

Constantine and Eusebius in Antioch

ABSTRACT In the 320s CE, the eastern metropolis of Antioch became the scene of violent conflict between pro- and anti-Nicene factions vying to put one of their own in the bishopric. Eusebius of Caesarea (himself one of the candidates) claims in his influential *Vita Constantini* that bloody conflict was avoided only by the calming influence of the emperor himself. This article focuses on three letters that Eusebius included in the *Vita Constantini* to illustrate the emperor's involvement, looking for what they can tell us about the sequence of events, and also about the relationship between the first Christian emperor and his future biographer. Scholars have labeled Eusebius as everything from the power behind Constantine's throne to a sycophant who needed Constantine to protect him from his ecclesiastical enemies. This study reveals an evolving relationship in which the emperor learned to respect Eusebius's political as well as academic skills. **KEYWORDS** Constantine I, Eusebius of Caesarea, church councils, Antioch

As far as we know, the first Christian emperor, Constantine, and his future biographer, bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, were never physically in Antioch at the same time. But the attention of emperor and bishop alike became focused on this eastern metropolis by a series of religious upheavals that shook the city in the late 320s CE. The point of this counterfactual title is to call attention to the important role these events played in defining the relationship between these two figures. The time is ripe for such an evaluation, since the role scholars once assigned to Eusebius now seems overinflated. Although

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the bishop of Caesarea was long regarded as virtually the emperor's alter ego,¹ two influential modern studies have effectively knocked Eusebius off this perch. Pointing out that the bishop can only be put in Constantine's presence on four known occasions, Timothy Barnes concluded that Eusebius "was no courtier, still less a trusted counselor from whom Constantine sought constant advice on ecclesiastical policy." Conversely, Averil Cameron labeled Eusebius a "master apologist" and ascribed Eusebius's claim to intimate knowledge of his subject to the panegyrist's stock in trade that need not be taken literally.² Though reached by entirely different means, both conclusions effectively demoted Eusebius from prime minister to backbencher. This reevaluation has obvious implications for how much authority should be assigned to Eusebius's *Vita Constantini* (*Life of Constantine*, hereafter *VC*),³ a book that remains central to the study of the first Christian emperor. The events in Antioch that are the focus of this article suggest that both conclusions need to be modified.

The immediate cause of the disturbance at Antioch was its outspoken bishop, Eustathius, a fierce proponent of what became the orthodox position at the council of Nicaea in 325, and one of the most prominent victims of the

1. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. John B. Bury, vol. 2 (London, [1776–88] 1909–14), 136, set the tone when he portrayed Eusebius as a "courtly bishop," who was "more practised in the arts of courts, than . . . almost any of his contemporaries"; for "courtly bishop," see 148, 222. More recently, Arnaldo Momigliano, "The Origins of Ecclesiastical Historiography," in *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 139, described him as "the adviser and apologist of Constantine," and in Arnaldo Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century A.D.," in *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 85, as "the shrewd and worldly adviser of the Emperor Constantine." Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3 (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1983), 310, called him Constantine's "chief theological adviser." Nonspecialists have taken Eusebius's role even further. Yosef Levy, "Julian the Apostate and the Building of the Temple," *Jerusalem Cathedra* 3 (1983): 73: "the head of the victorious church at the time of Constantine"; Walter Stevenson, *The Origins of Roman Christian Diplomacy: Constantius II and John Chrysostom as Innovators* (London: Routledge, 2021), 5: "the enormously influential courtier, Eusebius of Caesarea."

2. Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 266; Averil Cameron, "Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* and the Construction of Constantine," in *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*, ed. Mark J. Edwards and Simon Swain (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 153; Cameron, "Eusebius of Caesarea and the Rethinking of History," in *Tria Corda: Scritti in onore di Arnaldo Momigliano*, ed. E. Gabba (Como: Edizioni New Press, 1983), 83–84.

3. Friedhelm Winkelmann, ed., *Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantins*, Eusebius' Werke I.1, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975). Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of the *VC* are from Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, trans., *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

theological infighting that followed in its wake.⁴ Eustathius had been translated from Beroea to the vacant bishopric of Antioch in (probably) 325, evidently to shore up support for the upcoming council of Nicaea, and at Nicaea he had been out for blood. In a bitter letter quoted by the church historian Theodoret a century later, Eustathius lamented the intervention of moderates on the council who allowed the supporters of Arius to get off the hook.⁵ In Antioch, Eustathius ruthlessly purged clerics whose theology he deemed suspect and also built up a substantial constituency for his version of orthodoxy. His removal by a council of bishops in the years following Nicaea led to rioting between Christian factions that Eusebius says would have destroyed the city but for the pastoral care of the emperor (*VC* 3.59).⁶

While Constantine did not himself go to Antioch, as a sign of the seriousness with which he viewed the situation, he dispatched not one but two high-ranking court officials, the *comites clarissimi* Acacius and Strategius, to restore order.⁷ Eusebius, on the other hand, was directly involved. He engaged in a fiery pamphlet war with Eustathius, and he is usually held to have presided over the council in Antioch that drove Eustathius from office. He was also himself nominated to succeed Eustathius, an action that contributed to the very unrest that he censures. Eusebius disingenuously plays down this aspect of his involvement in the *VC*, which he wrote about a decade after these events, instead simply blaming envy ($\phi\theta\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$) for all the troubles. But in that same account Eusebius tells us that the emperor sent numerous letters to the warring parties, and he includes verbatim copies of three of them.⁸

These letters have the potential to shed new light on the question of Eusebius's standing with the emperor but, as is often the case in ancient studies, before fundamental questions—such as how and why Constantine became involved and the role Eusebius played—can be addressed, the simple matter of dating Eustathius's deposition needs to be resolved. This is

4. On Eustathius's theology, see Sophie Cartwright, *The Theological Anthropology of Eustathius of Antioch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). David Gwynn, *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the "Arian Controversy"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), cautions against accepting the polarized image created by Athanasius.

5. Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica* (hereafter *HE*) 1.7, ed. Léon Parmentier and Günther Christian Hansen, *Theodoret's Kirchengeschichte* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1998). For the date of Eustathius's transfer, see my note 11.

6. For the clash between Eusebius and Eustathius, see Sozomen, *HE* 2.18.2, in *Sozomenus Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Joseph Bidez and Günther Christian Hansen (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995).

7. On Acacius's increasingly active role, see David Woods, "Eusebius on Some Constantinian Officials," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 67 (2002): 195–223.

8. To the Antiochenes (*VC* 3.60), to Eusebius (*VC* 3.61), and to the bishops (*VC* 3.62).

a question with several moving parts, the most important of which for present purposes are challenges to the traditional date for the council that took action against Eustathius. With a firmer chronological footing, Constantine's letters take on new significance, for they seem to show that Constantine owed a debt of gratitude to Eusebius that was as large as the much better known debt that Eusebius owed the emperor.

1. DATE(S) OF THE COUNCIL(S) OF ANTIOCH

The date traditionally given for the council of Antioch that deposed Eustathius from his episcopal throne is 330/331. Until scholars began to examine the issue, this date seemed fairly secure. It was based on a claim by a council of eastern bishops at Serdica (the modern Sofia, in Bulgaria) that Bishop Asclepas of Gaza had been deposed by a council of Antioch 17 years previously. Since the fifth-century church historian Socrates gave a date of 347 to the Serdican council, the date of the earlier one was easy to calculate. And, since Asclepas was a firm ally of Eustathius, it was held unlikely that he could have been deposed by a council in Antioch while Eustathius was still in charge, so the bishop's own deposition must also have occurred at this time, if not earlier. That view has not gone without challenge.⁹ Newer studies, however, push the date of Eustathius's deposition back as far as 326, although it has slowly been creeping back to its original date, with 327, 328, and 329 now in play.¹⁰

For present purposes, there are only three important variables: the sequence of bishops of Antioch in the 320s; a visit to the Holy Land by Constantine's mother, Helena; and Eusebius's presidency.

Sequence of Bishops

Evidently, with regard to its bishopric, Antioch was a busy place in the second half of the 320s. Three bishops are attested in the small span of years between the death of Philogonius (probably at the end of 323) and the succession of Euphronius (Constantine's nominee, probably in 328). In addition to

9. Richard W. Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronography*, *Historia Einzelschriften* 135 (Stuttgart, 1999), 195, argues against tying the fate of Asclepas to the fall of Eustathius.

10. Henry Chadwick reopened the question in "The Fall of Eustathius of Antioch," *Journal of Theological Studies* 49 (1948): 27–35. Previously, Socrates, *HE* 2.20.4, ed. Günther Christian Hansen, *Sokrates Kirchengeschichte* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), dated the council of Serdica to the eleventh year after Constantine's death (347), resulting in a date of 330/331, but that date is contradicted by evidence from, among other sources, the Egyptian Festal Index, not published until 1848: Burgess, *Studies*, 241.

