetrarchic period, see also Corcoran, *Empire of the Tetrarchs*.

Constantine's legislation has been preserved, for reasons to do with its transmission and with the compilation of the Codes. Inscriptions also record measures of Constantine, of which those from Hispellum and Orcistus are significant for his religious policies.<sup>77</sup>

In a number of places, all in *VC* IV, Eusebius refers specifically to laws without citing them directly. These concern Sunday rest (IV. 18. 2, 19–20; 23, cf. *CTh* 2. 8. 1; *CJ* 3. 12. 1, AD 321); the alleged ban on pagan sacrifice (IV. 23, cf. *CTh* 16. 10. 2 (Constantius II, AD 341); *CTh* 9. 16. 1–3, AD 318–20, prohibits magic and private use of *haruspices*); the abolition of gladiatorial games (IV. 25. 1, cf. *CTh* 15. 12. 1, AD 325); the repeal of the Augustan laws penalizing celibacy (IV. 26. 2–4, cf. *CTh* 18. 16. 1, AD 320), and the alleged ban on Christians being enslaved to Jews (claimed at IV. 27. 1, but cf. *CTh* 16. 9. 1, *Sirm.* 4, AD 335, which allow Jews to keep Christian slaves). Eusebius also records (IV. 2 6) that Constantine made informal wills binding (cf. *CTh* 16. 2. 4). What we read in the *VC* often does not correspond closely, or at all, to the text as we have it in the Codes; Eusebius may not have had the text available, or may have been basing his account on general awareness, or on a summary from someone else. If he was using the texts, he has given them a strongly Christian interpretation by selective quotation or other means.<sup>78</sup> Of the repeal of the Augustan marriage laws, he says that existing legislation penalized the childless and claims that Constantine wanted to benefit consecrated virgins of both sexes, i.e. Christian ascetics; however, it seems clear that the measure was only one part of a comprehensive edict on family law which has been split up under different titles in the Codes.<sup>79</sup> Eusebius does understand, however, that the law was about the important matter of inheritance. In general, he concentrates on Constantine's pronouncements in the form of letters, formal and informal, which

<sup>77</sup> See Dörries, *Selbstzeugnis*, 209–26; Hispellum: *ILS* 705, and see note on IV. 16; Orcistus: *MAMA* vii. 305.

<sup>78</sup> See in general B. H. Warmington, 'Eusebius of Caesarea's Versions of Constantine's Laws in the Codes', *Studia Patristica*, 24 (1993), 201–7. Warmington's general verdict is that Eusebius was 'a careless and perhaps tendentious reporter of recent legislation, even when it seems he had a text' (p. 205).

<sup>79</sup> See Judith Evans-Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity: The Emperor Constantine's Marriage Legislation* (Oxford, 1995), 128–30, with Warmington, 'Eusebius of Caesarea's Versions', 204; Corcoran, *Empire of the Tetrarchs*, 194.

he saw as revealing Constantine's piety, and it is not his aim to give a complete or an impartial account of the Emperor's legislation.<sup>80</sup> Other allusions to Constantine's activity occur at I. 43, on Constantine's benefactions, on which cf. *CTh* 10. 8. 1; II. 45. 1, a decree banning the erection of idols, divination, magic, and sacrifice (see above); IV. 2–3, changes in land-tax law; IV. 26. 2–3, a ban on effeminate priests in Egypt; IV. 27. 2, the status of synodical decrees.

### (c) *Secular histories*

In *HE* Eusebius refers to the authority of earlier historians, especially when writing of the disasters of the Jews in book II, with reference to Josephus, and there may be a reference to Dio Cassius and Appian at IV. 2. 1–5; but this material probably came to him through a secondary Christian source such as Origen. *VC* I. 10 seems to indicate acquaintance with secular historians who have written about bad emperors like Nero, but more probably reflects a stock theme.<sup>81</sup> *VC* I. 11. 1 suggests that Eusebius will privilege moral 'deeds' over military and secular history; however, IV. 1–6 (alone) suggests that he did have a secular source (for the order followed, cf. *Origo*, 30–2). He may have used such a source (possibly the lost pagan history by Praxagoras) also for the campaign against Licinius at II. 6. 2 and 10. 4–12. 2; for the letter to Shapur at IV. 8–13, and for legislation mentioned at IV. 18–26. It is not impossible that he drew on panegyric speeches for his praise of Constantius I at I. 13–17 or for the benefactions mentioned at I. 43, but he shows no direct knowledge either of Lactantius or of the *Panegyrici Latini*.

### (d) *Scriptural citations and models*

There are some forty citations or allusions to the Bible in the main text, and six more in the documents; they are evenly divided between the Old and New Testaments. Eusebius uses scriptural exemplars to provide a typological framework, especially in his comparison of Constantine with Moses (for discussion see § 7).<sup>82</sup> Further, the fulfilment of prophecy provides

<sup>80</sup> Warmington, 'Eusebius of Caesarea's Versions', 206–7.

<sup>81</sup> See Barnes, 'Panegyric', 109–10, with comments on the contents of the library at Caesarea at 108–9.

<sup>82</sup> For scriptural usage in the *LC* see S. Calderone, 'Eusebio e l'ideologia imperiale', *Le*

verification, first of Scripture itself and secondly of the divine providence which sends, directs, and inspires Constantine. Thus the battle with Maxentius answers the prophecies of Moses and the Psalmist at I. 38, while Constantine's emblem of the serpent pierced by the cross-shaped *labarum* and thrust downwards fulfils Isaiah's words (III. 3), and the church over the tomb of Christ is the New Jerusalem of Revelation 3: 12 and 21: 2. The majority of Eusebius' allusions are to the Old Testament, but the list of nations at the Council of Nicaea is modelled consciously on the list given in the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>83</sup> Eusebius also cites Scripture for moral or pious comment.<sup>84</sup> He adapts references to the Scriptures to the linguistic texture of the work by using symbolic and Platonizing language when referring to them.<sup>85</sup>

(e) *Secular citations*

There are occasional allusions to classical works.<sup>86</sup> At I. 7 Eusebius may be thinking of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, but the comparison with Cyrus was a rhetorical commonplace (see below and note *ad loc.*). At I. 17. 2 Eusebius refers to a saying 'that it is a blessed thing to have no troubles and to give none to another', possibly from Epicurus, unless merely proverbial. At I. 57. 2, the remark on the malady of Galerius may allude to Plato, *Laws* 959c, but cf. also 2 Maccabees 9: 9; it is already found in *HE* 8. 16. 4, and Lact., *DMP* 33. There may be Homeric allusions at II. 16. 2, 43. 5; III. 15. 2, 54. 6; IV. 7. 1.

(f) *Firsthand and oral evidence*

Eusebius saw Constantine as a youth (I. 19), talked to an officer from Licinius' army (II. 5. 5), heard rumours of miracles (II. 6. 1), was deeply involved in the church controversies and councils described at II. 61–2; III. 4–15, 21; IV. 59, 63–6; IV. 41, and close enough to have information about the conversion of the

*trasformazioni della cultura nella tarda antichità, Atti del Congresso tenuto a Catania, Università degli Studi, 27 sett. – 2 ott. 1982* (Rome, 1985), 18–22.

<sup>83</sup> III. 7–8, cf. Acts 2: 1–13.

<sup>84</sup> E.g. Ps. 132 (131): 7 at III. 42. 2, or Phil. 1: 18 at III. 58. 4.

<sup>85</sup> See on I. 3. 4, 38. 1; II. 12. 1 and cf. *LC* pref., 5. In *LC* I. 1, the clergy are *basilikoi paides*; see Calderone, 'Eusebio', 5–7, and see on I. 32. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Winkelmann, 156.

cities of Constantia and Constantine (IV. 37–9). Decrees of Licinius would affect his see of Caesarea (I. 53), and he knew personally the sacred buildings in Palestine (III. 41–7), and especially in Jerusalem (III. 25–40), where he attended the Council in AD 335 (IV. 43–7). Caesarea's status as a metropolitan see included Jerusalem, though the Jerusalem bishops were now led to aspire to independence or even to their own primacy, which they eventually attained. Several scholars (Rubin, Drake, Walker and others) have seen this tension in Eusebius' description of the building in Jerusalem, but see notes on III. 25–46. He was deeply concerned with the holy sites, and with the Empress Helena's work in Palestine, and would have had personal information about it, as perhaps also about the destruction of temples, though this does not prevent him from putting his own interpretation on what happened.<sup>87</sup> He notes and describes imperial portraiture on coins and statues (IV. 15, 73), and visited Constantinople,<sup>88</sup> whose architecture and statuary he describes (III. 3, 48–9, 54. 2–3), and where he observed foreign embassies (IV. 7), perhaps attended a public oration by the Emperor (IV. 29–32), and delivered one himself (IV. 33). He may have seen the mausoleum described in IV. 58–60. He was present at the palace for the Tricennalia (II. 1. 1), where he presumably observed Constantius' marriage (IV. 49–50), though his account of it is mingled with tendentious fiction about the sons of Constantine (IV. 51–2). Towards the end such material reflects the conditions and anxieties of the period after Constantine's death, notably in the critique at IV. 54 and the account of the succession of Constantine's sons at IV. 68. His version of the Emperor's baptism, lying-in-state, and funeral (IV. 60. 4–71) probably derives from the clergy of Constantinople, whose bishop Eusebius (formerly of Nicomedia) was an ally of his namesake; for the description of mourning at Rome at IV. 69 see note *ad loc.*

Eusebius was not an intimate of Constantine. He may have met him only at Nicaea and when he was in Constantinople for the Tricennalia. But he claims that he was shown a later version of the cross-shaped standard or *labarum* (I. 31), and that he heard from Constantine himself the story of the latter's vision (I. 27–30;

<sup>87</sup> See III. 54–8.

<sup>88</sup> See Drake, 'Genesis'.

see below and notes) and of the miraculous efficacy of the standard (II. 6–10); perhaps he also heard the related material about military prayers and ornaments (IV. 18. 3–21), however much this may have improved with the telling.<sup>89</sup>

#### 5. PLAN OF THE *VC*

Any conception of the plan of the *VC* must be connected with the view one takes of its literary character, for which see § 6,<sup>90</sup> for the common division of the work into chapters varies between manuscripts and does not go back to Eusebius, while the traditional chapter headings are also inauthentic, though possibly close in date to Eusebius.<sup>91</sup> We must divine the structure of his thought from the text itself. This is not always clear, for Eusebius moves easily from one subject to another, not always indicating a clear break. Our own understanding of the work's structure is set out below; we have generally followed Winkelmann, but with some variations. The headings given below are also used in the translation and commentary, but it must be emphasized that they are not original. Rather, they have been provided by ourselves, with the aim here and in the body of the translation and commentary of helping the reader to understand what Eusebius wrote and how the *VC* is constructed. The Greek chapter headings (based on Winkelmann's edition) are translated at pp. 54–66 below.

#### *Book I*

- 1–11. *Preface*
- 1–3. Constantine's immortality
- 4–6. God's achievement in Constantine
- 7–9. Constantine superior to other Emperors
- 10–11. Eusebius' purpose and plan
- 12–24. *Birth, family, and youth*
- 12. Childhood among the tyrants
- 13–18. Career and character of Constantine's father
- 19–21. Constantine joins his father
- 22–4. Constantine declared Emperor
- 25–41. 2. *Deeds in war I: The liberation of the West*

<sup>89</sup> For arguments against the common view of Eusebius as a 'court theologian', see Barnes, 'Panegyric', 114.

<sup>90</sup> For Barnes's view of its overall plan see 'Panegyric', 95–6 ('a messy structure').

<sup>91</sup> Winkelmann, p. xlix; see above, § 1.

