

specific to a determinate quirky individual in a determinate historical context. It is hardly surprising that his major figures are often insufficiently individuated for modern tastes.

We started with a few paradoxes—Dio's penchant for biostructuring, yet also his concern to make timeless points about the principate as a whole; his elements of biography, yet the lack of personal individuation or understanding. Those may now seem less paradoxical. First, biostructuring does not stop Dio bringing out his trans-regnal themes and ideas; he does bring out the importance of individual character in defining the flavour of different reigns, but he can also bring out themes which transcend particular reigns and rulers. Second, his characterization is more unsatisfactory by modern than by ancient standards. He is not served by modern conceptions of personality which privilege the individuating concerns which, as a historian concerned with generalizing, he will counter and downplay. Yet third, if we think of those analyses of motivation, he is perhaps less far from *some* modern conceptions than we thought. When we recall the succession-struggles, with that preference for motives that are not too tied to the quirkiness of an individual, it is hard to resist the reflection that many moderns do the same. Others have shared his distaste for a concentration on Tiberius' dislike for Julia, or on his personal pique. Yavetz recently talked of a 'blurring of all personal characteristics of Pompey and Caesar, Antonius and Octavian'.⁸⁷ He was talking, not about Dio, but about Sir Ronald Syme. So, if Dio makes some of these emperors less personally interesting and quirky, then we should not be too hard on him. There are greater historians who have done the same.

⁸⁷ Yavetz (1990: 28).

6

Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* and the Construction of Constantine

AVERIL CAMERON

For all the difficulties involved in judging its reliability, Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* has served many generations of historians as a guide to Constantine's life and career, none more so than T. D. Barnes, whose standard work, *Constantine and Eusebius* (1981) relies heavily on its evidence. That the *Vita* uneasily combines history and panegyric is well known; accordingly, G. Pasquali in 1910, followed by Barnes in 1989 and 1993, argued for a two-stage composition and change of genre mid-stream.¹ Certainly Eusebius has left a very untidy, and in the eyes of many scholars unfinished, work, a fact which makes judgements of genre somewhat unsafe. But genre is one thing, reading another. The *Vita* (henceforth *VC*, not necessarily to be taken as Eusebius' original title) has to be read as a text before it can be read as a source. Yet its very ambiguity has rendered it capable of several different readings. A full history of the interpretation and reception of the *VC* would require a substantial volume, and would be a volume worth writing. In this paper I shall confine myself to the matter in hand, and begin by inquiring whether the work is more susceptible to a reading in terms of biography than Barnes allows. It is worth stating at the outset that the hypothesis of successive

I have given talks and seminars on the *Vita* in a number of places, including Paris (Collège de France), Cambridge, Australia, Victoria BC. This version was given at the conference on Constantine organized by Dr S. C. Lieu in April 1993 at the University of Warwick (Lieu, ed., forthcoming). I am very grateful to all these audiences for their comments and suggestions, and to a number of individuals, especially Paul Cartledge and Raoul Mortley; in addition I owe a special debt to Anna Wilson for generous encouragement from one whose interest in the *VC* has run parallel to my own, and to T. D. Barnes, a long-standing friend to whose work I am greatly indebted, and but for whom, as is obvious, I would not have written this paper.

¹ Pasquali (1910); Barnes (1989) with Barnes (1993a). See also Tartaglia (1984: 13 ff.). Surprisingly enough, Tartaglia's annotated Italian translation is the only modern translation of the *VC* so far available, though for extracts in German translation see Keil (1989). The excellent critical edition by F. Winkelmann in the GCS series (Winkelmann 1975, 1992) contains a useful brief discussion of genre in the introduction, liii ff.

versions may be right, at least in the sense that Eusebius doubtless added to and adapted his original work over a period of time; yet it can obscure the reader's sense of the work's overall ideology and purpose if too rigidly perused.² A reading of the *VC* against some other contemporary and near-contemporary texts permits us to see both more clearly.

It may be relevant to consider these words on the enterprise of biography from no less a person than Sigmund Freud: 'whoever turns biographer', he wrote in a letter to a self-appointed biographer of himself, 'commits himself to lies, to concealment, to hypocrisy, to embellishments, and even to dissembling his own lack of understanding, but biographical truth is not to be had, and even if one had it, one could not use it.' Elsewhere he wrote: 'biographers are fixated on their hero in a quite particular way; they choose him in the first place because they feel strongly drawn to him, so that their work is almost bound to be an exercise in idealization.'³ The tendency of so much modern biography towards character assassination may seem to disprove the last observation; its relevance to the *VC*, with its panegyric aspects, and to other fourth-century works, is however obvious. In a short sentence or two, Freud set out the interplay of biography and encomium which we see so clearly exemplified in the *VC*. As for the first part of the quotation, it is far indeed from the persistent expectation of many historians that the *VC* is in fact attempting to convey a reliable historical record.⁴ Naturally the *VC* is no psychological biography in the sense to which we have become accustomed, nor is it one of those heavily documented 500 or 600-page volumes which crowd the bookstalls. Yet those who have been so hard on Eusebius for 'fraud', that is, deliberate distortion of the 'facts', might do well to ponder Freud's words.⁵

² Barnes (1989: 98) claims that Pasquali's thesis 'cannot be refuted, for it corresponds to and explains the observable data', and further, that alternative theories fail through not accepting Pasquali's 'proof' (115–16).

³ Quotation from a letter to Arnold Zweig and comment from a 1910 paper on Leonardo da Vinci, both from Gay (1988: xv–xvi).

⁴ See also in relation to autobiography, Sturrock (1993). There is a considerable modern bibliography on narrative and fictionality in biography and autobiography, as of course on the whole concept of 'self'; I must thank Patricia Cox Miller for some directions.

⁵ The hostile tradition of Burckhardt (1853) and others, largely answered in Baynes's Raleigh Lecture of 1929 (1931, rev. edn. 1972), has recently been revived by Elliott (1991). For the authorship controversy see Winkelmann (1962); many scholars have argued for later insertions, editing or even composition: see briefly Barnes (1989), 96; Winkelmann (1975, 1992: lvi); Tartaglia (1984: 13–17). This paper starts from the hypothesis that apart from the chapter headings and any other contemporary editorial interventions (Barnes, 'Panegyric', 98–9—though it is of course fallacious to assume that the presence of an infelicity or repetition cannot be attributed to Eusebius himself), the work is Eusebian.

It is one of the cardinal principles of Barnes's *Constantine and Eusebius* that Eusebius should be taken seriously. Not necessarily, indeed, in the way in which some of Eusebius' apologists have taken him, notably N. Baynes,⁶ nor necessarily taking literally all that Eusebius says.⁷ But, as Barnes replies to one of his critics, what is at stake is 'the accuracy and probity of Eusebius of Caesarea, the most important and most voluminous surviving witness to the "Constantinian revolution"'.⁸ Yet though Barnes himself has given us several Eusebii—Eusebius the scholar, Eusebius the partisan and apologist, Eusebius the panegyrist, and Eusebius the historian—he has explicitly denied us Eusebius the biographer. His recent restatement of Pasquali's 'proof' that the surviving *VC* 'is a conflation of two generically different drafts', namely a conventional imperial panegyric and 'something daringly original, which hovers between ecclesiastical history and hagiography',⁹ ends with a challenge, in itself revealing. The view which he rejects suggests, he says, that 'the *Life* contains hidden assumptions which pervade the work and impair its value as evidence for Constantine'.¹⁰ In other words, he too is primarily anxious to defend the historical reliability of his author, and unwilling to pursue the hagiographical reading in the direction in which it would necessarily lead. Views which reject the two-stage composition theory are wrong, he implies, because they fail to correspond to or explain the 'observable phenomena', something which any fuller literary analysis must also respect.¹¹ This seems to mean, as is suggested in his concluding sentence, that any approach which returns to the intentionality of the author and proceeds on the assumption that, however untidy, the *VC* can nevertheless be read as a homogeneous work, is fundamentally flawed.¹² Now I agree (for I am indeed Barnes's target) that one cannot regard the *VC* as exactly homogeneous;¹³ but it does not follow that the only alternative is to see it as a series of *disiecta membra* cobbled

⁶ Baynes (1931).

⁷ For Barnes's own hesitations see Barnes (1981: 265–71).

⁸ Barnes (1984), responding to Drake (1982); 'probity' is hardly the right term in this case. Another formulation: Barnes (1989: 114–15).

⁹ Barnes (1989: 102, 116). In fact Barnes is uncertain about the genre of the second draft (a political pamphlet, for Pasquali), referring in turn to 'slabs of documentary history' (105), 'a more grandiose and connected narrative' (108), 'an experiment in hagiography' and 'a documentary history of a hagiographical nature' (110), and floats the idea of an intended sequel to the *HE* (113).

¹⁰ From which I do not dissent; cf. Cameron (1983).

¹¹ Barnes (1989: 98, 116). ¹² Barnes (1989: 97, 116).

¹³ For its 'messy' construction, see Barnes (1989: 95, 100, 107); Winkelmann (1975, 1992: liv f.), proposing at pp. lvi–lvii a 'modified' version of Pasquali's thesis. There is a lacuna of half a page in all MSS which includes the end of 4. 56, 4. 57 and the beginning of 4. 58, attributed by Barnes (1989: 107) to 'purely accidental' loss.

together, or to imagine that one can identify in it discrete sections of 'an abandoned panegyric' and hope to assign every sentence to one or other of the two alleged drafts.¹⁴

Barnes dismisses out of hand the notion that the *VC* is in any sense a 'life in the ancient sense', appealing for support to Wilamowitz,¹⁵ or, *a fortiori*, a biography in the modern sense, even while arguing that 'the more historical design' represents 'an experiment in hagiography'.¹⁶ Yet what is hagiography, if not the writing of lives?¹⁷ In my view Barnes's recent restatement of Pasquali's thesis fails to do justice to the full complexities of the *VC*. Even if we concede that there may have been two or more successive drafts, the question is far from being so clear-cut as Barnes imagines. As he himself effectively admits, a closer study of the work in relation to contemporary and later *Lives*, both Christian and pagan, is certainly in point, as also is a broader consideration of its role in relation to the development of historical and biographical narrative in late antiquity.¹⁸ Such an approach, avoiding terms like 'lies' or 'frauds', which prejudice the issue of Eusebius' intentions in a particularly crude way, is indeed long overdue.

