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THE CHURCH HISTORY

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EUSEBIUS

THE CHURCH HISTORY

Translation and commentary by
PAUL L. MAIER

 **Kregel**
Academic & Professional

Eusebius: The Church History

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To the faculty of Concordia Seminary

in appreciation
for their conferral
of the degree of
Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*

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INTRODUCTION

If Herodotus is the father of history, then Eusebius of Caesarea (c. A.D. 260–339) is certainly the father of church history. He was the first to undertake the task of tracing the rise of Christianity during its crucial first three centuries from Christ to Constantine. Since no other ancient author tried to cover the same period, Eusebius is our principal primary source for earliest Christianity, and his *Church History* is the cornerstone chronicle on which later historians would build. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus provides fascinating addenda to our information about the people, places, and events of the biblical world, and Eusebius does the same for the period up to A.D. 324.

What happened to Jesus' apostles later in life? Did Simon Peter ever go to Rome? Where did John spend the rest of his days? Did Paul survive his trial before Nero? When were the Gospels written? Who wrote them, and where? How did the New Testament canon develop? Why and how were the early Christians persecuted? These questions and many more involve an era no longer covered by the New Testament and could hardly be answered were it not for Eusebius.

The ten books¹ of his *Church History* are a treasure trove of data on the fledgling faith, whose survival and purity were sorely tested by persecution without and heresy within. Today Christianity is the most successful single phenomenon, statistically considered, in all of history. During its early years, however, it was fragile, fragmented, harried, tortured, and seemingly doomed by a hostile Roman Empire. Equally destructive were the internal attacks by renegade religionists who tried to seduce the saints through arcane distortions of doctrine or corral them into schismatic groups that foreshadowed contemporary cults.

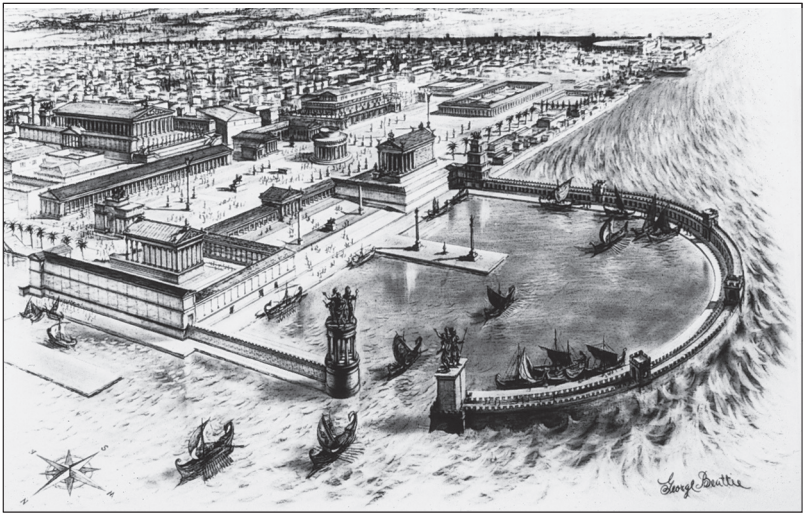
Eusebius tells it all, but he also reports the heroic stance of the martyrs, whose blood indeed became the “seed of the church,” as Tertullian put it. Eusebius writes of the fearless defenders of the faith who had the courage to face emperors and face down heretics, of bishops and elders who guided the church through

1. The modern equivalent for “books” in the ancient world would be “long book chapters,” since the term referred originally to scrolls. Such “books” might range in length from a modern lengthy chapter to a seventy-page booklet.

horrendous adversity, and of writers whose crucial statements preserving orthodoxy would in many cases have been lost had Eusebius not reported them word for word. These pages, then, show how Christianity's tragedies turned into triumph in the course of its first three centuries.

The Life of Eusebius

Eusebius in Greek means one who is reverent, pious, or devout—a proper name (nearly equivalent to *Pius* in Latin) that was shared by a half dozen other famed figures in Christian history. A geographical suffix distinguishes them from one another. Just as *Jesus of Nazareth* differentiated him from the twenty other Jesuses in biblical times, so *Eusebius of Caesarea* designates the church historian.



Ancient Caesarea, looking toward the southeast. Herod the Great constructed the city in the years 25 to 13 b.c., including the semicircular seawall opening to the north (*George Beattie*).

Although there were also a number of Caesareas in antiquity—all named in honor of Augustus, the first Roman emperor—Eusebius's is Caesarea Maritima, the famous city of Palestine constructed by Herod the Great on the Mediterranean shore, at a site previously

called Strato's Tower. This Caesarea is mentioned frequently in the New Testament as the Roman capital of Judea, the headquarters of Pontius Pilate, Cornelius, Herod Agrippa, Felix, and Festus, as well as the place where Paul was imprisoned for two years. Here, too, the riot broke out in A.D. 66 that led to the great Jewish War against Rome and the destruction of Jerusalem. The last only enhanced the importance of Caesarea, and by the third century it was virtually the capital of Syria, a very large, cosmopolitan city with a Jewish, Greek, Samaritan, and Christian populace.

Eusebius was probably born around 260. His biography, written by Acacius, his successor as Bishop of Caesarea, has not survived to provide more exact detail. His ancestry and the story of his youth are unknown. His education may be adduced from the fact that the great Eastern scholar-theologian Origen spent his later years in Caesarea, dying several years before Eusebius was born. Origen's influence persisted strongly in the theological school founded there by the learned Pamphilus, presbyter in the church at Caesarea, who taught Eusebius and influenced him most. Eusebius joined Pamphilus in writing a defense of Origen, made use of his great library, and wrote a *Life of Pamphilus* (now lost), whom he valued so highly that he was often known as Eusebius Pamphili. In the final Great Persecution of the Christians under Diocletian, Pamphilus was imprisoned and martyred in 310.

Upon the death of his mentor, Eusebius went to Tyre in Phoenicia and Alexandria in Egypt, where he was imprisoned in the Diocletianic persecution but released shortly afterward. Many years later an opponent accused him of having gained his release by pagan sacrifice, but no evidence for this was adduced at the time or since. Had such evidence existed, it surely would have been used in the theological turmoil of the day. Just after Constantine's edict of toleration was issued in 313, Eusebius was elected Bishop of Caesarea, where he remained until his death, despite being offered (and declining) the patriarchate of Antioch in 331.

About 316, he gave the dedicatory address at the new cathedral in Tyre, which he published in Book 10 of his *Church History*. Two years later the Arian controversy exploded in Eastern Christendom, and Eusebius soon found himself embroiled in it. He favored a mediating position between the theological extremes of Arius, presbyter in Alexandria ("Jesus is more than man but less than God, who existed before the Son"), and Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria ("Jesus is God, of the same essence and co-eternal with

the Father”). Although Eusebius did not endorse the full subordinationism of Arius, he was somewhat sympathetic to the Arian cause, for which the Council of Antioch provisionally excommunicated him and two others in 324. His case, however, was transferred to the great Council of Nicea the following year, where he sat at Constantine’s right hand and served as a prominent theological adviser, delivering a panegyric in honor of the emperor.

As leader of the moderate party at the council, Eusebius presented the creed used by his church at Caesarea and was exonerated of any heresy. Constantine stated that the creed reflected his own views, and it seems to have served as basis for that adopted at Nicea, but this creed was adopted only after important addenda had been made by the Alexandrian party, including Jesus being defined as *homoousios* (“of one substance” or “essence”) with the Father. Although Eusebius finally voted with the overwhelming majority for what would emerge as the Nicene Creed, he wrote a letter to his church explaining his hesitations and voicing concerns that the Alexandrian party was verging on Sabellianism, a heresy that claimed unity over trinity (i.e., that the Son of God was only God acting in a saving mode or capacity).

This concern followed Eusebius to the Council of Antioch in 331, which deposed Eustathius, a leading anti-Arian, and to the Synod at Constantinople in 336, which condemned Marcellus, Bishop of Ancyra (modern Ankara), for extreme anti-Arianism. This does not, however, mean that Eusebius remained a pro-Arian. Eusebius’s orthodoxy later in life is confirmed by his rejection of two cardinal principles of Arianism: that there was a time when the Son of God was not and that he was created out of nothing.

Just after the Synod of Constantinople, Eusebius was chosen to deliver an oration on the *tricennalia* of Constantine, the celebration marking his thirtieth year as emperor. Constantine died in the following year (337), and Eusebius two years after that, most probably on May 30, 339, a date known with considerable certainty from the Syriac martyrology of the fourth century. Nothing is known of Eusebius’s two final years, other than that he published a *Life of Constantine* in four books, a panegyric rather than a strict history.

The Writings of Eusebius

Eusebius was a prolific author, writing books, chronologies, treatises, dictionaries, and orations in many different areas, not to

mention his extensive correspondence. The most complete edition of his works (vols. 19–24 of J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca* [Paris: 1857]) fills six large volumes, and these are merely some, not all, of his writings that have survived in Greek. Following is a partial catalogue of his works in categories suggested by A. C. McGiffert in his magisterial introduction to Eusebius in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Some of these titles have been lost or survive only in fragments.

1. Historical Writings. Aside from the *Church History*, which will be discussed in the next section, Eusebius wrote about his mentor in the *Life of Pamphilus*; two separate works on persecution in the *Martyrs of Palestine* and *Collection of Ancient Martyrdoms*; an important work on chronology, the *Chronicon* or *Chronicle*; and the *Life of Constantine*.