- 25. 1. Constantine settles his father's domain
- 25. 2–26. Constantine observes the plight of Rome
- 27–32. Constantine seeks divine aid and receives the *labarum*
- 33–41. 2. The campaign against Maxentius
- 33–6. The crimes of Maxentius
- 37–8. Constantine's victory
- 39–41. 2. Celebrations and monument to victory
- 41. 3–48. *Emperor of the West*
- 41. 3–43. Generosity to Christians and others
- 44–5. Constantine deals with church disputes
- 46–7. Victories abroad, plots unmasked, and divine favours
- 48. Decennalia celebrations
- 49–59. *The crimes of Licinius*
- 49–50. Breaking faith
- 51–54. 1. Measures against Christians
- 54. 2–55. General policy and character
- 56–9. Licinius ignores the fate of Galerius and Maximin

#### *Book II*

- 1–22. *Deeds in war II: The victory over Licinius*
- 1–2. Licinius attacks the Church
- 3–5. Preparations for a war of religion
- 6–10. Licinius' attack repelled by God's aid
- 11–14. Constantine's religious and merciful conduct
- 15–18. Renewed war and final victory
- 19. Victory celebrations
- 20–2. Persecution and tyranny ended
- 23–43. *Constantine's confession of God: The letter to the Easterns* (24–42)
- 44–61. 1. *Constantine promotes the Church and restrains paganism*
- 44–45. 1. General measures
- 45. 2–46. Church buildings
- 46–61. 1. Letter against polytheistic worship
- 61. 2–73. *The disputes in Egypt*
- 61. 2–62. The two disputes
- 63–73. Constantine's letter to Alexander and Arius

#### *Book III*

- 1–3. *Constantine superior to the tyrants through piety*
- 4–24. *The Council of Nicaea*
- 4–9. The calling of the Council

- 10-14. The proceedings of the Council  
 15. Vicennalia celebrations  
 16-20. Constantine's report to the churches  
 17. 1-20. 2. Constantine's letter about the date of Easter  
 21-2. The bishops dismissed  
 23-4. Further conciliatory negotiations and letters  
 25-47. 3. *Buildings on three most sacred sites*  
 25-8. Excavation of the Holy Sepulchre  
 29-40. The church of the Holy Sepulchre  
 30-2. Constantine's letter to Macarius  
 41-3. 4. Churches at Bethlehem and the Ascension  
 43. 4-47. 3. The death of the Empress Helena  
 47. 4-53. *Other churches built*  
 47. 4-49. Constantinople  
 50. Nicomedia and Antioch  
 51-3. Mamre  
 54-8. *Pagan temples*  
 54. Removal of valuables  
 55. The shrine at Aphaca demolished  
 56. The Cilician Asclepaeum demolished  
 57. General campaign against idolatry  
 58. The shrine of Aphrodite at Heliopolis demolished  
 59-66. *Church disputes settled*  
 59-63. Constantine's letters about Antioch  
 63-6. Suppression of sects  
 64. 1-65. 3. Constantine's decree against heretics

*Book IV*

- 1-14. 1. *The prosperous Empire*  
 1-4. Philanthropy  
 5-6. Foreign relations I: Pacification of Goths and Sarmatians  
 7. Foreign relations II: Tributes  
 8-14. 1. Foreign relations III: Peace with Persia  
 9-13. Constantine's letter to Shapur  
 14. 2-39. *Constantine's sanctity*  
 14. 2-16. Personal piety  
 17-21. Staff and military personnel  
 22-3. Domestic religion  
 23-5. Christianity promoted and idolatry suppressed

- 26-8. Legislation and public charity  
 29-33. Speaking and listening  
 34-7. Letters on Christian topics  
 37-9. Conversion of cities  
 40-52. 3. *Final achievements*  
 40. Tricennalia and promotion of sons  
 41-2. The Council at Tyre  
 42. Constantine's letter to the Council  
 43-8. The assembly in Jerusalem  
 49-50. The universal Empire  
 51-52. 3. Sons prepared for succession  
 52. 4-73. *Baptism and death*  
 52. 4-55. Constantine's physical health and faith in immortality  
 56-7. Preparations for war against Persia  
 58-60. The shrine of the Apostles  
 61-4. Illness, baptism, and death  
 65-7. Mourning and lying-in-state  
 68-73. Succession and funeral  
 74-5. *Conclusion: The unique Emperor.*

6. THE LITERARY CHARACTER OF THE *VC*

The *VC* is a literary hybrid. But it is neither sufficient nor plausible to describe it as a mixture of two separate stages, imperial encomium and historical/hagiographic narrative.<sup>92</sup> Eusebius was an innovative writer in many other spheres, and the very task of writing about a Christian emperor presented new problems and called for new solutions. Even if Eusebius was not particularly successful in literary terms,<sup>93</sup> he should be given the credit for experimenting in the *VC* with new possibilities.

The introductory chapters (I. 1-11), while appealing to commonplaces, also place the work in a context of something

<sup>92</sup> Barnes, 'Panegyric', 104-8, aims to assign every passage either to a 'conventional commemoration of a dead monarch' (p. 102), 'a speech composed by Eusebius during 337, presumably begun when he heard of Constantine's death on 22 May' and revised after 9 Sept. (p. 104), or to 'a more grandiose and detailed exposition and... connected narrative' (p. 108); this aim is refined and taken further in Barnes, 'Two Drafts', 4-8. In contrast J. Moreau, 'Eusebius von Caesarea', *RAC* vi (Stuttgart, 1966), 1073-5, regards the whole work as a panegyric. For detailed criticism of Barnes's view see Cameron, 'Construction'.  
<sup>93</sup> So Tartaglia, 22.

novel, and are the more striking in view of the references to the three Augusti, which show that the opening at least (like the conclusion) was written after September 337, no doubt after the composition of the main body of the work. The impulse behind the final stage of writing was highly political: Eusebius wished to urge the continuation of the Constantinian settlement on Constantine's sons.<sup>94</sup> Yet even if he left the work unfinished, Eusebius paid close attention to its literary presentation, and framed the *VC* in a literary as well as a political sense with these opening and closing chapters. At I. 1. 2–3 and again at 1. 9 and IV. 72 Constantine is claimed to live on in the reign of his three sons. At I. 1. 2–2. 3 the perplexity and incompetence of the author in face of his subject is expressed. At I. 3. 2 it is emphasized that art, sculpture, and inscriptions, though used to commemorate the dead, are perishable in comparison with God's rewards to Constantine. At I. 4–6 Eusebius describes Constantine's mission to overthrow the persecutors and their religion and to set an example of true godliness. In I. 7–8 we read how Constantine excelled the greatest conquerors of the past, Cyrus and Alexander, not only in the extent of his conquests, but in the godly manner of his life and death. I. 9 expresses the continuity of Constantine's virtue, received from his father and now passed to his sons. I. 10–11 are interesting, as describing Eusebius' purpose and plan. If bad emperors have books written about them, he says, the virtuous certainly should. I. 11, where Eusebius asserts that he will confine himself to matters relating to Constantine's Christian policies, has often seemed problematic, in view of the fact that he does not in practice so limit himself, and especially in the light of the war narrative in books I–II; however, that narrative is told as a religious war, and the comparisons of Constantine to Moses are prominent—the victory over Licinius represents the freedom of the Christians from persecution. I. 12 establishes the comparison with Moses (see below); we are to regard Constantine's reign as divinely ordained in the same way as Moses was chosen to lead his people out of Egypt and receive the law. In I. 10 Eusebius likens his task to that of a painter tracing a 'verbal portrait' of Constantine.<sup>95</sup> The work

<sup>94</sup> See Cameron, 'Construction'.

<sup>95</sup> See note *ad loc.* and cf. I. 11. 1. Here Eusebius is writing in the manner of Hellenistic ethical biography and universal history; his model may be Plutarch's *Life of*

is to be instructive, that is, it will not merely present a useful record of virtue, or be embellished with high style<sup>96</sup> but will give an account of Constantine guaranteed to be correct by Eusebius' claim to special knowledge. Its purpose is thus explicitly said to be didactic.<sup>97</sup>

Modern discussion has begun from a structural analysis of the work and centred round the *VC*'s perceived combination of biography and encomium.<sup>98</sup> However, when Eusebius sets out the nature of his own work (I. 10–11) it is clear that its antecedents are mixed. He compares it with previous histories (I. 10. 2), as well as with 'lives' (I. 10. 3) and accounts of *praxeis* (I. 10. 3) written for the purpose of *epideixis*. Thus Eusebius himself calls to mind the Acts of the Apostles and locates his work in a Hellenistic historiographical tradition.<sup>99</sup> Eusebius uses the verb *historein* here and of his own activity;<sup>100</sup> he does not himself call the *VC* a *bios*, nor do the manuscripts call it a *bios* but merely *eis ton bion*.<sup>101</sup> In the same chapter he professes to spurn classicizing rhetoric. Nevertheless, the whole introduction is indebted to the standard rhetorical *praefatio*, and is based on the requirements of a standard imperial panegyric or *basilikos logos*. Indeed, Eusebius makes effective use of the stock encomiastic comparisons even while introducing the theme of Moses as a type for Constantine.

We may agree with Pasquali, Barnes, and others that the *VC* is not unitary; it was probably not composed in a single stage, and later insertions were made by Eusebius himself. It is not clear, however, over what period the writing continued. Book IV is

*Alexander*, see R. Mortley, *The Idea of Universal History from Hellenistic Philosophy to Early Christian Historiography* (Lewiston, NY, 1996), 31–2; 174–7.

<sup>96</sup> I. 10. 3–4.

<sup>97</sup> F. Heim, *La Théologie de la victoire de Constantin à Théodose* (Théologie historique, 89; Paris, 1992), 90–1, analyses chs. 1–11 and concludes that their aim is to show how Constantine's success (I. 4–9, recapitulated in the closing chapters) depends on his piety.

<sup>98</sup> See Winkelmann, pp. xlix–liii; Tartaglia, 7–15; see also Cameron, 'Construction'; 'Form and Meaning'.

<sup>99</sup> See Mortley, *Universal History*, 31–2, 174–7.

<sup>100</sup> See III. 24. 2, 51. 2, with II. 23. 2, and cf. Tartaglia, 11. But he is generous with his terminology: other terms used are *diegema* (I. 23), *graphie* (II. 5), *diegesis* (II. 63), *hypothesis* (IV. 32) and *logos* (III. 59. 5).

<sup>101</sup> See Anna Wilson, 'Biographical Models: the Constantinian Period and Beyond', in Samuel N. C. Lieu and Dominic Montserrat, in conjunction with Bill Leadbetter and Mark Vermes, *Constantine: History, Historiography and Legend* (London, 1998), 107–35. See Barnes, 'Panegyric', 103.

neither clearly a panegyric nor clearly a narrative, showing elements of both, and Barnes admits that here as elsewhere the construction is 'messy'.<sup>102</sup> The many infelicities of structure are commonly explained on the hypothesis that the work was left unfinished.<sup>103</sup> Yet I. 1–11, together with IV. 71–5, which is surely Eusebian, relate to the work as a whole, and just as he allowed the final form of the *HE* to go out despite many remaining inconsistencies, and with only crude and hasty updating, Eusebius may have thought the *VC* as it stood good enough to release, particularly as the circumstances of the latter months of 337 made rapid publication desirable. There is in fact no certainty that Eusebius was still working on the *VC* up to the time of his own death, nor does the addition of chapter headings by another hand in itself require such an explanation.

Just as the *HE* was not like a standard classical history, so the *VC* is neither an encomium, nor a *bios*, nor yet a history, but a combination of all of these. That Eusebius could envisage panegyric treatments of Constantine of quite different kinds is clear from a comparison with the *LC*. The *VC* taken as a whole is not a conventional encomium, for the rhetorical features characteristic of such a work, according to the precepts of Menander Rhetor,<sup>104</sup> which are followed closely in book I and the first part of book II, and which partially return in book IV, give way in the rest of books II and III to a much more expansive narrative and documentary treatment. Yet the work is also more than a *bios*, particularly in view of its inclusion of documents. Nor is it a straightforward history. There was as yet no precedent for a consciously Christian imperial encomium.<sup>105</sup> But by the early fourth century, *Lives*, both Christian and pagan, were becoming a popular vehicle for ideological messages; Eusebius had recent examples to note in the *Lives* of Pythagoras and Plotinus by the pagan Porphyry, whose work he had elsewhere been at pains to refute, and book 6 of his own *HE* contains what amounts to a *Life*

<sup>102</sup> Barnes, 'Panegyric', 95.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* 104.

<sup>104</sup> Ed. D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford, 1981); further below.

<sup>105</sup> See S. MacCormack, 'Latin Prose Panegyrics: Tradition and Discontinuity in the Later Roman Empire', *REA* 22 (1976), 29–77; H. Kloft, *Liberalitas Principis: Herkunft und Bedeutung. Studien zur Prinzipalsideologie* (Kölner historische Abhandlungen, 18, Cologne 1970), 170–7, discusses Eusebius' adaptation of standard motifs of imperial panegyric to Christian use.

of Eusebius' hero Origen; he also knew the *Life* of Apollonius of Tyana.<sup>106</sup> The *Life of Antony*, generally regarded as the first saint's life proper, was still to be written when Eusebius died.<sup>107</sup> In one sense the *VC* represents a 'political' as opposed to an ascetic *Life* (such as the *Lives* of Plotinus and Pythagoras); yet it too clearly constitutes a version of hagiography.<sup>108</sup> It presents Constantine as a 'divine man' or hero (*theios aner*), marked as such by divine signs. Just as Moses was granted the sign of the burning bush, so Constantine receives his vision. Hagiography and panegyric were to share many formal characteristics, and if the subject was an emperor the well-defined genre of imperial encomium meant that there was likely to be an even closer connection. However, the inclusion of documents on the scale to which Eusebius practises it in the *VC* was, like their use in the *HE*, an innovation and was not in the nature of things to become an established hagiographical feature.<sup>109</sup> Yet the documents too serve Eusebius as a guarantee of God's choice of Constantine, and affirm the authority of Eusebius' testimony as promised at I. 10. Eusebius' thinking about the role and mission of Constantine was to develop further in the years after 325, and his mature judgement on the Emperor is fully set out in the *LC*, close in date to the *VC* as he left it.