STRUCTURE

The structural and other oddities of the *VC* are well enough known already. It begins with an elaborate preface, whose sentiments are recalled in the concluding paragraphs of the work;¹⁹ Eusebius then covers most of the conventional elements of the *basilikos logos* as laid down in the rhetorical handbooks—birth, family, upbringing, deeds in war.²⁰ After his lengthy treatment of the war against Licinius, extending into book 2, Eusebius inserts the first of a series of substantial documents, and tells of the Council of Nicaea in highly tendentious fashion, following this with an account of Constantine's buildings in the Holy Land.²¹ All this could perhaps still be regarded as relevant to panegyric, even if over-

¹⁴ Barnes (1989: 107).

¹⁵ Barnes (1989: 110).

¹⁷ On this see Cameron (1991: esp. ch. 3); on the *VC* and biography: Wilson (forthcoming).

¹⁸ Cameron (1991: 53–6, 61–4).

¹⁵ Barnes (1989: 102); see further below.

¹⁹ 1. 1–11, cf. 4. 71, 75.

²⁰ Heikel (1902: xlvi–xlix); Russell and Wilson (1981); Tartaglia (1984: 7–8); Wilson (forthcoming).

²¹ That there is no comparable discussion of his earlier Roman churches (see 1. 42) is no doubt to be explained by Eusebius' comparative lack of information about Constantine's career in the West.

long.²² Admittedly, the last book is very untidy,²³ consisting of a mixture of panegyric effusion, personal observation and anecdote, reference to more legislative measures and some historical information, and concluding with the famous account of Constantine's death and funeral; there follow some miscellaneous observations of Eusebius' own, and a fulsome conclusion repeating the themes from the opening chapter of book 1 of the unity of rule by Constantine through his sons, and of the continuity of orthodox Christian government. The difference between the account up to the defeat of Licinius in AD 324 and the rest is accounted for partly by the fact that as a bishop in the East Eusebius had access to far more documents for the latter part of the reign than the earlier,²⁴ and partly by the simple fact that it is the first part which embraces most of the obvious subheadings of the *basilikos logos* (birth, youth, etc.). In addition, however, especially in the chapters from 1. 25–2. 19, Eusebius was very closely and carefully adapting his existing account of these years in *HE* 8–10; this was of course no longer possible for the narrative after AD 324.²⁵

Such a close use of *HE* has implications for the present inquiry. 1. 26–46 and 48–2. 19 are assigned by Barnes to the second draft or 'documentary history', in the course of a discussion which accuses Eusebius of 'repeating' the *HE*, and of poor arrangement of his material.²⁶ But S. G. Hall's detailed analysis of the use made of the *HE*,²⁷ like the disposition of documentary material in the *VC*, suggests that Eusebius was as much influenced by the materials he had immediately to hand as by considerations based on genre. He had beside him an existing narrative of the events of Constantine's rise as far as the year AD 324, to which, it seems, he could add very little from new sources; he therefore took his own earlier narrative and, where appropriate, expanded it, often merely with rhetorical generalizations, but invariably in such a way as to enhance the earlier report in the light of his later understanding of Constantine's place in God's providential plan. Licinius, only superficially dealt with in the final revision of the *HE*, is here fully assimilated into the role of persecutor and tyrant on a par with those already recorded in the *HE*. This procedure inevitably led to one of the most commonly alleged flaws in

²² This is so both in traditional terms (war, imperial building) and in the context of the Christian adaptation of the genre of imperial panegyric: see MacCormack (1975: 166–73).

²³ See Drake (1988).

²⁴ Warmingston (1985).

²⁵ For detailed analyses of 1. 13–47 and 57–9, showing the purposeful and painstaking use of *HE* see Hall (1993a, 1993b); most, though not all, of the relevant passages are marked in Winkelmann's edition.

²⁶ Barnes (1989: 105–7).

²⁷ Followed also by Cameron and Hall, (forthcoming).

the *VC*, namely the blurring over of the first clash between Constantine and Licinius in AD 316; this clash, known as the Battle of Cibalae, had ended in Constantine being outflanked and forced into a temporary alliance with his rival, by the terms of which their three sons all became Caesars on 1 March, 317.²⁸ The apparent conflation of the two wars, usually seen as one of the awkward features in the *VC*, falls perfectly into place once one sees that the whole campaign narrative is very closely dependent on *HE*, where the first hostilities are omitted, and that the whole tenor of the alterations made in the *VC* to the *HE* narrative²⁹ is designed to increase the impression of Constantine's special protection and Licinius' wickedness. To this end, Eusebius does not hesitate either to suppress (as he does with the role played by Crispus in the campaign of 324 and included in the *HE* version), or to add and expand, as he had done with the account of Constantine's vision and the making of the *labarum*, on which further below,³⁰ and as he does again with Constantine's preparations for war and his demeanour while on campaign.³¹ In many cases, as Hall shows, the source of Eusebius' additions and expansions can be easily deduced from existing materials already to hand (documents or other passages in *HE*), where the additions are not indeed simply his own rhetorical touches. On the other hand, when there seem to be omissions, the relevant passages are often used elsewhere; when there is a real omission, it is usually the result of deliberate choice when Eusebius needs to tell a different story. The level of attention which Eusebius has devoted to 'improving' his earlier narrative for present consumption is truly remarkable, and I refer readers to Hall's studies for analysis of how the changes operated in detail.

There are indeed difficulties in the construction of the *VC*, usefully listed by Barnes.³² Yet while it is generally admitted that the hand of an editor can be detected, for instance in the chapter headings,³³ arguments for the work's having been left unfinished by Eusebius rest on subjective judgements; there is no actual evidence that he intended to alter it in any major way.³⁴ If he did not, he would be only one of many authors whose sense of form has failed to live up to the expectations of their critics. In

²⁸ Possible, though passing, allusions to the first campaign: *VC* 1. 50. 2; 2. 6. 2; there is no explicit reference to it.

²⁹ *VC* 1. 49–2. 120 is heavily dependent on, but also heavily elaborated from *HE* 10. 8–9.

³⁰ *VC* 1. 28 f.

³¹ The tabernacle on the battlefield (*VC* 2. 12, 14, and cf. 7–9 on the *labarum*, information allegedly from Constantine himself, like the vision and *labarum* story in bk. 1; further below).

³² Barnes (1989: 98–102).

³³ *Ibid.* 101.

³⁴ Winkelmann (1975, 1992: lviii) adduces arguments from language.

the known case of the *HE*, his various attempts at editing and updating left the later books very deficient in this regard, and the actual revision was a shoddy business.³⁵ Freud had been a considerable stylist too, yet his late work *Moses and Monotheism*, notorious for its contents, but much prized by the author, was left by him in a curiously uneven state. It consists of three essays of quite unequal length and weight, of which one has 'two initial prefaces, that largely cancel each other out, and a third preface to Part II, right in the middle, and is crowded with material deliberately repeated from other papers'.³⁶ It seems that Eusebius left both the *HE* and the *VC* in a similarly inharmonious state. It may be relevant that both Freud and Eusebius wrote from intense personal involvement. We need, I suggest, to be particularly careful in cases like these to avoid projecting our own presuppositions onto the works we are studying.

As I have suggested already, neither the two-draft theory itself, in whichever order it is put,³⁷ nor the idea that every sentence in the *VC* can theoretically be assigned to one or the other³⁸ necessarily follows from the unevenness and lack of homogeneity in the text. Nor, despite a brief discussion of the genre of hagiography by Barnes in this paper,³⁹ has the actual interconnection between panegyric and hagiography yet been fully explored, despite all the writing on the subject in recent years. A saint's life was by definition an encomium, and naturally tended to follow the structure recommended for encomia in the rhetorical handbooks; while the extent to which the similarity extended to linguistic and rhetorical features varied according to the literary level of the individual work, the debt can be seen even in the *Vita Antonii*, and was to continue right through the Byzantine period. In related genres too, the funerary orations of Gregory of Nazianus, 'the Christian Demosthenes', and the biographical works, encomia, and funerary orations by Gregory of Nyssa, both from later in the fourth century, combined the Christian encomium and the Christian biography with a highly refined training in classical rhetoric and language.⁴⁰ In interesting contrast, Gregory of

³⁵ See Barnes (1980); Louth (1990).

³⁶ Gay (1988: 605); he goes on, 'to read *Moses and Monotheism* is to participate in its making, in the internal and political pressures acting on Freud during these years, and to catch echoes from earlier, less harrowing times.'

³⁷ Pasquali put the panegyric first; Barnes argues for the reverse order (Barnes 1989: 110–14).

³⁸ *Ibid.* 104–8.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 110.

⁴⁰ See Kennedy (1983) (p. 210 for the *V. Ant.*, on which see below); Spira, ed. (1984); Klock (1986). The classical tradition continued by the 4th-cent. Fathers: Hunger (1981: 38). For the later 4th-cent. examples see also Wilson (forthcoming).

Nyssa presents his *Life of Moses* in two parts, *historia* and *theoria*.⁴¹ Eusebius' preface to the *VC* draws explicitly on traditional progymnasmata, in the comparison of Constantine to Cyrus and Alexander;⁴² even if he did not know the Latin panegyrics on Constantine,⁴³ he clearly knew the basics of imperial encomia, a field in which his work would have to stand comparison with that of many others, including, later, men like Themistius and Libanius.⁴⁴ Although neither the adaptation of secular encomium or that of pagan imperial panegyric to Christian purposes was completely straightforward, in both cases the traditional rhetorical substructure remained.

By now history too embodied many elements of biographical technique, while conversely, panegyrics like the *Panegyrici Latini* included large sections of historical material, as was also to be the case with hagiography. There was also room for variety of treatment, as the surviving encomia by Eusebius show—the speeches on the church at Tyre, the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and on Constantine's thirtieth anniversary, all of which are more ekphrastic and more theoretical by far than the *VC*;⁴⁵ this in itself must make us wonder whether Eusebius was ever likely to have produced 'a conventional commemoration of a dead monarch'.⁴⁶

The change of genre theory depends on a clear delineation of the two types or genres proposed. But it has also left aside perhaps the most powerful element in the *VC*, namely its apologetic purpose. The work as we have it has a clear and single thread running through every part, namely the desire to defend Constantine, present all his actions and motives in the best possible light from Eusebius' point of view, and to claim and commend the continuation of his policies. For Eusebius this means that Constantine was elected by God, and that his enemies with-

⁴¹ *V.Mos.* 1. 16; 2. 1.