2. Apologetic Works. In defending the faith, Eusebius wrote *Against Hierocles*, opposing a Neoplatonist governor in Bithynia and Egypt who persecuted the Christians; and *Against Porphyry*, refuting another Neoplatonist philosopher who launched a formidable attack on Christianity. *On the Numerous Progeny of the Ancients* was Eusebius's explanation of the polygamy of the patriarchs. His greatest apologetic writings, however, are the *Preparation for the Gospel*, in which he shows how superior a base for Christianity were the Scriptures of monotheistic Judaism rather than the pagan polytheisms of the Greeks; and the *Proof of the Gospel*, which shows how Jesus was indeed the Messiah predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures. Unlike these major works, the *Praeparatio Ecclesiastica* and the *Demonstratio Ecclesiastica*, which concerned the life of the church rather than its doctrines, have not survived. In the *Theophany* he defends God's manifestation in Christ; his *Two Books of Objection and Defense* have been lost.

3. Polemic Writings. As mentioned earlier, Eusebius and his mentor Pamphilus jointly wrote the *Defense of Origen*, against attackers who faulted Origen's allegorizing theology. Only the first of the six books of the *Defense* has survived, and that in a Latin translation by Rufinus.

Eusebius seems to have been provoked most by the Sabellian heresy of his day, which stressed unity in the Trinity to such an extent as to teach that the one God appeared in three different modes, not persons, and it might thus be said that the Father suffered in the Christ mode (Patripassianism). He wrote two works against the Sabellian views of the Bishop of Ancyra: *Against*

Marcellus and *On the Theology of the Church: A Refutation of Marcellus*.

He also wrote *Against the Manicheans*, opposing followers of Mani, who preached in Persia a dualistic Gnosticism that divided reality into two principles—Light and Dark, God and Matter—and ensnared even the later Augustine for a decade.

4. Doctrinal Works. As an opening guide to theological study, Eusebius wrote ten books entitled *General Elementary Introduction*, of which only fragments survive, except for Books 6–9, which formed an independent unit called *Prophetic Extracts*, dealing with messianic passages from the Old Testament.

On the Paschal Festival was Eusebius's contribution to the controversy over the date to celebrate Easter. It explains the decision made at the Council of Nicea.

5. Exegetical Writings. Eusebius was particularly active in transcribing biblical texts, especially Origen's edition of the Septuagint. Under commission from Constantine, he also had fifty elaborate copies of the Scriptures prepared for use by the churches in Constantinople.

In *Ten Evangelical Canons*, he wrote a comparative harmony of the New Testament Gospels, showing which passages were common to all or several of them and which were unique to each. *Gospel Questions and Solutions* deals with the different genealogies of Jesus given in Matthew and Luke, as well as with the divergences in the accounts of the Resurrection.

The following listing is in biblical, not chronological, order. His *Commentary on the Psalms* is complete to Psalm 118, but that for 119 to 150 survives only in fragments. Because of its good Hebrew scholarship and critical acumen, the work enjoyed high regard among his contemporaries and since. The same can be said of his *Commentary on Isaiah*. In contrast, the simpler interpretations in his *Commentary on Luke* suggest an earlier dating. Other writings, such as his *Commentary on First Corinthians*, are known only as names or have survived only in fragments.

6. Bible Dictionaries. Eusebius's range of learning surfaces also in his titles: *Interpretation of Ethnological Terms in the Hebrew Scriptures*, his *Chorography of Ancient Judea*, and *A Plan of Jerusalem and of the Temple*, all of which have been lost. Fortunately, this is not the case with his *Onomasticon*, or *On the Names of Places in Holy Scripture*, which lists and defines, in alphabetical order, the names of biblical cities, villages, rivers, mountains, and the like, very much like a modern Bible dictionary.

Finally, *On the Nomenclature of the Book of the Prophets* summarizes the lives and predictions of the Old Testament prophets.

7. Orations. Aside from the panegyric at Tyre contained in Book 10 of the *Church History*, Eusebius gave the following major addresses: The *Oration at the Vicennalia of Constantine*, commemorating the twentieth anniversary of Constantine's reign in 325, was delivered at the opening of the Council of Nicea. The *Oration on the Savior's Sepulcher* was also heard by Constantine a decade later, just after the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. A third was the *Oration at the Tricennalia of Constantine*, which Eusebius delivered at Constantinople in 336 for the emperor's thirtieth anniversary. He delivered other addresses: *In Praise of the Martyrs*, *On the Failure of Rain*, and on other topics.

8. Letters. Eusebius's surviving correspondence deals with the Arian controversy in letters to Alexandria, his own Caesarea, and elsewhere. But it includes also a letter *To Constantia Augusta*, Constantine's sister and the wife of his co-emperor, Licinius, in reply to her request that Eusebius send her a likeness of Christ about which she had heard. Eusebius objected that such images invite idolatry.

Even apart from his *Church History*, then, Eusebius was a prolific and wide-ranging author of much erudition. This list of his own publications exceeds most of those he recorded for other writers whom he admired in the first three centuries A.D.

The Church History

The title of this work in the original Greek is *Ekklesiastikes Historias*, in Latin *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and in English *Ecclesiastical History*, the formal title by which it is still known (and usually abbreviated by scholars as *Hist. eccl.* or simply *H.E.*). The final version comprises ten books, of which the first deals with the life of Jesus as the incarnate Word of God. Books 2-7 cover the rise of Christendom from the ascension of Christ in A.D. 33 up to the reign of Diocletian, which began in 284. Book 8 tells of the Great Persecution under Diocletian that started in 303 and ended under his successor Galerius in 311. Book 9 reports Constantine's victory in the West and Maximin's renewed persecution in the East, while Book 10 celebrates the toleration, peace, and imperial favor finally accorded the church.

Eusebius added to his original work as time went on. The first edition most likely comprised Books 1-7 only and was probably

published before 300 (though some scholars argue for a later dating). Books 8–10 differ from the previous ones in that the author is now a contemporary or an eyewitness of the events described, and they no longer continue lists of apostolic succession, a hallmark of the earlier books. It is clear that Eusebius published another edition of his history that included Books 8, 9, and 10 (through chapter 7) after his panegyric at the rededication of the basilica at Tyre in 314 and before Constantine's war with his co-emperor, Licinius, in 316. The final edition including all of Book 10 as we now have it appeared after the defeat of Licinius in 324 and before the death of Constantine's son Crispus in 326, hence late 324 or early 325, just prior to the Council of Nicea. The reasons will be obvious in Book 10.

Eusebius structured his *Church History* on a time grid of Roman emperors, a device used in nearly all histories of the Roman Empire to the present day. Within this framework the successions of bishops in the four great centers of the early church—Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome—constitute subdivisions. Eusebius thus shares the annalistic tradition of such predecessor historians as Thucydides, Polybius, Tacitus, and Josephus, as we might expect from the author of the earlier *Chronicle*. Difficulties in this otherwise logical arrangement, however, develop when a theme or a personality extends into the reigns of several emperors. One such was Justin Martyr, who appears in Books 2, 3, 4, and 5, when one section dedicated to the apologist might better have served the reader.

His sources, which Eusebius often quotes, paraphrases, or condenses in Books 2–7, need not be listed here, since he is always scrupulous about crediting the fonts of his information and citations. His debt to Josephus, Hegesippus, Justin, Irenaeus, Dionysius of Alexandria, and others is open and acknowledged. He may have borrowed too heavily for modern tastes, but much of this material owes its very survival to its felicitous incorporation in Eusebius's record. He found much of his material in the vast library at his own Caesarea, founded by Origen and tended by Pamphilus, and that at Jerusalem established by Bishop Alexander, which accounts for the Greek and Eastern emphasis in his pages at the expense of the Latin and Western contributions, which somewhat upsets a balanced presentation in his *Church History*.

Other faults in Eusebius's historiography will become clear in the reading. Footnotes in the text will have to correct his occasional inaccuracies in matters of chronology and interpretation. In desul-

tory fashion he often jumps from one theme to the next through abrupt transitions, and one hardly looks for literary elegance or logical precision in his copious prose. He seems to have written rapidly, with little thought given to subsequent refinement or revision. His coverage at places is superficial, where he seems content to describe effects but not causes or identifies either God or Satan as sufficient explanation of cause. Except for the persecutions, the events of history and its actors seem to interest him less than its writers and their books, for Eusebius is preeminently a literary historian. Even here, however, the central ideas of these literati receive only scant attention, as is the case with the basic teachings of the Fathers or the errors of the heretics.

Eusebius's merits, however, clearly outweigh these defects. Had his *Church History* never been written, our knowledge of the first three centuries of Christendom would be heavily pock-marked by missing figures, facts, documents, and data of major importance. With his vast erudition, the Bishop of Caesarea sifted through mountains of material to gather valuable information for subsequent ages that might explore it more deeply than he did. Unlike many authors of antiquity, he could usually discriminate between reliable and unreliable sources and was far less credulous than many historians before him and since. He was scrupulously honest not only in acknowledging his sources but also in confessing the trepidation with which he undertook this task, since no history of the church had been written before. He was blazing a theological-historical trail, and pioneers can be forgiven their rugged qualities. His *Church History* was never redone by another historian of antiquity but became a classic and has survived the centuries intact—facts that overcome all criticism.

This Edition

Unlike my *Josephus—The Essential Works* (Kregel Publications), which is necessarily a condensation of the vast writings of the Jewish historian, this volume is a full translation of Eusebius's *Church History*. It is based on the standard critical edition of the original Greek text of Eusebius published by the great German scholar Eduard Schwartz (in *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller* [Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1897]). This text, which has superseded earlier versions, is most conveniently available in the *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; and London: Heinemann, 1926, 1932), with

English translations by Kirsopp Lake (vol. 1) and J. E. L. Oulton (vol. 2). Other prominent English translations include a rather dated version by Christian Frederick Cruse from 1850 (reprint ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); a text with excellent commentary by A. C. McGiffert from 1890, reprinted in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, volume 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952); and the best recent translation: G. A. Williamson, *Eusebius—The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* (London: Penguin, 1965; rev. ed., Andrew Louth, 1989).