Eustathius, Paulinus of Tyre and one Eulalius are attested as bishop during this period. Philogonius's death traditionally was placed in December of 324, with Eustathius succeeding in time to represent Antioch at the council of Nicaea in May/June of 325. If Eustathius himself was removed in 327, or even 326, Paulinus and Eulalius would barely have had time to unpack before themselves being succeeded by Euphronius. Richard Burgess creates a little breathing room by dating Philogonius's death a year earlier (December 323) and making Paulinus his immediate successor. Burgess buttresses his case by observing that Zenon is listed as bishop of Tyre at Nicaea, whereas if the former dating were correct Tyre would still have been represented by Paulinus. Since Paulinus's tenure is known to have been brief, Eustathius could still have been appointed in time to attend Nicaea, leaving Eulalius (another brief occupant) the only one to succeed Eustathius after Nicaea.¹¹

Visit to the Holy Land

Henry Chadwick first called attention to the importance of Helena's visit to the Holy Land for dating the ouster of Eustathius.¹² One of the charges supposedly leveled against the bishop is that he had insulted the emperor's mother, and the most likely time for that to have happened was when she passed through Antioch en route to Jerusalem. The source of this charge, Athanasius of Alexandria, like other defenders of the Nicene position, was inclined to blow smoke around any theological grounds for the removal of a confederate, and Chadwick was leery of the other charge supposedly leveled against Eustathius—that he had sired a child with a prostitute.¹³ Unlike such a stock charge, Chadwick decided, the Helena story was specific and unique enough to have some factual basis. Eustathius was famous for his acid tongue,

11. Burgess, "The Date of the Deposition of Eustathius of Antioch," *Journal of Theological Studies* 51, no. 1 (2000): 150n1, 186. For a list of the signatories at Nicaea, see Ian Mladjov, "Appendix I: The Signatories," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Nicaea*, ed. Young Richard Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 368–74. In the fifth century, Theodoret, *HE* 1.21, named Eulalius as the first to succeed Eustathius, and despite many reasons to doubt his account of these events, he seems to have been using an Antiochene list of bishops when he dealt with matters of succession. See my note 46.

12. Chadwick, "Fall of Eustathius," 29.

13. Chadwick, "Fall of Eustathius," 28, refers to such charges as "a well-worn theme in hagiography." Richard Patrick Crosland Hanson, "The Fall of Eustathius of Antioch," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 95 (1984): 178, takes note of the way defenders made use of such charges "in order to conceal the fact, that they had really been deposed for unorthodoxy." Sara Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy, 325–345* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 107, finds the adultery charge more persuasive. See my note 56.

and it is not difficult to imagine how he might have, say, spurned with a few choice words an offer of the imperial largesse that Helena was distributing en route.¹⁴ R. P. C. Hanson minimizes the importance of this story, as, more recently, does Sarah Parvis. But where Hanson delays the date of Eustathius's deposition to 328 or 329, Parvis opts for autumn of 327.¹⁵

A precise date cannot be assigned to Helena's journey. The ancients thought of it as a pilgrimage to atone for the simultaneous deaths of Constantine's son Crispus and wife, Fausta, in 326, but more clear-eyed modern scholars prefer to see it as part of a program to shore up local support for the Constantinian house.¹⁶ Jan Willem Drijvers, in a careful review of the evidence, decided the date of Helena's journey cannot be narrowed to more than a two-year period bracketed by the aftermath of the murders in 326 on one end and Helena's death in 328 on the other. But even this two-year span narrows the spread considerably, and if Parvis is correct to put Helena's death in late 327, the date could be narrowed even further.¹⁷

14. *VC* 3.44 takes note of Helena's liberal spending. Cf. E. D. Hunt, "Constantine and Jerusalem," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 48 (1997): 409; Jan W. Drijvers, "Helena Augusta, the Cross, and the Myth: Some New Reflections," *Millennium* 8 (2011): 141. Noel Lenski, *Constantine and the Cities: Imperial Authority and Civic Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 268, suggests Helena's devotion to the Antiochene martyr Lucian, a godfather of Arianism, was the cause; Chadwick, "Fall of Eustathius," 34, thinks Helena's questionable origins might have been the target of Eustathius's "mordant tongue."

15. Hanson, "Fall of Eustathius," 171–79, argues, "We have no reason to think that Constantine was specially solicitous about his mother's feelings" (177). In *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 210, Hanson argued that Constantine would never have sanctioned Helena's journey because it would have only multiplied "the very bad publicity" generated by the deaths of Crispus and Fausta. Parvis, *Marcellus*, 101–106, offers a much more substantial argument. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 7, gives 324 as the date for the elevation of both Helena and Fausta to the status of Augusta; Jan W. Drijvers, *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of Her Finding of the True Cross*. (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 41–42, dates it to 324 or 325. At some point, the emperor renamed Drepanum in Asia Minor "Helenopolis," possibly because it was her birthplace, though this has been doubted. See Drijvers, "Helena Augusta and the City of Rome," in *Monuments & Memory: Christian Cult Buildings and Constructions of the Past, Essays in Honour of Sible de Blaauw*, ed. Mariëtte Verhoeven, Lex Bosman and Hanneke van Asperen, *Studies in the History of Architecture* 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 129–30.

16. Hunt, "Constantine and Jerusalem," 417–18; Drijvers, "Some New Reflections," 138; Heinrich Schlange-Schöningen, "Helena im Heiligen Land—Pilgerreise oder politische Mission?" in *Konstantin der Große: Zwischen Sol und Christus*, ed. Kay Ehling and Gregor Weber (Darmstadt: Philipp von Zabern, 2011), 100–109. Paul Parvis, "Constantine's Letter to Arius and Alexander?" *Studia Patristica* 39 (2006): 94–95, makes the intriguing suggestion, hinted at in Parvis, *Marcellus*, 100, that Helena acted as a substitute for Constantine's initial plan to make the journey himself.

17. Drijvers, "Some New Reflections," 138; Parvis, *Marcellus*, 102. Drijvers based his date on the abrupt end of Helena coinage in the spring of 329.

Eusebius's Presidency

A set of canons adopted by a council that met in Antioch lists Eusebius first among the signatories, a standard way to indicate who presided.¹⁸ The canons were long attributed to a dedication council that met in Antioch in 341 to inaugurate Constantine's Golden Octagon church, but this date is problematic because some signatories, including Eusebius, had died before then. Hence a conclusion that the canons actually were produced at an earlier council and then mistakenly attributed to the dedication council is widely accepted.¹⁹ The obvious candidate is the council that met to depose Eustathius, since Eusebius would only have presided had there been a vacancy in Antioch's episcopal throne.

But when did that council meet? A discrepancy in different lists of the signatories (Aetius of Lydda is named in one but not in another) led Chadwick to postulate that there must have been not one but two councils of Antioch in these years. The first, presided over by Eusebius, met in 326 to depose Eustathius and adopt a set of canons that were mistakenly attributed to the later council; the second met at a later date to choose Eustathius's successor, and this is the one that nominated Eusebius himself. Burgess accepts the premise of two councils but changes the date on the basis of a Syriac chronicle that says Eustathius was bishop for four years, which would extend his reign to late 328 or early 329.²⁰ His redating is wobbly, relying as it does on the reconstruction of a source that is consistently off in its dating of known events,²¹ but Burgess modifies Chadwick's argument in two other ways as well. First, he puts Eusebius in charge of both councils and, second, he argues that the two councils were not separated by "about a year" but instead occurred "in quick succession." In Burgess's reconstruction, the first council met in 328 and selected Eulalius to succeed Eustathius, touching off the riots that led Constantine to send two imperial *comes* to restore order; the second,

18. For the text, E. J. Jonkers, *Acta et symbola conciliorum quae saeculo quarto habita sunt*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 47–57. English translation in Karl Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church, from the Original Documents*, trans. William R. Clark, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1894), 67–74.

19. The canons were redated by Edouard Schwartz. See Chadwick, "Fall of Eustathius," 34, and for a full discussion, Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, trans. Henri Leclercq, t. 2 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1907), 707–14. Eusebius's presidency is not certain, but Burgess, "Deposition of Eustathius," 157, agrees it is likely.

20. Burgess, "Deposition of Eustathius," 154.

21. Gwynn, *The Eusebians*, 141, partly relying on David Woods's review in *Journal of Theological Studies* 52, no. 2 (2001): 900–903.

meeting early in 329 after Eulalius's death, was the one that chose Eusebius, assertedly against his will.²² A third reconstruction is provided by Sara Parvis as part of her study of the career of another Nicene combatant, Marcellus of Ancyra. Parvis also identifies two councils, and like Burgess names Eusebius as chair of both. But she dates the first, which removed Eustathius, to October 327 and the second, which issued the canons, to September 328.²³

Eusebius tells us that Constantine kept a close watch on this situation, and the letters he provides confirm the emperor's interest. Accordingly, travel times offer another way to think about dating these events.²⁴ Strictly in terms of ease of communication, 326 would have been the most difficult year for a delegation to reach the emperor. For most of that year, he was either en route to or returning from the celebration of his *vicennalia* in Rome; depending on time and place, a delegation would have taken close to two months to reach him and return (see appendix).²⁵ This would in any case not have been the best time to meet with an emperor who had just put to death his wife and eldest son.

Most of the year 328 would not have been much better, since Constantine spent it campaigning on the Rhine, requiring as long as three months for a round trip. Again, thinking only in terms of travel times, the best time would have been mid-327 to spring 328. From June of the one year to at least March of the other, Constantine is attested in the vicinity of Nicomedia and Constantinople, where he could be reached in as little as two weeks. If, as Barnes thought, the council of Antioch met in 327, the time lag thus becomes more manageable.

Military dispatch riders traveling in relays could cover 250 km in a day, shaving these times considerably. For instance, the round trip to Constantinople would have taken only ten days.²⁶ All these times assume

22. Burgess, "Deposition of Eustathius," 157–58. For Eusebius as president of the first council, Chadwick, "Fall of Eustathius," 35.

23. Parvis, *Marcellus*, 97–101.

24. All Constantine travel dates are from Barnes, *New Empire*, 76–78.

25. After leaving Constantinople in March of 326, Constantine is not attested back in the Balkans (at Sirmium) until the last day of that year. In April of 326, he was in Aquileia where a delegation from Antioch traveling by sea would have taken 20 to 26 days to reach him, assuming it took the fastest route under optimal conditions. Once Constantine was in Italy, in July, the trip would have been about the same (25 days to Rome, 24 to Milan). In the fall, travel times would have been comparable: 26–27 days to reach Milan, 23 for Sirmium. Return times would have been similar. See appendix.