The features which the *VC* shares with the classic *basilikos logos*<sup>110</sup> are the following: I. 7–9 *synkrisis* (comparison with other rulers), I. 12–13 *genos* (birth, family, upbringing); I. 19–20 youth and accession; I. 25–40 deeds in war (despite Eusebius'

<sup>106</sup> Origen: *HE* 6. 1–36; see Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1983), 69–101; on Eusebius and Porphyry see below, § 7, and see Cameron, 'Construction'; 'Form and Meaning'. Fourth-century *Lives*: T. Hägg and Philip Rousseau, eds., *Greek Biography and Panegyrics in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, forthcoming).

<sup>107</sup> For a comparison, see Cameron, 'Form and Meaning'.

<sup>108</sup> Admitted by Barnes, 'Panegyric', 110 ('an experiment in hagiography'), comparing the *Life of Antony* (and pointing out at p. 103 that Eusebius did know the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*), even while denying that it is a *Life*; cf. also 116 ('something... which hovers between ecclesiastical history and hagiography').

<sup>109</sup> Though compare the long speeches attributed to Antony in the *Life of Antony*.

<sup>110</sup> For these see Russell and Wilson, eds., *Menander Rhetor*, 77 ff.; C. E. V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors. The Panegyrici Latini. Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994), 21–6; M. Mause, *Die Darstellung des Kaisers in der lateinischen Panegyrik* (Palingenesia, 50; Stuttgart, 1994); Heikel, pp. xlvi ff.; G. Pasquali, 'Die Composition der *Vita Constantini* des Eusebius', *Hermes*, 46 (1910), 369–86, at 384–5; Tartaglia, 8.

disclaimer, I. 11); I. 41–2 deeds in peace; 46 ff. deeds in war. II. 1–19 continues the narrative of Constantine's campaign against Licinius and his eventual victory. The similarities with imperial panegyric go deep, and extend to terminology, motifs, and types of argument; these are discussed in the notes, and see especially on I. 28–9, Eusebius' narrative of Constantine's vision. The *VC* also shows a preoccupation with the visual presentation of the Emperor and the appearance of Constantine himself which finds echoes in both the Latin panegyrics and the visual evidence.<sup>111</sup> From II. 20 Eusebius turns to Constantine's settlement and subsequent Christian policies; even this despite its length could fall under the category of deeds in peace, and it includes conventional subject-matter (legislation, building activity). Book IV contains panegyric material interspersed with personal anecdote (cf. in particular IV. 1–4 philanthropy, *liberalitas*; 5–14. 1 foreign relations; 14–25 *pietas*; 29–39 *iustitia*; from IV. 40 onwards Eusebius mainly records events and anecdotes of the close of the Emperor's life. Barnes sees II. 24–60, 61–73; III. 5–22 as 'slabs of documentary history', while I. 26–46 (the war against Maxentius) is also taken to be a connected narrative interrupting the panegyric sequence.<sup>112</sup>

Where did Eusebius acquire his familiarity with the rhetorical features of panegyric? He is unlikely to have known the *Panegyrici Latini*, where the broad categories of the *basilikos logos* are observed,<sup>113</sup> but the precepts laid down in the rhetorical treatises were standard fare in the system of higher education generally available. However, while the opening part of book I (unlike the *LC*) does indeed follow the broad scheme advocated by Menander Rhetor, elsewhere panegyric and narrative or historical elements are intermingled in varying degrees, just as in so many later saints' *Lives*. A particular panegyric feature adopted by Eusebius is the omission of proper names (Diocletian, Maximian,

<sup>111</sup> For a comparison of the *Panegyrici Latini* with the visual evidence see R. R. Smith, 'The Public Image of Licinius I: Portrait Sculpture and Imperial Ideology in the Early Fourth Century', *JRS* 87 (1997), 170–202, at 194–201.

<sup>112</sup> 'Panegyric', 105–6; compare 106–7 on I. 48–II. 19.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Nixon and Rodgers, 10–14; for a structural and linguistic analysis of the *Panegyrici Latini* see M.-C. L'Huilier, *L'Empire des mots: Orateurs gaulois et empereurs romains, 3<sup>e</sup> et 4<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris, 1992), unfortunately without parallels from the *VC*; L'Huilier notes the high proportion of space given to military narrative in the Latin panegyrics, as in *VC* I–II.

Maximin, Galerius, Arius, Athanasius: see on I. 26). The non-panegyric features of the *VC* (in the strict sense) are the inclusion of connected narrative in chronological rather than thematic order, and the incorporation of lengthy documents. As has been noted, certain similarities can also be seen with Plutarchan biography: for instance the comparison between Constantine and the persecutors at III. 1.<sup>114</sup> This seems to have resulted in 'an uneasy juxtaposition of the scientific/ethical style *Life* and the encomium', a new genre which 'probably owes nothing to Roman sources'.<sup>115</sup> But it seems unlikely that Eusebius himself had as clear a view of genre as modern critics wish upon him.

The question of the intended audience of the *VC* is also contentious. Eusebius has attempted an elevated style,<sup>116</sup> and it seems likely that the work was aimed at a mixed audience of Christians and pagans, particularly those with influence at court and not least the sons of Constantine themselves; similarly the audience of *Pan. Lat.* 5 (8), 312 (composed for Constantine's Quinquennalia), had, we are told, consisted of Constantine, his *amici* and his high officials, together with visiting delegations from the cities of Gaul, and the *LC* was delivered in the palace at Constantinople during Constantine's Tricennalia, where pagan rhetors were also present.<sup>117</sup> Panegyrics were written for performance, and Eusebius is no exception in his consciousness of audience and occasion.<sup>118</sup> The language and general presentation of the *VC* are studiously neutral; the biblical allusions are neither frequent nor usually obvious, and the preface has pretensions to high style and a clear debt to classical rhetoric. The comparison of Constantine with Moses was one which pagans as well as Christians would understand, and which had featured in recent works; in several passages it is introduced in carefully classicizing language. At

<sup>114</sup> So Tartaglia, 9, with G. Ruhbach, *Apologetik und Geschichte: Untersuchungen zur Theologie Eusebs von Caesarea*, Diss. Theol. (Heidelberg, 1962), 201–3; cf. n. 44 above. Tartaglia draws attention to the special importance of biography for Christian writers and to the sense in which Constantine's life is seen by Eusebius as a model of Christian life (cf. I. 5).

<sup>115</sup> Mortley, *Universal History*, 180.

<sup>116</sup> Winkelmann, p. lvii–lviii.

<sup>117</sup> *LC* I. 2–3, cf. *VC* IV. 33, 46, with H. A. Drake, 'When was the *De laudibus Constantini* Delivered?', *Historia*, 24 (1975), 345–56.

<sup>118</sup> On these features in the Latin panegyrics see L'Huilier, *L'Empire des mots*, 119, 287–303.

IV. 54 Eusebius complains of the pseudo-Christians at Constantine's court; at IV. 29 he describes the Emperor's regular public sermons, while noting that the audience often came out of mere curiosity and remained unpersuaded. It is likely that court circles contained people of all persuasions as well as many who prudently kept their own counsel. The same is likely to be true of the first readership of the *VC*. In order to reach these varied groups, the *VC*, a fully Christian work, uses a language and literary manner which conform at least in general terms to classical expectations. We should not conclude from this any hesitation or equivocation about Christianity on Constantine's part.<sup>119</sup>

#### 7. EUSEBIUS' PORTRAYAL OF CONSTANTINE

Together with the *LC*, the *VC* presents a distinctive view of Constantine and a conception of the Christian Empire which was to become standard in the Byzantine Empire.<sup>120</sup> Hellenistic ruler-theory was proposed as a source by Norman Baynes.<sup>121</sup> The Emperor is seen as specially marked out by God, and himself an imitator of God, beneficent ruler and lawgiver on earth, with the special task of ensuring the correct worship of God (as Constantine saw his role himself as early as 313: Optatus, *App.* 3). He was raised up by God to end the persecutions, and was a friend of the divine Logos. His duty was to further the Christian religion and to abolish the errors of polytheism. The *LC* puts into Platonic vocabulary and vague and symbolic language the ideas and actions more explicitly described in the *VC*: Eusebius also mentions in the *LC* (8) the destruction of the temple at Aphaca (*VC* III. 54, 55) and the confiscation of temple treasures. Many individual phrases descriptive of Constantine are shared by the *LC* and the *VC*, and both works develop the view of Constantine inherent in the closing parts of the *HE*. In all these works, Constantine's

<sup>119</sup> As supposed by H. A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1976), e.g. 79, with 'Genesis', 33-5.

<sup>120</sup> See F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background*, ii (Washington, DC, 1966), 611-22; cf. J.-M. Sansterre, 'Eusèbe de Césarée et la naissance de la théorie "césaropapiste"', *Byzantion*, 42 (1972), 131-95, 532-94.

<sup>121</sup> N. H. Baynes, 'Eusebius and the Christian Empire', in *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), 168-72 (first published 1933).

religious role leads directly to political and military success.<sup>122</sup> This thinking is the Christian version of Roman imperial ideology, and especially of imperial encomia in verse and prose.

However, the influences of Middle Platonic ruler-theory and of Christian writers such as Clement and Origen are more immediate than Hellenistic models.<sup>123</sup> A key element in Eusebius' thought is the idea of *mimesis*, whereby the Christian ruler and his Empire are held to mirror or imitate God in heaven. In recent years the influence of biblical models and imagery on Eusebius' thought has also been stressed.<sup>124</sup> In fact, Eusebius was attempting something new, which would be very different from the conventional *basilikos logos*.<sup>125</sup> His developed political theory, or theology of empire, is set out in the group of later works to which the *VC* belongs.<sup>126</sup>

The most obvious device used by Eusebius in the *VC* to bring home his ideological message is the patterning of Constantine on Moses.<sup>127</sup> First appearing at I. 12, the comparison recurs explicitly at I. 20 and again at I. 38 in the context of the battle against Maxentius, where Eusebius develops the comparison with the crossing of the Red Sea which he had used at *HE* 9. 9; in the final campaign against Licinius Constantine's tabernacle (II. 12. 1) is based on that in Exodus (II. 12, 14). Moses is distinguished as the servant of God in Numbers 12: 7, 8, quoted in Hebrews 3: 5. Eusebius uses this biblical word of him ('the great Servant Moses',

<sup>122</sup> Cf. esp. *VC* I. 6 and 8.

<sup>123</sup> Tartaglia, 21; detailed discussion in R. Farina, *L'impero e l'imperatore cristiano in Eusebio di Cesarea: La prima teologia politica del cristianesimo* (Zurich, 1966).

<sup>124</sup> See Calderone, 'Eusebio', 1-2, against Baynes and Dvornik (on Platonism, see 10-11); and see M. Hollerich, 'Religion and Politics in the Writings of Eusebius: Reassessing the first "Court Theologian"', *Church History*, 59 (1990), 309-25, at 309-13; Rubbach, *Apologetik und Geschichte*.

<sup>125</sup> Calderone, 'Eusebio', 2-3, also citing F. Taeger, *Charisma*, ii (Stuttgart, 1960), 686 ff. on the originality of the *LC*; for *VC* cf. Barnes, 'Panegyric', 116 ('something daringly original').

<sup>126</sup> See Cameron, *Tria Corda*; Calderone, 'Eusebio'; for Eusebius' earlier view of history see J. Sirinelli, *Les Vues historiques d'Eusèbe de Césarée durant la période prénicéenne* (Dakar, 1961); general and bibliography, Hollerich, 'Religion and Politics', 309-10.

<sup>127</sup> Discussed by Mortley, *Universal History*, ch. 5, and see Hollerich, 'Religion and Politics', 321-5; id., 'The Comparison of Moses and Constantine in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Life of Constantine*', *Studia Patristica*, 19 (1989), 80-95; Wilson, 'Biographical Models'; Claudia Rapp, *JThS* N.S. 49 (1998), 685-95.