⁴² 1. 7; the comparison is recommended by Menander Rhetor for use in imperial encomia.

⁴³ There was inevitably a large overlap in ideas, treatment and motifs: Liebeschuetz (1979: 281–91; 1981). For the *Panegyrici Latini* and the *VC*, see MacCormack (1975), and in general Nixon and Rodgers (1994); Lieu and Montserrat (1996), chap. 2.

⁴⁴ Panegyrics by others: 4. 45; Libanius on Constantine: *Or.* 59. 60–75 (mentioning Darius, Xerxes, and Herodotus, in the context of Constantine and Persia, *VC* 4. 8 f., see Barnes 1985b; for an introduction and translation of *Lib. Or.* 59 see Lieu and Montserrat (1996: ch. 4). Barnes (1989: 109–10) denies Eusebius any real knowledge of secular historians, but Hunger (1981: 38) assumes that he had received the standard education of the day and Wallace-Hadrill (1960: 149 f.) points out his considerable debt to Plutarch. Deficiencies in his prose style: Winkelmann (1975, 1992: lvii f.).

⁴⁵ A point which Drake (1976) misses in supposing that the *Tricennialian Oration* uses vague and symbolic language so as not to make Constantine seem too Christian.

⁴⁶ Barnes (1989), 102.

out exception were doomed by their own mistakes, in accordance with the will of God. Eusebius was a master apologist; he applies to Constantine in the *VC*, as he does also in a different way in the *Tricennialian Oration*, many of the ideas which he had developed earlier and expressed in particular in the *Praeparatio* and *Demonstratio Evangelica*.⁴⁷ The *HE* in its various versions is above all an apologetic history, and Eusebius' efforts to keep abreast of the rapidly changing events, in however clumsy a fashion, demonstrate just how seriously he took that aim. But in the *VC* too, we can see just how carefully he applied this apologetic technique in the changes he made in books 1 and 2 to his own earlier version of the same events. As for biography, he had earlier tried an apologetic type of biographical writing, albeit on a brief scale, in the chapters on Origen in book 6 of the *HE*.⁴⁸

I shall return below to the question of the possible relation of the *VC* to other contemporary 'lives'. Meanwhile let us resume consideration of the two-genre hypothesis proposed by Pasquali and argued in more detail by Barnes. Eusebius' thinking about Constantine had certainly deepened and matured between, say, AD 325, when he saw the emperor at the Council of Nicaea, and the year of Constantine's death. If he left the *VC* unfinished, we might also expect it to reflect something of the changes which happened in the following years. Indeed, on any hypothesis, substantial parts of the *VC* represent the thinking and experience of someone looking back on a generation of Constantinian government, when the defeat of Maxentius, probably recorded in the *HE* not very long after the event, was already some twenty-five years in the past. From at least 335, Eusebius claims,⁴⁹ Constantine was looking to the future of the empire after his own death, and others besides Eusebius himself were reflecting on the project of the Christian empire as it now appeared. Any misgivings they may have had were quickly proved to be well founded when, after the death of Constantine in May 337, existing rivalries came to the surface, and potential dynastic enemies were swiftly eliminated. At the same time, exiled rivals of Eusebius and his friends, such as Athanasius and Marcellus, were restored. By 337, Eusebius had probably written the *Contra Marcellum*, and was finishing the *Ecclesiastical*

⁴⁷ For the *VC* in this light see Cameron (1983).

⁴⁸ Such idealized, or 'spiritual', biography is the main focus of Cox Miller's book (1983), which analyses the account of Origen in *HE* 6 along with Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*; unfortunately she did not go on to apply the same analysis to the *VC*, where it would have been extremely pertinent.

⁴⁹ *VC* 4. 51–2.

Theology, works in which his personal sympathies are made clear.⁵⁰ Of the complications of these years more later. Meanwhile, it is worth reminding ourselves that we do not know exactly when Eusebius wrote the preface and the conclusion to the *VC*, in both of which Constantine is envisaged as reigning through his sons, their empire a continuation of his. The three sons of Constantine shared the empire until 340, when Constantine II challenged his brother Constans and was killed himself; if we take 30 May 339 as the date of Eusebius' death,⁵¹ the probable context of the *VC* becomes one of intense political and religious activity. With the heavy weight of its preface and conclusion, the work can be read as a mirror for princes, urging the continuance of Constantine's example by asserting that Constantine's influence still reigns, or, more subtly, as an apologia for the religious policies of Constantius II which seemed to his enemies to be an abrogation of what had been agreed at the Council of Nicaea. In this case, the delicate matters of Eusebius' own role, and of Constantine's own position in the years after Nicaea, would need, as we shall see, to be treated with some finesse.

Even in general terms, Eusebius would by now have seen the earlier events which he describes differently. Many critics dealing with the vision and the campaign of AD 312 and related matters still fail to allow for this difference, or to distinguish sufficiently between Eusebius' earlier and later thought. This applies equally to those who are apt to dismiss the *VC* account as 'lies', 'frauds', or misrepresentation. We must instead consider the alternative, and in human terms much more likely, hypothesis that quite apart from the immediate political and religious circumstances following the emperor's death, the elderly Eusebius wanted to set the Constantinian record straight as he now saw it. The *VC* is a work of persuasion and apologetic through and through, but it is not necessarily for that reason deliberately fraudulent. As for Barnes, despite his earlier criticisms of the work, he now wishes to defend the *VC*'s general historical reliability and Eusebius' 'probity'; [Eusebius] 'was a scholar whose earlier historical works evince an honest desire to write a reliable history of his own day—an aspiration which the *Life* reiterates (2. 32. 3)'.⁵² But it is one thing to admit that Eusebius passionately believed in the rightness of his own vision, and quite another to claim that the *Life* was a 'doc-

⁵⁰ Barnes (1981: 263–4); S. G. Hall has pointed out to me that against Barnes, Klaus Seibe (1993), along with most authorities, places their composition before the death of Constantine.

⁵¹ Barnes (1981: 263); Wallace-Hadrill (1960: 38). On the sons of Constantine see Lieu and Montserrat (1996: 147–52).

⁵² Barnes (1989: 114); in some contrast to Barnes (1981: 267–71).

umentary history', a sober and accurate account of 'what really happened'.⁵³ Such a description would be just as untrue of the *HE*, Eusebius' other main 'historical' work. If ever there was an author unsuited to a positivist critique, that author is Eusebius.

The language and style of the preface (1. 1–11) are worth a closer look. The introduction to the work was evidently written after 9 September 337, when the sons of Constantine became Augusti, though exactly when we do not know; it is presumably in some sense Eusebius' considered statement of how he wanted the *VC* to be taken.⁵⁴ All critics lay stress on the preface for the apparently programmatic language it uses about the genre and intention of the work, as for instance the statement at 1. 11. 1 that Eusebius will include only the deeds of Constantine relating to his Christianity, and specifically not the emperor's military campaigns; this intention, if that is what it is, is held to have been later ignored, though in fact virtually everything is turned to religious ends by Eusebius, and most particularly Constantine's campaign against Licinius.⁵⁵ Barnes cites 1. 10 to show that Eusebius thought of his work as a history, even if not a standard imperial history;⁵⁶ he supports this by the fact that the term *bios* in the MS title is not Eusebius' own, and that 'the text of Eusebius's so-called *Life of Constantine* never uses the terms appropriate to a formal biography . . . on the contrary, Eusebius twice describes his work as a history'.⁵⁷ At 1. 10 he seems to compare himself with those historians (*sungrapheis*) who had composed accounts of wicked emperors such as Nero. Yet even in so doing he refers to them as having recorded the 'lives and actions' (*bious kai praxeis*) of these wicked men, who should rather be passed over in silence; his work will do the opposite, providing a morally useful (*biophiles*) account (*huphegesis*, cf. also 11. 2) for those well prepared in spirit to receive it. The language is biographical, even if the sense of the passage is that the writers of the *bioi kai praxeis* of these wicked men (persecutors and tyrants) are in fact the writers of imperial

⁵³ Barnes (1989: 103, 105, 110). A 'documentary history of a hagiographical nature' (110) is a contradiction in terms.

⁵⁴ See also *VC* 4. 74–5. It is of course very possible that some of the material for the *VC* had been collected before Constantine died in May 337 (Drake 1986); Barnes puts the beginning of the collection process very much earlier (Barnes 1989: 113); as he has pointed out, I had earlier incautiously assumed that the work as a whole was written after the emperor's death. But we still do not know exactly when the version that we have was put together.

⁵⁵ 'Deeds in peace and in war', such as are listed at 1. 11. 1, are indeed the regular content of panegyric, and appear in this guise in bk. 4. See also Wilson (forthcoming) for the argument that the 'statement of intention' can be read alternatively as a justification of licence for the hagiographer.

⁵⁶ Barnes (1989: 109–10).

⁵⁷ Ibid. 103; cf. *VC* 3. 24. 2, 51. 2.

history. Again Eusebius distances himself from them: would it not be shameful, he asks, to be silent, when such men as Nero have attracted written accounts, when 'God Himself has vouchsafed to bring us together with an emperor so great that all history has not recorded his like, and to see him, know him, and to share his company?'⁵⁸ Significantly, the examples he chooses are clearly those of persecutors; Nero, the only bad ruler to be mentioned by name,⁵⁹ appears in *HE* 2. 25 in this guise, with a citation from Tertullian, and Domitian as the second persecutor at *HE* 3. 17–18, with the statement that 'even historians (*sun-graphheis*) who accepted none of our beliefs unhesitatingly recorded in their pages both the persecution and the martyrdoms' (trans. Williamson), followed in the next chapter by a second citation of Tertullian. The thought in *VC* 1. 10 is not new; but insofar as it is not directly derived from the *HE*, it comes from the realm of Christian apologetic, not from Roman historiographical tradition.⁶⁰ A further and important conclusion seems to follow from his terminology: Eusebius himself did not make much of a distinction between *bioi* and traditional *historiai*, and would not have worried nearly as much as modern critics do about how exactly the *VC* was to be classified.