A new edition, translation, and brief commentary on Eusebius, however, seems indicated for several reasons. The first is to make Eusebius clearer and more readable. His Greek, as Williamson points out, is quite difficult: “The first sentence of Book I is 166 words long, and we have to plough through 153 of them before we reach the one and only main verb. Sometimes there is no main verb at all, or the sentence is an anacoluthon, beginning in one way and ending in another” (xxxvii).

A word-for-word translation would be almost unreadable, and yet Eusebius must survive his translation intact. The problem of trying to remain faithful to an original text while rendering it readable in another language is one that has always beset translators. As someone has said (wickedly and in sexist days), “A translation is very much like a woman: if it is beautiful, it is not faithful; if it is faithful, it is not beautiful.”

I have endeavored to clarify Eusebius’s text by breaking up his long sentences into digestible segments, eliminating excess verbiage where it serves no purpose other than to obscure meaning, reducing parallel phraseology where it is clearly useless, and dropping any cloyingly repetitive phrases that add nothing to the record. In other words, *if Eusebius had had a good editor*, this is how his text might have appeared when adjusted for modern tastes. (Eusebius, it will be recalled, did not have an editor, not even himself in polishing or revising his work.) Not one datum of information has been surrendered in the process, and the results, I hope, have rendered Eusebius far more readable and usable today.

Several examples may illustrate my method. The first translation in the following couplets is from the Loeb edition, which faithfully renders all of Eusebius’s verbiage, while the second is mine:

I have already summarized the material in the chronological tables which I have drawn up, but nevertheless in the

present work I have undertaken to give the narrative in full detail (1.1).

Previously I summarized this material in my *Chronicle*, but in the present work I deal with it in the fullest detail.

Again:

Now while Origen was plying his accustomed tasks at Caesarea, many came to him, not only of the natives, but also numbers of foreign pupils who had left their own countries (6.30).

While Origen was teaching at Caesarea, many students, both local and from many foreign countries, studied under him.

And again:

It is not our part to commit to writing the conflicts of those who fought throughout the world on behalf of piety toward the Deity, and to record in detail each of their happenings; but that would be the especial task of those who witnessed the events (8.13).

To record in detail the ordeals of those who fought throughout the world for reverence toward the Deity would be a task for eyewitnesses rather than for me.

Another, though lesser, reason for this new translation is to correct occasional errors in previous versions. For example, Eusebius has an interesting passage concerning the fate of Pontius Pilate after Pilate's return to Rome in A.D. 37. According to one recent translation, Pilate committed suicide, "as the records show" (2.7), but Eusebius's Greek for the phrase in quotes is much less definite: *katexei logos*, "word has it" or "tradition holds"—a rather significant difference. (There is earlier evidence that Pilate was not a suicide.)

Finally, no edition of Eusebius, to my knowledge, is illustrated with documentary photographs of the sites he describes or with maps and charts that assist in interpreting the text. Sometimes these become very important in trying to understand Eusebius's meaning in full.

A word of caution may be appropriate here. Since Eusebius was eager to trace the episcopal succession in the four great sees of early Christendom—Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and

Rome—long lists of bishops' names and dates at these locations will clutter the text from time to time. The reader is urged to scan or to skip this material, since it can all be found in Appendix 2, where it is laid out much more clearly.

Several mechanical items should be mentioned. Greek versions of proper names have been rendered in their common English equivalents (e.g., "Peter" rather than "Petros"). Literary titles are treated similarly: hence Justin's *Defense*, for example, rather than his *Apologia*; Clement's *Outlines* rather than his *Hypotyposes*. Although each book (chapter) in this volume is lengthy, it was Eusebius himself who divided his work into these ten segments. Book titles and subtitles, however, are mine, as are chapter or section titles. Their numbering in each book has been standard since the early manuscripts of Eusebius, even if the placement of these numbers sometimes seems to have been the work of a madman. The Greek manuscripts also have lengthy indexes prior to each book, which are tedious and unnecessary and have not been included in this translation. Many of the chapter titles, however, directly reflect these.

Important dates are added in the margins, since the B.C./A.D. system was not yet in use at the time of Eusebius. Ellipses (. . .) do not indicate omissions in the text other than, for example, when Eusebius, in quoting Josephus twice in the same passage, strings citations together with an unnecessary "Josephus goes on to say." Brackets denote my addenda in Eusebius's text to improve its intelligibility.

Brief commentaries follow each chapter to elucidate the preceding material. The last part of each of these provides a summary of concurrent Roman imperial history to clarify the political framework of the times.

Going behind the works of digested or secondary history to primary sources like Eusebius is extremely rewarding. Even if historians have pored over this material for nearly seventeen hundred years, joining them in this process should be a refreshing experience for the lay reader or, in the case of the scholar, a challenge to find new nuggets of information. Here then is the most important work of the most voluminous extant author, pagan or Christian, of the late third and early fourth centuries: the first history of the church ever written.

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Book 1

THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

AUGUSTUS TO TIBERIUS

The Contents of These Books

1. It is my purpose to record

the successions from the holy apostles and the periods extending from our Savior's time to our own;

the many important events that occurred in the history of the church;

those who were distinguished in its leadership at the most famous locations;

those who in each generation proclaimed the Word of God by speech or pen;

the names, number, and ages of those who, driven by love of novelty to the extremity of error, have announced themselves as sources of knowledge (falsely so-called)¹ while ravaging Christ's flock mercilessly, like ferocious wolves;

the fate that overtook the whole Jewish race after their plot against our Savior;

1. The Gnostics, as prime representatives of heresy.

the occasions and times of the hostilities waged by heathen against the divine Word and the heroism of those who fought to defend it, sometimes through torture and blood;

the martyrdoms of our own time and the gracious deliverance provided by our Savior and Lord, Jesus the Christ of God, who is my starting point.

This project requires kindness on the part of the reader, since I feel inadequate to do it justice as the first to venture on such an undertaking, a traveler on a lonely and untrodden path. But I pray that God may guide me and the power of the Lord assist me, for I have not found even the footprints of any predecessors on this path, only traces in which some have left us various accounts of the times in which they lived. Calling as from a distant watchtower, they tell me how I must walk in guiding the course of this work to avoid error. I have gathered from the scattered memoirs of my predecessors whatever seems appropriate to this project, plucking, as it were, flowers from the literary fields of the ancient authors themselves. I shall incorporate them in a historical narrative, happy to rescue from oblivion at least the most distinguished of the successors of our Savior's apostles in the most famous churches. I deem this work especially necessary because I know of no Christian author who has taken interest in such writings, which, I hope, those who know the value of history will find most valuable. Previously I summarized this material in my *Chronicle*, but in the present work I deal with it in the fullest detail.

I will begin with a concept too sublime and exalted for human grasp: the ordering of events [by God] and the divinity of Christ. Anyone intending to write the history of the church must start with the Christ himself, from whom we derive our very name, a dispensation more divine than most realize.

The Nature of Christ

[Chapters (sections) 2–4 that follow are unlike the rest of the Church History and deal with the preexistent Christ. Eusebius's regular history begins with section 5.]

2. His character is twofold: like the head of the body in that he is regarded as God and yet comparable to the feet in that he put on humanity for the sake of our salvation, a man of passions like

ours. If I begin his story with the principal and most basic points to consider, both the antiquity and divine character of Christianity will be demonstrated to those who suppose that it is recent and foreign, appearing only yesterday.

No language could adequately describe the origin, essence, and nature of Christ, as indeed the Holy Spirit says in prophecy: "Who shall declare his generation?" [Isa. 53:8]. For no one knows the Father except the Son, and no one has fully known the Son except the Father who begot him. And who but the Father could conceive of the Light that existed before the world, the Wisdom that preceded time, the living Word that was in the beginning with the Father and was God? Before all creation and fashioning, visible or invisible, he was the first and only offspring of God, the commander-in-chief of the spiritual host of heaven, the messenger of mighty counsel, the agent of the ineffable plan of the Father, the creator—with the Father—of all things, the second cause of the universe after the Father, the true and only begotten Child of God, the Lord and God and King of everything created, who has received lordship, power, honor, and deity itself from the Father. According to the mystic ascription of divinity to him in the Scriptures:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by him, and apart from him nothing was made [John 1:1, 3].

Indeed, this is also the teaching of the great Moses, the earliest of all the prophets, when by the Holy Spirit he described the origin and ordering of the universe: the Creator gave over to none but Christ himself the making of subordinate things and discussed with him the creation of man: "For God said, 'Let us make man in our image and likeness' " [Gen. 1:26].

Another of the prophets confirms this ascription of divinity: "He spoke, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created" [Ps. 33:9; 148:5]. Here he introduces the Father and Maker as a supreme sovereign giving commands by a royal nod and, second to him, none other than the divine Word as carrying out his commands.

Ever since Creation, all those distinguished for righteousness and virtue—Moses, and before him Abraham and his children, as well as all the just men and prophets since—recognized him through the eyes of the mind and paid him the reverence due the Son of God, who taught all humanity the knowledge of the Father.

Thus the Lord God is said to have appeared as an ordinary man to Abraham as he sat by the oak of Mamre, yet he worshiped him as God, saying, "O Lord, judge of all the world, will you not do justice?" [Gen. 18:25]. Since reason would never permit that the immutable essence of the Almighty be changed into human form, even by illusion, or that Scripture would falsely invent such a story, who else could be so described as appearing in human form but the preexistent Word, since naming the First Cause of the universe would be inappropriate? Of him it is said in the Psalms:

He sent his Word and healed them,
And he rescued them from their destruction [107:20].