I. 38. 5), and likens Constantine to him almost immediately (I. 39. 1). Moses is also a prophet (I. 12. 1; II. 12. 1, following Deuteronomy 18: 15–18, cf. Acts 3: 22; 7: 37); when Constantine's gifts as visionary and prophet are described, he is called God's servant, using Moses' title (*therapon*). Moses' story is told in 'sacred books' and 'divine oracles' (I. 38. 1; II. 2. 1), which are verified by God's work in Constantine (I. 38. 1–4). This principle of fulfilment and verification of the 'ancient oracles of the prophets, transmitted in Scripture', is important, and has been clearly stated in the work's preface.<sup>128</sup>

The deliberateness of the sustained Moses image is striking in view of the close dependence of this part of the *VC* on the *HE*. Eusebius' method of working is extremely careful, and the Moses analogy, developing much further the use already made of it in *HE* 9. 9, is inserted very precisely into the fabric of the text. In *HE* 9. 9, whereas the fate of Maxentius is compared with that of Pharaoh, and the victors likened to those about Moses, no parallel is drawn between Constantine and Moses. In contrast, in the adaptation of this story in the *VC* the comparison is made explicit (I. 39. 1). The whole of Constantine's life as ruler of God's people is now to be read in terms of the figure of Moses.

Eusebius' explicit allusions to Moses are presented with some attention to linguistic detail; at I. 12. 1 he refers to 'an ancient report' (*pheme*) about the Hebrews, then summarizes the circumstances of Moses's youth, finally stating (I. 12. 2) that whereas the old story was 'framed as a myth' the wonders which God has revealed through Constantine are 'greater than in myths'. Eusebius retains the apologetic style evident in his reference to Moses in the *HE*, especially at I. 12 and I. 38, deflecting the likelihood that the stories in the Old Testament will not be believed. Yet he now develops the likeness further; thus Constantine spends his youth at the court of tyrants (I. 12), returns to lead his people to freedom from persecution, and then takes on the role of lawgiver. This was a threefold pattern, based on the three periods in the life of Moses, which was to have an important place in later hagiography.<sup>129</sup>

Moses was not only an Old Testament type for Constantine;

<sup>128</sup> I. 3. 4; cf. I. 2. 3–3. 1 and 1. 4.

<sup>129</sup> See M. Harl, 'Les trois quarantaines de Moïse', *REG* 80 (1967), 407–12.

he was also a figure known and respected by pagans as well as Christians and Jews, and featured in contemporary writing following a tradition going back to Josephus and to Philo's *Life of Moses*. Eusebius quoted Josephus on Moses in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* (8. 8. 1–55) as a means to refuting Porphyry, and in his life of Origen at *HE* 6. 19. 10 f. he cites a work called 'On the harmony of Moses and Jesus', again in the context of Porphyry's criticisms. Eusebius also states that the desire to refute Porphyry was the starting-point for the *Canones*, and the importance to him of the question of the antiquity of Moses is indicated in the work's opening.<sup>130</sup> Moses was thus a key figure in Christian apologetic, according to which Mosaic law prepared the world for the Christian dispensation, which reached its culmination in Constantine.<sup>131</sup> The Jewish and Christian tradition claimed that Moses had been the source for Greek philosophy, thus that he was the bringer of culture and learning as well as piety, and while some pagans were critical of Moses, more regarded him as the type of the wise lawgiver.<sup>132</sup> The sustained comparison of Constantine and Moses would have much more resonance for contemporaries than it has for us. It is fundamental to Eusebius' developed historical thinking, as expressed in the *Praeparatio Evangelica*, the *Demonstratio Evangelica*, and the *logos* theology of the *Theophany*, the latter a work of AD 335, used extensively in the *LC* and very close in date to the *VC*. In the *DE* Eusebius makes an explicit connection between Moses and Jesus.<sup>133</sup> In the *VC*, that association is not directly made; yet the comparison between Constantine and Moses, 'a secular application of biblical typology without precedent in Christian literature before Eusebius',<sup>134</sup> was perfectly suited to the work's apologetic purpose.

The Moses analogy is closely connected with a second theme

<sup>130</sup> See Burgess, 'Dates and Editions', 488–9 and app. II.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 489; the preface to the *Canones* shows that Eusebius 'is clearly initiating a dialogue with Jewish, pagan, and even earlier Christian historians and apologists over what was probably the most fundamental chronological crux of Jewish and early Christian apologetic'.

<sup>132</sup> See J. G. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* (New York, 1972); A. Droge, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture* (HUT 26; Tübingen, 1989); Mortley, *Universal History*, 112–20, 135–49, 167–70.

<sup>133</sup> *DE* 3. 2. 6–7; see Hollerich, 'Religion and Politics', 318–21.

<sup>134</sup> Hollerich, 'Religion and Politics', 321.

in the *VC*, that of the persecutors as tyrants.<sup>135</sup> In the first reference to Moses at I. 12, Eusebius makes it clear that he now equates Constantine's victories with the exodus from Egypt; the passage is very carefully structured so that no one will miss the fact that a major theme of the *VC* is here being announced. It is made more explicit in various ways, for example, by likening Constantine's youth and upbringing at the court of Diocletian and Galerius to that of Moses at the court of Pharaoh (I. 12. 1, 20. 2). Eusebius distances Constantine's father Constantius from the other tetrarchs (I. 13. 1-3 (cf. *HE* 8. 13. 12-13); I. 15-17) and portrays Constantine's opponents Maxentius and ultimately Licinius as unequivocal persecutors of Christians (I. 13. 1-3; 51-9). His father must be shown as pious and virtuous if Constantine is to have the right pedigree (I. 12. 3, 21, 22-7; cf. I. 18, 25).

The account of Constantine's vision, told at I. 28 and the source of so much modern dispute, falls within the panegyric frame of the opening section and the chapters which work out the Moses analogy. Nevertheless, it is additional to the *HE* narrative, and great stress is laid upon it by Eusebius; whatever the source of Eusebius' information (allegedly Constantine himself: I. 28. 1), Eusebius also needed to explain the vision's absence from *HE* and the veracity of his new account. Preceded and followed by passages describing the thoughts of Constantine (I. 27, 29), the description carries guarantees of its own authenticity in the claim of personal information (I. 28. 1) and heavy emphasis on eye-witness testimony (I. 28. 2, 'with his own eyes'; I. 29, Constantine's dream; I. 30, Eusebius' sight of the *labarum*). The anachronism in the *labarum* description has often been noted; moreover, the timing of the vision, as well as (apparently) its nature, is quite different from the account of Constantine's dream told by Lactantius at *DMP* 1. 44.<sup>136</sup> At this point in the narrative, the story provides Constantine with a divine sign such as Moses was also given (with I. 27-9 compare Exodus 3: 1-6; Acts 7: 30-5), and it gives Eusebius the starting point for the emphasis which he is to lay henceforth on the 'saving sign' (*semeion*) or 'trophy' (*tropaion*), that is, the cross. In the description of the statue which Constantine erected in Rome after the victory

<sup>135</sup> Similarly, the *HE* is dominated by a number of Eusebian preoccupations which run through the whole work (Grant).

<sup>136</sup> See notes *ad loc.*

soon after (I. 40. 2, cf. *HE* 9. 9. 10) it is now explicitly said to be 'in the shape of the cross'. What Constantine saw in the sky was a cross (I. 28. 2); the *labarum* is a version of this 'sign', of the cross (I. 29); in addition, Eusebius refers to the cross as a 'trophy' (I. 28. 2), making explicit the assimilation of the terms cross, sign and trophy which is so prominent in the rest of the *VC*, and in the *LC* (see especially *LC* 10).<sup>137</sup> The vision of the cross and description of the *labarum* at I. 28-31 underpin the thinking behind Eusebius' presentation of Constantine in *LC* and *VC*, and provide the essential explicit equation of cross/sign/trophy. The description of the making of the *labarum* (I. 29-31) also allows Eusebius to evoke the making of the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25-8), as later (II. 12) Constantine builds a tabernacle for use on campaign against Licinius, while the miraculous powers of the cross-shaped *labarum* (II. 6. 2-9. 2) evoke the rod of Moses (Exodus 4: 1-5; 14: 16; 17: 8-13, of which 14: 16 is the most important passage). No doubt the cross/sign/trophy theme became fully developed in Eusebius' mind with his reflections on the meaning of the building of the church of the Holy Sepulchre, on which he himself delivered an oration (IV. 45. 3) and which occupies so much space in *VC* III (III. 25-40). It also in part provides the rest of the *VC* with the structural framework which it otherwise lacks once Eusebius has passed the point of the victory of Licinius and his need to rewrite the *HE* diminishes.

## 8. THE CAREER OF CONSTANTINE

Constantine was the son of Constantius I (later known as Chlorus), Caesar AD 293, Augustus 305, d. 25 July 306, by Helena; six more children were born to Constantius by his second wife Theodora, the daughter of Maximian.<sup>138</sup> Constantine was born at Naissus (Nis), c. 272-3.<sup>139</sup> He served under Diocletian and Galerius in the east from c. 293 and was with Diocletian in Nicomedia when not on campaign until 305.<sup>140</sup> He

<sup>137</sup> See R. Storch, 'The Trophy and the Cross: Pagan and Christian Symbolism in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries', *Byzantion*, 40 (1970), 105-17; Calderone, 'Eusebio', 25-6.

<sup>138</sup> Barnes, *NE* 35-7, 60-1; *PLRE* I, Fl. Val. Constantius 12.

<sup>139</sup> See on I. 8; II. 51; IV. 53 and see Barnes, *NE* 39-41.

<sup>140</sup> Barnes, *NE* 41-2.

married first Minervina, the mother of his son Crispus, and in 307 Fausta, the daughter of Maximian and Eutropia; he had five more children, the three future Caesars and Augusti Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans, and two daughters, Constantina (m. Gallus, Caesar 351-4) and Helena (m. Julian, Augustus 361-3).<sup>141</sup> Constantine died on 27 May 337, at the age of 64 or 65.<sup>142</sup>

On his father's death Constantine was proclaimed Augustus by the troops at York, but received the title of Caesar from Galerius and that of Augustus only in 307 from Maximian, probably at Trier;<sup>143</sup> at this stage he bore his father's epithet *Herculius*.<sup>144</sup> On the news of Maximian's usurpation in 310 Constantine marched south to Massilia where he defeated him and caused him to commit suicide. The Latin Panegyric of 310 for the first time claims his descent from the third-century Emperor Claudius II Gothicus (268-70) and records an alleged vision of Apollo;<sup>145</sup> subsequently, and for many years afterwards, Constantine's coins featured the legend *Soli invicto* ('to the Unconquered Sun').<sup>146</sup> After the death of Galerius (311), Constantine marched against Maxentius, was victorious at Verona, and defeated Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge over the Tiber on 28 October 312, after which he entered Rome. A meeting with Licinius at Milan early in 313 resulted in the marriage of his sister Constantia to Licinius and an agreement on religious toleration, the so-called 'Edict of Milan'.<sup>147</sup> Constantine also began issuing laws in favour of Christians, thus encountering the problem of division between Christians in North Africa and the beginnings of Donatism,<sup>148</sup> a situation which he tried to deal with by summoning councils at Rome (313) and Arles (314; see on I. 44. 1-2). Licinius' defeat of Maximian and the latter's death,

<sup>141</sup> Barnes, *NE* 43.

<sup>142</sup> See in general Barnes, *NE* 5-8; 68-80; Hall, *TRE* xix. 489-500, Konstantin I; *PLRE* I, Fl. Val. Constantinus 4.

<sup>143</sup> Barnes, *NE* 5, 69; see *Pan. Lat.* 7 (6), AD 310.

<sup>144</sup> *Pan. Lat.* 7 (6), AD 310.

<sup>145</sup> *Pan. Lat.* 7 (6), AD 310, 21. 3-7; see B. Saylor Rodgers, 'Constantine's Pagan Vision', *Byzantion*, 50 (1980), 259-78, and see note on I. 28. 2. The Latin panegyrist introduces the genealogy as something new: *quod plerique adhuc fortasse nesciunt* (2. 1).

<sup>146</sup> P. Bruun, 'The Disappearance of Sol from the Coins of Constantine', *Arctos*, NS 2 (1958), 15-37.

<sup>147</sup> *HE* 10. 5; Lactantius, *DMP* 48.

<sup>148</sup> Laws: *HE* 10. 5. 15-17, 6. 1-5; Donatism: see note on I. 41-5.

also in 313, left Constantine and Licinius sole emperors. Church-building began in Rome, and Constantine celebrated his Decennalia there in 315 (I. 48). He intended to go to Africa himself to settle the Donatist quarrel in 315 (*Opt., App.* 6) but was prevented by renewed hostilities against Licinius.