26. Timothy Barnes, "Emperors and Bishops, A.D. 324–344: Some Problems," *American Journal of Ancient History* 3 (1978): 60; Barnes, *New Empire*, 77. For military travel, see my appendix.

optimal conditions and that Constantine dropped everything to deal with the matter right away. It is well to remember that Fergus Millar once calculated that it would take “several months” for an emperor to deal with routine matters.²⁷

A preliminary timeline that takes into account all of these variables and Constantine’s itineraries is as follows:

December 323	Philogonius dies; Paulinus of Tyre translated to Antioch
Early 325	Paulinus dies; Eustathius translated to Antioch
May/June-July 325	Council of Nicaea
March-December 326	Constantine goes to Rome to celebrate <i>vicennalia</i> , attested back in Sirmium on 31 December
Late 326 / early 327	Helena travels to Jerusalem via Antioch
Mid-327	Constantine in Nicomedia and environs; learns of insult to Helena
Autumn 327	First council of Antioch deposes Eustathius; Constantine sends Eustathius into exile; council installs Eulalius
Early 328	Eulalius dies
Spring 328-spring 329	Constantine campaigns on Rhine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ July 328, in Moesia to open stone bridge across Danube ○ September-29 December 328, in Trier
Spring/fall 329	Constantine campaigns in Balkans
11 May 330	Constantine dedicates Constantinople, remains in vicinity until spring 332, when he campaigns against Goths

A close look at Constantine’s letters will add further considerations to this timeline.

2. CONSTANTINE’S LETTERS

Eusebius turns to Antioch in the third book of the *VC*. His aim was not to provide a full account but to illustrate the way Constantine dealt with the Antiochenes “in the manner of a saviour and physician of souls” (δικην σωτήρος καὶ ψυχῶν ἰατροῦ, *VC* 3.59.3) and probably also to give himself an

27. Fergus Millar, “Paul of Samosata, Zenobia, and Aurelian: The Church, Local Culture, and Political Allegiance in Third-Century Syria,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 15: “The evidence of the early Constantinian period suggests that it normally took several months from the issuing of an Imperial reply to its arrival in a provincial city. Similarly, though here our information is less precise, it will have taken a comparable period for a delegation to reach the Emperor wherever he happened to be, to gain an audience, and receive an answer.”

indirect pat on the back.²⁸ His account leaves a number of important questions unresolved. How was Eustathius removed from his see? At what point did the Antiochenes take to the streets to express their displeasure? When, and why, did Constantine initially intervene? Most importantly, what was Eusebius's role in the crisis? Close examination of the letters yields at least a partial answer to these questions.

Eusebius begins with a narrative that is brief enough to insert in full:

(1) While all were enjoying a happy life under these conditions, and the Church of God was everywhere in every way and in every province increasing once more Envy (*φθόνος*), who seeks opportunity against good things, was limbering up to attack the prosperity so rich in benefits. He perhaps hoped that the Emperor would himself change his attitude to us in irritation at our troubles and disorders. (2) He therefore lit a great flame and plunged the church of Antioch into disasters of tragic proportions, so that the whole city was all but completely destroyed. The church people (*τῶν τῆς ἐκκλησίας λαῶν*) were split into two factions, while the general population of the city including the magistrates and military personnel were stirred up to warlike attitudes, and even swords might well have been used, had not God's oversight and fear of the Emperor quelled the passions of the mob, (3) and once more the Emperor's patience, in the manner of a saviour and physician of souls, applied the medicine of argument to those who were sick.

He negotiated very gently with the congregations, sending the most loyal of his proven courtiers who held the rank of *comes*, and he exhorted them in frequent letters to adopt a pacific attitude. He taught that they should behave in a manner befitting godliness, and used persuasion and pleading in what he wrote to them, pointing out that he had personally listened to the one who caused the sedition (*ὡς τοῦ τῆς στάσεως αἰτίου διακηκῶς αὐτος εἶη*). (4) These letters of his too, which are full of helpful instruction, we would have produced at this point, but they might bring discredit on the persons accused. (5) I will therefore set these aside, determining not to renew the memory of evils, and will include in my work those of the rest that he composed in satisfaction at the unity and peace. In these he urged them not to try to obtain a leader from outside, inasmuch as they had achieved peace, but by the rule of the Church to choose as pastor that person whom the universal Saviour of the world would himself designate. He wrote to the laity themselves and to the bishops separately as follows (*VC* 3.59).

28. Burgess, *Studies*, 72, writes, perhaps too severely, "It was probably only Eusebius' penchant for self-aggrandizement that led him to include the Eustathius episode in the *VConst* at all."

After this narrative, Eusebius inserts without further comment three letters sent by Constantine: the first (*VC* 3.60) to Antioch's Christian laity, the next (3.61) to Eusebius himself, and the final one (3.62) to the council of bishops charged with finding a replacement for Eustathius. The letters to Eusebius and the council can be summarized quickly. In the one to Eusebius, which is the briefest of the three, Constantine writes approvingly of the bishop's refusal to accept the transfer: "But your Intelligence, which knows how to keep the commandments of God and the apostolic rule of the Church, has done exceptionally well in declining the episcopate of the church in Antioch, preferring to remain in that church in which by God's will you received the bishopric in the first place" (3.61.2).

As consolation, the emperor tells him, "You should certainly consider yourself blessed in this respect, that by the testimony of practically the whole world you have been judged worthy to be bishop of any and every church," adding that he has said as much to the Antiochenes, and also to the bishops at the council. Constantine closes by telling Eusebius he "will have to attend their council, so that what is decided at the church in Antioch may be deemed entirely right both by God and by the Church."

As he said he would, Constantine commends in his letter to the council (3.82) "the wise resolve of Eusebius" in writing that "he [Eusebius] should in no wise forsake the church entrusted to him by God." Ruling that the bishops should ratify Eusebius's decision, Constantine nominates two alternatives: Euphronius of Caesarea in Cappadocia and George of Arethusa. Subsequently, the bishops select Euphronius.²⁹

The letter to the laity of Antioch to which Constantine refers in both of these missives is the longest of the three. He begins with a plea for concord in the Antiochene congregation, pointing out that salvation cannot be attained through hatred and asking, "what could be more precious than the unanimity" that comes from resolving issues on the basis of "sound doctrine?" (*VC* 3.60.1–2). As he continues, Constantine takes note of "the noble praises and testimonials which you bestow on Eusebius, at present bishop of Caesarea, a man I myself also have known well for a long time for his learning and moderation (παιδεύσεώς τε καὶ ἐπεικειάς),"³⁰ adding, "I see that you are

29. For an analysis of the legal procedures in the letter, see Lenski, *Constantine and the Cities*, 269–71.

30. Cameron and Hall, *Life* (slightly modified). Paul Dräger, *Eusebios, Über das Leben des glückseligen Kaisers Konstantin = De vita Constantini*, 2nd ed. (Oberhaid: Utopica Verlag, 2007), at *VC* 3.60.3, renders the phrase καλῶς [γε] ἐκ πολλοῦ γιννώσκω as "know many good things about" (*aus*

pressing to get him for yourselves” (*VC* 3.60.3). But instead of pursuing this topic (obviously the reason for his letter), Constantine veers off into generic moralizing that evidently is what made Eusebius characterize these letters as signs of the emperor’s pastoral care. Blaming their strife on rivalry, the emperor asks the Antiochenes to consider the damage being done to their reputation and laments the desire for “rank and placement” that keeps men from being satisfied with what they have—a curious concern for a ruler who had seized control of the eastern empire for himself. “To me indeed,” he writes, “it seems that the one who aims rather at peace has done better than victory itself; for where someone can do the fitting thing, there is nobody who would not be pleased” (3.60.4–5). To Constantine, the solution is to stop thinking of one episcopal appointment as more prestigious than another, or seeing the choice of one candidate as defeat for another. Instead, he urges, they must realize that they all want the same thing, and instead of arguing about which side has more votes they should come together in support of their common goal (3.60.6).

The substance of these platitudes is that it was wrong for the Antiochenes to covet another see’s bishop, and to assume that the prestige and riches of their own see entitled them to select whomever they wanted. And it was doubly wrong to do so in a way that alienated a significant portion of the congregation. For present purposes, however, Constantine’s pastoral concerns are less important than the sense his tiptoeing conveys that he was expecting a negative reaction to his decision to deny the post to Eusebius. In fact, he seems determined to cushion the blow. Twice he goes out of his way to reassure the Antiochenes that he shares their high regard for the bishop of Caesarea. At 3.60.5, he writes, “I certainly praise the man whom you also judge worthy of rank and placement,” and at 3.60.8 he assures them that “the one who came to give correct advice (ὁ δι’ ὀρθὴν συμβουλήν ἀφικόμενος) is reaping his due reward from the divine judgement, having received an exceptional testimonial in the large vote which you have given him for his moderation (ἐπιεικείας).”³¹

The second of these comments poses a problem. Constantine ends his letter to Eusebius by telling him he “will have to attend their council,” presumably meaning the council of Antioch that had nominated him

vielem gut kanne), on grammatical grounds and because Constantine is not likely to have known Eusebius prior to the council of Nicaea.

31. Cameron and Hall, *Life*, translate ἐπιεικείας as “integrity.” On this term, see further my note 67.

(3.61.3), whereas the letter to the Antiochenes indicates that Eusebius had already declined the honor in person. A fast carriage could bring Eusebius the 549 km to Antioch in four days, so it is not inconceivable that he went there more than once. But why would Constantine ask him to go to Antioch to do what he had already done?

One possible explanation is that the “one who came to give correct advice” in the letter to the Antiochenes is not Eusebius. But in the end there can be little doubt that this person is the bishop of Caesarea. For one thing, the subject in the previous phrase (“the man whom you also judge worthy of rank and placement”) also is unnamed, and in this case he certainly is Eusebius; for another, the remainder of the sentence, describing this person as one who has received “an exceptional testimonial,” tracks so closely with the soothing words in Constantine’s letter to Eusebius—to the effect that he should be satisfied with the honor of having been nominated—that it would be difficult to come up with a more plausible replacement.

