The Editions of Eusebius’
Ecclesiastical History

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Eusebius published several editions of his Ecclesiastical History, and it is clearly of the highest importance for understanding the age of Constantine to establish the approximate date at which he first composed the work. Did the original design include the contemporary persecution of the Christian church which Eusebius witnessed and recorded? Or had he already completed the first edition before February 303, when Diocletian issued the first edict directed against the Christians? Most modern historians, whether of ideas, of the Roman Empire, or of Christianity, have adopted the former view: hence they present Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History as a manifestation of the Zeitgeist of the Constantinian period. The present article seeks to demonstrate that Eusebius probably completed the first edition a full decade before Constantine was proclaimed emperor.

The problem of disentangling the various editions of the Ecclesiastical History is extremely intricate. Fortunately, the successive efforts of A. Harnack, E. Schwartz, H. J. Lawlor, and R. Laqueur have performed much valuable clarification, without which the present exposition would hardly be possible. But these scholars were hampered by a secular chronology which precluded a correct dating of two of the editions of the History—and which reversed their order. For they dated the first war between Constantine and

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2. A. Harnack, Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius II (Leipzig 1904) 111ff; E. Schwartz, Eusebius Werke II.3 (GCS IX.3, 1909) xlvii ff; H. J. Lawlor, Eusebiana (Oxford 1912) 243ff; H. J. Lawlor and J. E. L. Oulton, Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History II (London 1928) 2ff; R. Laqueur, Eusebius als Historiker seiner Zeit (Leipzig 1929); cf. D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, Eusebius of Caesarea (London 1960) 39ff. The last-named dates Books One to Seven “before 303” (57), but also asserts that “Eusebius’ scheme took the narrative to 303 in seven books, and in this form the work was first published” (41).
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Licinius to autumn 314 and (with the exception of Harnack) the death of Diocletian to 3 December 316—from which it followed that the speech on the rebuilt basilica at Tyre, which comprises the greater part of Book Ten (10.4), was composed before October 314, while the so-called Appendix to Book Eight (8 App.), which refers to the death of Diocletian, cannot have been written before 317. But it is now clear that Diocletian died no later than 313, and in fact probably earlier (in 311/12, perhaps precisely on 3 December 311), and that the war of Cibalae must be dated to 316/7.3 Hence, so far as concerns these historical references, the Appendix to Book Eight could have been written before the original form of Book Ten and as early as 313, while Book Ten could have been written as late as 316. Now the correct date for the war of Cibalae was first propounded by P. Bruun in 1953,4 and five years later C. Habicht, when strengthening Bruun’s arguments, adumbrated the consequences for Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History, though he declined to essay a complete unravelling of its various editions.5 The present article attempts to separate and date the various editions of the History by combining arguments drawn from Harnack, Schwartz, Lawlor, and Laqueur (in the interests of brevity, not always acknowledged fully or in detail) with a well-founded secular chronology, in order to arrive at a better conclusion. The exposition must begin, however, by considering other works of Eusebius to which the History either refers or is closely related.

I

Eusebius published two editions of the Chronicle.6 The second terminated with the vicennalia of Constantine, which were celebrated from 25 July 325 to 25 July 326 (p.34.2f, 62.3ff Karst; Jerome, Chr. 6.17–7.3 and 231e–f Helm), while the first preceded both the first edition of the Ecclesiastical History (HE 1.1.6) and the General Elementary Introduction (Ecl. Proph. 1.1, Migne, PG 22.1024A), and was therefore completed more than twenty years