Moses clearly speaks of him as a second Lord after the Father when he says: "The Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord" [Gen. 19:24]. Holy Scripture again refers to him as God when he appeared to Jacob in the form of a man and said, "No longer shall your name be Jacob, but Israel . . . for you have prevailed with God." Then too: "Jacob called the name of that place 'the Vision of God,' saying, 'For I saw God face-to-face, and my life was spared' " [Gen. 32:28-29].

To suppose that these recorded theophanies were appearances of subordinate angels and ministers of God cannot be correct, for whenever these appear to people, Scripture distinctly declares in countless passages that they are called angels, not God or Lord.

Joshua, Moses' successor, names him commander-in-chief of the Lord's army, as leader of the angels and archangels and the heavenly powers and accorded the second place in universal rule as the power and wisdom of the Father, yet Joshua too saw him only in human form. For it is written:

When Joshua was at Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing before him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua approached him and said, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" He replied, "It is as commander of the Lord's army that I have come." Then Joshua fell to the ground, face downward, and asked, "Master, what do you command your servant?" The commander of the Lord's army replied, "Take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy" [Josh. 5:13-15].

The words themselves will show you here too that this was none other than the one who spoke also to Moses:

When the Lord saw that he approached to see, the Lord called out to him from the bush, "Moses, Moses!" He replied, "What is it?" He said, "Do not come near. Remove your sandals, for the place where you stand is holy ground." He continued, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" [Ex. 3:4-6].

There are additional proofs that this really is the being named the Word of God and Wisdom, who existed before the world and assisted the God of the universe in the fashioning of all created things. Wisdom clearly reveals her own secret through the mouth of Solomon:

I, Wisdom, made counsel my dwelling and invoked knowledge and thought.
 By me kings reign and rulers decree justice;
 By me the great are enhanced and sovereigns rule. . . .
 In the beginning before time began and before the Lord made the earth
 He begot me, before springs gushed forth and the mountains arose.
 When he prepared the heavens, I was there, and when he secured the springs under heaven, I was with him, setting them in order.
 I was she in whom he daily delighted, and I always rejoiced in his presence when he rejoiced that he had completed the world.²

This, then, is a brief demonstration that the divine Word pre-existed and appeared to some, if not all, people.

Why he was not proclaimed long ago to all people and all nations, as now, is explained as follows. In the past humanity was not capable of grasping the teaching of Christ in all its wisdom and virtue. At the beginning, after the original state of blessedness, the first man disregarded the command of God and fell into this mortal state, exchanging the delight of heaven for the curse of earth. His descendants, who filled our world, showed themselves even worse, except for one or two, choosing a brutal existence and a life not worth living. City, state, art, knowledge, laws, virtue, or philosophy were not even names among them, and they lived as savage nomads in the desert, destroying reason and culture through excessive wickedness. Surrendering to total depravity, they corrupted, murdered, or cannibalized each

2. Selections from Prov. 8:12-31.

other and in their madness prepared for war with God himself and to fight the famed battles of the giants,³ trying to fortify earth against heaven and, in their delirium, to do battle with the supreme Ruler himself.

In response, God sent them floods and conflagrations, famines and plagues, wars and thunderbolts—punishments progressively drastic—in order to restrain the noxious illness of their souls. Then, just when the vast flood of evil had nearly drowned humankind, the firstborn and first-created Wisdom of God, the preexistent Word himself, appeared in his great kindness, as an angelic vision or in person as God's saving power to one or two of the God-fearing men of old, yet always in human form, since they could receive him in no other way.

When they, in turn, had sown the seeds of true religion among many, an entire nation appeared, sprung from the Hebrews and practicing the true religion. To them, through the prophet Moses, he revealed images and symbols of a mystical Sabbath and of circumcision, as well as instruction in other spiritual principles, but no complete revelation of the mysteries, for they were still bound by old practices. Yet when their law became famous and penetrated everywhere like a fragrant breeze, the minds of most of the heathen were moderated by lawgivers and philosophers. Savage brutality changed into mildness, so that profound peace, friendship, and easy communication prevailed.

Then at last, when all humanity throughout the world was now ready to receive knowledge of the Father, that same divine Word of God appeared at the beginning of the Roman Empire in the form of a man, of a nature like ours, whose deeds and sufferings accorded with the prophecies that a man who was also God would do extraordinary deeds and teach all nations the worship of the Father. They also predicted the miracle of his birth, his new teaching, the wonder of his deeds, the manner of his death, his resurrection from the dead, and, finally, his restoration to heaven by the power of God. Through inspiration by the Holy Spirit, the prophet Daniel described his final sovereignty in human terms:

As I looked, thrones were placed and an Ancient of Days was seated.
His clothing was white as snow and his hair like pure wool. His

3. Eusebius combines the description of the *nephilim* (Gen. 6:4) with the account of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9).

throne was a flame of fire. . . . A thousand thousand ministered to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. . . . I looked, and behold, one like a Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven before the Ancient of Days. To him was given dominion, glory, and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His is an everlasting sovereignty that shall not pass away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed [Dan. 7:9-10, 13-14].

Clearly this could not apply to anyone but our Savior, the God-Word who was in the beginning with God, called "Son of Man" because of his ultimate incarnation. But since I have collected the prophecies concerning our Savior Jesus Christ in special commentaries, let this suffice.

The Names Jesus and Christ Known Earlier

3. The very names *Jesus* and *Christ* were honored even by the God-loving prophets of old. Moses himself was the first to announce how greatly sanctified and glorious was the name of Christ, using types and symbols in response to the oracle that told him, "Make everything according to the pattern shown you in the mount" [Ex. 25:40]. When describing God's high priest as a man of supreme power, he calls him and his office "Christ" as a mark of honor and glory,⁴ understanding the divine character of "Christ."

He was also inspired by the Holy Spirit to foresee quite clearly the title *Jesus*. Although previously it had never been known, Moses gave the title *Jesus*, again as a type or symbol, only to the man he knew would succeed him after his death.⁵ His successor had been known by another name, Hoshea, which his parents had given him [Num. 13:16], but Moses calls him Jesus—Joshua the son of Nun himself bearing the image of our Savior, who alone after Moses received authority over the true and pure religion. In this way Moses bestows the name of our Savior Jesus Christ as a supreme honor on the two men who in his time surpassed all others in merit and glory: the high priest and the man who would rule after him.

4. The high priest is described as "anointed" in Lev. 4:5, 16 and in 6:22. The words *Christ* and *anointed*, though different in English, are the same in Greek, as translations of the Hebrew *messiah* or "Messiah."

5. Num. 27:12-23 refers to *Joshua*, which is the Greek transliteration of "Jesus."

Later prophets also clearly foretold Christ by name, predicting also the plots against him by the Jewish people and the calling of the Gentiles through him. Jeremiah, for example, says:

The spirit of our face, Christ the Lord, was caught in their pits; Of whom we said, "In his shadow we shall live among the Gentiles" [Lam. 4:20].

David, in his perplexity, asks:

Why did the nations rage and the peoples imagine vain things?
The kings of the earth arrayed themselves, and the rulers convened
against the Lord and against his Christ [Ps. 2:1-2].

He adds, speaking in the person of Christ himself:

The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you.
Ask me, and I will give you the Gentiles as your inheritance and
the limits of the world as your possession" [Ps. 2:7-8].

Accordingly, it was not only the high priests, symbolically anointed with oil, who were designated among the Hebrews with the name *Christ*, but also the kings; for by divine directive they too were anointed by the prophets as symbolic Christs, since they carried in themselves the patterns of the regal and sovereign authority of the only true Christ, the divine Word, who rules over all. Similarly, some of the prophets themselves, by anointing, became types of Christ, so that all [three] refer to the true Christ, the divine Word, who is the only High Priest of the universe, the only King of all creation, and the only Archprophet of the Father.

Proof of this is the fact that none of those symbolically anointed of old, whether priest, king, or prophet, ever obtained the sort of divine power our Savior and Lord, Jesus—the only real Christ—demonstrated. None of them, however honored among their own people for so many generations, ever conferred the name *Christian* on their subjects from their symbolic title of *Christ*. None was worshiped by his subjects or held in such esteem after his death as to be ready to die for the person honored. None caused such a stir in all nations throughout the world, since the power of the symbol could not produce such an effect as the reality of our Savior. He did not receive the symbols of high priesthood from anyone or trace his physical descent from priests. Armed forces did not promote his

rule, nor did he become a prophet like those of old. Jews accorded him no rank or precedence whatever. Yet he had been adorned with all these by the Father, not in symbols but in truth. Although he did not obtain the honors cited, he is called Christ more than all of them, for he is himself the one true Christ of God who has filled the entire world with his Christians. He no longer provides patterns or images for his followers but fully revealed truths, and he has received not material christm but divine anointing by the Spirit of God through sharing in the unbegotten divinity of the Father.

Isaiah teaches this very point when he exclaims, as if Christ were speaking:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind [Isa. 61:1-2].

And not only Isaiah but David also refers to him in saying:

Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever:
Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity.
You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity.
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
With the oil of gladness above your fellows [Ps. 45:6-7].

The first verse calls him God, the second accords him a royal scepter. Honored with divine and royal attributes, he is presented, in the third place, as having become Christ, anointed not with material oil but divine, and far superior to his physically anointed predecessors. Elsewhere too the same writer explains his status:

The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand
Till I make your enemies your footstool. . . .
From the womb before the morning star, I begot you."
The Lord swore and will not rescind: "You are a priest forever of
the order of Melchizedek" [Ps. 110:1-4].

