

Two Speeches by Eusebius

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SOME MANUSCRIPTS of Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* contain not only the four books of the *Life* and *Constantine's Speech to the Assembly of the Saints* but also two speeches which are conventionally known by a single title as *Laus Constantini*, *Laudes Constantini*, *De laudibus Constantini*, or the "Tricennial Oration," and which all editors of Eusebius so far have published as a single work.¹ That the two speeches are in fact separate compositions ought to be clear, and some obvious differences between the first ten chapters in the traditional numeration and the last eight were stated long ago.² Nevertheless, some scholars still continue to treat the whole as a single speech,³ so that it will be necessary to preface a discussion of the dates of the two speeches by restating the decisive arguments for dividing the text into two halves.

Both external attestation and internal criteria point to two separate and distinct works. First, all three primary manuscripts have traces of a break between chapters 10 and 11, and the most reliable of them explicitly marks the two parts as bearing distinct titles (*viz.*, "τριακονταετηρικός" and "βασιλικός" respectively).⁴ Second, each part constitutes a logical and stylistic unity, which differs from the other in tone and purpose.⁵ The first ten chapters are a panegyric addressed to Constantine in his presence (1.1), with a formal preface and an easily recognisable conclusion (10.7).⁶ The last eight chapters, in contrast, read like a sermon on a solemn occasion: they justify Constantine's building of churches, particularly his building of the Church of

¹ The most recent edition is that of I. A. Heikel, *Eusebius Werke* 1 (GCS 7, 1902) 195–259. Although he prints a continuous text, not even marking a lacuna between 10 and 11, he argues in his introduction that "eine neue Schrift" begins with ch.11 (*ibid.* civ–cvi).

² P. Wendland, *BPW* 22 (1902) 232f (reviewing Heikel); E. Schwartz, *RE* 6 (1909) 1428f.

³ So, recently, S. Calderone, *Le Culte des souverains dans l'empire romain (Entretiens Hardt 19, 1973)* 220.

⁴ Heikel, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1), on 223.22, 259.29, *cf.* on 196.14.

⁵ H. A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations* (University of California Publications, Classical Studies 15, 1976) 31ff.

⁶ Eusebius looks forward to Constantine's reception into heaven—a Christian version of the traditional closing prayer for an emperor's longevity, *cf.* *AJP* 96 (1975) 444.

the Holy Sepulchre, repeat many well-worn apologetical arguments in favour of Christianity, and advance an interpretation of human history as culminating in the Christian Empire (11–18). Thirdly, the two parts present themselves as delivered in different places: the panegyric was delivered in the imperial palace (*praef.* 4), with Constantine and the Caesar Constantius present (1.1; 3.4, *cf.* VC 4.49), while the eleventh chapter, despite its invocations of Constantine in the second person (11.1; 11.7; *cf.* 18.1), refers to Jerusalem as πόλεως τῆςδε (11.2)—which implies that Eusebius was speaking in that city. Moreover, a passage towards the end of the whole refers back to a sentence in chapter 11 as occurring “at the start of the speech” (16.9, *cf.* 11.4). The traditional designation, therefore, embraces two quite separate works: the preface and chapters 1–10 are a panegyric on Constantine, chapters 11–18 a treatise on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Both panegyric and treatise can be dated precisely by reference to external events. Constantine celebrated his *tricennalia* for a full year, with the principal festivities occurring on 25 July 335 and 25 July 336 (*Chr.min.* 1.235). The extant panegyric genuinely deserves the title *Laudes Constantini* or “Tricennial Oration,” for it is the speech in honour of Constantine’s *tricennalia* which Eusebius promised to append to his *Life* (VC 4.46). Although some scholars have dated it to 25 July 335,⁷ or even to early September 335,⁸ Eusebius alludes to the Caesar Dalmatius, who was raised to the purple on 18 September 335 (3.4, *cf.* *Chr.min.* 1.235). Since, moreover, Eusebius delivered the speech on an occasion when Constantine was also praised by other panegyrists (*praef.*), and in Constantinople (1.1; VC 4.46), the correct date must be 25 July 336.⁹ The treatise, however, was composed for the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which was solemnly inaugurated by a council of bishops on 13 September 335.¹⁰ Hence it is chronologically impossible to argue (as several scholars have done)¹¹ that Eusebius composed the treatise

⁷ A. Harnack, *Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius II* (Leipzig 1904) 117; J. Quasten, *Patrology III* (Utrecht and Westminster [Md.] 1960) 326; B. Altaner and A. Stuiber, *Patrologie*⁷ (Freiburg 1966) 220.