Several passages in the preface do in fact refer to the analogy between what Eusebius is here doing and the writing of 'lives' (*bioi*) of pious men. 1. 3. 4 explicitly links the account of Constantine first with the Scriptures and then with 'the lives of pious men'. In this vein Eusebius himself had written about Origen and Pamphilus (Origen: *HE* 6. 1–32; Pamphilus: *HE* 6. 32. 3; 7. 32. 25), as well as about the other martyrs who appear in the *HE*.⁶¹ He presented Origen, like Constantine, as a model, offering *hupodeigmata* to be followed by others (*HE* 6. 3. 13),⁶² and Eusebius refers to his accounts of Origen and Pamphilus in each case in terms of a *bios*.⁶³ Constantine too is an 'example', a 'lesson' and a 'teacher' (1. 3. 4,

⁵⁸ Eusebius may not have been much of a confidant of Constantine in our eyes (see Barnes 1989: 114; Barnes 1981: 265–7), but that does not mean he did not see himself as such; he also had good reasons for emphasizing the point, as will become clear.

⁵⁹ Anonymity, or the failure to name names, is of course a standard method in invective, and is practised through much of the *VC* in relation to the persecutors and to schism, though not consistently: see Winkelmann (1975, 1992: liii).

⁶⁰ Barnes too argues that this passage does not show actual knowledge of imperial historiography on Eusebius' part (1989: 110); for its function see also Barnes (1981: 271).

⁶¹ The (lost) work on Pamphilus is described by Barnes (1981: 192) as 'a formal biography'. For the *Apology for Origen* (also lost), written by Pamphilus while in prison and claimed as a joint work by Eusebius, *HE* 6. 33. 4, see *ibid.* 199–201; Clark (1992: 149, 160–3).

⁶² The word belongs to the realm of Origenist exegesis: Chesnut (1977: 157).

⁶³ *HE* 6. 2. 1, 32. 3; 7. 32. 25; cf. 8. 13. 6; 6. 32. 28. The *Apology for Origen*: *HE* 6. 33. 4.

4. 1, 5. 2). In 1. 9. 2 God is envisaged as the recorder of Constantine's deeds (*praxeis*), who has 'traced out his victories on the tablets on heavenly monuments for all eternity'. At 1. 10. 1 the *VC* is described as 'a verbal portrait (*eikon*)', a metaphor from visual art which Eusebius also uses at 1. 3. 2, 4; the *topos* is biographical, to be found, for example, at the opening of Plutarch's *Alexander* and elsewhere.⁶⁴ The reliability of outward appearance as a guide to inner character was a point that was debated; Plutarch supports it in the case of the Elder Cato, though he favours *praxeis* when writing of Demosthenes.⁶⁵

The preface makes plain how Eusebius himself saw Constantine—as someone set apart and chosen by God, Who had made his plan clear by destroying the persecutors and giving his favour to Constantine; at 1. 3. 1 we read that He made it clear that 'even the death of his servant, as well as his life, is worthy of our admiration and praise', in direct contrast to what happened to the persecutors. This, then, is why Eusebius later includes, in contrast to his account of Constantine's death in book 4, a brief account of the deaths of the persecutors Maximian, Galerius, and Maximin at 1. 47, 58–9, despite his earlier stated intention at 1. 23 to leave out such things.⁶⁶ Constantine has been set up by God as an example and teacher of a godly life, just as the lives of other pious men of old promise hope of immortality (1. 3. 4). God made him His representative on earth (1. 5. 1) and showed his special status with divine signs (1. 4), and especially by the defeat of the persecutors (1. 4. 5; 4. 74). He was a 'herald' and 'beacon' (*phoster*) of God (1. 4; 4. 75), and like all saints, His slave and servant (*doulos kai therapon*) (1. 5. 2, 6, cf. also *boethos*, 11. 1),⁶⁷ different from any emperor who had gone before (1. 6; 4. 74). There are certainly many elements of rhetorical encomia here—the stock *sunkrisis* (1. 7), the language of crowning and victory (1. 1. 1, 6), the *topoi* of the extent of empire (1. 8. 2) and the writer's inadequacy (1. 2. 3, 10. 1). As in the *Tricennialian Oration*, to which he refers in the opening paragraph, so in the introduction to the *VC* Eusebius invokes the idea of Constantine as the 'friend of God' (1. 3. 4, 4), a motif which can be seen as a translation

⁶⁴ See also *Cimon* 2. 3, and later, Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* 1. 3, where the writer's object is said to be 'to trace in outline . . . the perfect life'. Plutarch's influence on Eusebius' other works: Wallace-Hadrill (1960: 139–54).

⁶⁵ *Elder Cato* 8–9; *Demosth.* 11. 7. I am grateful here to Raoul Mortley and see now Mortley (1996), esp. ch. 5. For the Acts of the Apostles in relation to biography see Alexander (1993).

⁶⁶ The account of the death of Maximian occurs immediately before a passage explaining how Licinius, unlike Constantine, failed to read the evidence of God's intentions (1. 49); the same thought serves as the conclusion to bk. 1, following the accounts of Galerius and Maximin.

⁶⁷ 'Servant', frequently used of Constantine in the *VC*, also recalls Moses (below).

of that of the emperor as divine *comes*. Yet all these tropes, including the conventional comparison with Cyrus and Alexander and the allusions to written accounts of earlier emperors, have the same end, that of supporting Eusebius' emphasis on the uniqueness and difference of Constantine.

The comparison of Constantine to Moses is equally carefully chosen, and equally explicable in relation to the development of Eusebius' thought. He had already used the image in relation to Constantine in *HE* 9. 9 when describing the defeat of Maxentius in 312; now he develops it much further, with the persecutors now cast as the Egyptians, and Constantine as the leader who brings his people to freedom and right belief (I. 12; IV. 75).⁶⁸ The comparison determines not only the structure of the first part of the work and the presentation of Constantine as God's servant, but also the accounts of Licinius as an idolator (2. 5) and of Constantine's campaign against him, adding the detail of the latter's prayer-tent on the field (2. 12, 14), which explicitly recalls the actions of Moses in Exodus 33. This modelling is the precursor of the typological parallels which were to be the stuff of later hagiography. Though it is not sustained with the same deliberate emphasis after the account of AD 324 (after which the narrative ceases to be based on the *HE*), it is applied to all stages of Constantine's life, from birth and childhood (1. 12) to his later role as priest/bishop, legislator, and teacher.⁶⁹

It is not usually noted that one reason for the added story of the vision and subsequent dream of Constantine, in which Christ Himself appears to the emperor (1. 29), is that, like Moses, Constantine must be given a direct experience of God before he emerges in the roles of leader, legislator, and teacher. Moses did not simply lead his people from Egypt and give them the law; he was vouchsafed a sign, the burning bush (Exod. 3), and then allowed to see God (Exod. 34), just as Constantine saw first the 'sign' (one of Eusebius' favourite terms) and then Christ Himself. This is also why Eusebius is so eager to emphasize direct revelation, and to argue that Licinius fell because he ignored the signs he could have read. In the *Tricennialian Oration*, similarly, Constantine's success is demon-

⁶⁸ See Hollerich (1990). As well as the book of Exodus, the emphatic introduction of the analogy at 1. 12 draws on the speech of Stephen at Acts 7: 22 f., in which the life and achievements of Moses are recapitulated: his childhood with the Egyptians, his wanderings with the Israelites, his experience of God, his deliverance of the Israelites from idolatry, and the construction of the tent in the wilderness. The Acts of the Apostles is frequently cited in the *HE*, as a model for Eusebius' account there of the development and early history of the Church: see Nobbs (1993).

⁶⁹ Tartaglia (1984: 10); for detailed discussion see also Wilson (forthcoming) and on Moses see further below.

strated by proofs sent from God (*LC* 3), and in the speech on the Holy Sepulchre, Eusebius addresses the emperor with the words: 'you have frequently received perception of the Saviour's divinity through actual experience, and have become not by words but by events themselves a herald of the truth.'⁷⁰ The vision in 312 is described in the *VC* as a 'sign' (below), a 'manifestation' (*phasma*, *VC* 1. 19. 1) and a *thauma*, the standard word for 'miracle' (1. 28); in turn, Constantine's reaction is the standard reaction to miracles, namely amazement (1. 28, 32. 1). The likenesses between this account and the description in Exodus 3 of Moses seeing the burning bush are detailed and striking: God says to Moses 'I am the God of thy father' (Exod. 3: 6, cf. *VC* 1. 17. 3–28. 1); both Moses and Constantine are taken by surprise (Acts 7: 31; from Exod. 3: 3; *VC* 1. 28. 2), and both ask the name of the god (Exod. 3: 13, *VC* 1. 28. 2). Similarly, the account of the shape of the standard (the *labarum*) and its manufacture (31) recalls that of the making of the Ark of the Covenant (Exod. 25–7). Finally, like the Ark and the *labarum* (2. 7–9, 16), so too the rod of Moses is stretched out to ensure victory (Exod. 17: 8–13, cf. *VC* 4. 5. 2). Both the miracle of the burning bush and Constantine's vision and dream are presented as callings by God to a providential destiny; both elicit doubt and uncertainty, and both are followed by further and more direct instruction from God or Christ. Even though Eusebius had earlier implied that Constantine was virtually a Christian, he must now be depicted as uncertain and in need of further instruction.⁷¹ There is a further incongruity in 1. 27, which portrays him both as uncertain which god to choose and as deciding for his father's god, but we have part of the answer once it is noticed that God says to Moses too, out of the burning bush, 'I am the God of your father' (Exod. 3: 6). To suit the trope, Constantine is introduced in 1. 32 to Christian theology at a very basic level by priests, odd if his father Constantius had really surrounded himself with bishops at his court (1. 17. 3). It is worth remembering that at 1. 12 also, in contrast to other passages in the *VC*, Constantine is shown as being like Moses in having been reared in the court of the tyrants, and thus separated from his father's influence. The various turns of Eusebius' thought become easier to understand once we realize that Constantine's vision occupies in the *VC* the place held by miracles in later saints' lives;

⁷⁰ *SC* 18. 1, trans. Drake (1976), and following Drake's identification of the *Oration* as consisting of two speeches, *LC* (on Constantine's Tricennialia) and *SC*, on the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

⁷¹ 1. 27, 32; his previous Christianity, implied by Lact. *DMP* 24, is strongly urged by Elliott (1987). Eusebius does his best in the preceding chapters of the *VC* to imply that his father Constantius was in fact a Christian (1. 17. 2–3, cf. 2. 49).

it guarantees his selection and protection by God (1. 4, 6) and his status as holy (1. 9. 1). Like every holy man after him, he wonders at the miracle that has been granted to him.