This Melchizedek is defined in the sacred books as priest of the most high God without his having received any material anointing or even as belonging to the Hebrew priesthood. That is why our Savior has been called, under oath, Christ and priest according

to his order and not that of others who received symbols and patterns. Nor does the record state that he was anointed physically by the Jews or belonged to the tribe of those who held the priesthood but that he had his existence from God himself before the morning star, that is, before the creation of the world, and holds his priesthood to all eternity.

That his anointing was divine is proved by the fact that he alone, of all who have ever lived, is known throughout the world as Christ and is called thus by Greeks and non-Greeks alike and to this day is honored by his worshipers throughout the world as King, held in greater awe than a prophet, and glorified as the true and only High Priest of God and above all as the preexistent Word of God, having his being before all ages and worshiped as God. We who are dedicated to him honor him not only with voice and word, but also with all of our soul, so that we value testimony to him more than life itself.

The Antiquity of the True Faith

4. This introduction was necessary lest anyone think of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, as novel, in view of the date of his incarnation, or his teaching new and strange, as crafted by a typical man of recent date. With his recent advent, it was admittedly a new people—neither small, weak, nor remote but the most numerous, pious, and invincible, with God’s eternal help—that appeared at the appointed time, honored with the name of Christ. This so amazed one of the prophets when he foresaw the future through the eye of the Holy Spirit that he exclaimed:

Who has ever heard such things? And who spoke thus?

Was the earth in labor but one day, and was a nation born at once
[Isa. 66:8]?

The same writer also hints at its future name, saying, “Those who serve me shall be called by a new name, which shall be blessed on the earth” [Isa. 65:15–16].

But although we are new and this clearly fresh name of Christians has only recently become known among all nations, our life, conduct, and religious principles are no recent invention of ours but stem from the natural concepts of men of old who were the friends of God, as we will demonstrate. The Hebrews are not a new people but are known by all and honored for their antiquity.

Now their oral and written records deal with men of an early age, few and scarce in number yet outstanding in piety, righteousness, and other virtues. Some of them lived before the Flood, others after—Noah’s children and descendants—but Abraham in particular, whom the Hebrews boast as their own founder and ancestor. All of these credited for righteousness, going back from Abraham to the first man, could be described as Christians in fact if not in name, without exceeding the truth. For the name means that the Christian, through the knowledge and teaching of Christ, excels in self-control and righteousness, in discipline and virtue, and in the confession of the one and only God over all, and in all this they showed no less zeal than we.

They had no interest in bodily circumcision, nor do we; nor for keeping the Sabbaths, nor do we; nor for abstaining from some foods or other distinctions that Moses first delivered to their successors to be observed as symbols, nor do such things concern Christians now. But clearly they knew the Christ of God, since he appeared to Abraham, taught Isaac, spoke to Israel [Jacob], and conversed with Moses and the later prophets, as I have shown. Therefore you will find that these God-loving men even received the name of Christ, according to the word regarding them: “Touch not my Christs, and do no wickedness among my prophets” [Ps. 105:15]. Clearly then, the recent proclamation of Christ’s teaching to all nations is none other than the very first and most ancient of all religions discovered by Abraham and those lovers of God who followed him. Even if they argue that Abraham long afterward received the command for circumcision, I reply that before this he had been deemed righteous through faith, as the divine Word says: “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” [Gen. 15:6]. The oracle given him before his circumcision by the God who showed himself to him—Christ himself, the Word of God—dealt with those who in the future would be justified in the same way as he and ran as follows: “In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” [Gen. 12:3]. And: “He shall become a great and mighty nation, and in him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” [Gen. 18:18].

Now this has obviously been fulfilled in us, for it was by faith in the Word of God, the Christ who had appeared to him, that he was made righteous and gave up the superstition of his fathers to confess the one God, the God over all, serving him by right conduct and not by the law of Moses, who came later. To him, as he was then, it was said that all nations would be blessed

in him. And currently, in deeds louder than words, Christians alone across the world practice their faith in the very way that Abraham practiced it. Accordingly, Christ's followers share the same life and religion as the God-loving men of old, and thus Christ's teaching is not new or strange but, in all honesty, ancient, unique, and true.

Jesus' Birth and the End of the Jewish Dynasty

5. Now then, after this necessary introduction to my *Church History*, let us begin with the appearance of our Savior in the flesh, first invoking God, the Father of the Word, and Jesus Christ himself to assist us in producing a truthful narrative. It was in the forty-second year of the reign of Augustus and the twenty-eighth after the conquest of Egypt and the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra,⁶ the last of the Ptolemaic dynasty, that our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, was born in Bethlehem of Judea in accordance with the prophecies concerning him. This was at the time of the first census, which took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, a registration mentioned also by Flavius Josephus, the most famous of the Hebrew historians, who adds an account of the Galilean sect that arose at the same time, to which our own Luke refers in the Acts:

After him arose Judas the Galilean at the time of the census. He persuaded some of the people to follow him. But he too perished, and all his followers were scattered [Acts 5:37].

The historian previously cited [Josephus] supports the above in *Antiquities*, Book 18:

Quirinius, a member of the senate who had passed through all the other offices to become consul and was a man of high distinction in other ways, arrived in Syria with a small staff. He had been sent by Caesar to govern the nation and to assess their property. . . . Judas, a Gaulonite from the city called Gamala, took with him Zadok, a Pharisee, and incited a revolt, for they claimed that the assessment

6. Eusebius calculates Augustus's reign as beginning with the death of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., hence 2 B.C. for the birth of Jesus, which accords also with twenty-eight years after the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra in 30 B.C. This date, however, is too late, since Jesus was born in 4 B.C. at the latest and most probably in 5 B.C.



Statue of Augustus, emperor 27 B.C. to A.D. 14, in the garb of a priest (*Museo Nazionale, Rome*).

would lead to nothing but total slavery, and they called on the people to defend their freedom.⁷

And in the second book of his *Jewish War*, he writes about the same man:

At this time a Galilean named Judas stirred the natives to revolt, naming them cowards if, after serving God, they accepted mortal masters and submitted to paying taxes to the Romans.⁸

6. At this time Herod was the first foreigner to become king of the Jewish nation, fulfilling Moses' prophecy that "A ruler shall not be wanting from Judah, nor a leader from his loins, until he comes for whom it is reserved" [Gen. 49:10]. Moses also states that he will be "the expectation of the Gentiles." This prediction

7. *Antiquities* 18.1, 4. The census causing Judas's revolt took place in A.D. 6, ten years after Jesus' birth, a chronological problem long debated among scholars.

8. *Jewish War* 2.118.

could not be fulfilled as long as the Jews lived under rulers of their own race, beginning with Moses and continuing down to Augustus's reign. In his time, however, the Romans awarded the government of the Jews to Herod, the first foreigner. Josephus states that he was an Idumean on his father's side and an Arab on his mother's, but [Julius] Africanus—no ordinary historian—claims that Antipater, Herod's father, was the son of a certain Herod of Ascalon, one of the servants in the temple of Apollo. As a child, this Antipater was captured by Idumean bandits and stayed with them because his father was too poor to pay his ransom. He was brought up in their customs and later befriended by the Jewish high priest Hyrcanus. His [Antipater's] son was the Herod of our Savior's time.

When the Jewish kingship devolved on such a man, the expectation of the Gentiles, according to prophecy, was already at the door, for the regular succession of their rulers and governors from the time of Moses came to an end. Before their Babylonian captivity, they were ruled by kings, Saul and David being the first. And before the kings, rulers known as judges governed them, following Moses and his successor Joshua. After the return from Babylon, an oligarchic aristocracy of priests was in control until the Roman general Pompey laid siege to Jerusalem and defiled the holy places by entering the inner sanctuary of the temple. **63 B.C.** He sent as prisoner to Rome, together with his children, the king and high priest, Aristobulus, who had continued the succession of his ancestors up to that time, and transferred the high priesthood to his [Aristobulus's] brother, Hyrcanus, while making the whole Jewish nation tributary to Rome from then on. And when Hyrcanus was taken prisoner by the Parthians, Herod was the first foreigner, as I have said, to be placed over the Jewish nation by the Roman senate and the emperor Augustus. The advent of Christ clearly occurred in his time, and the anticipated salvation and calling of the Gentiles followed in accord with the prophecy.

When the line of Jewish rulers ceased, the orderly succession of high priests from generation to generation fell into instant confusion. The reliable Josephus reports that Herod, once made king by the Romans, no longer appointed high priests of the ancient line but obscure sorts instead, a practice followed by his son Archelaus and the Roman governors after him when they took over the government of the Jews. The same writer reports that Herod was the first to lock up the sacred vestment of the high priest and keep it under his own seal rather than priestly control,

as did his successor Archelaus and the Romans after him.

These facts also demonstrate that another prophecy was fulfilled in the appearance of our Savior Jesus Christ. The text in Daniel specifies the exact number of weeks until the rule of Christ—I have treated the subject elsewhere⁹—and prophecies that after these weeks the anointing of Jews will cease. Clearly this was fulfilled at the time our Savior Jesus Christ was born. These preliminaries were necessary to underscore the truth of the date.



Head of Gnaeus Pompey, who conquered Jerusalem in 63 B.C. (*Glyptotek, Copenhagen*).