A more likely explanation is that the letters are not in chronological order. There is no reason to assume that they are, since Eusebius’s aim was not to construct such a record, or even to provide a complete account of the situation (as he tells us at *VC* 3.59.5, he had no wish to stir unpleasant memories). But in both of his other letters Constantine refers to a letter he had written to Antioch’s laity,³² and Eusebius’s description of that letter as one in which the emperor “urged them not to obtain a leader from outside” (*VC* 3.59.5) corresponds sufficiently closely to the one at 3.60 that there is little reason to doubt that the two are one and the same.³³ Accordingly, it seems safe to conclude that Eusebius had already been to Antioch when he

32. To Eusebius (*VC* 3.61.3): “On this subject we have written a letter to the people.” To the bishops (*VC* 3.62.1): “I have, after making the necessary enquiries, written to the people of Antioch what is pleasing to God and fitting for the Church.”

33. Understandably, this apparent contradiction does not seem to have troubled other translators or commentators, since the letters have never previously been read with the chronology of the Antioch disturbances in mind. So, in addition to Cameron and Hall, *Life*, used here, cf. Bruno Bleckmann and Horst Schneider, *De vita Constantini = Über das Leben Konstantins*, *Fontes Christiani* 83 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 397: “derjenige, der wegen der richtigen Unterweisung gekommen ist”; Dräger, *Eusebios*, 229: “derjenige, der zum Zweck eines richtiges Ratschlags gekommen ist”; Luce Pietri and Marie-Joseph Rondeau, *Eusèbe de Césarée: Vie de Constantin*, *Sources Chrétiennes*, *Textes Grecs* 559 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2013), 441: “celui qui est venu avec une droite intention.” Ernest Richardson, *The Life of Constantine*, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2nd series, vol. 1 (New York: Christian Literature, 1890), 537, reads, “he, who came among you for the purpose of offering disinterested counsel.”

received the letter from Constantine that is quoted in *VC* 3.61, and that when in Antioch he had advised the laity that he could not be their candidate. It is even more safe to conclude that he was back in Caesarea when he received his own letter from the emperor.

Another sentence in the emperor's letter suggests that he was not asking Eusebius to refuse the position a second time but rather that he had a different purpose in mind. After praising the bishop's refusal, Constantine refers to a letter from "your colleagues in the ministry," written "in terms which your Purity will readily understand when you read it (ἄπερ ἡ σὴ καθαρότης ἀναγνοῦσα ῥαδίως ἐπιγνώσεται)." This cannot be the letter nominating Eusebius, since he would already have known about that one. It must, instead, have been one of the many letters that the bishop tells us he did not include, so as "not to renew the memory of evils" (*VC* 3.59.5). It appears to have been a follow-up letter, in which the bishops pressed their case either despite or in ignorance of Eusebius's decision. Hence when the emperor tells Eusebius that he "will have to attend their council, so that what is decided at the church in Antioch may be deemed entirely right both by God and by the Church" (*VC* 3.61.3), his goal is not simply to send Eusebius to Antioch to refuse the office a second time but to take control of the proceedings, on the assumption that a selection approved by the bishop of Caesarea would go a long way to soothing the passions of his supporters.³⁴

In an elliptical way, then, these sentences confirm that there was a second council and that this is the one Eusebius would preside over, since it is highly unlikely that the first council would have sent his name forward if he had presided and refused to be considered. And they also show that this second council cannot have been the one that nominated Eusebius, since it is unlikely that either he or the other bishops would have taken such a step in the face of the emperor's opposition. Another statement, in which the emperor warns that "teeth appear in the character and strength even of sheep, when the attention and care of the shepherd disappears and they are deprived of the direction they had before," seems to confirm Burgess's hypothesis of a months-long interregnum between the death of Eulalius and the selection of Euphronius.³⁵

34. I am grateful to Aaron Johnson for this suggestion.

35. *VC* 3.60.7. Burgess, *Studies*, 194, postulates "a vacancy of some months (eight?)" between Eulalius and Euphronius. Parvis, *Marcellus*, 100, also postulates a year between the two councils, but instead of a vacancy she places the episcopacy of Paulinus of Tyre in this period.

As for Eusebius's role in the first council, a third-century precedent explains how he could have been in Antioch yet not a participant. During the prolonged effort to remove Paul of Samosata from the same bishopric, the council that judged him had summoned authorities from as far away as Alexandria and Cappadocia to help in their deliberations.³⁶ For Eustathius, Eusebius would have served as just such a consultant and thus could have been in a position to effect Eustathius's ouster without being an actual member of the council.

But critical questions still need to be answered, and the most serious of these involve Eusebius. His own role is among the matters that the bishop chose to pass over in silence. Only from others do we learn that he led the charge against Eustathius and therefore would have been widely viewed as the author of his downfall. Even so, we are left in the dark when it comes to being any more precise about the role he played. We know, for instance, that Eusebius advised against his own appointment, but we do not know how readily, or at what point in the process, he did so. It is customary to assume he acted immediately, but since all the evidence Eusebius provides comes from the end of the process, it might be useful to conjure up a different scenario.

There are many reasons why Eusebius might have preferred to stay in Caesarea, where he had been bishop for more than a decade and where he also had the library originally founded by Origen that was one of the great repositories of Christian knowledge.³⁷ Still, if the library were indeed private, as has been suggested, then Eusebius might well have been able to take it with him.³⁸ Moreover, Antioch was an illustrious setting with a storied past. It was the place where the term *Christian* first came into use, and its bishop sat on an apostolic throne. Even a saint would have been tempted.³⁹ As a renowned scholar, Eusebius was the type of luminary that the Antiochenes were

36. Millar, "Paul of Samosata," II (Dionysius of Alexandria, Firmilian of Caesarea in Cappadocia).

37. Andrew Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea*, *Vigiliae Christianae*, Supplements, vol. 67 (Leiden 2003). For a fine study of the importance of Caesarea in shaping Eusebius's outlook, see David DeVore, *Greek Historiography, Roman Society, Christian Empire: The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius of Caesarea* (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2013), chapters 4–5.

38. For an argument that Eusebius technically had ownership of the library, see Marco Frenschkowski, "Studien zur Geschichte der Bibliothek von Cäsarea," in *New Testament Manuscripts*, ed. T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 53–104. (I am grateful to David DeVore for this reference.)

39. For a discussion of the importance of the see and probable reason for Eusebius's refusal, see Oded Irshai, "Fourth-Century Christian Palestinian Politics: A Glimpse at Eusebius of Caesarea's Local Political Career and Its *Nachleben* in Christian Memory," in *Reconsidering Eusebius: Collected*

accustomed to seeking for their patriarchal throne, and as the leader in the charge against Eustathius, he was an obvious candidate to pick up the mantle dropped when Eustathius replaced Eusebius's close friend, Paulinus of Tyre. He evidently had strong backing both among the laity and the bishops in the council.⁴⁰ Eusebius's first thought might well have been to let the process run its course. This would mean his nomination went forward to Constantine before he decided—because of the intense opposition of Eustathius's supporters or for some other reason—that it would be best to withdraw, reminding both the Antiochenes and the emperor (in a letter he dispatched at this point) of the tradition (reaffirmed by the council of Nicaea) that bishops should stay in the see where they had first been elevated. The council then turned to the otherwise unknown Eulalius, presumably as a compromise candidate, and Eusebius returned to Caesarea.

When Eulalius died shortly afterward—no more than a few months, in Burgess's assessment⁴¹—a hastily reassembled council then nominated Eusebius. That it did so suggests that Eusebius's earlier refusal had been something short of categorical; one can imagine a new nomination that pointed out he had said he *could not* accept the transfer, not that he *would not* accept it. This would be the new circumstance that Constantine alludes to in his own letter to Eusebius, and it would explain why the emperor wanted him to go to Antioch to do what he had already done. As a metropolitan bishop, Eusebius would have assumed the presidency of such a council.

This can only be an imaginative reconstruction, but it is one that fits the known facts, and it answers some key questions. It explains why Eusebius had to decline the appointment a second time, and why a second council was

Papers on Literary, Historical, and Theological Issues, ed. Sabrina Inowlocki and Claudio Zamagni, *Vigiliae Christianae*, Supplements, vol. 107 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 36.

40. Sozomen, *HE* 2.19.3. Eusebius dedicated to Paulinus both his *Onomasticon* and the tenth book of his *HE* (which contains a lengthy speech filled with praise of Paulinus's new church in Tyre). On this speech, see Christine Smith, "Christian Rhetoric in Eusebius's Panegyric at Tyre," *Vigiliae Christianae* 43 (1989): 226–47; Michael Simmons, "Eusebius' Panegyric at the Dedication of the Church at Tyre A.D. 315: Anti-Porphyrian Themes in Christian Rhetoric of the Later Roman Empire," *Studia Patristica* 37 (2001): 597–607. On Paulinus's theology, Alastair Logan, "Marcellus of Ancyra on Origen and Arianism," in *Origeniana septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Wolfgang Bienert and Uwe Kühneweg, *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 137 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999): 159–63; Markus Vinzent, "Origenes als *Subscriptum*: Paulinus von Tyrus und die origenistische Diadoche," in Bienert and Kühneweg, *Origeniana septima*, 149–57.

41. Burgess, "Deposition of Eustathius," 160, thinks Eulalius "lasted perhaps three months."

necessary. But it does not account for Constantine's role, or that of Eustathius himself.