Constantine invaded Licinius' territory in AD 316 and two battles were fought, the first at Cibalae (October 316), the second, in which he defeated Licinius, at Campus Ardiensis, early in 317. Peace was patched up and Constantine's sons Crispus and Constantine, and Licinius' son Licinius (two of them infants), were all proclaimed Caesars (317). The date of this war was 316 rather than 314;<sup>149</sup> it has often been thought that Eusebius omits it altogether in the *VC*, but this is not clearly so.<sup>150</sup> After this, Licinius soon began to be represented as a persecutor of Christians.<sup>151</sup> Constantine campaigned in Gaul against the Sarmatians (323) and in 324 prepared to confront Licinius, whom he defeated at Adrianople on 3 July, 324, aided by Crispus, who commanded his fleet and destroyed Licinius' ships. Licinius fled and, after being defeated a second time at Chrysopolis (18 September), abdicated, and was subsequently killed with his son.<sup>152</sup>

From 19 September 324 until his death Constantine was sole Emperor. He set in hand legislation to restore church property and regulate religious affairs,<sup>153</sup> visited Antioch and summoned and attended the Council of Nicaea (May-June 325), where he also celebrated his Vicennalia.<sup>154</sup> He was in Rome in July, 326; shortly before, his son Crispus was put to death at Pola and Fausta died, both in mysterious circumstances,<sup>155</sup> after which Constantine's mother Helena, declared Augusta in 324, received more prominence.<sup>156</sup> Helena founded churches in the Holy Land, and died soon after her return.<sup>157</sup> Constantine did not remarry. The new foundation of Constantinople, planned immediately after Constantine's defeat of Licinius,<sup>158</sup> was dedicated on

<sup>149</sup> See Barnes, *CE* 65-8, following P. Bruun; so also Grünwald, *Constantinus*, 109-12; the date of 314 is defended by König, *Origo*, 119-23.

<sup>150</sup> See notes on I. 50. 2; II. 9. 4.

<sup>151</sup> *HE* 10. 8; Lactantius, *Inst.* 1. 1; see notes on I. 49-50.

<sup>152</sup> See notes on II. 9. 4, 15-18.

<sup>153</sup> II. 20-2, 24-42, 45.

<sup>154</sup> III. 22.

<sup>155</sup> Pola: Barnes, *NE*, 84, and see *NE* 9; *CE* 220-1; *PLRE* I, F. Max. Fausta.

<sup>156</sup> See on III. 25.

<sup>157</sup> Churches: III. 41-3. 4; death: *PLRE* I, Fl. Iulia Helena 3, and see on III. 43. 5-7. 3.

<sup>158</sup> Barnes, *CE* 212.

11 May 330, in Constantine's presence. From then on, he spent much of his time there, though he campaigned against the Goths in 332 and the Sarmatians in 334 (see on IV. 5-6), and north of the Danube in 336. The church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was dedicated in September 335, and Eusebius delivered one of the speeches (he later repeated it in the presence of Constantine in Constantinople).<sup>159</sup> Constantine made a settlement in 335 which assigned separate territorial spheres to his three surviving sons and to his half-nephews Dalmatius and Hannibalianus (see on IV. 51-2. 3; his nephews were killed during the months following Constantine's death). Also in 335, Constantine encountered Athanasius in Constantinople and called the Council of Tyre which condemned and exiled him.<sup>160</sup> During 336 Eusebius was in Constantinople and delivered the *LC*, which celebrated the Emperor's Tricennalia.<sup>161</sup> The Emperor fell ill and was baptized at Easter 337 by Eusebius of Nicomedia at a suburb of Nicomedia, where he died on 22 May, the day of Pentecost, while preparing a campaign against Persia.<sup>162</sup> His body was escorted to Constantinople, where he lay in state and was interred by his son Constantius in a Christian ceremony in his mausoleum; he also received the traditional honours of *consecratio* in Rome and was described as *divus*.<sup>163</sup>

#### 9. CONSTANTINE'S MISSION

The letters of Constantine, and especially the documents in the *VC*, give an insight into his religious views and attitudes, which are inseparable from the public policy which they express. Constantine feels a divine calling to rescue the peoples of the Empire from tyranny, specifically from Maxentius and Licinius, and to unite them in the knowledge of God; his army fights under God's sign, achieving 'deeds of salvation', and he prays that God will through him bring healing to the eastern Empire.<sup>164</sup> God's cure for the tyranny of the persecutors was to

<sup>159</sup> See on IV. 33. 1-2, 46.

<sup>161</sup> See on IV. 40; Drake, 'Genesis'.

<sup>163</sup> Constantinople: IV. 65-7, 71-3; Rome: IV. 69, 73, with notes.

<sup>164</sup> II. 64-5. 1; II. 55. 1, cf. *LC* 6. 21. This is also Eusebius' view: *LC* 5. 1. Constantine's religious thought is discussed by H. Kraft, *Konstantins religiöse Entwicklung* (Tübingen, 1995) and see Dörries, *Selbstzeugnis*. For his vocabulary in relation to God see Heim, *La Théologie de la victoire*, 37-51.

<sup>160</sup> IV. 41-2.

<sup>162</sup> IV. 64. 2; IV. 61-4, with notes.

examine and approve Constantine's service, so that he could dispel the horrors and so that 'the human race, taught by my obedient service, might restore the religion of the most dread Law, while at the same time the most blessed faith might grow under the guidance of the Supreme'; with God as ally he has 'raised up the whole world step by step with sure hopes of salvation'.<sup>165</sup> This salvation is an expression of providence, the divine government of the world both physical and moral, which leads to God's acts of reward and punishment in history and beyond. No intelligent and virtuous person can observe the divine laws operating in nature without rising to the knowledge of God.<sup>166</sup> God is often spoken of with a respectful periphrasis: 'Providence' (*pronoia*), 'the Supreme' (*to kreitton*), 'the Divinity' (*to theion, divinitas*). As supreme God he holds all things in his hand, and rules with fatherly kindness. It is his providence which raised up Constantine to save the world from evil.<sup>167</sup> Persecution of the Church is rebellion against God, and leads to calamity in this life and beyond.<sup>168</sup> The testimony of martyrs and confessors, by contrast, deserves greatest honour.<sup>169</sup> The evidence of judgement and saving providence is the foundation of Constantine's faith: 'I genuinely love your name, and dread your power, which you have revealed by many tokens, confirming the strength of my faith.'<sup>170</sup> God's truth can be described as Law (*nomos, lex*) a concept which embraces in varying mixtures the laws of nature, the books of the Bible, and the religious system of Christianity. In it is the truth: in contradiction to the polytheistic 'sanctuaries of falsehood' stands 'the shining house of your truth, which you have given in accordance with nature'.<sup>171</sup> The truth is a medicine, openly available in the Church for all to receive, which heresy distorts into deadly poison.<sup>172</sup>

The Church is not only the repository of this truth for the benefit of mankind; it also offers the worship due to God. Thus the Church ensures the peace and prosperity of the Empire; the unity of the Church and God's proper worship will ensure that his favour persists; the building and enlargement of churches facilitates both teaching and worship.<sup>173</sup> In this respect Constantine is

<sup>165</sup> II. 28. 2; IV. 9.

<sup>168</sup> II. 27. 2.

<sup>171</sup> II. 56.

<sup>173</sup> II. 65. 2; *HE* 10. 7. 2; *VC* II. 46, III. 30 etc.

<sup>166</sup> II. 48, 58. 1.

<sup>169</sup> II. 26. 1, 40.

<sup>172</sup> II. 59; III. 64. 1, cf. II. 68. 1.

<sup>167</sup> II. 28.

<sup>170</sup> II. 55. 2.

little different from his polytheistic predecessors. Purity of religion could even motivate a persecutor, and was held to preserve the divine favour, *pax deorum*, for the whole Empire. Constantine is therefore directly concerned with the people of the Church. He works hard to secure their unity and concord, in Egypt and Antioch as in North Africa, and in Tyre and Jerusalem; they are 'brothers . . . who are pledged to God by one and the same commitment to a right and just course of life as members of a sacred and holy family'.<sup>174</sup> He regularly addresses any bishop as 'brother', as if he were one of them, and in one place calls himself 'bishop appointed by God over those outside'.<sup>175</sup> His use of episcopal councils to resolve ecclesiastical disputes indicates a genuine sense of their spiritual power: he explicitly endorses the early Church's idea that assembled bishops speak with the voice of God, and legislated to allow episcopal decisions to be binding in civil law.<sup>176</sup>

Doubts have been expressed about the genuineness of Constantine's Christianity.<sup>177</sup> Once the letters are accepted as authentic, Constantine's conviction of divine calling and service must be accepted. But was he at heart a Christian, and if so, of what kind? Opinions differ as to the degree of his theological awareness, and as to his ultimate motives.<sup>178</sup> Some hold him to have been a syncretist; others that he had little belief in the saving work of the cross of Christ as generally understood by Christians.<sup>179</sup> He was in practice willing to tolerate polytheism, even if he could be at the same time personally hostile and

<sup>174</sup> II. 66–8; III. 20. 2; IV. 42; III. 60. 2.

<sup>176</sup> III. 20. 1; *CTh* 1. 27. 1.

<sup>177</sup> Notably in the past Jakob Burckhardt and Eduard Schwartz. Modern thinkers produce sharply conflicting estimates, not always wisely based: compare the opposing views of Alistair Kee, *Constantine Versus Christ* (London, 1962), and Paul Keresztes, *Constantine: A Great Christian Monarch and Apostle* (Amsterdam, 1981). For a balanced estimate see Baynes or Dürries (whose assessment is distilled in English in Hermann Dürries, *Constantine the Great* (New York, 1972), though it lacks the accuracy and authority of his original work).

<sup>178</sup> See Øyvind Norderval, 'The Emperor Constantine and Arius: Unity in the Church and Unity in the Empire', *Studia Theologica*, 42 (1988), 113–50, arguing for religious unity as his primary aim, but for tolerance of a degree of pluralism; he was thwarted when others refused to cooperate (see on IV. 41).

<sup>179</sup> H. A. Drake, 'Constantine and Consensus', *Church History*, 64 (1995), 1–15, argues that his aim was rather to promote a moderate monotheism which both Christians and pagans could accept; this was not in Drake's view a matter of syncretistic belief but of policy. Cf. also id., 'Lamb's into Lions: Explaining Early Christian Intolerance', *Past and Present*, 153 (1996), 3–36.

verbally abusive: the combination of insult and permission in II. 56, 62 is typical. Eusebius' statement that he chiefly promoted Christians to office is a clear exaggeration.<sup>180</sup> He continued to honour the Unconquered Sun, and this deity figures on his coins to the exclusion (with rare exceptions) of Christian symbols. When he appoints the Day of the Sun for rest, he does not refer to its Christian significance,<sup>181</sup> and even Eusebius' account of his vision in 312 is loaded with solar symbolism. The best explanation however is not that Constantine was a half-informed syncretist, so much as that the Sun could be a potent symbol of the one God worshipped by Christians.<sup>182</sup>

It has also been argued that Constantine's understanding of Christian doctrine is defective at a crucial point, the person and work of Jesus Christ, to the extent that he is rather theist than Christian. It is true that the death of Christ plays little apparent part in his thinking—even in the *Oration to the Saints*, which was delivered at the Easter festival, chapter 11 stresses the teaching and resurrection of Christ, but not his suffering.<sup>183</sup> God is often seen by Constantine as Saviour (*soter*), an idea which undoubtedly includes the giving of victory in war, and is not related particularly to spiritual reconciliation with God by the saving death of Jesus. Rather, the cross is a 'saving trophy' precisely because it brings victory in battle over the powers of tyranny. Similarly his engagement in the Arian, Nicene and post-Nicene controversies with the theological question of the person of Christ and his divinity may appear to be time-serving: he is more interested in the unity and effectiveness of the Church than in the truth of the doctrines it adopts. Many modern readers, including earnest Christians, might sympathize with the Emperor's view that the dispute over Arianism was out of all proportion, and that the issues did not justify the drastic actions and divisions it caused.<sup>184</sup> But it should be noted that even at this time, he was

<sup>180</sup> II. 44; see e.g. R. von Haehling, *Die Religionszugehörigkeit der hohen Amtsträger der römischen Reiches von Constantins I. bis zum Ende der Theodosianischen Dynastie* (Antiquitas, 3 23; Bonn, 1978); R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire AD 100–400* (New Haven and London, 1984), 43–8; see however T. D. Barnes, 'Statistics and the Conversion of the Roman Aristocracy', *JRS* 85 (1995), 135–47.

<sup>181</sup> IV. 18 and notes.

<sup>182</sup> On this see the fundamental discussion of Baynes in his appendix (pp. 95–103).

<sup>183</sup> Just as his primary interest in the site of the church of the Holy Sepulchre was the place of the resurrection rather than the rock of Golgotha.