The Variant Genealogies of Christ

7. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke record the genealogy of Christ differently, and many suppose that they conflict with one another. Since each believer has been eager to offer uninformed guesses regarding these passages, I shall reproduce an explanation of the problem in a letter that the aforementioned Africanus wrote to Aristides on the harmony of the Gospel genealogies. After refuting the opinions of others as forced and patently false, he gives the explanation that had come to him:

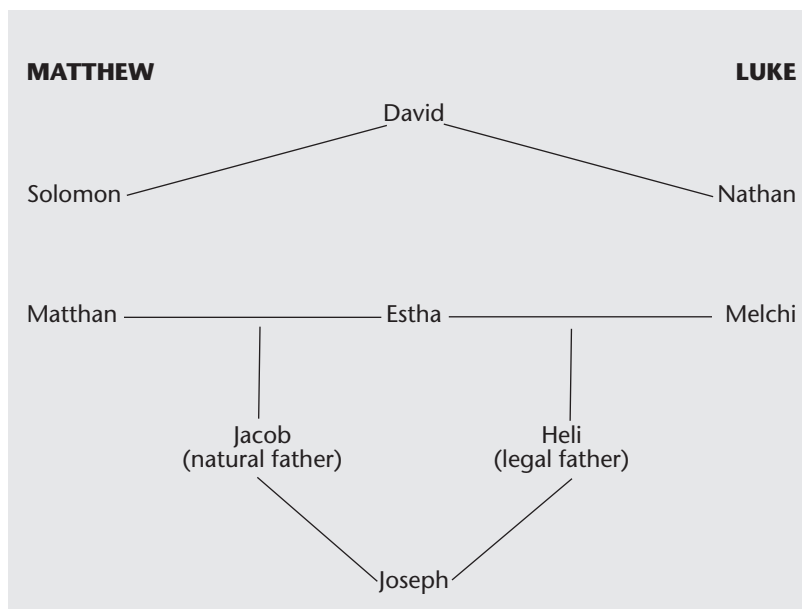
Names in the families of Israel were reckoned either according to nature or law: by nature in the case of genuine offspring; by law when another man fathered children in the name of a brother who had died childless.¹⁰ Since no clear hope of the resurrection had as yet been given, they depicted the future promise by a mortal “resurrection” so that the name of the deceased might survive. These genealogies, then, include some who succeeded their actual fathers

9. In Eusebius’s *Proof of the Gospel* 8.2 and *Selections from the Prophets* 3.45. Dan. 9:24–27 speaks of “seventy weeks of years” (70 x 7, or 490 years) and other such “weeks of years,” which Eusebius and some scholars since have applied to Jesus’ birth and ministry.

10. See Deut. 25:5–6.

and others who were children of one father but were recorded as children of another. Thus both the memories of the actual and nominal fathers were preserved. Hence neither of the Gospels is in error, since they take both nature and law into account. For the two families—one descended from Solomon and the other from Nathan—were so interconnected through the remarriage of childless widows and the “resurrections” of offspring that the same persons could correctly be deemed as children of different parents at different times—sometimes of reputed fathers, sometimes of actual. Both accounts are therefore accurate, though complicated, as they bring the line down to Joseph.

To clarify, I will explain the relationship of the families. Reckoning the generations from David through Solomon [as does Matthew 1:15-16], the third from the end is Matthan, whose son was Jacob, the father of Joseph. But if we follow Luke [3:23-37] and reckon from Nathan, the son of David, the corresponding third from the end is Melchi, whose son was Heli, the father of Joseph. It must therefore be shown how both Heli and Jacob can be fathers of Joseph, and both Matthan and Melchi, belonging to two different families, were grandfathers.



Now Matthan and Melchi, since they took the same wife, were fathers of stepbrothers, for the law permits a woman who has been divorced or widowed to marry again. Now Estha, the traditional name of the wife in question, first married Matthan (descended from Solomon) and bore him Jacob. When Matthan died, his widow married Melchi (descended from Nathan), of the same tribe but different family, and bore him Heli. Thus Jacob and Heli had the same mother, and when Heli died childless, his [half] brother Jacob married his widow and fathered Joseph by her. Joseph, then, was the natural son of Jacob but the legal son of Heli, for whom a good brother had "raised up" offspring. Matthew uses the term *begot* for physical descent, whereas Luke says, "who was, as was supposed"—note the addendum—"the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Melchi" [3:23-24]. It was impossible to express legal descent more precisely, and he never uses the term *begot* regarding such children in tracing the line back to "Adam, the son of God."

This is neither unprovable nor conjecture. The human relatives of the Savior have handed on this tradition also, either to boast or simply to give information, but in any case telling the truth. When Idumean bandits attacked the city of Ascalon in Palestine, they captured from the temple of Apollo Antipater, the child of a certain Herod, a temple servant. Because the priest was unable to pay ransom for his son, Antipater was raised as an Idumean and later befriended by the Judean high priest Hyrcanus. Sent to Pompey in Hyrcanus's behalf, he won for him [Hyrcanus] the restoration of his kingdom that had been seized by his brother Aristobulus, and so [Antipater] became overseer of Palestine. After he was treacherously assassinated, he was succeeded by his son Herod, who later was appointed king of the Jews by Antony, Augustus, and decree of the senate. His sons were Herod [Antipas] and the other tetrarchs. The Greek historians confirm this.

But the Hebrew families were still inscribed in the archives, as well as those descended from proselytes—Achion the Ammonite, Ruth the Moabitess, and mixed families who had left Egypt with them. So Herod, with no Israelite ancestry and pained by his base origins, burned the genealogical records, thinking he would appear of noble birth if no one were able to trace his bloodline from public documents. A few, however, carefully kept private records of their own, either remembering the names or finding them in copies, and took pride in preserving the memory of their aristocratic birth. Among these were

the *desposyni*,¹¹ so called because of their relation to the Savior's family. Living in the Jewish villages of Nazareth and Cochaba, they went through the rest of the land, explaining the above genealogy of their descent and quoting from the book of daily records as much as they could. Whether or not this is true, no one could give a clearer explanation, and the Gospel record, in any case, *is* true.

At the end of this letter Africanus adds:

Matthan, Solomon's descendant, begot Jacob. When Matthan died, Melchi, Nathan's descendant, begot Heli with the same woman. Heli and Jacob thus had the same mother. When Heli died without children, Jacob raised up seed for him in fathering Joseph, his own natural son but Heli's legal son. Thus Joseph was the son of both.

This genealogy of Joseph is also virtual proof that Mary belonged to the same tribe as he, since, according to the law of Moses, it was illegal for the different tribes to intermarry. The command that partners be from the same town and clan is given so that the [family] inheritance might not be transferred from tribe to tribe.

Herod and the Infants of Bethlehem

- c. 5 B.C.** 8. Now when Christ was born, according to prophecy, at Bethlehem of Judea at the time already noted, magi from the East asked Herod where they could find the one born king of the Jews. They had seen his star, which had occasioned their long journey in their eagerness to worship the infant as God. The request greatly disturbed him [Herod]—he thought his sovereignty was in danger—and therefore he inquired among teachers of the Law where they expected the Christ to be born. When he learned of Micah's prophecy that it would be Bethlehem, he issued a single edict for the massacre of all infants two years old and under in Bethlehem and its vicinity, according to the time indicated by the magi, thinking that Jesus would surely share the same fate. The child, however, forestalled the plot by being taken to Egypt, since his parents had been forewarned by an angel. This is also reported in the sacred Gospel [of Matthew].

11. "Belonging to the master" in Greek, since Jesus was Lord or "Despot." In a spiritual context the Greek flavor of "despot" was not politically pejorative.

It is worth noting, in this regard, the result of Herod's crime against the Christ and the children of his age. Without any delay, the justice of God overtook him while he was still alive as prelude to what awaited him in the next world. Here it is not possible even to summarize the ways in which he darkened the reputed glories of his reign by the repulsive murder of wife, children, relatives, and friends. No tragic drama has darker shadows, as Josephus narrates at length in his histories. From the moment he plotted against our Savior and the other innocents, the scourge of God drove him to death. In Book 17 of his *Jewish Antiquities*, [Josephus] tells of his end:

Herod's illness progressively worsened as God exacted punishment for his crimes. A slow fire burned inside him, less obvious to the touch. He had an insatiable desire for food, ulcers in the intestines, terrible pain in the colon, and a clammy edema in his feet. His bladder was inflamed and his genitals gangrenous, breeding worms. His breathing was rapid and extremely offensive due to its stench, and every limb was convulsed intolerably. Wise onlookers declared that God was exacting retribution from the king for his many wicked deeds.¹²

In Book 2 of his *Jewish War*, Josephus provides a similar account:

The disease spread throughout his body with fever, an unbearable itching everywhere, continual pain in the colon, edema in the feet, inflammation of the abdomen, and gangrene in the wormy genitals. His breathing was difficult, especially if he lay down, and spasms shook each limb—a punishment, according to the diviners. Still he clung to life and planned his own treatment in hope of recovery. He crossed the Jordan and took the hot baths at Callirhoe that flow into the Dead Sea but are sweet and potable. The doctors there decided to warm his body by lowering him into a tub of hot oil, but he fainted, turning up his eyes as if dying. Noise from his attendants beating their breasts revived him, but he now gave up hope of recovery and ordered that fifty drachmas be given each of his soldiers and large sums to his officers and friends.

Returning to Jericho in extreme depression, he planned a final, monstrous crime. He assembled the most eminent men from every

12. *Antiquities* 17.168-70.

village in all Judea and had them locked inside the hippodrome. Then he told his sister Salome and her husband, Alexas: "I know the Jews will celebrate my death with rejoicing, but I can be mourned for the sake of others and have a splendid funeral if you do as I direct. Surround the men [in the hippodrome] with soldiers, and the moment I die, kill them all quickly, so that all Judea and every house will weep over me." . . .