More generally, the choice of Moses ties Constantine in to the whole sequence of salvation history, and bestows a heroic religious light on all his actions, particularly his wars against his rivals. Not only does Eusebius here develop the analogy with Moses expressed in his earlier account of the defeat of Maxentius at *HE* 9. 9; he had also begun the *HE* with an argument to the effect that it was Christ the Logos who appeared to Moses, and with a brief history of divine revelation in which Moses played a central role. Moses was given 'images and symbols', and the Jewish Law 'like a fragrant breeze penetrated to every corner of the world' (*HE* 1. 2. 3); moreover, Moses knew Christ (1. 3); in Eusebius' own time, Christ has 'filled the whole world with Christians' and 'no longer communicates to His followers patterns or images but fully revealed virtues and a heavenly life with the very doctrines of truth' (1. 3. 12, trans. Williamson). The place of Constantine in this grand conception was far clearer in 337 than it had been in the years following 312. But Eusebius' purpose is still to persuade, and he therefore introduces the direct Moses analogy in the *VC* with a deliberate reference to pagan views, which he intends to answer: 'most people regarded this ancient story, which everyone knew, as a myth' (1. 12. 2).

Moses is the only Old Testament type used in this way in the *Life*. It has perhaps not been fully recognized how significant this choice was for Eusebius.⁷² In the first place, Moses was a figure well-known to pagans in the guise of wise lawgiver; some viewed him negatively, but it had also been argued that Plato was influenced by the teachings of Moses and that Moses had been the teacher of Orpheus. Thus by presenting Constantine as Moses Eusebius was able to evoke wide-ranging connotations of respect and antiquity. Philo's *Life of Moses*, the work of a writer influential on both Origen and Eusebius, had established Moses as belonging to the category of 'divine man', and the model of Moses was to be duly taken up by later Christian writers of hagiography and funerary encomia.⁷³ In the apologetic works of Eusebius, especially the *Praeparatio Evangelica*, Moses played a pivotal role, for it was essential to argue the importance of Moses in the history of religious thought against

Porphyry's criticisms of Origen on this point.⁷⁴ Moreover, Porphyry had argued on the basis of Philo's *Phoenician History* for the priority of the religion of the Phoenicians over that of the Hebrews. Thus Philo was used by both parties in the debate: he appears in Eusebius' *HE* 6 as one of the Jewish authors who showed that Moses preceded the Greek philosophers,⁷⁵ in the course of a passage in which Eusebius goes on to defend Origen and mention a work of Ammonius *On the Harmony of Moses and Jesus* (*HE* 6. 19). In the *Praeparatio Evangelica*, the first part of his polemic against Porphyry, Eusebius argued the place of Moses in the history of religion, while in the *Demonstratio Evangelica* which continued it, he showed, as in the opening of the *HE*, how the coming of Christ related to Mosaic Law and fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.⁷⁶ If it was the patriarchs who exemplified the true predecessors of Christianity, nevertheless Mosaic religion had been necessary in order to prepare the way for the gospel.⁷⁷ Like Moses, Constantine too had led his people out of the captivity of persecution, corrected their error of idolatry, and made them ready to receive the true message of Christianity. This thinking, merely hinted at in the *HE*, was fully incorporated into Eusebius' later Constantinian political theology, where the broader interpretation of Moses in the development of Christian history set out in the *PE* is used with specific reference to Constantine. The *Tricennialian Oration* thus shows Constantine as moving on from Old Testament precedents into a new Christian monarchy. In the *VC*, Eusebius takes a further step. Constantine is now explicitly the successor of Moses, who had fulfilled God's dispensation by preparing the world for the coming of Christ; Constantine's role is to overcome tyranny as Moses had done, and realize God's plan for Christian government on earth. The *Theophany*, too, expressed Eusebius' views on the historical manifestations of God's plan for the world.⁷⁸ But it is the *VC* which provides the precise and detailed demonstration of how Eusebian providentialism was embodied in the person of Constantine.

The signs by which God demonstrated Constantine's special role are accordingly an important element in the *VC*, as they had been already in the *LC*. Eusebius' understanding of the term is generous: it can apply for

⁷⁴ See Droge (1989: 171–93).

⁷⁵ *HE* 6. 13. For his influence on the *VC* see Tartaglia (1984: 10). Porphyry's use of Philo's *Phoenician History*: Droge (1989: 177); and for the reception of Philo's work in general, Runia (1993).

⁷⁶ See Bruns (1977).

⁷⁷ Droge (1989: 185–7), with Sirinelli (1961).

⁷⁸ Dated to c. 325–6 by Barnes (1981: 187); but see Wallace-Hadrill (1960: 52–5) (after 337).

⁷² Though see Hollerich (1990), with Gager (1972).

⁷³ Philo on Moses: Chesnut (1977: 148–9, 154–5); later uses: Harl (1967, 1984). In the *V. Ant.* the analogy appears only in relation to Antony's death (c. 93): see Bartelink (1994: 49–50).

instance to the picture on the palace at Constantinople, which is said to represent 'the saving signs' (3. 3). God's signs also followed the body-guard surrounding the *labarum* (2. 6–9), and Constantine's vision is itself a 'sign' (1. 28). The cross in the vision is associated more generally with the cross as the sign or trophy of victory, the 'saving sign' (1. 27. 22 f., 32, cf. 4. 21 and elsewhere), as Eusebius had already said that God 'revealed his saving sign' to Constantine and achieved victory over his enemies by setting 'that glorious trophy to repel demons' (LC 6. 21).⁷⁹ In the *Oration* the 'saving sign' or 'trophy' has a virtually independent existence as the talisman of the Constantinian empire. Eusebius concludes the speech on the Holy Sepulchre with terminology reminiscent of the *VC*: 'this you have put round the sepulchre that bears witness to immortal life, impressing on the heavenly Logos of God the imperial seal as victor and triumphator, and in clear-cut and unambiguous terms making unto all peoples, by deeds as well as by word, a pious and devout confession.'⁸⁰ Constantine's building is presented as at once a 'trophy', a 'seal' and a 'proclamation'. Finally, in the *VC*, Eusebius spells out the nature of the sign as it appeared to Constantine in the new and detailed story of the vision and the *labarum*, the latter also and confusingly taken as the cross-shaped 'sign'.⁸¹ When he wrote the account of the defeat of Maxentius in the *HE* he probably did not know the vision story, but by the time he came to write the account in the *VC*, it had acquired a critical importance as the most important demonstration to Constantine of God's power, by direct revelation, in the ultimate 'sign' of the cross.

Eusebius tells us three times, very emphatically, that the emperor himself had told him the details of the vision ('a quite astonishing divine sign'), the dream and the *labarum* (1. 28, 29; 2. 8, 9), and says he had seen the latter himself (1. 30). The first such claim is expressed in forceful words: 'if someone else had reported it, it would perhaps not be easy to accept; but since the victorious Emperor himself told the story to the present writer a long while after, when I was privileged with his acquaintance and company, and confirmed it with oaths, who could hesitate to believe the account, especially when the time which followed provided evidence for the truth of what he said?' (1. 28. 1). But while it is not impossible that what Eusebius claims is true,⁸² the story is not mentioned

⁷⁹ Cf. *SC* 15. 8, with Drake (1976: 71).

⁸¹ Storch (1971: 148 f.).

⁸² So Barnes (1981: 43), though remarking that at the time of the battle the story was 'probably no more than an attempt to give Constantine's unexpected action [in adopting the sign of Christ as his standard] a conventional religious interpretation'. Eusebius also implies that the emperor told him of his necessary instruction in the meaning of the vision and indeed about

⁸⁰ *SC* 18. 3, trans. Drake.

as such in the *Tricennialian Oration*, and is clearly present in the *VC* for strongly apologetic reasons. In particular, it is hardly likely that the elaborate jewelled *labarum* described by Eusebius could have been manufactured while Constantine was on campaign in 312, or so early in his career when things were still so uncertain; Eusebius has surely retrojected his own later experience of seeing the *labarum* in its later form, with its portrait bust of Constantine and his sons woven into the hanging (1. 31), such a portrait would indeed have been difficult at the alleged date of its manufacture, since only Crispus had been born before AD 312.⁸³ Careful study shows how closely at this point Eusebius was working with the earlier *HE* account, but also that he altered it very significantly. Eusebius' version in the *VC* has no relation to the near-contemporary account in Lactantius;⁸⁴ the vision as here recounted not only differs from what Lactantius describes, but is separated chronologically from the battle against Maxentius, and takes place while Constantine is on another campaign 'somewhere'.⁸⁵

APOLOGETIC LIVES

It would hardly be surprising if the *Life of Constantine* went through several drafts and revisions, though it is unlikely that they were as discrete or as straightforward as to be capable of being identified so neatly as had been suggested.⁸⁶ Overall, it is an apologetic work which supplements with detailed narrative the theology of Constantine's reign expressed in *LC* and *SC*, and adumbrated in earlier works. As we have seen,

Christianity itself (1. 32). The stages in the development of the vision story are neatly and clearly set out by MacMullen (1969: 74–8).

⁸³ 1. 30 alleges that the gold and jewelled standard was manufactured immediately after Constantine had seen the vision; Eusebius says that the emperor showed it to him 'once', and proceeds (1. 31) to describe it. At 1. 32. 1 he says that this (i.e. the showing, or the appearance of the standard) refers to a time 'a little later' than the campaign against Maxentius. The *labarum* (or at least the cross-shaped standard) in the campaign against Licinius: *VC* 2. 7–9, information also ascribed to the emperor; 2. 16; later coins show the *labarum*, with Constantine and his three sons, piercing a writhing serpent, as apparently depicted in the portico of the palace: 3. 3.

⁸⁴ *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 44, apparently not known to Eusebius.

⁸⁵ 1. 28. 1. Constantine's Italian campaign (passed over very briefly at 32. 3, 37. 2) here becomes a crusade, and any suspicion of aggression on Constantine's part is implicitly denied; to that end, the vision/dream story and its implications are juxtaposed with Maxentius' sexual and other crimes (1. 33–5).