3 JRS 63 (1973) 32ff.
4 P. Bruun, The Constantinian Coinage of Arelate (Finska Fornminnesföreningens Tidskrift 52.2 [1953]) 17ff; Studies in Constantinian Chronology (Numismatic Notes and Monographs 146 [1961]) 10ff.
5 C. Habicht, Hermes 86 (1958) 360–78, esp. 376–78.
6 A third edition “completed after 303 and before 311” has been imagined by D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, JThS n.s. 6 (1955) 250ff.
earlier. It has traditionally been held that Eusebius completed the first edition of the *Chronicle* in 303.\(^7\) That date has no valid foundation. On the contrary, R. Helm suggested in 1923 that the elaborate synchronism of various local eras which the *Chronicle* enters under the second year of Probus (277/8), which is also the first year of the eighty-sixth Jewish Jubilee (223\(^h\).k Helm), marked the end of the first edition\(^8\)—which would appear to imply composition before 303. It is unfortunate that even those who cite Helm’s paper have taken scant notice of this observation. Jerome’s statement that Eusebius wrote *On the Place-names in Holy Scripture* after the *Chronicle* and *Ecclesiastical History* also indicates a date earlier than 303: for, if Eusebius was engaged in compiling the gazetteer *ca* 295 (as appears probable), Jerome may be held to imply that he had completed the *Chronicle* by that date.\(^9\) In the present context, however, it is not necessary to establish the validity of these inferences. It will suffice to observe that, since the traditional date of the first edition of the *Chronicle* is vulnerable, the fact that the *History* alludes to and presupposes the *Chronicle* need not entail that Eusebius completed the *History* after 303 rather than before.

II

Eusebius’ *Martyrs of Palestine* survives in two distinct recensions, which are normally and aptly described as ‘the long recension (or version)’ and ‘the short recension (or version)’. The two versions have suffered very different fates. The long recension is fully extant only in a Syriac translation, although some fragments of the original Greek can be disinterred from Greek hagiographical sources.\(^10\) The short recension is preserved by four of the principal

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\(^7\) Harnack (*supra* n.2) 112ff; Wallace-Hadrill (*supra* n.2) 43. The last-named again gives “before 303” in the tabulation of his conclusions (57): E. Schwartz sets at least the collection of material before 303 (*RE* 6 [1907] 1376).

\(^8\) R. Helm, *Abh Berlin* 1923.4, 42.


Greek manuscripts of the *Ecclesiastical History*, two of which insert it between Books Eight and Nine.¹¹ Their textual transmissions, therefore, imply that the long recension is an independent work, while the short is intimately related to the *History*, perhaps even at some stage part of it.¹² Inspection of the contents of each version confirms the inference.

The long recension is a complete and self-sufficient work in itself, which begins with a formal preface and ends with a proper conclusion (13.11), and internal criteria indicate that Eusebius was writing in 311 precisely. For the narrative ends with martyrs of the eighth year of persecution, *i.e.*, 310/1,¹³ and yet the work claims explicitly to describe “the entire time of the persecution among the people of Palestine.”¹⁴ Eusebius clearly wrote this passage in the interval between Galerius’ edict of toleration, which will have become known in Palestine in May or June 311, and Maximinus’ resumption of persecution in the following November.¹⁵ Eusebius was thus writing while Maximinus still reigned, and at least one passage in the long recension refrains from insulting the emperor where the corresponding passage of the short calls him a ‘tyrant’ (4.8). In the long recension of the *Martyrs of Palestine*, Eusebius assumed that the persecution which had begun in 303 was at an end and he set out to record the martyrdoms of Christians in Palestine whom he knew personally (praef. 8).

Admittedly, the long recension contains some passages which, in their present form, can hardly have been written before the summer of 313, since they denounce Maximinus as an impious tyrant, “a terrible serpent and cruel tyrant” (4.1; 6.1f; 6.7; 7.7), and allude to his defeat and death (3.6f) and perhaps to the en-

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¹¹ Edited by E. Schwartz, *GCS* IX.2 907ff (printing in parallel the Greek fragments of the long recension from Delehaye’s edition). All four manuscripts, including two where the *Martyrs* follows Book Ten, have a note explaining that the work belongs in or after Book Eight (*GCS* IX.2 907; IX.3 xlix).