<sup>184</sup> II. 69–71.

sure Arius was wrong.<sup>185</sup> Such favour as he later showed to Arius was in response to professions of orthodoxy, and his banishing of Athanasius, the arch anti-Arian, was on political and disciplinary grounds, not theological. It is best therefore to accept Constantine's attachment to the Christian God and to Christ as the response of one deeply committed to his imperial calling, who adopts and patronizes Christ precisely because he seems to bring 'salvation'—victory, that is, prosperity and peace. It is a doctrine which many of the best Christian intellectuals of the day (including both Eusebius and Lactantius) were not ashamed to approve and encourage.

#### 10. THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE VC

The *VC* is the single most important source for the reign of Constantine. As such, it needs and deserves careful and detailed examination, and above all, a consideration of the nature of the *VC* qua literary composition. Historically, estimation of the quality of the *VC* has shared in the broader issue of the reputation of Eusebius.<sup>186</sup> Particularly in this century, it has been the object of repeated attack on grounds of authenticity and veracity (see § 2 above); however, much of this criticism arose from the application of the wrong criteria to the *VC* by interpreting it as a strictly historical work, rather than as a work of apologetic suffused with ideological and encomiastic themes and style in the manner of other works of Eusebius. Eusebius was a biblical scholar as well as a Christian apologist,<sup>187</sup> and the *VC* is to be read not as a 'scientific' history, but, like most of his works, from those points of view.

A number of specific features of the *VC* which seem to impair its historical value have also been adduced as grounds for doubting Eusebius' authorship. These include the omission of Crispus' role in the campaign against Licinius, originally included in the *HE*, the 'doctoring' of Constantine's settlement for the succession in 335<sup>188</sup> and the alleged omission of the battle

<sup>185</sup> II. 69. 1.

<sup>186</sup> For a brief statement see S. Calderone, 'Il pensiero politico di Eusebio di Cesarea', in G. Bonamente and A. Nestori, eds., *I cristiani e l'impero nel IV secolo* (Macerata, 1988), 45–54.

<sup>187</sup> So Calderone, 'Il pensiero', 51–4, and cf. Barnes, *CE* 106–25, 164–88.

<sup>188</sup> IV. 40 with note; on Crispus in the *HE*, see Burgess, 'Dates and Editions', 494, and note on II. 1. 2–3. 2.

of Cibalae (see above). But they can generally be explained (unless based on misunderstandings) by reference to Eusebius' apologetic aims in the *VC*, and to the circumstances when it was written. Since book I and II. 1–19 (and sections of the rest of the *VC*, especially in book IV) are written in the manner of panegyric, one should not expect sober historical reporting, and it is natural that Constantine's parentage is made the subject of encomiastic elaboration. His vision is also there for apologetic reasons (above, § 7). A number of scholars believe that Eusebius deliberately omitted the discovery of the True Cross at Jerusalem, but it would have been to his apologetic advantage to include it, and it is more likely that the discovery postdated the *VC*.<sup>189</sup> Surprisingly, the city of Constantinople does not receive much attention in the *VC*, but what attention it does receive is designed to promote the idea of it as a new Christian foundation.<sup>190</sup> Scholars have found it difficult that Eusebius claims that he will concentrate only on the Emperor's religious actions,<sup>191</sup> but then includes narratives of his military campaigns; yet for Eusebius (as for traditional imperial panegyrists) all Constantine's actions have a religious inspiration and a religious interpretation (see above). The Emperor's very success is the result of God's favour. On the other hand, some secular and anecdotal material about Constantine's policies and demeanour as Emperor is also included, especially in book IV, where there are sometimes similarities with other sources such as the *Origo Constantini*. At times, for instance in his remarks on the senatorial order at IV. 1 or on wills at IV. 26. 1, Eusebius provides information on secular matters not to be found elsewhere.

For all its religious and personal bias, the *VC* is the fullest and most important source for the reign of Constantine; the other most important sources are the account in Lactantius's pamphlet *On the Deaths of the Persecutors* (*De Morte Persecutorum*, *DMP*), the *Origo Constantini*, and Zosimus' *New History* 2. 8–39. Of these, the account in the *Origo* is largely neutral in religious terms, though some Christian elements are present, derived from Orosius, while Zosimus' version is aggressively pagan and

<sup>189</sup> See on III. 28.

<sup>190</sup> See III. 48, 54; IV. 58. 1. B. H. Warmington suggests that Eusebius was conscious of the criticisms of extravagance directed at the foundation of the new city (e.g. Zosimus, 2. 32).  
<sup>191</sup> I. 11. 1.

hostile.<sup>192</sup> Constantine is also the subject of five contemporary Latin panegyrics, covering the period AD 307–21, contained in the surviving collection of *Panegyrici Latini*.<sup>193</sup> Aside from the Latin panegyrics, no contemporary pagan account has survived, although Praxagoras is known to have composed a laudatory history in Greek of Constantine's rise.<sup>194</sup> We do however have the collection of learned and effusive poems in Constantine's honour sent to the Emperor from exile by Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius in 324–5.<sup>195</sup> But the hostile versions seem to have started early, and some of that tradition can be detected in surviving fourth-century accounts (see also § 11 below).<sup>196</sup>

#### 11. THE LATER TRADITION OF THE VC

Later testimonia to the VC are few.<sup>197</sup> It was known to the church historian Gelasius of Caesarea (d. 395) and after him in varying degrees to the fifth-century church historians Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Gelasius of Cyzicus.<sup>198</sup> It has often been claimed that it was not known or at least not cited during the fourth century, but Libanius' panegyric on Constantius II and Constans, which naturally enough also praises their father Constantine, contains a number of similarities with the VC even though Libanius entirely omits any reference to Constantine's

<sup>192</sup> For the *Origo* see the commentary by I. König, *Origo Constantini. Anonymus Valesianus, i. Text und Kommentar* (Trier, 1987); an English translation of Zosimus with brief notes exists by R. T. Ridley, *Byzantina Australiensia*, 2 (Canberra, 1982). König accepts a late 4th-cent. date for the *Origo*, with later additions, but the original work may be earlier: see T. D. Barnes, 'Jerome and the *Origo Constantini imperatoris*', *Phoenix*, 43 (1989), 158–61 (c. 340).

<sup>193</sup> See Nixon and Rodgers, reproducing the Latin text by R. A. B. Mynors.

<sup>194</sup> *FGH* 219; it is summarized by Photius.

<sup>195</sup> Ed. G. Polara (Turin, 1973). On Porfyrius see T. D. Barnes, 'Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius', *AJP* 96 (1975), 173–86; he was released during Constantine's Vicennalia, 325–6.

<sup>196</sup> For discussion in relation to Constantine's Persian expedition, his baptism, and his death see G. Fowden, 'The Last Days of Constantine: Oppositional Versions and their Influence', *JRS* 84 (1994), 146–70.

<sup>197</sup> Winkelmann, pp. xxvii–xxxiii; id., 'Die Beurteilung des Eusebius von Cäsarea und seiner Vita Constantini im griechischen Osten', in J. Irmscher, ed., *Byzantinische Beiträge* (Berlin, 1964), 91–119 (= *Studien*, 15), at 107.

<sup>198</sup> See Winkelmann, pp. xxvii–xxx; id., *Textbezeugung*, 71–88; id., *Untersuchungen zur Kirchengeschichte des Gelasius von Kaisareta* (Berlin, 1966); see also A. Linder, 'The Myth of Constantine the Great in the West: Sources and Hagiographic Commemoration', *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser. 16 (1975), 43–95, and see on IV. 56.

Christianity.<sup>199</sup> However, neither Julian in his *Caesares* nor Ammianus Marcellinus is likely to have used the strongly Christian and partisan VC when writing of Constantine,<sup>200</sup> and even Eusebius' *HE* was not available in Latin until it was translated and continued by Rufinus in 402 or 403. Moreover, Eusebius himself was regarded as suspect in many quarters for his sympathy for the Arian cause.<sup>201</sup> From the fifth century on the VC seems to have been unknown or neglected until Photius read it in the ninth century (see below).

From an early stage (probably as early as the fifth century) Constantine himself entered the realm of legend and hagiography, as the saintly Christian founder of Constantinople; in the Byzantine period, some twenty-five *Vitae* and *encomia* are known, with extant manuscripts beginning c. 800, and from the ninth century onwards the various legendary features in these works pass into historical writing on Constantine.<sup>202</sup> Constantine's vision of the cross, and Helena as the finder of the True Cross, also passed into the highly ideological manuscript illustrations of the

<sup>199</sup> *Or.* 59, AD 344–5; see H.-U. Wiemer, 'Libanius on Constantine', *CQ* 44 (1994), 511–24, at 513–14; cf. P. Petit, 'Libanius et la Vita Constantini', *Historia* 1 (1950), 562–80 (contra, J. Moreau, 'Zum Problem der Vita Constantini', *Historia*, 4 (1955), 234–45). The speech is translated with introduction and notes in Lieu and Montserrat, eds., *From Constantine to Julian* (London, 1996), 147–209 (see p. 206 on possible use of the VC); Libanius himself says that his interpretations are familiar ones: *Or.* 59. 20. Contrast his emphasis on religious elements in the case of Julian, *Or.* 13 (362) and 12 (363), which give a pagan version of Eusebius' imperial theory.

<sup>200</sup> Nor does it seem to have been used in Julian's *Oration* 1, his panegyric of Constantius (AD 355), which praises Constantine.

<sup>201</sup> See Winkelmann, 'Die Beurteilung', 108–12. For an explicit statement as to Eusebius' orthodoxy see Germanos I of Constantinople (715–30), *De Haeresibus et Synodis*, PG 98. 53A.

<sup>202</sup> For these developments see F. Winkelmann, 'Ein Ordnungsversuch der griechischen hagiographischen Konstantiniden und ihrer Überlieferung', in J. Irmscher and P. Nagel, eds., *Studia Byzantina*, ii, (Berliner Byzantinische Arbeiten, 44; Berlin, 1973), 267–84 (= Winkelmann, *Studien*, 12); 'Die älteste erhaltene griechische hagiographische Vita Konstantins und Helenas (BHG Nr. 365z, 366, 366a)', in J. Dummer, ed., *Texte und Textkritik* (TU 133; Berlin, 1987), 623–38 (*Studien*, XIII); Fowden, 'Last Days of Constantine'; G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: Étude sur le "césaropapisme" byzantin* (Paris, 1996), 154–8; see also E. T. Brett, 'Early Constantine Legends: A Study in Propaganda', *Byzantine Studies*, 10 (1983/4), 52–70; H. J. Cowdrey, 'Eleventh-Century Reformer's Views of Constantine', *BF* 24 (1997), 63–91 (Constantine in the *Actus Silvestri*); Lieu and Montserrat, eds., *From Constantine to Julian*, 97–146 (translation of BHG 364, the 'Guidi-Vita', with notes); M. Van Esbroeck, 'Legends about Constantine in Armenian', *Classical Armenian Culture* (Chico, Calif., 1982), 79–101. They are seen as beginning at a later date by A. Kazhdan, "'Constantine imaginaire": Byzantine Legends of the Ninth Century about Constantine the Great', *Byzantion*, 57 (1987), 196–250.

ninth century.<sup>203</sup> These developments show how far the interest in the genuine historical record for Constantine, in so far as it is represented in the *VC*, had already receded, and indeed the hagiographic *Vitae* do not use the *VC* directly, although there seems to have been a Syriac translation of the *VC* which has not survived, and whose date is uncertain.<sup>204</sup> During the early Byzantine and Iconoclast periods, therefore, the *VC* was eclipsed by the hagiographical *Lives* of Constantine, and Eusebius himself regarded as suspect;<sup>205</sup> the Iconoclasts were, however, responsible for renewed interest in Eusebius, whom they regarded as an opponent of images.<sup>206</sup> This revival seems to have led to the rediscovery of the *VC*. After the ending of Iconoclasm in 843, Photius records in his *Bibliotheca* an encomiastic work on the life of Constantine by Eusebius in four books.<sup>207</sup> He goes on to criticize Eusebius' style, points out that the work includes many passages from the *HE*, and comments that it says that Constantine was baptized at Nicomedia, without naming the bishop who baptized him; Photius also criticizes Eusebius' position on Arius and Arianism. Photius' entry shows a renewed awareness of the *VC* in Constantinople with the revival of learning and the ending of Iconoclasm; equally, his unfavourable verdict demonstrates the reasons for its earlier neglect. V, the earliest surviving manuscript (Vat. gr. 149), dates from the tenth century. In the fourteenth century Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos knew of the *VC* as a work in five books.<sup>208</sup>

## 12. TRADITION AND EDITIONS

This new translation and commentary is based on the critical edition of the *VC* by Winkelmann, whose introduction discusses

<sup>203</sup> See Leslie Brubaker, 'To Legitimize an Emperor: Constantine and Visual Authority in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries', in P. Magdalino, ed., *New Constantines* (Aldershot, 1994), 139–58, for Par. gr. 510, and see especially 142–9.