⁸⁶ Winkelmann (1975, 1992: lvi) writes of 'several' rewritings by Eusebius; see his general discussion of Pasquali, together with other attacks on authenticity and theories of interpolation in the *VC*, pp. liii–lvii, with Winkelmann (1962).

Wilamowitz roundly stated that it is not a biography, for which he is cited approvingly by Barnes,⁸⁷ who also quotes the judgement of Leo, according to which, while the work is broadly 'an ecclesiastical history of his time centred around the person of Constantine', 'a mixture of panegyric and history', it also has 'biographical elements', even Suetonian ones, as evinced in the summary of Constantine's life at 4. 53-5.⁸⁸ Barnes's response is to reassign the apparently biographical elements to the 'unfinished panegyric', on the grounds that 'encomiastic biography' and 'largescale panegyric' often in practice overlapped.⁸⁹ The reader may feel that this concedes the case, but Barnes goes on to the task of assigning virtually every passage in the *VC* to his two separate stages, 'the abandoned panegyric' and the 'documentary history'. I persist in regarding the *VC*, as we have it, as being, if not homogeneous, at least more complex than this.⁹⁰ It does not have a clear-cut or uniform literary form because it is an innovatory work in itself, as Barnes himself recognizes when he refers to the second stage as 'something daringly original' and 'an experiment'.⁹¹ It is tendentious as well as apologetic; this explains the particular thrust of the narrative of the Council of Nicaea, the inclusion of many of the documents, and the lengthy account of Constantine's building in the Holy Land;⁹² so too were many later works of hagiography. The balance of material and treatment is not good. Constantine is idealized; he hardly emerges as a real character, and in much of the work the focus is on the actions (*praxeis*) rather than the individual. But this too was often to be the case in hagiography, as was the focus on subject matter deemed to be of religious significance, or capable of being construed as such. Again as in the case of hagiography, the general arrangement of the *VC* in both biographical and encomiastic; it proceeds through the birth, life, and death of Constantine, and since its expressed purpose is to praise him, in so doing it takes many motifs from secular panegyric.

The question of how far either the biographies of philosophers and sages, such as Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, or the *Life of Apollonius of*

⁸⁷ Wilamowitz (1900: 105 n. 1) cited by Barnes (1989: 102) and cf. Barnes (1993a: 3-4).

⁸⁸ Leo (1901: 311-13), discussed by Barnes (1989: 103). Ruhbach (1962) looks rather for Plutarchan elements.

⁸⁹ Barnes (1989: 104).

⁹⁰ For the *VC* as a mixture of genres, see Tartaglia (1984: 12-13).

⁹¹ Barnes (1989: 116, 110). The *VC* as the first adaptation of encomium to a Christian subject: Winkelmann (1975, 1992: li).

⁹² The latter especially so if one follows the hypothesis of rivalry between Caesarea and Jerusalem as argued by Rubin (1982), accepted by Drake (1985), Walker (1990), Drijvers (1992).

Tyana, or Christian hagiography, starting with the *Life of Antony* (c. AD 357), may have owed to classical precedents has become a real minefield, thanks particularly to attempts to prove the derivation of individual works. It has been argued that the *Life of Antony* may owe debts to pagan *Lives* of Plotinus and Pythagoras.⁹³ Eusebius had himself in the *Contra Hieroclem*⁹⁴ attacked Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* from a Christian point of view, answering Hierocles' comparison of Apollonius and Jesus and his preference for the former. But if Hierocles called for serious refutation, Porphyry, the author of *Lives* of Plotinus and Pythagoras as well as the *Against the Christians* (c.303) and the much earlier work *On Philosophy from Oracles*, was an even more urgent target for Eusebius' anti-pagan argument, and Porphyry too was an admirer of Apollonius.⁹⁵ Thus even if Eusebius' knowledge of Greek pagan writers tended to be limited and second-hand,⁹⁶ he was acutely conscious of the dangerous competition which some pagan authors presented to Christian intellectuals. A feature of his section on Origen in *HE* 6 is his insistence on Origen's superiority over pagans and philosophers, most of all Porphyry, who had accused him in the *Against the Christians* of being dependent on pagan philosophy and deriving his allegorical interpretation from Stoic sources.⁹⁷ The danger inherent for Christians from the competing claims for moral and religious superiority made between Apollonius and Jesus, and the propensity of Porphyry to attack Christians from their own Scriptures were matters which Eusebius could not ignore.

In this context biography was part and parcel of apologetic. The individuals of whom Porphyry and others wrote are idealized; for the purpose was to present a heroicized type which could be used to press home the author's own, often polemical, concerns;⁹⁸ these concerns could be of different kinds, directed against external or internal opponents, or both. In Eusebius' case, Origen was such a figure; like Constantine later, Eusebius maintains that Origen's life was marked out by divine favour and divine signs; he was thus quite different from Apollonius.⁹⁹ It was essential for Eusebius to present a Christian corrective for the heroic

⁹³ See Bartelink (1994: 62-3).

⁹⁴ Eusebian authorship is denied by Hägg (1992). The *Contra Hieroclem* has usually been regarded as an early work, either before 303 (Barnes 1981: 165-6) or after 311 (Forrat, in Forrat and Des Places (1986), with earlier bibliography). For the difference of style between this and Eusebius' other works see Hägg (1992: 147 f.); Wallace-Hadrill (1960: 145, 151-3).

⁹⁵ See above, with the detailed discussion in Barnes (1981: 175-86); Eusebius goes to great pains to refute Porphyry's arguments from oracles as well as his views on Moses.

⁹⁶ See e.g. Barnes (1981: 183); Winkelmann (1975, 1992: lviii).

⁹⁷ *HE* 6. 19.

⁹⁸ For the modern reception of Eusebius' version, see Cox Miller (1983: 71-2).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 76-7; 73-4.

lives being promoted by pagan philosophers, particularly in the heated context of persecution. Those concerns did not leave Eusebius as Constantine's reign developed. But he began to evolve a broader conception of the grand scheme of history and of Constantine's role within it. Even without its final clumsy revision, the *HE* had been an apologetic work rather than a history of the austere kind which modern critics persist in wanting it to be.¹⁰⁰ Now in the *VC*, as Barnes emphasizes, Eusebius tells us himself that the text of the *VC* was to be accompanied by the *Oration to the Saints* and his own speeches on the *Tricennalia* and the Holy Sepulchre;¹⁰¹ it is not accidental that these works, if taken together, would provide a philosophical, historical, and apologetic exposition of Constantine's special position in God's plan. Seen from this point of view, the *VC* provides the detailed defence of the emperor's life and reign on which the broader interpretation must rest. This demanded a broadly biographical treatment, even if the work as we have it subsumed other concerns as well.

The documents included in the *VC* can be seen in a similar light. Eusebius had included documents in the *HE* in order to prove his apologetic contentions from original materials; now, while his access to the material itself was variable even after 324 and despite his grand claims to intimacy with the emperor, the documents which he does quote and the measures to which he refers do in general support the view of Constantine as upholder of the Church, and of his own much-vaunted accord with the emperor, which he is at such pains to establish.¹⁰² Combined with his deliberate omissions and truncated or tendentious treatment of embarrassing matters such as Arius and Arianism, the Councils of Nicaea and Tyre, and the role played by Athanasius and others such as Marcellus of Ancyra in the religious controversies of Constantine's last years, the documentary evidence cited conveys a clear impression to those who know no better of harmony both between State and Church and (except where he cannot avoid an allusion, however brief, to actual division) within the Church itself. This aim is further assisted by omission, or by manipulation of the narrative. As Barnes has pointed out,¹⁰³ Eusebius' account of the Arian controversy, and of the Council of Nicaea itself (*VC* 2. 61–3. 24) is a masterpiece of disingenu-

¹⁰⁰ See Grant (1980).

¹⁰¹ *VC* 4. 32, 46; Barnes (1981: 271). However, the extant speech about the Holy Sepulchre does not seem to be the one to which Eusebius alludes.

¹⁰² For a summary see Barnes (1981: 269–70) in the context of a defence of Eusebius' reliability.

¹⁰³ Barnes (1981: 269–70).

ousness, designed, among other things, to conceal any hint of Eusebius' own very recent condemnation and his subsequent change of heart, and to distract the reader from the doctrinal issues by concentrating on the visual impact of Constantine's appearance (especially in 3. 10, a memorable description of the emperor). Constantine's long but imprecise address to the council (3. 12) is followed by the briefest and blandest summary of its proceedings (3. 13). There is no hint of the change in Constantine's stance later in the reign, when the exiles of Nicaea were recalled and Constantine baptized by the same Eusebius of Nicomedia whom he had earlier exiled. Indeed, one would never guess from the language in which Eusebius of Caesarea wraps up the account of the Council of Tyre in AD 336, also accompanied by an imperial letter, that there had been a complete reversal, and that it was now the champions of Nicaea who were being condemned.¹⁰⁴

Eusebius' own use of documents in the *HE* would have been precedent enough for the techniques used in the *VC*,¹⁰⁵ but for the citation of documents in matters of disputes over doctrine his own rivals in the years following Constantine's death also offered ample parallel, in particular, in connection with the return of Athanasius from exile in summer 337, and his subsequent activities.¹⁰⁶ In the various works in which Athanasius justified himself and attacked his opponents (termed 'the Eusebians' after their leader, Eusebius of Nicomedia), Eusebius of Caesarea is several times mentioned as being among their number;¹⁰⁷ and like Eusebius, Athanasius, too, relied on documents to prove his accusations.¹⁰⁸

The context of the final stages of Constantine's life, and of the final stages of composition of the *VC* as Eusebius left it, was one of intense religious competition, during which Eusebius worked energetically to establish the rightness of his own cause, and to claim imperial support for

¹⁰⁴ 4. 41–2; cf. 2. 61 on Arianism.

¹⁰⁵ See Wilson (forthcoming) for Eusebius' 'passion for documentation'.

¹⁰⁶ For the sequence of events see Barnes (1993b: ch. 4).