¹² J. Viteau, *De Eusebii Caesariensis duplici opusculo Περὶ τῶν ἐν Παλαιστίνῃ μαρτυρησάντων* (Diss. Paris 1893) 40ff.


¹⁴ 13.11. The Greek original presumably had ἑθνος, *i.e.*, in Eusebius’ usage, “the province of Palestine.”

¹⁵ See Lawlor (*supra* n.2) 279ff.
suing purge of his supporters (7.8). But such passages are merely the result of a superficial revision. For a general contrast between the two recensions strongly confirms the inference that the longer was written in 311, while Maximinus still ruled Palestine. The short recension makes the emperor far more prominent as an active persecutor in contexts where the long recension focuses attention on and attributes responsibility to the successive governors of Palestine, particularly Urbanus, whom Maximinus executed in early 308 (e.g., 8.3, 8.13, 13.10). Moreover, the following pair of variants in the long recension may document author's revision (6.5):

when Maximin arrived at the exhibition described above, as though to reward the prowess of Urban, he increased his power to do evil (p.356.15–17 Lawlor and Oulton);
the impious Maximin was more rabid in his wickedness than the evil Urban (p.356 app.crit. 7–8).

The long recension of the *Martyrs of Palestine*, therefore, was written by Eusebius between May and November 311, and retouched in 313 or later.16

The short recension of the *Martyrs of Palestine*, in contrast, does not claim to report “the entire time of the persecution,” only “the martyrdoms accomplished in Palestine in eight entire years” (13.11), and it is, at least as extant in the manuscripts, incomplete at both beginning and end. It begins abruptly (praef. 1):

It was the nineteenth year of the reign of Diocletian, the month Xanthicus, or April as the Romans would call it, in which, as the festival of the Saviour’s Passion was approaching, while Flavianus was governor of the province of Palestine, a letter was all at once everywhere promulgated, ordering the razing of the churches to the ground.

No introduction, no explanation, no setting, just the start of a narrative. Similarly, at the end, after describing the end of persecution in 311 (13.11f), Eusebius introduces the edict which Galerius issued in April and promises to quote it: “The recantation also must be placed on record” (13.14). But the text breaks off with these words and thus fails to reproduce the promised document.

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16 If correct, this date completely undermines the attempt by T. Christensen to discredit Eusebius’ picture of Maximinus as a mere repetition of the abuse normally heaped on a fallen tyrant: *C. Galerius Valerius Maximinus. Studier over Politik og Religion i Romerriget 305–315* (Copenhagen 1974) 43ff.
The peculiarities can be explained when the short recension of the *Martyrs of Palestine* is considered, not in isolation, but together with the eighth book of the *Ecclesiastical History*. The passage with which it begins (partly quoted above) and a passage in the first chapter also stand in the eighth book of the History with wording unchanged (praef. 1–2 = *HE* 8.2.4–5; 1.3–5 = *HE* 8.3.1–4), while the substance (though this time not the precise words) of a passage just before the end also recurs in the History (13.13, cf. *HE* 8.13.10–11). Moreover, the document promised in the Martyrs is quoted in the History (*HE* 8.17.3ff), and a passage in the body of the text of the Martyrs refers back to a passage which stands in the introduction to Book Eight of the History with the words “as I stated at the beginning” (12, cf. *HE* 8.2.2f). It seems an inescapable inference that at some stage Eusebius intended the short recension of the Martyrs of Palestine to stand between the passages which now constitute the beginning and the end of Book Eight of the *Ecclesiastical History*.18

III

The existence of several editions of the *Ecclesiastical History* is demonstrated by variant readings and historical allusions in the text. Schwartz and H. Emonds have set out the evidence in full and discussed it thoroughly:19 hence, for present purposes, a brief summary of the principal variants in Books Eight to Ten will suffice:

8.16.2–3. The manuscripts *ATER* add a clause and a sentence which describe Galerius as responsible for “the whole persecution.”