Later, tortured by hunger and a convulsive cough, he tried to anticipate his fate. He took an apple and asked for a knife—he cut up apples when he ate them—and then raised his right hand to stab himself [but was prevented].¹³

4 B.C. Josephus also relates that before he died, Herod ordered the execution of yet a third of his legitimate sons [Antipater], in addition to the two already murdered, and then died in great agony. Such was Herod's end, a just punishment for the children he murdered at Bethlehem and vicinity. After this, an angel appeared in a dream to Joseph while he was in Egypt and directed him to return to Judea with the child and his mother, declaring that those who sought the life of the little child were dead. The Evangelist continues: "But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee" [Matt. 2:22].

Pilate and the Priests

9. Josephus corroborates Archelaus's succession, in accordance with Herod's will and Augustus's decision, and how, when he fell from power ten years later, his brothers Philip and the younger Herod [Antipas], together with Lysanias, continued to rule their own tetrarchies.

A.D. 26 In Book 18 of his *Antiquities*, the same author writes that Pontius Pilate was given the administration of Judea in the twelfth year of Tiberius, who had succeeded to the throne after the fifty-seven-year reign of Augustus, and that Pilate remained in office ten whole years, almost until Tiberius's death. This clearly proves that the recently published *Acts of Pilate*¹⁴ are forgeries, since

13. Although Eusebius gives Book 2 of the *Jewish War* as his reference, this extract occurs in Book 1.656-60, 662 in our texts.

14. See 9.5 of this *Church History*. The *Acta* (the *Memoirs*) to which Eusebius refers were forgeries circulated at the time of the persecution under Maximin Daia (c.

they claim that the crime of the Savior's death occurred in the fourth consulship of Tiberius, which was the seventh year of his reign, a time when Pilate was not yet in charge of Judea. Josephus clearly states that it was in the *twelfth* year of his reign that Tiberius appointed Pilate procurator of Judea.¹⁵

10. When, according to the Evangelist [Luke], Tiberius Caesar was in the fifteenth year of his reign and Pontius Pilate in the fourth of his governorship, and Herod, Lysanias, and Philip were tetrarchs over the rest of Judea,¹⁶ our Savior and Lord, Jesus the Christ of God—about thirty years old at the beginning [of his ministry]—came to the baptism of John and began proclaiming the Gospel.

A.D. 29

Holy Scripture states that he completed his teaching under the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, thus beginning his mission under Annas and continuing to Caiaphas, a period that does not comprise four complete years. Life tenure for hereditary priests, according to the Law, was no longer the case, since Roman governors conferred the high priesthood first on one, then on another, who did not hold this office for more than one year.¹⁷ In his *Antiquities*, Josephus records four high priests in the succession between Annas and Caiaphas:

Valerius Gratus, having deprived Ananus [Annas] of the priesthood, appointed Ishmael the son of Phabi as high priest. Soon he removed him and named as high priest Eleazar, son of Ananus. After a year, he removed him too and transferred the high priesthood to Simon, son of Camithus. Nor did his tenure last for more than a year, and Joseph, also called Caiaphas, was his successor.¹⁸

312). The so-called *Acts of Pilate* extant today are apocryphal documents of Christian origin but just as fraudulent.

15. *Antiquities* 18.32ff., 85ff. Pilate was governor A.D. 26–36. His title was not “procurator,” which is an anachronism in both Josephus and Tacitus, but “prefect,” according to an inscription discovered at Caesarea in 1961.

16. Tiberius became emperor in A.D. 14, and his fifteenth year was A.D. 28–29. Eusebius inaccurately condenses Luke 3:1 here. Herod was in charge of Galilee, Lysanias of Abilene, and Philip of territories northeast of the Sea of Galilee.

17. This is incorrect. The Romans did change the high priesthood frequently, but there was no set term of office. Caiaphas, for example, was high priest for seventeen or eighteen years.

18. *Antiquities* 18.33–35.



A limestone ossuary, discovered on a slope south of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1990, is inscribed with the name of Joseph Caiaphas. Five whorl rosettes surround a center rosette inside the two great circles of this superbly carved bone chest, which most probably contained the remains of the Jewish high priest who indicted Jesus before Pontius Pilate (*Courtesy of Garo Nalbandian*).

A.D. 33

The whole period of our Savior's teaching thus was not even a full four years, since four high priests in four years from Annas to Caiaphas held the office for a year. Naturally, the Gospel named Caiaphas as high priest in the year of the Savior's passion, and so the time of Christ's teaching accords with this evidence.¹⁹

Our Savior and Lord called the twelve apostles shortly after the start of his preaching—of all his disciples he gave the name *apostles* to them only as a special privilege—and appointed sev-

19. The chronologies of Josephus and the Gospels do agree, but Eusebius's argument is faulty. In trying to interpret Luke 3:2 ("during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas") as meaning the period between the two, he constructs his less-than-four-year time grid for Jesus' ministry. But this founders on the fact that Annas was dismissed by Gratus in A.D. 15. A better explanation of Luke's passage would point out the honorific nature of Annas's title as "high priest" even after leaving office, since he was the gray eminence in Jerusalem, the priestly patriarch who set a record in having five of his own sons and a son-in-law, Caiaphas, succeed to the high priesthood.

enty others whom he also sent out in advance, two by two, into every place or town where he himself planned to come.

John the Baptist and Jesus

11. Soon afterward, John the Baptist was beheaded by the younger Herod [Antipas], as we learn from the inspired Gospel [Mark 6:14–29]. Josephus confirms the Gospel narrative, mentioning Herodias by name and telling how Herod married her though she was the wife of his brother, who was still alive, and dismissed his own lawful wife, who was the daughter of King Aretas [IV] of Petra. For her sake also he put John to death and went to war with Aretas, whose daughter he had dishonored. Josephus says that the entire army of Herod was destroyed in battle as retribution for his plot against John. The same Josephus acknowledges that John was especially righteous and a baptizer, confirming the description of him in the Gospels. He also reports that Herod was stripped of his kingship because of the same Herodias and was exiled with her to Vienne, a city of Gaul. The story is found in *Antiquities*, Book 18, where he writes regarding John as follows:

A.D. 39

Now, to some of the Jews the destruction of Herod's army seemed to come from God as a very just recompense, a punishment for what he did to John who was called the Baptist. For Herod had executed him, though he was a good man and had exhorted the Jews to exercise virtue both in practicing justice toward one another and in piety toward God and, so doing, to join in baptism. For thus, it seemed to him, would baptismal washing be acceptable, if it were used not to gain pardon for whatever sins they committed but as a purification of the body, implying that the soul was already thoroughly cleansed by righteous conduct. When others also joined the crowds about him—for they were deeply stirred at hearing his words—Herod grew alarmed: such great influence over the people could lead to an uprising, for they seemed ready to do anything John might advise. Accordingly, Herod decided that it would be much better to strike first and get rid of him before any insurrection might develop than to get himself into trouble and be sorry not to have acted once a rebellion had begun. And so, due to Herod's suspicions, John was brought in chains to Machaerus, the fortress that we have previously mentioned, and there put to death.²⁰

20. *Antiquities* 18.116–19.

In telling this about John, he says the following concerning our Savior in the same historical work:

About this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was the achiever of extraordinary deeds and was a teacher of those who accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. When he was indicted by the principal men among us and Pilate condemned him to be crucified, those who had come to love him originally did not cease to do so; for he appeared to them on the third day restored to life, as the prophets of the Deity had foretold these and countless other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of Christians, so named after him, has not disappeared to this day.²¹

When a historian, himself a Hebrew, has provided in his own writing this evidence concerning John the Baptist and our Savior, what option is there but to condemn the shamelessness of those who forged the *Acts* concerning them?

The Disciples of Jesus

12. The names of the apostles are obvious to everyone from the Gospels, but no list of the seventy disciples has survived anywhere. It is said, however, that one of them was Barnabas, cited in the Acts of the Apostles and by Paul in writing to the Galatians [2:1, 9, 13]. They say that another of them was Sosthenes, who wrote with Paul to the Corinthians [1 Cor. 1:1]. Then there is the story in Clement (*Outlines*, Book 5) that the Cephas about whom Paul says, “But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face” [Gal. 2:11] was one of the Seventy, who had the same name as the apostle Peter.²² Matthias also, who took Judas’s place in the list of the apostles, as well as the [Justus] honored with him

21. *Antiquities* 18.63. This citation is of great importance because it demonstrates that this (unfortunately interpolated) version of Josephus’s famous passage on Jesus read this way already in Eusebius’s time. Scholars justifiably deny that Josephus, who did not convert to Christianity, ever claimed that Jesus was the Messiah who rose from the dead. Josephus’s most probable original wording is in Appendix 1.

22. Clement of Alexandria (c. 155–c. 220) wrote the *Hypotyposes* (*Outlines*) as a biblical commentary. The suggestion that this Cephas was different from the apostle Peter is unfounded and merely an attempt to protect Peter from the apostolic squabble at Antioch that used to bother a few of the church fathers.

at the casting of lots [Acts 1:23], was called among the Seventy, according to tradition. They also claim that Thaddeus was one of them,²³ about whom a story has come to my attention that I shall shortly relate.

There were more disciples of the Savior than the Seventy. Paul states that after his resurrection Jesus was seen first by Cephas, then by the Twelve, and after these by more than five hundred brethren at once, some of whom, he says, had fallen asleep, but the majority were still alive at the time he wrote. Then, he says, he was seen by James, one of the alleged brothers of the Savior, and finally "by all the apostles" like Paul himself, a larger number patterned on the Twelve.