¹⁰⁷ *Apology against the Arians* (AD 349), 47, 77 (described as 'our enemy'), 87; *De Synodis* (AD 359), 13 (his turncoat behaviour at Nicaea and afterwards), 17 (ascribing to Eusebius the statement that 'Christ is not truly God'). I take the dates of Athanasius' works from the list provided by Barnes (1993b: xi–xii); see also below, and Martin (1993). Chronological table also in Brakke (1995: xvi–xviii).

¹⁰⁸ Athanasius quotes the synodical letter of the Egyptian meeting in his *Apology against the Arians*; the same work records the letters sent to bishops and to the Augustus after the council at Antioch, upon which Constantius had written to Athanasius; though also dealing with events of the mid to late 340s, the work contains a long series of earlier documents, with further attachments (for the composition, see Barnes 1993b: App. 2). He was not above composing them himself (*ibid.* 36 f., 39). Documents in Theodor's *HE*: *ibid.* App. 7.

it. Meanwhile Eusebius of Nicomedia, his ally and the bishop who had baptized Constantine, had been translated to the see of Constantinople itself. Writing was a fundamental weapon in the process of attack and justification. Of Athanasius' *History of the Arians* (AD 357), a later work which rehearsed again the events of 337 and after, and denounced Constantius, Barnes writes that 'Athanasius's primary techniques . . . are suppression and distortion'; insofar as these methods are concerned, the work differs from how he proceeds elsewhere only in its degree of openness.¹⁰⁹ Looking back at the events over a period of twenty years or so, Athanasius, too, sharpened and exaggerated, as well as supplying additional details to what he had written a decade before in the *Apology*.¹¹⁰ Eusebius' treatment of Origen and Pamphilus and his eagerness to counter the rival pagan *Life of Apollonius* have already shown that tendentiousness and apologetic could extend to *Lives*. The *VC* too should be read in this context. Eusebius expressed his theological convictions more overtly elsewhere, notably in the *Contra Marcellum*, a justification of the deposition of Marcellus in 336 and at the same time a defence of Eusebius of Nicomedia and several others in his 'party', which contained the charge that Marcellus had misrepresented their true opinions by selection and distortion.¹¹¹ In the *Ecclesiastical Theology* he continued the argument, with the implication that Marcellus should be deposed again, as indeed he was soon after Eusebius' own death on 30 May 339. 'Even the casual reader . . . cannot fail to see that it is an Arian orthodoxy which Eusebius represents as the accepted teaching of the Church.'¹¹² Seen against such a background, the final purpose of the *VC* comes to look even more complex. Not content with urging the model of Constantinian unity on the sons of Constantine, Eusebius smoothly glosses over the change in Constantine's religious predilections, and implies that right lies with his own side. By identifying Constantius II and his brothers with the policies of their father, and by pointedly retelling the account of the Council of Tyre at the very time when the cases of Athanasius and Marcellus had been reopened amid such controversy, Eusebius strengthened the point he made in his own *Contra Marcellum*, and made clear where he wanted justice to be seen to lie. It is in this light that one may now return to Eusebius' insistence on his own closeness to Constantine, whereby his opposition to Athanasius and Marcellus was openly declared. He can make the point only at the cost of some difficulty in the

¹⁰⁹ Barnes (1993b: 128; cf. 126–9).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 129, 126; I have adapted Barnes's own words.

¹¹² *Ibid.* 265.

¹¹¹ Barnes (1981: 264).

writing; as we have seen, the Council of Nicaea was particularly hard for him to deal with, and signs of sympathy towards Arius have been detected elsewhere in the work.¹¹³ Who, if anyone, was persuaded? Significantly, the appearance of hypocrisy presented by Eusebius' behaviour at the Council of Nicaea was by no means lost on Athanasius. And if Eusebius' 'Arianism' proved awkward for him in writing the *VC*, so it did later for Rufinus, the translator and continuator of his *Ecclesiastical History*, who was obliged to doctor certain passages so as to make them more acceptable; by the same coin Rufinus, a supporter of Origen like Eusebius himself, actually amplified the latter's account of Origen in *HE* 6 by adding extra information of his own.¹¹⁴

THE *VITA CONSTANTINI* AND THE *VITA ANTONII*

The *Life of Constantine* is a complex and multi-faceted work. It can plausibly be regarded, as T. D. Barnes admits, as having pioneered the idea of hagiography. Thus it invites comparison with the *Life of Antony*, that 'classic of western spirituality' usually seen as the first real saint's life. That work, written soon after Antony's death in 356, and therefore considerably postdating the *VC*, is equally tendentious and written to persuade—notably of the superiority of Athanasian orthodoxy over 'Arianism'. It too is a complex work, showing both literary influences and a heavily theological and apologetic content. Antony delivers a long speech allegedly to some 'Greeks', i.e. pagans, in which he argues for the supremacy of faith over reason and names a number of Greek gods; he also had exchanges with 'Greek philosophers'.¹¹⁵ He is depicted as being tempted by demons, a theme which has been held to tell against Athanasian authorship, though demons, which were to have a long history in ascetic writings,¹¹⁶ were also common enough in other Christian writers and are part of Eusebius' conception in the *VC*.¹¹⁷ Significantly,

¹¹³ Barnes (1989: 115).

¹¹⁴ See Clark (1992: 181–2). Rufinus was also the translator of Pamphilus' *Apology for Origen*, in which Pamphilus had been assisted by Eusebius (above, n. 63).

¹¹⁵ *V. Ant.* 74–80; 72–3. See Rubenson (1990: ch. 6) for a detailed discussion of the *V. Ant.* in relation to the controversial issue of Antony's learning (or lack of it); the contrast of natural wisdom (represented by Antony) and philosophy in the confrontation with the pagan philosophers, and its relation to Athanasius' own intellectual position, is well discussed also by Brakke (1995: 255–8).

¹¹⁶ See Valantasis (1992); Bartelink (1994: 54–6).

¹¹⁷ The universality of belief in demons is well shown from contemporary sources by MacMullen (1968: 91–3), including reference to Eusebius and to the *V. Ant.*; see Chesnut (1977: 103, 125–9), with many examples from *HE*; Rubenson (1990: 86–7), citing opposite examples

from our point of view, the *V.Ant.* presents Antony, in a famous passage, as unimpressed by imperial pomp and authority, the very reverse of the position adopted by Eusebius in the *VC*. On receiving a letter from Constantine and his two (*sic*) sons, Antony says to the monks, 'Do not consider it marvellous if a ruler writes to us, for he is a man. Marvel, instead, that God wrote the law for mankind and has spoken to us through his own Son.'¹¹⁸

Since he denies that Athanasius himself was the author of the *V.Ant.* Barnes omits any discussion of the work from his recent study of Athanasius.¹¹⁹ Yet Athanasius' connections with the monks are well attested;¹²⁰ the Index to his *Festal Letters*¹²¹ records a visit made by Antony to Alexandria in 338, and the *History of the Arians* was prefaced by a *Letter to the Monks*. These ties dated back to early in Athanasius' episcopate, and the monks sheltered him when he was deposed again in 356, close in time to Antony's death; according to the *V.Ant.*, Antony left him a sheepskin and the cloak which Athanasius had given him when new.¹²² Athanasius wrote a number of important works while moving from place to place in hiding in the desert, including perhaps the *Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya*; a continuation to the *Apology against Constantius*, the *Apology for his Flight*, and the *History of the Arians* also belong to 356–7.¹²³ This was a bad moment for the orthodox, as Serapion of Thmuis wrote to Antony's monks after his death; Antony, who was needed as their leader in the factional divisions, had died and Athanasius

of the demonology of Origen. For Eusebius, pagan temples and oracles were identified with the work of evil demons, who have, he claims, been rendered impotent by the coming of Christ (see e.g. *PE* 5. 1–2, with Droge 1989: 183–5). *Contra* Barnes, demons are essential to Athanasius' thought, not merely a theme in the *V.Ant.*: see Brakke (1995: 216–44, 255–6).

¹¹⁸ *V.Ant.* 81, trans. Gregg. After the elimination of Constantine II, the official version was that there had been two sons of Constantine, not three, let alone four: *Lib. Or.* 59; Constantine II's name was erased from inscriptions.

¹¹⁹ Barnes (1986); for his omission, see Barnes (1993b: 240 n. 64), with more bibliography, and for discussion see in particular Louth (1988); Rubenson (1990: 128–9); Bartelink (1994: 27–35). Bagnall (1993: 235–60—an important discussion; see also 278–89, 293–309) corrects common misimpressions about Greek and Coptic among the monks of Egypt; far from being the language of the uneducated peasantry. Coptic, a script for writing a heavily Graecized form of Egyptian, evolved in monastic settings and necessarily implied close familiarity with Greek.

¹²⁰ Barnes (1993: 21, 97). Brakke (1995) now demonstrates the integral role of asceticism and monastic experience in Athanasius' life and thought.

¹²¹ To Letter 10 (338).

¹²² *V.Ant.* 91; he gave another sheepskin to Serapion of Thmuis, a candidate for authorship of the original material later worked into the Greek *V.Ant.*, according to Tetz (1982). Barnes points out (Barnes 1993: 240 n. 64) that Serapion is also the first to mention a *Life* of Antony (AD 362, *Ep. ad monachos* 13, PG 40. 540).

¹²³ Barnes (1993: 121–6).

been driven into exile in the same year.¹²⁴ There are interesting indications of partisan rivalries: the *V.Ant.* portrays Antony as being claimed by the Arians, and represents him as going to Alexandria and preaching against them;¹²⁵ in a counter-move, the whole tenor of the *V.Ant.* itself claims him as anti-Arian. Even more interestingly, the same passage claims that pagans were won over too, and the conclusion of the work, while first presenting the *Vita* as a delineation for monks of the ideal monastic life, goes on to encourage the monks to read it also to pagans, as an encouragement to conversion.¹²⁶

Here then are two *Lives* of opposing aims but with interestingly complementary qualities. The *V.Ant.* was written c.357, at a time when Athanasius was again in exile and with the monks; it attacks 'Arianism', as do Athanasius' eloquent works of the same years;¹²⁷ it glorifies a monk who is shown as expressing independence from emperors, and it exemplifies a very different view of Church and State from that of Eusebius, a view consonant indeed with the experience of someone who had suffered imperial censure and condemnation, bitterly denounced the emperor he had once tried to conciliate and now looked back on the last years of Constantine and the early years of Constantius with heightened animosity. Whether it can possibly be taken to represent historical conditions in late third-century Egypt, or the 'historical' Antony, any more than other similar hagiographical texts from Egypt, is extremely questionable, as R. S. Bagnall has recently emphasized;¹²⁸ rather, the Greek version reflects the concerns and interests of its author.¹²⁹

It remains intriguing that Eusebius of Caesarea is named in Athanasius' works as a member of the 'Eusebian' group, led by Eusebius of Nicomedia, that had consistently opposed him.¹³⁰ At first sight the two *Lives* look very different; nor is there any evidence that Athanasius or

¹²⁴ Rubenson (1990: 164–5); his death fell 'c.355' according to Barnes (1993b: 97).