3. IMPERIAL INTERVENTION

Constantine's motive for getting involved in this situation is rarely questioned, because the answer seems so obvious: Eustathius's removal led his followers to take to the streets. Urban unrest was never something emperors could ignore, especially when it occurred in cities like Antioch, with large and volatile populations, and Eusebius claims the church of Antioch was verging on a disaster "of tragic proportions" that would have "all but completely destroyed" the city (*VC* 3.59.2). This was the ultimate test for any emperor. To control such a situation required a delicate balance between showing restraint and the overt display of brute force.⁴² With local paramilitary ("police") forces practically nonexistent, emperors had few resources to deploy short of regular troops, and such troops were not trained to exercise restraint. The results could be disastrous, as later in the century Theodosius I learned when he unleashed the military on the citizens of Thessalonika. The same emperor's earlier handling of the Riot of the Statues in Antioch provides a counterexample, wherein instead of troops the emperor sent a fact-finding commission and delayed taking action while local orators (led in this case by the charismatic Christian priest John Chrysostom) kept the populace on edge by alternately stoking their fear of reprisals and predicting mercy in return for true repentance.⁴³

42. Benjamin Kelly, "Riot Control and Imperial Ideology in the Roman Empire," *Phoenix* 61 (2007): 150–76.

43. For the role of rhetoric in the Riot of the Statues, see David Hunter, "Preaching and Propaganda in Fourth Century Antioch: John Chrysostom's Homilies on the Statues," in *Preaching in the Patristic Age: Studies in Honor of W. Burghardt*, ed. D. Hunter (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), 119–38, Dorothea French, "Rhetoric and the Rebellion of A.D. 387 in Antioch," *Historia* 47 (1998): 468–84; Hartmut Leppin, "Steuern, Aufstand und Rhetoren: Der Antiochener Steuer-aufstand von 387 in christlicher und heidnischer Deutung," in *Gedeutete Realität: Krisen, Wirklichkeiten, Interpretationen* (3.–6. Jb. n. Chr.), ed. Hartwin Brandt, *Historia Einzelschriften* 134 (Stuttgart, 1999), 103–23. On the deficiencies of local resources, see Alan Cameron, *Porphyrius the Charioteer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 237. More recently, Geoffrey Greatrex, "The Emperor, The People, and Urban Violence in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries," in *Religious Violence in the Ancient World: From Classical Athens to Late Antiquity*, ed. Jitse Dijkstra and Christian Raschle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 395, puts the issue succinctly: "Troops were ill equipped to handle street fighting and riots; moreover, their deployment might easily escalate an already delicate situation." See, more generally, C. Fuhrmann, *Policing the Roman Empire: Soldiers, Administration, and Public Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). On the importance of Theodosius I's handling of the riot in Thessalonika, see Neil McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church*

Similarly, there has been little need to examine Eustathius's role in the disturbances, even though Eusebius's account leaves much to be desired. He tells us that, as part of his "persuasion and pleading," the emperor told the Antiochenes that he had personally "listened to the one who caused the sedition" (ὡς τοῦ τῆς στάσεως αἰτίου διακηκῶς αὐτοῦ εἶη), but he does not name this individual, and it is ironic that the only person Constantine claims in the surviving letters to have listened to is Eusebius himself. Eusebius was indeed deeply involved, but the fifth-century church historians who tell us more of the story place the blame on a different Eusebius—the bishop of Nicomedia, who became the *bête noire* to Athanasius, whose writings they all relied on.⁴⁴ Eusebius of Nicomedia was Arius's leading champion before and during the council of Nicaea. Along with his close ally Theognis of Nicaea, he had ultimately subscribed to the Nicene Creed, but within months of the council, Constantine sent both bishops into exile for sharing communion with Arian sympathizers. Constantine eventually allowed the pair to return; the date is uncertain, but it is not likely to have been before Eustathius's removal.⁴⁵ However, there is something to be gleaned from Theodoret's account, which is the fullest, and one that seems to be based on Antiochene sources not used by the others.⁴⁶

and Court in a Christian Capital (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 291–360, and, for a deconstruction, Luke Gardiner, "Intimations of a Massacre: Thessalonica, Theodosius I and Self-Ironization in Socrates Scholasticus's *Historia ecclesiastica*," *Studies in Church History* 49 (2013): 29–41. On the role of violence in Antioch, see Dayna Kalleres, *City of Demons: Violence, Ritual, and Christian Power in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015). More broadly, Michael Whitby, "Factions, Bishops, Violence, and Urban Decline," in *Die Stadt in der Spätantike—Niedergang oder Wandel?*, ed. Jens-Uwe Krause and Christian Witschel, *Historia Einzelschriften* 190 (Stuttgart, 2006), 441–61; Daniëlle Sloopjes, "Crowd Behavior in Late Antique Rome," in *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome: Conflict, Competition, and Coexistence in the Fourth Century*, ed. Michele Salzman, Marianne Sághy, and Rita Lizzi Testa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 178–94; S. Janniard, "Les empereurs chrétiens et l'usage de l'armée pour réprimer les déviances religieuses aux IV^e et V^e siècles," in *Le prince chrétien de Constantin aux royautés barbares (IV^e–VIII^e siècle)*, ed. Sylvain Destephen, Bruno Dumézil, and Hervé Inglebert (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2018), 399–413; Kate Cooper, "Constantine the Populist," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 27 (2019): 241–70; Jitse Dijkstra, "Crowd Behaviour and the Destruction of the Serapeum in Alexandria in 391/392 CE," in Dijkstra and Raschle, *Religious Violence*, 286–305.

44. Gwynne, *The Eusebians*, 141, urges caution in using such a polarized view.

45. As pointed out by Chadwick, "Fall of Eustathius," 30, who deemed March of 328 the earliest plausible date for his return. Burgess's date of 328 for the council (see my note 21) would allow for his involvement, but this date is an outlier.

46. Viz., *Théodoret de Cyr*, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, t. I, text grec de Léon Parmentier et Gunther C. Hansen, trans. Pierre Canivet, vol. I, Sources Chrétienne 501 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2006), 70–72.

After returning from exile, Theodoret writes, Eusebius and Theognis received permission from Constantine to travel to Jerusalem, ostensibly to see the emperor's new buildings but in reality to meet with co-conspirators to plot the downfall of Eustathius. "When they reached Antioch, they put on a friendly face, and Eustathius, the great champion of truth, extended the greatest hospitality and received them with complete brotherly affection. On arriving in the Holy Land they met with the like-minded Eusebius of Caesarea, Patrophilus of Scythopolis, Aetius of Lydda, Theodotus of Laodicia, and all the others who had the Arian disease. They brought them into the plot and went with them to Antioch."⁴⁷ At the ensuing council, Theodoret continues, the conspirators brought in a prostitute who swore under oath that Eustathius was the father of her child. Challenged by Eustathius, the woman held her ground and the bishop was found guilty and deposed. But, Theodoret insists, that was only because the majority of bishops knew nothing of the plot to depose him. Those whose eyes were open urged Eustathius to fight back, but "those who perpetrated the deed ran to the emperor and, persuading him that the indictment was true and the deposition vote legitimate, they caused this champion of piety and chastity to be sent into exile as an adulterer and tyrant. He was taken across Thrace to a city in Illyricum."⁴⁸

Theodoret was writing more than a century after the event, and he clearly had an axe to grind. His account is riddled with anachronisms: he identifies Eusebius of Nicomedia as bishop of Constantinople, a post he did not assume until 339, and in the late 320s Constantine's building project in Jerusalem was just getting off the ground. (The dedication ceremony did not occur until 335.) The biggest anachronism is the role he assigns to Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis. The date of their recall is disputed, but even if Constantine had allowed them to return earlier, they would not have been reinstated in their sees before the council of Nicomedia met between December 327 and January 328,⁴⁹ and the thought that Eustathius would have received them in any fashion, much less with open arms, before they had been thus rehabilitated is difficult to entertain. Constantine's letter to the bishops at Antioch (*VC* 3.62) seemingly seals the case against Eusebius of Nicomedia's participation. In it, the emperor salutes "Theodotus, Theodorus, Narcissus, Aetius, Alpheus, and the rest of the bishops who are at Antioch." Assuming he

47. Theodoret, *HE* 1.21.3–4.

48. Theodoret, *HE* 1.21.9.

49. Barnes, "Emperors and Bishops," 61.

followed protocol, had either of the two Eusebii presided or even attended, their names should have come first, or at least prior to the bishops named, all of whom were under Antioch's jurisdiction.⁵⁰

Stripped of its persiflage, Theodoret's account conforms to the standard sequence of events: dethroned by a council, Eustathius fights back but is sent into exile after Constantine receives the council's report. We may presume that one part of Eustathius's counterattack consisted of the rioting otherwise ignored by Theodoret. But a potentially more serious omission is Eustathius's alleged treatment of Helena. At most, Theodoret deals with it indirectly, since the point of his account of Eustathius's gracious reception of Eusebius and Theognis is not simply to underscore the hypocrisy of his opponents but also to highlight the naive goodness of their target, thereby indirectly rebutting the charge that such a bishop could ever have insulted the emperor's mother.

An argument from silence is rarely much of an argument, but it should be noted that without the Helena story Theodoret trips himself up. Focusing on the adultery issue allowed him to sidestep the theological charges recounted by two other fifth-century church historians (Socrates and Sozomen), but he had closed his own account of the council of Nicaea with a report that Constantine so opposed accusations of episcopal peccadillos that he had told the bishops that even if he witnessed such an act with his own eyes he would throw his purple robe over it to prevent the authority of the priesthood from being tarnished. It is inherently implausible to think that, feeling as strongly as he did, Constantine would have condoned so public an airing of such a charge.⁵¹ So the question becomes, why did Theodoret prefer the adultery issue to one that carried no such taint?

He surely knew the story of Helena's run-in with Eustathius: like all the other fifth-century historians, Theodoret derived his understanding of this period from the writings of Athanasius, who is the source of that story.⁵²

50. As noted by Hanson, *Search*, 175. Cf. Chadwick, "Fall of Eustathius," 34. Cameron and Hall, *Life*, 306, point out that Theodotus and Narcissus had been conditionally excommunicated (as was Eusebius of Caesarea himself) by a council of Antioch that met prior to Nicaea.