8.17.5. *ATER* include the names and titles of Licinius together with the address “greetings to their provincials” in the heading to Galerius’

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17 Laqueur (*supra* n.2) 7ff, cf. Lawlor and Oulton, *Eusebius* I 395; II 9, 335. Schwartz noted the parallel but argued that Eusebius was referring to a lost prologue of the short recension of the Martyrs (GCS IX.3.I, IX.2 947).

18 One pair of passages appears impossible to reconcile with the inference drawn here. In the History Eusebius appears to refer to the Life of Pamphilus as not yet written: Πάμφιλος . . . οὗ τῶν ἀνδραγαθημάτων τῆς ἀρετῆς κατὰ τῶν δεδομένων καὶ ἑτέρων ἀναγραφομεν (HE 8.13.6). But the short recension of the Martyrs describes the Life as already completed (11.3). The difficulty can be met, either by accepting the aorist ἀναγράφομεν (in two manuscripts) or by the hypothesis that Eusebius refers to the account of Pamphilus in the Martyrs, destined to follow Book Eight as a sort of illustrative appendix (Lawlor and Oulton, *Eusebius* II 279).

19 E. Schwartz, GCS IX.3 xlvii f; H. Emonds Zweite Auflage im Altertum (Klassisch-philologische Studien 14 [1941]) 25ff.
edict of toleration: B D M, Rufinus, and the Syriac translation omit both elements.

8. A P. A E R have a passage of more than thirty lines on the deaths of Diocletian and his colleagues, which is an obvious doublet of HE 8.13.13–14.

9.1.1. All the manuscripts have an obvious doublet: Maximinus’ instructions to governors are described twice in separate sentences in almost identical language.

9.3.1–6. Only A T E R quote the letter of Maximinus’ praetorian prefect.

9.1.1. The text preserved in A T E R makes Constantine and Licinius jointly responsible for defeating “the two most impious tyrants,” that attested by B D M and the Syriac translation Constantine alone.


9.12a. Only A T E R state the names of “the champions of peace and piety” as Constantine and Licinius.

9.10.3. A T E R insert Λικινίω, which is a clear doublet of the τῶ τότε κρατοῦντι which stands in all the manuscripts.

9.11.8 + 10.1.1. The doxology ends Book Nine in B D, where Rufinus also found it, begins Book Ten in A T E R M, and stands in both places in the Syriac translation. Further, the manuscripts which omit it in Book Nine have instead a passage which names both Constantine and Licinius as champions of the Christians.

10 INDEX AND CHAPTER-HEADINGS. Variants reflect the omission of 10.5–7 in some manuscripts.

10.5–7. These five imperial letters are found only in A T E R M.

10.9.4,6. The Syriac translation lacks the references to Crispus’ role in the war of 324 which all the Greek manuscripts contain: it refers instead to Constantine’s sons (in the plural).

How many editions are implied by these variants? And how closely can they be dated? The exposition may proceed in reverse chronological order.

The Syriac translation alone attests the deletion of any reference to the Caesar Crispus. The deletion presupposes Crispus’ disgrace and execution in the spring of 326, and was presumably made by Eusebius himself. The Life of Constantine, for example, contains no allusion whatever to Crispus, and frequently, by implication, denies his very existence. It may be excessive to regard the alteration of two passages as a new edition, but the removal of Crispus’

20 E.g., VC 4.40.1; 51.1ff (on Constantine’s three sons). The allusion in 1.48.1 is not to Crispus and Fausta, but to Maximian (Habicht [supra n.5] 374).
name implies that Eusebius was careful to remain up-to-date in his political opinions.

The final two chapters of Book Ten, which describe the defeat of Licinius, must have been written after the war of 324, which deposed Licinius, and before the execution of Crispus in spring 326. In the edition for which these chapters were composed, which may for convenience be designated the edition of 325, Eusebius systematically expunged the name of Licinius in Books Eight and Nine, especially from passages which presented Licinius and Constantine as joint champions of the Christian church. Hence the manuscript variants in 8.16, 8.17, 9.9-11, where the manuscripts A T E R reproduce passages in the form in which they stood before 324. It may be inferred also that, because the imperial letters in 10.5-7, described in 10.5.1 as ordinances of Constantine and Licinius, appear only in one manuscript besides A T E R, they too were removed from the edition of 325.