<sup>204</sup> Winkelmann, p. xxxii; 'Die Beurteilung', 109.

<sup>205</sup> The legendary Constantine predominates in the 8th cent.: see Averil Cameron and Judith Herrin *et al.*, eds., *Constantinople in the Eighth Century: The Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (Leiden, 1984). This composite work is dated to c.800 by A. Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinupoleos* (Poikila Byzantina, 8; Bonn, 1988); it shows no knowledge of the *VC*.

<sup>206</sup> See S. Gero, 'The True Image of Christ: Eusebius' Letter to Constantia Reconsidered', *JThS* ns 32 (1981), 460–70.

<sup>207</sup> Phot., *Bibl.*, cod. 127.

<sup>208</sup> He is apparently dependent on Socrates: Winkelmann, p. xxxi.

the manuscripts in detail.<sup>209</sup> Winkelmann's fundamental work on the textual history of the *VC* provides an indispensable basis for study.

The textual transmission of the *VC* is complex; the present brief account is based on the full discussion by Winkelmann, pp. ix–xvi and his longer discussion published in *Texte und Untersuchungen*, 84. Among the principal manuscripts containing the *Life* the oldest and best (though by no means error-free) is *Cod. Vat. gr.* 149 (V, 10th cent.), in which the *VC* is followed by the *Oratio ad Sanctos*, presented as book V of the *VC* (cf. *VC* IV. 32).<sup>210</sup> The chapter headings are written twice in uncials, once at the beginning of each book and again in the margins of the main text, and the documents also appear with uncial headings. Next in importance come *Cod. Mosq. gr.* 50, also containing the *HE* and *LC* (J, 12th cent.), *Cod. Mosq. gr.* 340 (N, 12th cent.), *Cod. Par. gr.* 1437 (A, 13th cent.) and *Cod. Par. gr.* 1432 (B, 14th cent.). In addition, some manuscripts of the *HE* (*Codd. Laur. gr.* LXX.29, 10th cent.; *Paris gr.* 1431, 11th cent.; *Paris gr.* 1433, 11th/12th cent.) also contain the document given at *VC* II. 24–42, addressed by Constantine in Eusebius' copy to the provincials of Palestine, but sent to all the eastern provinces, and offer a better text than that given by the main manuscripts of the *VC*. Part of the same document (II. 27–9) also appears in P. Lond. 878, written very shortly after the promulgation of the edict and in close agreement with the version of the three *HE* manuscripts.<sup>211</sup> In addition, the many places where Eusebius has drawn from his own earlier works (especially *HE*, *LC*, and *SC*) sometimes allow comparisons with the text of those works. Finally, the *VC* is used by the church historians of the fifth century, especially Socrates; because of the separate transmission of their works, these can sometimes be of limited use in editing the *VC*.

The text has therefore been transmitted both directly, through its own manuscript tradition, and indirectly, via its use by later writers, while Eusebius' habit of drawing on his own works

<sup>209</sup> See also his discussion in *Die Textbezeugung der Vita Constantini des Eusebius von Caesarea* (TU 84, Berlin, 1962).

<sup>210</sup> See Winkelmann, p. xxxi.

<sup>211</sup> See A. H. M. Jones and T. C. Skeat, 'Notes on the Genuineness of the Constantinian Documents in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*', *JEH* 5 (1954), 196–200.

sometimes means that they too can be used to correct our text. We have a better text of II. 24–42 than for the rest of the work, thanks to the London papyrus and the manuscripts of the *HE* cited above. But though in the main body of the text V is generally the best guide, it is not always correct and it is always necessary to consider the witnesses to an individual passage in their entirety.

The chapter division also varies between the different manuscripts; in general, we follow Winkelmann's edition, just as for convenience we also give the page numbers of his Greek text. The style of the chapter headings differs materially from that of the rest of the work, they supply names not in the main text, and they use the third person when referring to Eusebius. It seems most likely therefore that they were supplied by a contemporary soon after Eusebius' death, no doubt the editor whom many scholars believe to have been responsible for publishing the work.<sup>212</sup> The arrangement of the *VC* in four books may also be attributable to the posthumous editor.<sup>213</sup> Here, as in Winkelmann's edition, the chapter headings are given together before the *VC* itself, so as not to disturb the continuity of the main text. In order to help the reader, the present translators have introduced at suitable points headings and subheadings which correspond with their understanding of the structure as the author saw it (see above, § 5). These headings and subheadings, which are not in the manuscripts, are distinguished by italic type from words translated from the Greek text. The numbers in square brackets in the translation refer to the pages of Winkelmann's edition.

The first printed edition of the Greek text of the *VC* was that of Stephanus (Paris, 1544). The Geneva edition of 1612 reproduced this text together with the *LC* and the Latin translation of the *VC* by John Christopherson, bishop of Chichester (d. 1558); however, the Greek text offered in J.-P. Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, 20 (Paris, 1857) is that of Valesius, who re-edited the *VC* in 1659 with full notes and a Latin translation. The first modern critical edition of the *VC* was that of Heikel, with very full and useful introduction. All previous editions are now superseded by that of Winkelmann.

<sup>212</sup> See Winkelmann, pp. xlvi–xlvi.

<sup>213</sup> Barnes, 'Panegyric', 104.

Older English translations exist by S. Bagster (London, 1845), revised by E. C. Richardson (NPNF 1, Oxford and New York, 1890). The Italian translation by L. Tartaglia includes short notes and a useful introduction, as does the Spanish version by M. Gurruchaga.

Italic type is used in what follows, not only for the editors' headings and subheadings, but to distinguish the documents attributed to Constantine from the rest of Eusebius' text.

## CHAPTER HEADINGS

In the manuscripts the whole *VC* is divided into chapters, the numbering of which is still used for reference. The headings of these chapters go back to an early editor or copyist, and not to Eusebius himself (see *Introd.*, § 1). Since they have their own historic interest, and occasionally provide useful information, a translation of them is presented here, on the basis of the Greek text in pp. 3–13 of Winkelmann's edition. The headings and subheadings in the Plan (*Introd.*, § 5) and in the translation itself have been made by the present translators, who believe they are a better guide to Eusebius' plan and thought.

CHAPTERS OF THE GODLY LIFE OF  
THE BLESSED EMPEROR CONSTANTINE

*Book I*

1. Preface on the death of Constantine
1. 3 On the accession of his sons
2. Further preface
3. On God who honours devout emperors and destroys tyrants
4. That God honoured Constantine
5. That he reigned piously for more than thirty years as monarch, and lived more than sixty
6. That he was a servant of God and victor over nations
7. A comparison with Cyrus the Persian emperor and Alexander of Macedon
8. That he ruled over almost the entire world
9. That he was the pious son of an emperor and bequeathed the government to his sons as emperors
10. On the need for and moral benefits of this history
11. That the account told only the deeds of Constantine concerned with his love of God
12. That like Moses Constantine was reared in houses of tyrants
13. How Constantius his father would not allow the agents of

- Diocletian and Maximian and Maxentius to persecute the Christians
14. How Constantius his father, being reproached for poverty by Diocletian, filled his treasury and then returned the money to those who had contributed
15. On the persecution carried out by the others
16. How Constantius his father made a pretence of idolatry, and then rejected those who were willing to sacrifice, while retaining in the palace those determined to confess
17. On Constantius' Christ-loving policy
18. That on the resignation of Diocletian and Maximian Constantius, who was graced with a large family, became senior Augustus
19. How as a young man Constantine his son visited Palestine in earlier times with Diocletian
20. How Constantine took refuge with his father because of the plots of Diocletian
21. The death of Constantius, leaving his son Constantine as Emperor
22. How after the funeral of Constantius the troops proclaimed Constantine Emperor
23. A brief account of the overthrow of the tyrants
24. That it was by God's will that Constantine obtained the Empire
25. Constantine's victories over barbarians and Britons
26. How he decided to liberate Rome from Maxentius
27. That he meditated on the defeats of the idolaters, and chose Christianity instead
28. How when he prayed God vouchsafed the vision of a cross of light in the sky at noon and a writing urging him to 'Conquer by this'
29. How the Christ of God appeared to him in his sleep, and directed him to use a sign of the same shape as the cross in his wars
30. The making of the same cruciform sign
31. A description<sup>1</sup> of the cross-shaped sign, which the Romans now call the *labarum*

<sup>1</sup> *Ekphrasis*, the technical term for a rhetorical description.

32. How Constantine received instruction<sup>2</sup> and read the divine Scriptures
33. On Maxentius' debaucheries in Rome
34. How the wife of the Prefect killed herself to save her chastity
35. The destruction of the people of Rome by Maxentius
36. Magic practices of Maxentius and shortage of food in Rome
37. Defeat of Maxentius' troops in Italy
38. Maxentius' death on a bridge over the River Tiber
39. Entry of Constantine into Rome
40. On his statue holding a cross and its inscription
41. Celebrations in the provinces and gifts made by Constantine
42. Bishops honoured and churches built
43. On Constantine's benefactions to the poor and needy
44. How he attended the councils of bishops
45. How he was long-suffering with the Africans
46. Victories over barbarians
47. The death of Maximian<sup>3</sup> after his plot and of others, whom Constantine found out by revelation
48. The celebration of Constantine's Decennalia
49. How Licinius maltreated the east
50. How Licinius intended to plot against Constantine
51. Licinius' measures against bishops and prohibitions of synods
52. Christians subjected to banishments and confiscations
53. Decree that women should not assemble in churches and that congregations pray outside the gates
54. Those not sacrificing to be discharged from the army, and those in prison not to be fed
55. On Licinius' wicked, greedy, and disgusting behaviour
56. That he then adopted a policy of persecution
57. That Maximian, subdued by fistulous sores and maggots, wrote in favour of Christians
58. That Maximin after persecuting Christians and fleeing lived like a domestic slave

<sup>2</sup> Lit. 'was catechized', i.e. received Christian instruction.

<sup>3</sup> Following Valesius's emendation. The MSS have 'Maximin'. See notes at I. 47.

59. That blinded by disease Maximin wrote in favour of Christians

#### Chapters of the first Book

#### *The Chapters of the Second Book*

1. The secret persecution of Licinius destroying bishops in Amasea in Pontus
2. Destruction of churches and butchery of bishops
3. How Constantine was roused on behalf of Christians destined for persecution
4. That Constantine made military preparations with prayer, but Licinius with divination
5. What Licinius said as he sacrificed in the grove about the idols and Christ
6. Visions in the cities ruled by Licinius, as if Constantine's armies were marching through
7. That in battle, wherever the cross-shaped sign appeared, victorious events ensued
8. That fifty were selected to carry the cross
9. That of the cross-bearers, the one who fled fell, while the one who stood faithfully by it survived
10. Various engagements and Constantine's victories
11. Flight and trickery of Licinius
12. How Constantine would win victories by praying in his tent
13. Generous treatment of prisoners of war
14. Further on the prayers in the tent
15. Licinius' cunning over friendly relations and his idolatry
16. How Licinius urged his troops not to engage the cross in battle
17. Constantine's victory
18. Licinius' death and celebrations of victory for it
19. Joy and festivals
20. Constantine's legislation on behalf of confessors
21. On behalf also of martyrs and ecclesiastical property
22. How he also revived the spirits of the people
23. That he proclaimed God as the source of good things; and on copies of laws

24. A law of Constantine on piety towards God and about Christianity, including the following:
25. Demonstration based on ancient times
26. On the persecuted and the persecutors
27. What great evils the persecution caused to the aggressors
28. That God chose Constantine as his minister of good things
29. Constantine's pious words about God and praise of confessors
30. A law releasing people from banishment, curial service, and confiscation
31. The same for those sent to islands
32. Those ignominiously put to work in mines and factories
33. On confessors who served in the army
34. Release of free men who had been serving in women's quarters, or given over to slavery
35. On the inheritance of properties of martyrs, confessors, and persons subject to banishment and confiscation
36. The Church to be heir of those without kin, and their personal bequests to be valid
37. Those in possession to surrender such lands and estates and houses, but not the fruits they have enjoyed
38. The manner in which petitions on these matters are to be submitted
39. The treasury to restore to the churches lands and estates and houses and so forth
40. *Martyria* and cemeteries to be restored to the churches
41. Those who have bought church property or received it by gift are to restore it
42. A call to worship God earnestly
43. How the legislation of Constantine was put into effect
44. That he promoted Christian officials; but if they were pagans,<sup>4</sup> they were forbidden to sacrifice
45. On laws prohibiting sacrifices and ordering people to build churches
46. Constantine's letter to Eusebius and the other bishops on the building of churches, and that they should repair and enlarge old churches with the help of the governors

<sup>4</sup> Literally 'Hellenes'.