51. Theodotus, *HE* I.11.6: φασὶ δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ τὸδε προσθεῖναι, ὡς εἰ αὐτόπτης ἐπισκόπου γάμον ἀλλότριον διορτύττοτος γένοιτο, συγκαλύψαι ἂν τῇ πορφυρίδι τὸ παρανόμως γινόμενον, ὡς ἂν μὴ βλάβῃ τοὺς θεωμένους τῶν δρωμένων ἢ ὄψις. Socrates, *HE* 1.24, and Sozomen, *HE* 2.18, give Sabellianism (failure to distinguish sufficiently between Father and Son) as the reason for Eustathius's fall, although at *HE* 2.19 Sozomen also acknowledges that the morals charge was used as a pretext.

52. Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* 4, in *Athanasius Werke*, ed. H. G. Opitz, Bd. 2, T. 1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1940), 184–85; see Chadwick, "Fall of Eustathius," 20. Athanasius's influence is ably deconstructed by Gwynn, *The Eusebians*, e.g., 114.

Without getting too hypothetical, the combination of this silence with Theodoret's evident intent to preemptively absolve Eustathius of committing such an affront suggests that the confrontation was not just (as Chadwick thought) more plausible, it was also more offensive—and not just to the laity. If Constantine was already smarting from Eustathius's caustic characterization of those who sought a consensus position at Nicaea (if not directed at himself personally, it certainly was aimed at those who shared his priorities), it is not difficult to imagine how combustible adding a slight to Helena to that mixture would have been. Might Constantine have taken matters into his own hands, without waiting for a council to act? For a theological charge, surely not. But protocols for imperial intervention in other matters were only just being established at this stage, and bishops had not yet acquired the right to be judged by their peers (*privilegium fori*), as enjoyed by senators and the military. In any case, insulting an Augusta was an act of *lèse majesté*, and his reaction a decade later to an affront by Athanasius shows that the emperor had little tolerance for such insults.⁵³

It should be noted that Athanasius says nothing about a council being involved. Instead, he writes, Constantine at once sent the bishop into exile. Athanasius may simply have wanted to skirt an embarrassing detail, but his account could be the truth, just not the whole truth. Constantine need not have waited to deal with the personal affront, while still leaving it to a council—presumably, judging by the addressees on Constantine's letter, one of the regularly scheduled provincial councils intended to deal with just such matters—to determine Eustathius's ultimate fate.⁵⁴ Might the exile have occurred before the council acted? Socrates and Sozomen both indicate that the rioting

53. H. A. Drake, "Nicaea to Tyre (325–335): The Bumpy Road to a Christian Empire," *Antiquité Tardive* 22 (2014): 43–52. Constantine extended to bishops the right to hear civil cases, and councils had become the venue for trials on conduct related to their duties as bishops, but the earliest surviving law to establish that bishops could not be accused in the courts is Codex Theodosianus 16.2.12, issued by Constantius II in 355. A later law, Codex Theodosianus 16.2.23, issued in 376 in the names of Valens, Gratian, and Valentinian, specifically excludes criminal offenses from the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical synods. On bishops' courts (*episcopalis audientia*), see Adrian Sirks, "The *Episcopalis Audientia* in Late Antiquity," *Droit et Cultures* 65 (2013): 79–88. On exile as the preferred episcopal penalty, see Eric Fournier, "Constantine and Episcopal Banishment: Continuity and Change in the Settlement of Christian Disputes," in *Clerical Exile in Late Antiquity*, ed. Julia Hilner, Jörg Ulrich, and Jakob Engberg (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2016): 47–65. For the likely date of Helena's elevation, see my note 15.

54. The fifth canon of the council of Nicaea makes provision for provincial councils to convene semiannually, once before Lent in the spring and again in autumn, and the canons subsequently produced by the council of Antioch were even more specific: canon 20 ruled that the first should be held four weeks before Pentecost and the other in mid-October. Nicaea canon 5 specified that these

broke out after Eustathius was deposed, but at the remove of more than a century the distinction between exile and his subsequent removal by a council might easily have eluded them.

Theodoret's account, heavily weighted as it is, tells us the emperor acted only after receiving a delegation from the council, and that this meeting occurred after Eustathius had chosen to fight the council's decision (presumably by instigating demonstrations by his supporters, and also by taking his case personally to the emperor, as Athanasius would do on more than one occasion). The way in which Eusebius of Caesarea writes of "the author of the sedition" apparently confirms that the interview occurred after the dispute had spilled into the streets, and that Eustathius was still in Antioch when it began. Following Eusebius's lead, Sozomen also writes that Constantine "regarded him [Eustathius] with suspicion as the author of the tumult" (*HE* 2.19), thereby also indicating that Constantine only became involved after Eustathius had been removed but not yet sent into exile.

While this is indeed the most likely scenario, some attention should be paid to the coy way Eusebius deals with the exile, in *VC* 3.59, for the allusive nature of his statement does much more than his professed purpose to avoid bringing "discredit on the persons accused" (*VC* 3.59.4). It is, in fact, vintage Eusebius: claiming the high ground while also deflecting attention from his own substantial role in Eustathius's downfall. The enmity between the two bishops went back at least as far as a council at Antioch that met prior to the council of Nicaea and provisionally excommunicated Eusebius, along with two other bishops, Theodotus of Laodicea and Narcissus of Neronias. Eustathius attended this council and may even have presided as the metropolis's newly installed bishop.⁵⁵ It is certainly no coincidence that Theodotus and Narcissus are the first and third bishops addressed by Constantine in his letter to the council, and their prominence (with Theodotus evidently presiding) suggests that theology played at least as much a role in Eustathius's downfall as the charge of moral failings that Theodoret highlighted. The

councils should deal with excommunications. See Jonkers, *Acta et symbola*, 41; Andreas Weckworth, "The Twenty Canons of the Council of Nicaea," in Kim, *Cambridge Companion*, 158–76.

55. The existence of this council became known early in the 20th century, when Edouard Schwartz discovered a Syriac version of the council's synodal letter. Constantine's emissary, Ossius of Cordoba, is named first among the signatories, a position usually accorded the presiding bishop, but this might just have been honorific; Eustathius is second to be named. An English translation of the letter by Aaron J. West can be accessed online at Wisconsin Lutheran College's website, Fourth Century Christianity: <https://www.fourthcentury.com/urkunde-18>. The action against Eusebius is in § 14.

broadside that Eusebius exchanged with Eustathius are another indication that theology held center stage, and that Chadwick was right to dismiss the other complaints as stock charges.⁵⁶ This being so, there is an equally plausible scenario in which the demonstrations that initially broke out at the time of Eustathius's exile were aggravated once his enemy, Eusebius of Caesarea, surfaced as a candidate to succeed him.⁵⁷

While it is not clear exactly when the Antiochene laity first took their disagreement over the bishop's chair to the streets, two conclusions are viable. First, the suspicion that Eustathius himself was at the bottom of the disturbances provides an early example of the sway that a strong-minded bishop could hold over his congregation (as Ambrose of Milan would put it half a century later, "it is normal for bishops to restrain crowds and to be lovers of peace, except when they are themselves roused by some wrong done to God, or by an insult to the Church"⁵⁸). Second, whenever the face-off started, Eusebius did Constantine a distinct service when he took his own name out of consideration, as a century later the church historian Socrates acknowledged when he gave the bishop equal credit with Constantine for helping defuse the situation.⁵⁹

56. See my note 13. Socrates, *HE* 1.24, and Sozomen, *HE* 2.18, both identify a theological charge (Sabellianism) as the cause of Eustathius's downfall. To the contrary, Parvis, *Marcellus*, 105–107, prefers Theodore's account and argues that the charge of immorality was so important that it caused Constantine to soften his stance against the Arians. See further Logan, "Marcellus of Ancyra and Anti-Arian Polemic," *Studia patristica* 19 (1989): 189–97, and Logan, "Marcellus of Ancyra and the Councils of AD 325: Antioch, Ancyra and Nicaea," *Journal of Theological Studies* 43, no. 2 (1992): 428–46.

57. Sozomen, *HE* 2.18, names Eusebius and Eustathius as the leaders of the two theological camps that emerged in the aftermath of the council of Nicaea.

58. Ambrose, letter 40.6: "sacerdotes enim turbarum moderatores sunt, studiosi pacis, nisi cum et ipsi moventur injuria Dei, aut Ecclesiae contumelia," in *Sancti Ambrosii: Epistula et acta*, ed. Michaela Zelzer, *Sancti Ambrosii Opera*, p. 10, t. 3 *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 82 (Vienna, 1982), 165; translation from J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz and Carole Hill, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, *Translated Texts for Historians* 43 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 99. On the growing power of bishops, see H. A. Drake, "Intolerance, Religious Violence and Political Legitimacy in Late Antiquity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79 (2011): 193–235; Maijastina Kahlos, "Pacifiers and Instigators: Bishops and Interreligious Conflicts," in *The Role of the Bishop in Late Antiquity: Conflict and Compromise*, ed. Andrew Fear, José Fernández Ubiña, Mar Marcos (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 63–82.

59. Socrates, *HE* 1.24.7: "The emperor through his letters and Eusebius by declining brought a halt to the escalating turmoil, whereupon the emperor honored him and wrote to him praising his decision and called him blessed, since not just one city but virtually the whole world judged him worthy of its bishopric." For Socrates's treatment of Eusebius, see Gardiner, "Intimations," 31.

The Helena story thus helps bring events into focus. The most likely date for her travel is 327, although she may have begun her progress during the final months of 326; 327 is also the earliest plausible year for Eustathius's removal, and the year when Constantine would have been most accessible to a delegation from Antioch.