There was, therefore, an edition of the History earlier than 324 which apparently ended with the imperial documents quoted in 10.5-7, the latest of which was issued by Constantine no later than the spring of 314.²¹ Now these documents are preceded by Eusebius’ speech on the basilica at Tyre, rebuilt after the persecution, which alludes to plural emperors as acting in harmony to destroy the persecutors (10.4.16, 60). The speech was clearly delivered some time after Maximinus’ defeat (because rebuilding has progressed far), but before Constantine and Licinius went to war in the autumn of 316. It follows that Eusebius published an edition of the History in ten books between 314 and 316, with the tenth book comprising his own oration at Tyre and the imperial letters contained in some, but not all, manuscripts. For convenience this edition may be styled the edition of 315.

The edition of 315 was not the only edition before that of 325. For the so-called Appendix to Book Eight, which is found in only three manuscripts, can hardly have been composed for the same edition of the History as Book Eight proper, since it contains a passage on the death of Constantius which reproduces a passage in Book Eight word for word (8 App. 4 = 8.13.13-14). But that the Appendix was once part of the History is shown by the fact that it seems to refer back to a passage in Book Eight with the words “as I have shown before” (8 App. 2, cf. 8.13.11). More-

²¹ Viz., HE 10.5.21ff, which summons the bishop of Syracuse to the Council of Arles, due to convene on 1 August 314.
over, the alternative positions of the doxology at the end of Book Nine and the beginning of Book Ten should reflect the existence of at least two editions earlier than 324, one of which ended where the present Book Nine ends, with the doxology.

IV

Harnack, Schwartz, and Lawlor, followed by the vast majority of subsequent scholars who have written about Eusebius, believed that the first edition of the *Ecclesiastical History* comprised eight books and was not completed before 311.22 Laqueur, however, argued for a first edition in seven books and hence for composition before 303.23 The latter view is commended by at least five converging considerations. First, if analogy may be trusted, the opening words of Book Seven (*HE* 7 praef., Τὸν ἐβδομὸν τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱστορίας αἴθις . . . Διονυσίος ἰδίας φώνας συνεκπονήσει) imply that the seventh is the last book.24 Second, Jerome implies that Eusebius completed the *History* before *On the Place-names in Holy Scripture*, a work which Eusebius appears to have been engaged in compiling *ca* 295.25 Third, the narrative of the internal history of the church comes to an end *ca* 280—a fact which is completely comprehensible if Eusebius was writing in the 290s, but hard to explain if Book Seven were written *ca* 310. Fourth, the last chapter of Book Seven states that Gaius in Rome and Cyrillus in Antioch were bishops “in our day,” then that they were succeeded by Marcellinus and Tyrannus, in whose tenures the persecution began (*HE* 7.32.1–4). Up to this point Eusebius has conscientiously recorded all the bishops of Rome and Antioch as part of the chronological framework of the *History* (*cf.* 1.1.3), but after this passage they are ignored.26 It is an attractive in-