47. That he wrote against idolatry
48. Constantine's letter to the provinces on the error of polytheism, with a preface on vice and virtue
49. On the father of the Godbeloved Constantine and on Diocletian and Maximian the persecutors
50. That it was as a result of the oracle of Apollo, saying that he could not utter oracles because of the righteous, that the persecution was provoked
51. That while still young Constantine personally heard Diocletian when he wrote the orders for persecution, because he had heard that the righteous were Christians
52. The number of tortures and punishments that were fiercely inflicted
53. That barbarians gave refuge to Christians
54. What retribution overtook those who persecuted because of the oracle
55. Constantine's expression of praise to God and acknowledgement of the sign of the cross and prayer for churches and peoples
56. That he prays for all to be Christian, but does not use compulsion
57. Expression of praise to God who through a Son has enlightened those in error
58. Further expression of praise for his government of the universe
59. Expression of praise to God who constantly teaches what is good
60. Exhortations at the end of the decree that none interfere with another
61. How disputes arose from the Alexandrian church because of the case of Arius
62. On the same also in the case of the Melitians
63. How Constantine sent a message and wrote about peace
64. Constantine's letter to Alexander the bishop and Arius the presbyter
65. That he constantly thought about peace
66. That he also resolved the disputes in Africa
67. That it was from the east that true religion began
68. That pained by the strife he counsels measures for peace

69. How the dispute between Alexander and Arius arose, and that these topics should not have been the subject of argument
70. Exhortations to concord
71. Not to argue over the same thing for the sake of verbal niceties
72. That for religion's sake his anguish made him weep, and he desisted from his intention to visit the east because of these things
73. Persistence and aggravation of the disputes after this letter
- Chapters of the second book

*The Chapters of the Third Book*

1. Comparison of the piety of Constantine with the wickedness of the persecutors
2. More on the piety of Constantine, who boldly flaunted the sign of the cross
3. On his picture, in which the cross was raised supreme and the dragon was pierced beneath
4. More on the debates because of Arius in Egypt
5. On the disagreement over Easter
6. How he ordered a Council to be held in Nicaea
7. On the world-wide Council, which bishops from all peoples attended
8. That as in the Acts of the Apostles they assembled from various peoples
9. On the merits and seniority of the 250 bishops
10. The Council in the palace, at which Constantine entered and took his seat
11. Silence in the Council after Bishop Eusebius made his speech
12. Constantine's address to the Council on peace
13. How he reconciled in concord those bishops who were at variance
14. The agreed statement of the Council on the faith and on Easter
15. How Constantine joined the bishops at a feast for his twenty years reign

16. Gifts to the bishops and letters sent to all
17. Constantine to the churches on the Council of Nicaea
18. His letter on agreement over Easter and against the Jews
19. Exhortation to follow for preference the greater part of the world
20. Exhortation to obey what had been written by the Council
21. Advice to the returning bishops on concord
22. How he sent some on their way, and wrote to others; and distributions of money
23. How he wrote to the Egyptians about peace and urged them to it
24. That he often wrote with pious concern both to bishops and to congregations
25. How in Jerusalem at the holy place of our Saviour's resurrection he ordered a temple for worship to be built
26. That the godless had hidden the divine tomb with rubble and idols
27. How Constantine ordered the material and rubble of the idol-house to be thrown far away
28. Revelation of the holy tomb
29. How he wrote about the building both to governors and to Macarius the bishop
30. Constantine to Macarius on the building of the Martyrion of the Saviour
31. To be built more beautiful than all the churches in the world as to walls and columns and marble
32. Furthermore representations to be made to the governors about the beauty of the ceiling and workmen and materials
33. How the Church of the Saviour was built as the prophesied New Jerusalem
34. Description<sup>5</sup> of the building of the most sacred tomb
35. Description of court and colonnades
36. Description of the walls and roofwork of the shrine, of its beauty and gilding
37. Description of the double colonnade on either side and the three eastern doors
38. Description of the dome and twelve pillars and bowls

<sup>5</sup> See n. 1.

39. Description of the inner court, arcades and entrance
40. On the abundance of offerings
41. On the building of churches in Bethlehem and the Mount of Olives
42. That the Empress Helena the mother of Constantine came to pray and built these churches
43. More on the church in Bethlehem
44. On Helena's generosity and good works
45. How Helena piously attended churches
46. How at 80 years of age she made her dispositions and died
47. How Constantine laid his mother to rest, and had earlier honoured her in life
48. How in Constantinople he built *martyria* and abolished all idol-worship
49. The sign of the cross at the palace and Daniel at the fountains
50. That he also built churches in Nicomedia and other cities
50. 2. On the church built in Antioch
51. That in Mamre too he ordered a church to be built
52. Constantine to Eusebius about the Mamre church
53. That the Saviour appeared there to Abraham
54. General destruction of images and idol-shrines
55. Removal of the idol-shrine at Aphaca in Phoenicia and its obscenity
56. Destruction of the temple of Asclepius at Aigai
57. How the pagans<sup>6</sup> condemned the idols and were converted to the knowledge of God
58. How in Heliopolis he destroyed Aphrodite and was the first to build a church
59. On the disturbance at Antioch because of Eustathius
59. 3. How Constantine tried to make peace by writing about these things
60. Constantine to the Antiochenes not to take Eusebius away from Caesarea but seek someone else
61. Constantine to Eusebius praising his refusal of Antioch
62. Constantine to the council, Eusebius not to be taken away from Caesarea
63. How he tried to eradicate the heresies

<sup>6</sup> See n. 4.

64. Constantine's decree against the heretics
65. On the seizure of the meeting-places of the heretics
66. How when unlawful books were found in their possession many heretics returned to the Catholic Church

*The Chapters of the Fourth Book*

1. How with gifts and promotion he honoured very many people
2. Relief from a quarter of the tax
3. Equalizations also of the heavy taxes
4. That for those who lost financial cases he made personal grants
5. Submission of the Scythians<sup>7</sup> after their defeat by the sign of our Saviour
6. Submission of the Sarmatians on the grounds of a slave revolt
7. Embassies of various barbarians and gifts from him
8. That also after an embassy from the Persian king he wrote to him about the Christians there
9. Constantine Augustus to Shapur the king of Persia in which he confesses most pious faith in God and Christ
10. Further, against idols and expressing praise to God
11. Further, against tyrants and persecutors and on Valerian who was taken prisoner
12. That he observed the fall of the persecutors and is now gratified by the peace of the Christians
13. Exhortations to love the Christians in his area
14. How the Christians had peace by the earnest prayers of Constantine
15. That both on coins and in pictures he portrayed himself as praying
16. That he also prohibited by law the setting up of his portrait in idol-shrines
17. Prayers and readings of divine Scriptures in the palace
18. Legislation to respect the day of the Lord's Day and Friday
19. How he ordered even non-Christian<sup>8</sup> soldiers to pray on the Lord's Days

<sup>7</sup> i.e. Goths; see note *ad loc.*

<sup>8</sup> Lit. *ethnici*, 'from the nations'.

20. Words of the prayer given to the soldiers by Constantine
21. The signs of the Saviour's cross on the armour of the soldiers
22. Earnestness in prayer and respect for the Easter feast
23. How he prohibited idolatry but honoured martyrs and festivals
24. That he said he was a kind of bishop of non-Christian affairs<sup>9</sup>
25. Further on prohibition of sacrifices and initiation rites and single-combat shows and the former obscene persons by the Nile
26. Reform of the existing law against the childless, and similarly further reform of that pertaining to wills
27. That he made laws that a Christian might not be slave to Jews, that the decisions of synods are legally binding, and so on
28. Gifts to churches and grants to virgins and the poor
29. Written works and speeches of Constantine
30. That to one covetous person he measured out a grave to shame him
31. That he was mocked for his excessive generosity
32. On the work which Constantine wrote 'To the assembly of the saints'
33. How he stood to listen to Eusebius' speeches about the tomb of the Saviour
34. That he wrote to Eusebius on Easter and sacred books
35. Constantine to Eusebius, praising his work on Easter
36. Constantine to Eusebius on the making of sacred books
37. How the books were manufactured
38. How the port of Gaza was designated a city because of Christianity and named Constantia
39. That in Phoenicia one place was made a city, and in the other cities there was destruction of idol-shrines and building of churches
40. That having in his thirtieth year proclaimed three sons as Emperors he proposed to carry out the dedication of the Martyrion in Jerusalem

<sup>9</sup> The chapter heading puts in the word 'affairs', which is missing in the main text; see note *ad loc.*

41. That because of the disputes in Egypt he ordered a Council to be held meanwhile in Tyre
42. Constantine to the Council in Tyre
43. At the festival of the dedication in Jerusalem bishops were from every province
44. On their greeting by Marianus the notary and the distributions to the poor and dedications in the church
45. Variety of addresses by bishops in meetings and by Eusebius the author of this history
46. That both the description<sup>10</sup> of the Saviour's Martyrion and a tricennialian oration were later delivered by him before Constantine himself
47. That the Council of Nicaea was held during the Vicennialia and the dedication in Jerusalem during the Tricennialia of Constantine
48. How Constantine would not allow anyone to praise him to excess
49. Marriage of Constantius Caesar his son
50. Embassies and gifts of Indians
51. How in dividing the government between his three sons Constantine piously explained their imperial duties
52. How when they grew up he also led them towards piety
53. That after about thirty-two years as Emperor and over sixty years of life his body remained healthy
54. On those who abused his excessive generosity for profit and pretence
55. How Constantine went on writing until the end
56. How on his campaign against Persia he took with him bishops and a tent to form a church
57. How after receiving Persian embassies he kept the vigil with the others at the Easter festival
58. On the building of the so-called Martyrion of the Apostles in Constantinople
59. Further description<sup>11</sup> of the Martyrion
60. That in this he also added the building of a tomb for his own burial
61. Indisposition at Helenopolis and prayers about baptism

<sup>10</sup> See n. 1.

<sup>11</sup> See n. 1.

62. Constantine's exhortation to the bishops about their imparting the bath of baptism
63. How after receiving the bath he praised God
64. Constantine's death at midday on the feast of Pentecost
65. Lamentations of soldiers and officers
66. Conveyance of the remains from Nicomedia to the palace in Constantinople
67. How even after death he was treated with honour by the *comites* and others just as when alive
68. How the army decided that his sons be now Augusti
69. Mourning for Constantine in Rome and honour by means of his images after death
70. Depositing of the remains by his son Constantius in Constantinople
71. Liturgy<sup>12</sup> in the so-called Martyrion of the Apostles to mark Constantine's death
72. On the phoenix
73. How they depicted Constantine on coins as ascending to heaven
74. That God who was honoured by him rightly gave honour to him in return
75. That Constantine was more pious than the Roman emperors before him

The chapters of the fourth book

<sup>12</sup> 'Religious service'.

## TRANSLATION

Eusebius Pamphili  
On the Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine

BOOK I

I-II. *Preface*

I-3. *Constantine's immortality*

[15] I (1) It was but recently the whole human race celebrated various ten-year periods for the great Emperor with festive banquets. It was but recently we ourselves hymned the conqueror with praises for his twenty years, taking the floor at the Council of God's ministers. Just now we wove garlands of words also for his thirty years, in the very palace hardly yesterday to crown his sacred head. (2) But today our thought stands helpless, longing to express some of the conventional things, but at a loss which way to turn, stunned by the sheer wonder of the amazing spectacle. Wherever it casts its gaze, whether east or west, whether all over the earth or up to heaven itself, every way and everywhere it observes the Blessed One present with the Empire itself. (3) On earth it perceives his own sons like new lamps filling the whole with his radiance, and himself powerfully alive and directing the whole government of affairs more firmly than before, as he is multiplied in the succession of his sons. If previously they still shared the honour of Caesars, now that they have put on his whole mantle of Godfearing virtue, they have been declared Imperatores Augusti, singled out with their father's honours.

2 (1) When our thought observes the one who was recently visible in a mortal body, and amazingly present with us even after his life is ended, when Nature rejects over-prolongation as alien—when our thought observes him endowed with the imperial palaces and properties and honours and panegyrics, it is utterly disconcerted. (2) But now that it reaches upward to the very vaults of heaven, it pictures there too the thrice-blessed soul in the presence of God, [16] stripped of all mortal and earthly attire, and

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EUSEBIUS

*Life of Constantine*

Introduction, translation,  
and commentary by  
Averil Cameron  
and  
Stuart G. Hall

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