The preliminary timeline can be fleshed out with the sequence suggested by close examination of Constantine's letters:

December 323	Philogonius dies; Paulinus of Tyre translated to Antioch
Early 325	Paulinus dies; Eustathius translated to Antioch, where a council provisionally excommunicates Eusebius along with Theodotus of Laodicea and Narcissus of Neronias
May/June—July 325	Council of Nicaea; Constantine supports Eusebius's credal statement
March–December 326	Constantine goes to Rome to celebrate <i>vicennalia</i> , attested in Sirmium on 31 December; Constantine exiles Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Antioch
Late 326 / early 327	Helena travels to Jerusalem via Antioch
Mid-327	Constantine in Nicomedia and environs; learns of insult to Helena
Autumn 327	First council of Antioch deposes Eustathius; rioting breaks out; Constantine interviews "author of the sedition" and exiles Eustathius; Eusebius decides he cannot accept bishopric. Council installs Eulalius
December 327 / January 328	Council of Nicomedia reinstates Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Antioch
Spring 328	Eulalius dies; reconvened council (re)nominates Eusebius; rioting ensues; Constantine sends imperial officials and writes to bishops and laity urging unity and to Eusebius directing him to return to Antioch; Eusebius presides over second council, which selects Euphronius and issues canons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spring 328–spring 329, Constantine campaigns on Rhine ○ July 328, Constantine in Moesia to open stone bridge across Danube ○ September–29 December 328, Constantine in Trier
Spring/fall 329	Constantine campaigns in Balkans
Spring 330	Constantine dedicates Constantinople; remains in vicinity until spring 332, when he campaigns against Goths

Reached by very different means, this timeline does not differ greatly from results achieved by others.⁶⁰ Its chief difference is that it brings Eusebius of Caesarea out of the shadows and offers a different interpretation of his role in the two councils. But for present purposes its most important use is to create an opportunity to think about the relationship between Constantine and Eusebius in a different way. Instead of something stable and fixed, it was one that changed and grew with the times.

4. AUTHOR AND SUBJECT

The letter Constantine wrote to the Antiochenes shows his mastery of the strengths, and limitations, of imperial power. As he counseled the laity to find a consensus candidate, he also showed just enough of the iron inside his velvet glove for them to know that if they did otherwise there would be consequences. Hence, in a sentence that, in its bluntness, leaps out from the gentle pleading that cushions it, Constantine makes it clear that failure to resolve their differences was not an option: “I myself state explicitly and emphatically (διαρρήδην καὶ εὐτόλμως) that this act is liable to the charge of provoking the disorder of large-scale civil strife” (*VC* 3.60.7). Despite Eusebius’s many good qualities, Constantine warns, the Antiochenes should heed the advice he is giving them (3.60.7). To reinforce the point, he closed his letter with another warning. The Antiochenes, he writes, must “make every proper effort to identify the man you need, setting aside all riotous and disorderly clamour; that sort of thing is always wrong, and it is from the striking together of conflicting materials that sparks and flames are kindled” (3.60.8).

It is significant that Eusebius referred to this letter as an example of the emperor’s healing ministration, because the situation required just such a touch. But without Eusebius’s support, as the historian Socrates recognized, it would have been much more difficult for the emperor to reject a candidate that had the wide appeal Eusebius evidently enjoyed. When he cited an apostolic rule against translating bishops from one see to another, Eusebius gave the emperor the pretext he needed to deny the majority their choice.

60. Burgess, “Deposition of Eustathius,” 158. Parvis, *Marcellus*, 100–101, assigns Helena’s journey to autumn 326–winter 327, the deposition of Eustathius and the start of riots (“fed by universal confusion and rumours about what has actually happened”) to summer–autumn 327, the recall and pardon of Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis to autumn 327–spring 328, and the second council presided over by Eusebius of Caesarea to September 328. It should be noted that she does not accept Burgess’s redating of the episcopacy of Paulinus of Tyre (see my note 10), and instead keeps both his and Eulalius’s tenure in the period of 327–328.

Even though the rule had recently been confirmed by canon 5 of the council of Nicaea, there is little reason to expect it would have been so effective if Eusebius had not himself invoked it, since the Antiochenes do not seem to have felt governed by it. It had not served as a deterrent for Paulinus of Tyre to move to Antioch or, for that matter, for Eustathius himself, whose original see had been Beroea. Proud of their ancient heritage and present preeminence, neither the majority that nominated Eusebius nor the minority that opposed him gave any indication that the Nicene canon influenced their position. But this is precisely the pretext that Eusebius invoked when he spoke to the Antiochenes and also when he wrote to Constantine.

To say invoking the apostolic rule was a pretext is not to deny its value. That Constantine cited it in each of the three letters shows how effective he thought it was. Nor does it mean that Eusebius was insincere in putting it forward. It is simply to point out that Constantine's chief concern, as that of any emperor, was to maintain public order, and he would gladly have embraced any reason that allowed him to do so. But, as he specifically told the Antiochenes, installing Eusebius would only lead to more trouble. The apostolic rule allowed Constantine to claim the moral high ground. To chastise the majority for throwing their weight around, instead of threatening the minority for their intransigence, was a stroke of genius, allowing him to appear impartial, not favoring one side or the other. And it was Eusebius who gave him that cover. Small wonder, then, that Constantine asked Eusebius to go to Antioch and take charge of the situation.

This picture of their relationship runs counter to the frequent assertion that Eusebius was decidedly the junior partner, utterly dependent on Constantine for protection from his ecclesiastical enemies.⁶¹ It started at Nicaea, so the story goes, where Eusebius was under the shadow of excommunication, thanks to the actions of the council of Antioch that had met a few months earlier. But after Eusebius presented the creed of his church in Caesarea as evidence of his orthodoxy, Constantine immediately pronounced himself satisfied, thereby effectively ending this humiliating episode (and probably inspiring Eustathius's vitriolic comments quoted by Theodoret).⁶²

61. Gardiner, "Intimations," 30, traces this viewpoint back to Socrates in the fifth century, who, he writes, "depicted Eusebius of Caesarea as a heresy-hunter and a flatterer of the Christian emperor Constantine (306–37), more concerned with sycophancy than accuracy."

62. Eusebius's letter appears in Socrates, *HE* 1.8, and Theodoret, *HE* 1.12, = Opitz, ed., *Urkunde* 22, in *Athanasius Werke*, Bd. 3, T. 1, *Urkunden zur Geschichte des Arianischen Streites*, 318–328 (Berlin, 1934), 43–44. For a translation and commentary, Henryk Pietras, *Council of Nicaea* (325):

Instead, the likelihood that Eusebius performed an important service for the emperor when he withdrew as a candidate for the bishopric of Antioch accords with a wave of newer scholarship that has presented an alternative picture of an independent-minded bishop who was firmly grounded in his own priorities and in a position to earn the emperor's respect and gratitude. Even at Nicaea, Oded Irshai has concluded, Eusebius's support of the questionable term *homoousios* allowed centrists "to draft a document of faith which avoided the pitfalls of contemporary theology, defused the tension, and rallied all present in support."⁶³ And James Corke-Webster, after an extensive study of Eusebius's vision of a Christian empire, firmly concluded that "Eusebius was not Constantine's man."⁶⁴ What Eusebius had that was so valuable in both situations was credibility with the opposition. Not only was he widely respected for his scholarship, but he had also intervened on behalf of the Alexandrian priest Arius, whose views about the Father and Son in the Trinity had precipitated the need for the council of Nicaea.⁶⁵ Thus, when he lent his support to the controversial term *homoousios*, Eusebius resolved the misgivings of other bishops who saw merit in Arius's argument. Later, during the Antioch troubles, his assumption of the council presidency, along with his unequivocal refusal of the bishopric, served to reconcile his supporters to the episcopate of Constantine's nominee. In both cases, he showed the emperor that he was what in modern terms would be called a team player.

To Constantine, this was a prized trait. Early in the *VC*, Eusebius describes the emperor's attitude when meeting with bishops in this way: "Such as he saw able to be prevailed upon by argument and adopting a calm

Religious and Political Context, Documents, Commentaries (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2016), 179–90. For Eustathius's reaction, see my note 5.

63. Irshai, "Palestinian Politics," 34.

64. James Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire: Constructing Church and Rome in the Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 201. For similarly positive conclusions, see Aaron Johnson, *Eusebius* (London: J. B. Taurus, 2014), 151: "Some restraint should be exercised in characterizing the relationship of Constantine and Eusebius and any hasty assumptions about fawning flattery and uncritical acceptance of the first Christian emperor." DeVore, *Greek Historiography*, 235: "Before the arrival of a Christian emperor Eusebius had already staked out a role for the church as the Empire's educators and religious advisors."

65. On the council, see Kim, *Cambridge Companion*. On the controversy, Rebecca Lyman, "A Topography of Heresy: Mapping the Rhetorical Creation of Arianism," in *Arianism after Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts*, ed. Michel Barnes and Daniel Williams (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 45–62; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford, 2004); Giuseppe Bartolozzi, "L'ὁμοούσιος niceno: alcune considerazioni," *Augustinianum* 53, no. 2 (2013): 375–92. For Eusebius's letter, see my note 62.

and conciliatory attitude, he commended most warmly, showing how he favoured general unanimity, but the obstinate he rejected” (*VC* 1.44.3). A century later, the church historian Socrates illustrated Constantine’s preference precisely when he told a story about the emperor’s encounter at Nicaea with the Novatian bishop Acesius. The Novatians were schismatics that had split from the main Christian body, not over theology or doctrine but because they thought those Christians who had caved to the pressures of persecution were being treated too leniently. When he learned that Acesius was such a rigorist, Constantine laughed him off, saying, “Get a ladder, Acesius, and climb alone into heaven.”⁶⁶

The language Constantine used in his letter to the Antiochenes shows that, by then, he had made this important assessment of Eusebius. He acknowledged, of course, the bishop’s “learning” (παιδεύσεως), but he twice praised the bishop’s ἐπιεικεία, a term with a root meaning “to be appropriate or reasonable.” Translators have variously rendered it as *moderation*, *integrity*, or *decency*.⁶⁷ This was an important trait to Constantine. He also uses the term at the conclusion of his “letter to the provincials” in reference to his own ἐπιεικεία (usually translated in this instance as *clemency*⁶⁸) and again in the letter he sent to the Persian shah, Shapur II, where he describes it as a trait that makes men beloved to God (*VC* 4.10.2). Applying this term to Eusebius thus amounts to high praise; it shows that the bishop had won the emperor’s confidence.