Thaddeus and the Prince of Edessa

13. Because of his miraculous powers the divinity of Christ was noised abroad everywhere, and myriads even in foreign lands remote from Judea came to him in the hope of healing from diseases of every kind. Thus, when King Abgar [V], the celebrated ruler of peoples beyond the Euphrates, was suffering terribly from an incurable illness and often heard the name of Jesus and his miracles, he sent him a request, via letter carrier, pleading for relief from his disease. Jesus did not consent to his request at the time but favored him with a personal letter, promising to send one of his disciples to cure the disease and bring salvation to him and his relatives.

The promise was soon fulfilled. After his [Jesus'] resurrection and ascension, Thomas, one of the Twelve, was divinely inspired to send Thaddeus, one of the Seventy, to Edessa as preacher and evangelist, who fulfilled all the terms of our Savior's promise. There is written evidence of this taken from the archives at Edessa, the then royal capital, which include ancient history as well as the events at Abgar's time. Here are the letters themselves, which I have extracted from the archives and translated word for word from the Syriac:

COPY OF A LETTER WRITTEN BY ABGAR THE TOPARCH
TO JESUS, SENT TO HIM AT JERUSALEM
BY THE COURIER ANANIAS

23. But one of the Twelve, according to Matt. 10:3 and Mark 3:18, and apparently identical with Jude.

Abgar Uchama, the Toparch, to Jesus the excellent Savior who has appeared in the region of Jerusalem, greeting.

I have heard about you and the cures you accomplish without drugs or herbs. Word has it that you make the blind see and the lame walk, that you heal lepers and cast out unclean spirits and demons, and that you cure those tortured by chronic disease and raise the dead. When I heard all these things about you, I decided that one of two things is true: either you are God and came down from heaven to do these things or you are God's Son for doing them. For this reason I am writing to beg you to take the trouble to come to me and heal my suffering. I have also heard that the Jews are murmuring against you and plot to harm you. Now, my city-state is very small but highly regarded and adequate for both of us.

(He wrote this letter when the divine light had only begun to shine on him. It is appropriate to hear also the letter that Jesus sent him by the same letter carrier. It is only a few lines long but very powerful:)²⁴

THE REPLY OF JESUS TO THE TOPARCH
ABGAR BY THE COURIER ANANIAS

Blessed are you who believed in me without seeing me! For it is written that those who have seen me will not believe in me and that those who have not seen me will believe and live. Now regarding your request that I come to you, I must first complete all that I was sent to do here, and, once that is completed, must be taken up to the One who sent me. When I have been taken up, I will send one of my disciples to heal your suffering and bring life to you and yours.

The following is appended to these letters in Syriac:²⁵

After the ascension of Jesus, Judas, who is also called Thomas, sent Thaddeus, one of the Seventy, to [Abgar], and he stayed with Tobias, son of Tobias. When Abgar heard that Thaddeus was healing every disease and weakness, he suspected that he was the one about whom Jesus had written. He therefore ordered Tobias to bring Thaddeus to him. So Tobias told Thaddeus, "The Toparch Abgar has instructed me

24. The passage in parentheses is missing in some manuscripts.

25. This addendum is somewhat condensed, since the original is incredibly redundant and obviously contrived. No factual material, however, has been surrendered.

to bring you to him so that you might heal him.” Thaddeus replied, “I will go, since I have been sent to him with power.”

Tobias rose early the next morning and took Thaddeus to see Abgar, surrounded by his nobility. When they arrived, Abgar saw a marvelous vision on the face of Thaddeus and bowed down to him, asking, “Are you really a disciple of Jesus, the Son of God, who wrote to me, ‘I will send you one of my disciples to heal you and give you life?’”

“I was sent to you for this reason,” Thaddeus replied. “If you believe in him, your prayers shall be answered in proportion to your faith.”

“I believed in him so firmly that I wanted to take an army and destroy the Jews who crucified him, had I not been prevented by Roman power.”



Christianity spread rapidly into the eastern Mediterranean world, the area shown in this map. Edessa, at the top right of this map, was a city in northwestern Mesopotamia near the upper bend of the Euphrates River. Eusebius reported that its ruler, Abgar, corresponded with Jesus during his public ministry.

“Our Lord has fulfilled the will of his Father,” said Thaddeus. “After fulfilling it, he has been taken up to the Father.”

“I too have believed in him and in his Father.”

“For this reason I put my hand on you in his name.”

When he did this, Abgar was immediately cured—and without drugs and herbs, just as in the healings of Jesus. Abdus, son of Abdus, fell at Thaddeus’s feet and was similarly cured of his gout, while many other fellow citizens of theirs were healed. Abgar then asked Thaddeus for further information about Jesus.

Thaddeus replied: “Please assemble all your citizens tomorrow, and I will tell them about the coming of Jesus and his mission, about the Father’s purpose in sending him, about his deeds and power and preaching, about his humility that made light of his divinity, and of how he was crucified and raised from the dead, descending to hades alone but ascending with a multitude to his Father.”

So Abgar assembled his citizens at daybreak to hear the preaching of Thaddeus, after which he ordered that gold and silver be given him. But Thaddeus refused, asking, “If we have left behind our own property, how can we accept that of others?”

This all took place in the year 340.²⁶

Let this useful and literal translation from the Syriac suffice for now.

26. The year is according to the Edessene calendar, which began in 310 B.C.; thus it is A.D. 30, three or four years too early to reflect the most accurate date for the crucifixion (A.D. 33).

EUSEBIUS ON JESUS

In Christianity's earliest history, one might have hoped for additional strategic detail on the life of Jesus to supplement the biblical record. Were there no further traditions on the childhood and ministry of Jesus, for example, that Eusebius might have recorded?

Either the traditions had been lost or Eusebius focused instead on what he deemed the most critical portion of his information on Christ: his preexistence and messiahship. Much as George Frederick Handel focused far more of his oratorio *Messiah* on Old Testament prophecy than on New Testament fulfillment, so Eusebius felt impelled to demonstrate that the Son of God was eternal and preexistent, not limited by temporal or geographical constraints. He was meeting a common objection to Christianity as a new system invented in the first century. For this reason many other early Christian authors also devoted much attention to Christ's preexistence and to Old Testament prophecies they found fulfilled in him.

Eusebius was equally concerned, however, to demonstrate the true historicity of the man Jesus. He made no appeals to blind faith but instead marshaled whatever nonbiblical sources he could find to show how well they corroborated the New Testament Gospels. Flavius Josephus was especially valuable for this purpose, as the Jewish historian has proved to be ever since.

In citing the writings of Julius Africanus regarding the divergent genealogies of Jesus, Eusebius unveils a pattern he will use throughout his history: to incorporate, with due credit, some of the most important historical sources word for word in his own record. Many crucial documents, accordingly, survive only in Eusebius, long after the original documents were lost. The problem of the genealogies also shows how ancient are many of the issues apparently just discovered by modern critics.

The story of Abgar's correspondence with Jesus, however sensational, must be regarded as apocryphal. There is no doubt that these documents were in the archives at Edessa, a city in extreme northwestern Mesopotamia near the upper bend of the Euphrates, and that Eusebius himself saw and translated them. Quite apart from other legendary aspects of the story, the spurious nature of

these documents is indicated by Jesus referring to items written about him at a time when they could not yet have been written down. Eusebius was not a critical historian in the modern sense.

This narrative, however, is a romanticizing of factual material: Christianity reached Edessa early, at least by A.D. 150, and its king, probably Abgar VIII, was baptized. A church was constructed at Edessa; the Greek New Testament was translated here into Syriac, and this is also the home of the Christian scholars Tatian and Bardesanes, whom Eusebius will mention subsequently.

Each of the end commentaries in this book will conclude with a very brief overview of Roman imperial politics during the period covered in each book, since Eusebius arranged his history in segments corresponding to the reigns of the emperors ruling at the time. Book 2, for example, covers the period from Tiberius through Nero.

Unlike subsequent books of the *Church History*, Book 1 covers a vast expanse of time, from the Old Testament prophets through Jesus' birth, ministry, death, and resurrection. In chapter 5 of this first book, however, Eusebius starts to superimpose a Roman imperial time grid on his account by introducing, as did Luke, the emperor who was ruling at the time of Jesus' birth, namely, Caesar Augustus.

Augustus (27 B.C.–A.D. 14)²⁷ was Rome's first and probably greatest emperor. His fascinating career began in the bloody civil wars of the late Roman republic, blossomed after his victory over archrival Mark Antony, and culminated in a long era of peace and prosperity, appropriately named the *Pax Augusta*. During the forty-four years that he was head of state he reshaped the government of Rome into a form that would endure for the next three centuries. To the already sprawling empire, he added Egypt as well as all unconquered lands up to the Rhine-Danube frontier, establishing these two river systems as the natural boundaries of the Roman Empire. At home he worked harmoniously with the senate, and his vast building enterprises lent substance to his claim: "I found Rome brick and left her marble."

Less familiar than these successes and conquests is his interesting religious policy. Convinced that the public's neglect of the

27. Such dates following the names of emperors are their regnal years. Julius Caesar's grandnephew Octavian achieved sole power after his victory over Antony at the battle of Actium in 31 B.C. and was named Augustus by the Roman senate in 27.

Greco-Roman gods was demoralizing Roman society, he tried to stimulate a religious revival by restoring or erecting temples—eighty-two in Rome alone—and inspiring a moral renewal in society. He could never know that this would best be accomplished by a baby born in the middle of his administration at far-off Bethlehem in Judea. When Augustus died in the month named after him—August 19, A.D. 14—Jesus was a late teenager in Nazareth. His public ministry would take place under the emperor Tiberius, who is portrayed in the next chapter.

(A list of the Roman emperors, correlated with listings of the bishops of Rome, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, is given in Appendix 2.)



Paul (left) and James the Just (right) hold the Scriptures in this early mosaic (*Mar-torana, Palermo*).