¹²⁵ *V.Ant.* 69.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 94. The audience of the *V.Ant.* has been much debated; for instance, was it aimed at persuading the monks of Egypt? Rubenson (1990: 131) summarizes the present state of scholarly opinion ('a state of greater confusion than ever before'). For the view that it was aimed at western monks (cf. *V.Ant., praef.*) see Bartelink (1994: 46).

¹²⁷ Bartelink (1994: 59–60); for the progressive demonologizing of 'Arianism' by its opponents in the 4th cent. see esp. Barnes and Williams (1993).

¹²⁸ Bagnall (1993: 7–8).

¹²⁹ But for the tendency to accept the historical reliability of the *V.Ant.* see Rubenson (1990: 131).

¹³⁰ Their enmity was remembered and commemorated even in 9th-cent. Byzantium (cf. *Synodikon Vetus*, ed. J. Duffly and J. Parker, ch. 36, the reason why Athanasius failed to turn up at Caesarea in AD 334; cf. *Soz. HE* 2. 25).

Serapion of Thmuis or anyone in their circle knew the *VC*, either directly or indirectly. Athanasius may have known Eusebius' *Theophany*, but does not use his later writings.¹³¹ Yet he would have seen Eusebius at the Council of Nicaea, which Athanasius attended as a deacon, and much later, Eusebius had been an agent in the doings of the Council of Tyre which condemned Athanasius in 335, one of those who carried the decision of the council to Constantine in Constantinople and who, when the emperor's reaction was less than supportive, produced a charge of treason against Athanasius. Faced with Constantine's anger, the latter is said to have lost his temper and challenged the emperor's authority directly.¹³² Later he produced and cited full documentation about the charges. Eusebius of Caesarea's *Contra Marcellum* and *Ecclesiastical Theology* would have seemed to Athanasius a provocative justification of the views of his own enemies, and indeed Marcellus himself joined Athanasius in a second exile in Rome, perhaps early in 340.¹³³ Relations between Athanasius and Eusebius were bitterly hostile. It is far from impossible that Athanasius should have known of the existence of the *VC*, a work which reiterated the very position which he challenged and from which he himself had suffered, or that having returned immediately after the death of Antony to ponder again the history of the Arian controversy he should himself have composed, even if from existing materials, a different kind of *Life* with a very different message.¹³⁴

CONCLUSION

After this discussion, the question of biography in the *VC* may no longer seem quite so pressing an issue. A recent scholar concludes that the works of Athanasius cited above are in no way genuinely biographical: rather, 'la personne d'Athanase est totalement occultée par sa fonction, son destin personnel se confond totalement avec celui de son peuple'.¹³⁵ Similar concerns pervade the *VC*, and take precedence over any interest in presenting either a biography of the real Constantine or a faithful depiction of Eusebius' own part in the transactions which he describes. The work is first and foremost apologetic, and must be read, like Eusebius' other

¹³¹ *Theophany*: Barnes (1993b: 13).

¹³³ Barnes (1993b: 56–7).

¹³⁴ 'Athanasian' theology in the *V.Ant.*: Louth (1988); Brakke (1995: 201–65); see Rubenson (1990: 131). This is not of course a full defence of Athanasian authorship, for which see Bartelink (1994: 27–35). But if Athanasius did not produce the Greek *V.Ant.*, in whose interest or competence was it to do so?

¹³⁵ Martin (1993: 154). I owe this reference to Dr Ruth Webb.

apologetic works, in the context of his own concerns. It may be lacking in the final polish that Eusebius might have given to it, had he lived,¹³⁶ but substantial parts of it at the very least can be seen to have been composed with extreme care and close attention precisely to attaining the maximum apologetic effect. This is entirely consonant, incidentally, with a theory of composition over some time. The work's peculiarities of form and content are best explained by reference in the first instance to Eusebius' personal interests; there would have been far less point in substantial interpolation at a later date, and whoever attempted it would have needed an extraordinarily precise understanding of the mind and purpose of Eusebius in order to achieve the present result. As we have seen, the *HE* required some skilful adjustments from its translator in order to make it suit late fourth-century thinking. But it is equally true that what Eusebius actually produced was a prototype for a saint's life, some twenty years or so before the composition of the *V.Ant.* Both the politics and the *Tendenz* are common features in hagiography, present also in the *V.Ant.* Writing about an emperor was of course a different matter from writing about an ascetic, and imposed a certain logic of its own—including closer adherence to the tradition of imperial *encomia*. Nevertheless, Constantine too is presented in the guise of the holy man, singled out by God for special favour, the recipient of divine signs, successfully overcoming the various trials which are the equivalent of the temptations experienced by Antony in the desert, and at the last received into heaven to preside from there over the next generation. Even the demonology of the *V.Ant.* (trials objectified on the personal level) finds its match in the *VC*'s attribution of division in the Church (the trials faced by the Christian Constantine) to the work of the devil and in Eusebius' fear that the demons active in pagan cults might still be present in their temples.¹³⁷ This Eusebian vision of Constantine had clear consequences for the narrative construction of the *VC*, with the results we have seen.

In sum, then, I suggest that at this stage in the history of its reception the *VC* has much to gain from an analysis less directly concerned with its historical reliability than with its status as a text and a narrative, and in particular with its relation to the apologetic thought of Eusebius. Since it is still more likely to be studied by historians than by literary critics *per*

¹³⁶ For a confident statement of what Eusebius 'would' have done, had he lived longer, see Barnes (1981: 268).

¹³⁷ See 3. 26. 3; 55 (Aphrodite); 56. 1 (Aesculapius). The silence of these gods when the temples were destroyed or emptied of their statues ('lifeless idols') is taken as the best proof that they have been vanquished: see especially *SC* 9.

se, its modern readers may also agree that it is worth looking at it more closely than has usually been done in relation to what is known of the author himself, and particularly of his activities and known opinions during the last years of his life. Such a study, it is obvious, owes an enormous debt to the recent work of T. D. Barnes, even if it takes issue with his views. But it also allows, I suggest, the separate, though of course closely related, issue of the historical reliability of the *VC* to be seen in a different dimension. There will no doubt continue to be disagreement about the work's genesis and the stages of its composition; in this discussion, the full implications of its apologetic nature and the impact which this has had on almost all parts of the narrative still need to be fully recognized, as indeed does the contribution which an understanding of it can make to our perception of the development of the writing of 'lives' in late antiquity.

In terms of its later reception, it would seem that the *Life of Constantine* was very much less successful than the *Life of Antony*; indeed, the latter, in addition to its effect on intelligent Christian fellow-travellers like Augustine, memorably recorded in his *Confessions*, managed to establish a whole literary genre. After all, desert hermits are more appealing to the ascetic and romantic imaginations than practical emperors. If we are to take the claims of the *V. Ant.* seriously, it was aimed at pagans as well as Christian insiders. Similarly, the *VC* seems to have been directed at least in part at a mixed audience, not unlike the courtiers who were obliged to listen to Constantine's own sermons.¹³⁸ But the *VC* also has in its own way a claim to be considered a prototypical saint's life. Moreover, even if it did not quite manage to found a genre, it was destined nevertheless to have its own after-life, however indirectly. The Byzantine *Lives of Constantine*, from a period when Constantine had become a real saint, and the ever-elaborated medieval reworkings of the legend of the finding of the True Cross went far beyond anything in the *VC* itself.¹³⁹ It is ironic that the latter story, with its linking of Constantine and Helena, was to be the most popular of all, for this was a story which Eusebius did not tell.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ 4. 29.

¹³⁹ Winkelmann (1964); Winkelmann (1975, 1992: xxi-xxv); Kazhdan (1987). One of the Byzantine *vitae* (*BHG* 364) is translated with introduction in Lieu and Montserrat (1996: ch. 3). For the persistent evocation of Constantine as an imperial model in later Byzantine history see Magdalino (1994).

¹⁴⁰ Drijvers (1992); pace Drake (1985), and see above, n. 92, it remains the most likely hypothesis that both the relic and the story of Helena postdated the *VC*.

7

The *Life of Daniel*

ROBIN LANE FOX

I. THE HISTORICAL AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

High on their pillars, Christian stylites present us with an image of religion in action which still challenges our ideas of sainthood and the human body. For forty years, their founder, Simeon, stood on a pillar where he was said to have dislocated three joints in his spine, lost his eyesight three times, ruined his feet by binding them, and ruptured his stomach, 'so that his attendants even said, "the affliction of his stomach is more severe than that of his feet"'.¹ Where is the Christianity in the solitary life of these old men, destroying their bodies on pillars above human contact? Yet crowds flocked to them from the highest and lowest social classes; greater churches of stone grew up round the pillars which we can still see, not just at Simeon's Qalat Seman but on the bleak upper slopes of the Marvellous Mountain, less than twenty miles from Antioch, where a second stylite, Simeon the Younger, stood for much of the sixth century.² We know of nearly fifty stylites between Simeon's death in 460 and the eleventh century; by 900 their numbers had dwindled but the living reality continued until the mid-nineteenth century, amazing visitors and still drawing criticism from contemporaries.³

The imbalance between the sexes was blurred as time passed. The great Simeon never received women in the enclosure around his pillar, an exclusion which was still preserved in traditions told to visitors a century later.⁴ The rise of the first stylite was the rise of a single-sex saint who reinforced the dominance of males in Christian leadership. However,

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¹ Syriac *Life* 46.

² *Van den Ven* i-ii (1962, 1970); Djobadze (1986); Nasrallah (1972: 132).

³ Peña (1975); Delehaye (1923: ch. 5).

⁴ Evagr. *HE* 1. 14 l. 30 (Bidez): *Syr. Life, passim*.

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