The rhetorical skills that led Cameron to label Eusebius a master apologist are indeed on full display in the *VC*, but the bishop’s treatment of the Antioch affair allows us to pinpoint one particular trait that helps explain the extraordinary authority vested in the *VC* over the ages. This was his

66. Socrates, *HE* 1.10: Ταῦτα εἰπόντος τοῦ Ἀκεσίου, ἐπειπεῖν τὸν βασιλέα, Ἰθὺς, ὃ Ἀκέσιε, κλίμακα καὶ μόνος ἀνάβηθι εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν.’ See further H. A. Drake, “Constantine and Consensus,” *Church History* 64 (1995): 1–15.

67. *VC* 3.60.3, 3.60.8 (see also my note 31). Cameron and Hall, *Life*: “integrity”; Dräger, *Eusebios*: “Mäßigung”; Bleckmann and Schneider, *De vita Constantini*: “Integrität” at 3.60.8, “Anständigkeit” at 3.60.3; Pietri and Rondeau, *Eusèbe de Césarée*: “équité” at 3.60.8, “modération” at 3.60.3. G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), offers “forbearance,” “gentleness,” “modesty,” and “reasonableness.” Jan Bremmer, “Man, Magic, and Martyrdom in the Acts of Andrew,” in *The Apocryphal Acts of Andrew*, ed. Jan Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2000): 17, provides epigraphic examples and concludes, “In all these cases, the stress on moderation and softness is an indication of the growing judicial harshness of the period, which needed to be countered by praising the moderation and gentleness of the *grands seigneurs*.” For the trend to brutal methods, see Ramsay MacMullen, “Judicial Savagery in the Roman Empire,” *Chiron* 16 (1986): 147–66.

68. *VC* 2.60.2. Plutarch uses it for Caesar’s “clemency” in his *Life of Caesar*, 57: LSJ, s.v., II.

penchant for circumlocution to elide differences between his own views and those of his imperial subject. In his brief narrative, Eusebius invoked the spirit of envy ($\phi\theta\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$) to explain the conflict.⁶⁹ As Cameron and Hall have pointed out, Eusebius typically cited envy as the cause for dissention in the church.⁷⁰ But in this instance it begs a very large question: Who, precisely, was being envious of whom? And for what reason? It thus serves to obscure the role that Eusebius himself played, first as Eustathius's principal opponent in the barrage of charges and countercharges that preceded his eviction, then as a controversial nominee to replace him, and finally as chair of at least one of the councils that sat in Antioch during this time.⁷¹ Except for his refusal to accept translation to the bishopric, which leaves him covered in praise, none of this involvement appears in Eusebius's account. Instead, he presents himself as a conciliator, refusing to name names and including only those letters that would not "renew the memory of evils" (*VC* 3.59). The effect was to position himself as a moderate, above the need to settle scores or engage in the kind of conflict that the spirit of envy aroused in others.

There is no reason to doubt that Eusebius shared Constantine's preference for moderation, or that he was equally devoted to the principle of unity.⁷² But by consistently aligning himself with the emperor and ignoring points of potential conflict, Eusebius leaves the impression that he and the emperor

69. *VC* 3.59.2. As observed by Ronald Ridley, "Anonymity in the *Vita Constantini*," *Byzantion* 50 (1980): 241–58, Eusebius in general avoids naming names in the *VC*. The chapter headings, which seem to have been done by another hand, do sometimes supply a name. They were used by Brian Warmington, "The Sources of Some Constantinian Documents in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History and Life of Constantine," *Studia Patristica* 18, v. 1 (1985): 93–98, to identify a possible means for Eusebius to have obtained Constantine's letters.

70. Cameron and Hall, *Life*, 305. Corke-Webster has called attention to the role of "personification metaphors" in establishing an author's authority: "Author and Authority: Literary Representations of Moral Authority in Eusebius of Caesarea's *The Martyrs of Palestine*," in *Christian Martyrdom in Late Antiquity: History and Discourse, Tradition and Religious Identity*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt and Johan Leemans (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2012), 62–63.

71. Socrates, *HE* 1.23. Chadwick, "Fall of Eustathius," 32. For envy, see *VC* 3.59.2. For a recent appreciation of the role of theological disputes in Eusebius's career, see Irshai, "Palestinian politics," 25–38.

72. See for example Eusebius, *HE* 8.1.6, in *Eusèbe de Césarée: Histoire ecclésiastique et Les martyrs en Palestine*, ed. and trans. Gustave Bardy, 4 vols., Sources chrétiennes 31, 41, 55, 73 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1952–60), where he describes the peaceful years prior to the outbreak of Diocletian's persecution as a time when envy had no power. Cf. David DeVore, "Character and Convention in the Letters of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 7, no. 2 (2014): 223–52. In *Eusebius and Empire*, 291, Corke-Webster concludes that Eusebius formed his views long before he became personally acquainted with Constantine.

were entirely of one mind.⁷³ Although less obvious than his claim to be the most appropriate person to write about Constantine, this is a pose that has contributed even more to Eusebius's image as Constantine's virtual alter ego. In effect, it serves to align himself with Constantine's policies and, vice versa, Constantine's with his own.

This reassessment of the turmoil in Antioch does not restore Eusebius to his previous perch, but it does show that, on the one hand, his claim to intimacy with the emperor was not entirely rhetorical and, on the other, that proximity is not equivalent to influence. It indicates that their relationship was far more reciprocal than usually seen and was mutually beneficial. It is also one that developed over time. At least twice, the emperor had occasion to watch Eusebius in action, and to be grateful for his support. In subsequent years, Eusebius was able to parlay this regard into permission to deliver two speeches in Constantine's presence, and probably also to gain access to imperial archives and the emperor himself during an extended stay in the new capital of Constantinople. One such interview led to the most famous passage in the *VC*, an account of the vision that Constantine swore was the reason for his conversion.⁷⁴

Eusebius and Constantine may never have been in Antioch at the same time, but their mutual involvement in its troubles, and the effect that the turmoil that shook the city in the late 320s had on their relationship, was profound. ■

73. An exception that proves the rule occurs at *VC* 4.54.2–3, where Eusebius chides the emperor for succumbing to the “unspeakable deceit on the part of those who slipped into the Church and adopted the false façade of the Christian name,” a trait he attributes to the emperor’s “kindness and generosity” and naive faith. Tellingly, Eusebius adds that what impressed Constantine was “the pretence of genuine loyalty to him” that these imposters maintained. Taken as a whole, the passage indicates a major area of disagreement between the emperor and the gatekeepers of the church.

74. *VC* 1.28. For the occasion, H. A. Drake, “What Eusebius Knew: The Genesis of the *Vita Constantini*,” *Classical Philology* 83 (1988): 20–38. Johannes Wienand, “Two Cities, Two Speeches: Eusebius in Jerusalem and Constantinople,” in *City of Caesar, City of God: Constantinople and Jerusalem in Late Antiquity*, ed. Konstantin Klein and Johannes Wienand, Millennium Studies 97 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 185–213, shows how Eusebius used the opportunity of speaking in the emperor’s presence to advance a subversive agenda. I am grateful to Prof. Wienand for the opportunity to see an advance copy of this chapter.

APPENDIX: TRAVEL TIMES

Fastest transit from and to Antioch (days/km distance)

From	To	April	July	January
Antioch	Aquileia	20.9/2827	25.5/2956	19/2843
Antioch	Constantinople	13.9/1689 sea	14.5/1134 land	12.3/1689 sea
Antioch	Milan	25.9/3159	23.8/3175	23.8/3175
Antioch	Nicomedia	14.2/1742 sea	14.7/1011 land	12.5/1742 sea
Antioch	Roma	21.3/2870	24.8/2999	20.7/2892
Antioch	Serdica	18.7/2041	22.1/2161	17.5/2043
Antioch	Sirmium	22.7/2693	26.4/2821	20.8/2707
Antioch	Trier	35.1/3781	39.8/3910	33.2/3796
Aquileia	Antioch	17.5/2842	16.1/2786	16/2843
Constantinople	Antioch	10.5/1664 sea	9/1664 sea	10/1688 sea
Milan	Antioch	22.4/3173	21.1/3118	21.1/3175
Nicomedia	Antioch	10.8/1717 sea	9.2/1717 sea	10.2/1717 sea
Roma	Antioch	17/2887	16.9/2829	17.6/2991
Serdica	Antioch	16/2043	14.8/2041	15.5/2043
Sirmium	Antioch	19.1/2707	18/2651	18.1/2707
Trier	Antioch	31.7/3796	30.3/3740	30.3/3797

Source: www.orbis.stanford.edu

All calculations are based on the fastest option of using carriage (67 km/day), civilian river transport, or sea travel (road, river, coastal sea, or open sea options).

Military Horse Relay (250 km per day / total distance)

From	To	
Antioch	Aquileia	11.8/2695
Antioch	Constantinople	5.4/1107
Antioch	Milan	13.3/3073
Antioch	Nicomedia	5/1103
Antioch	Roma	12.6/2801
Antioch	Serdica	7.7/1675
Antioch	Sirmium	9.6/2146
Antioch	Trier	15.7/3685