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22 Harnack (*supra* n.2) 114ff; E. Schwartz, GCS IX.3 xlvii ff; Lawlor (*supra* n.2) 243ff.
23 Laqueur (*supra* n.2) 210ff. Laqueur was prevented from solving the problems of Eusebius’ later revisions by two fundamental misconceptions—that the short recension of the *Martyrs* preceded the long (26ff), and that Eusebius indulged in wholesale invention of history (97ff).
25 See *supra* n.9.
26 E. Schwartz, GCS IX.3 6ff. Miltiades, the bishop of Rome, is mentioned, but only in imperial letters quoted for another purpose (*HE* 10.5.18, 22). Observe also that Eusebius fails to correlate the accession of Theonas as bishop of Alexandria *ca* 282 with the regnal year of an emperor (*HE* 7.32.30).
ference that Book Seven was originally written while Gaius was bishop of Rome, *i.e.*, between December 282 or 283 and April 295 or 296 (*Chr. min.* 1.75), and that Eusebius later added the references to Marcellinus and Tyrannus. Finally, if Eusebius wrote the first edition before 303, then the composition of two recensions of the *Martyrs of Palestine* can easily be explained: Eusebius penned the long recension in 311 before he decided to continue his *History* to include the "Great Persecution," the short recension in 313/4 as part of that continuation. J. Viteau demonstrated long ago that the so-called Appendix to Book Eight of the *History* ought, on internal criteria, to belong to the lost ending of the short recension of the *Martyrs*.27

A hypothesis can now be propounded which will explain the phenomena. It cannot be proved conclusively, but it may be claimed to explain better than any alternative not only why Eusebius produced several editions of the *Ecclesiastical History*, but also why he produced two versions of the *Martyrs of Palestine*. This hypothesis may be expounded most clearly in six main steps, as follows:

1. Eusebius composed the first edition of the *Ecclesiastical History* in the 290s, in seven books, ending almost exactly where the first edition of the *Chronicle* ended.

2. Between May and November 311 he wrote the *Martyrs of Palestine* as an entirely independent work, whose only connexion with the *History* was psychological: Eusebius considered that as a historian of the church he had a duty to record the heroism which he had witnessed.

3. The resumption of persecution by Maximinus in the winter of 311/2 rendered the *Martyrs*, in this form, out-of-date.

4. When persecution ceased again in 313, Eusebius set out to integrate into a single work the existing *History*, partially revised, a shorter version of the *Martyrs* rewritten for the purpose, and an account of the last two years of Maximinus, from his failure to enforce Galerius' edict of toleration to his death (*i.e.*, Book Nine).

5. Soon, however, Eusebius realised that the *Martyrs of Palestine*, with its personal emphasis and provincial focus, was, even in its rewritten form, unsuitable as a general account of the persecution between 303 and 311. Accordingly, he replaced it with the

present Book Eight, at the same time as he added the first version of Book Ten. The date of this edition is *ca* 315.

(6) When Licinius was defeated in 324, Eusebius retouched the last three books in order to deny him any credit as a benefactor of the Christians.

The hypothesis can also be stated more schematically:

**First Edition (ca 295).** Books One to Seven, as they stand now except for the end of Seven and passages added or retouched throughout, such as (1) the reference to contemporary persecution in the preface (1.1.2); (2) the references to Pamphilus’ and Eusebius’ *Defence of Origen* composed in 308–310 (6.23.4, 33.4, 36.4) and to Eusebius’ *Life of Pamphilus* (6.32.3); (3) the allusion to Porphyry’s *Against the Christians* (6.19.2ff).28

**Second Edition (ca 313/4).** Books One to Seven revised, plus the introduction to Book Eight, plus the short recension of the *Martyrs of Palestine*, plus Galerius’ edict (8.17) followed by the Appendix to Book Eight, plus Book Nine—perhaps all arranged in eight books.29

**Third Edition (ca 315).** Ten books, ending with the documents quoted in 10.5–7.

**Fourth Edition (325).** The present ten books, with the passages which refer to Licinius deleted or altered, and the documents in 10.5–7 removed.30

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28 Also 1.2.27; 1.9.3f; 1.11.9; 7.18f; 7.30, index and chapter-heading; 7.30.22; 7.32.1ff.
29 Laqueur (*supra* n.2) 190.
30 A version of the present paper was presented to the Eighth International Conference on Patristic Studies at Oxford in September 1979, and I am grateful to the audience on that occasion for helpful advice and comment. The implications of the chronology argued here are fully explored in *Constantine and Eusebius* (forthcoming), chapters VIII, IX, and XI.