⁸ A. Piganiol, *L’Empire chrétien* (Paris 1947) 82 n.62; Calderone, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) 220 n.1.

⁹ H. A. Drake, *Historia* 24 (1975) 345ff.

¹⁰ For the very varied evidence attesting the date, see A. Bludau, *Die Pilgerreise der Aetheria (Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums 15.1–2, 1927)* 185ff; P. Peeters, *Bulletin de l’Académie royale de Belgique, Classe des Lettres* 30 (1944) 167 n.1.

¹¹ Thus Calderone, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) 220 n.1.

for the ceremonies in Jerusalem in September 335 and later combined it with the already written panegyric to form a single speech which he delivered in Constantinople in the late autumn of that year. If the panegyric belongs to 336, then the treatise is not only a separate work, but earlier in date.

The hypothesis that chapters 11–18 of the *Laudes Constantini* were delivered twice represents an attempt to solve a dilemma which Eusebius' own references to orations about the Church of the Holy Sepulchre appear to impose. The *Life of Constantine* mentions a speech or speeches which its author composed on this church in three passages. In the first, Eusebius states that he delivered a speech "about the monument of our salvation" in the imperial palace and that Constantine insisted on standing throughout its delivery (4.33). Second, a passage which is partly corrupt in the manuscripts alludes to a speech which Eusebius gave in Jerusalem when the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was dedicated in September 335 (4.45.3). As printed by the most recent and most careful editor, it reads as follows:

ἔνθα δὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς τῶν ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς ἀγαθῶν ἡξιωμένοι ποικίλαις ταῖς εἰς τὸ κοινὸν διαλέξεσι τὴν ἑορτὴν ἐτιμῶμεν, τοτὲ μὲν τῶν βασιλεῖ πεφιλοσοφημένων τὰς ἐκφράσεις ποιούμενοι, τοτὲ δὲ καιρίου καὶ τοῖς προκειμένοις συμβόλοις τὰς προφητικὰς ἐρμηνεύοντες θεωρίας.¹²

The third passage (4.46.1) immediately follows that quoted, and in it Eusebius describes briefly a speech which he intends to append to the *Life* in the appropriate place:

οἶος δ' ὁ τοῦ σωτήρος νεώς, οἷον τὸ σωτήριον ἄντρον, οἷαί τε αἱ βασιλέως φιλοκαλῖαι ἀναθημάτων τε πλήθη ἐν χρυσῷ τε καὶ ἀργύρῳ καὶ λίθοις τιμίοις πεποιημένων, κατὰ δύναμιν ἐν οἰκείῳ κυγγράμματι παραδόντες αὐτῷ βασιλεῖ προσεφωνήσαμεν.

It has been assumed that all three passages allude to the same speech: hence it seems natural to combine the second and third passages, which are almost consecutive, and to deduce from them that Eusebius presented the speech of September 335 a second time, before the

¹² F. Winkelmann, *Eusebius Werke I.1*² (GCS, 1975) 139. The main textual variants are these: (1) Winkelmann, following Heikel, deletes *διὰ γράμματος* after *τοτὲ μὲν*; (2) *πεφιλοσοφημένων* V *πεφιλοκαλημένων* J N A B; (3) *ποιούμενοι* and *ἐρμηνεύοντες* have been transposed—an emendation whose necessity Valesius had detected.

emperor, when he came to Constantinople in November of that year.¹³ Yet the contents of the speech which Eusebius states that he delivered before Constantine do not match the extant speech, since this lacks any physical description of the site or buildings. From the contradiction one of two unwelcome corollaries appears inevitably to follow. Either identity of the two orations must be sustained by the hypothesis that Eusebius removed the description when he gave the speech a second time,¹⁴ or the speech to which Eusebius alludes must be different from the speech which survives.¹⁵ But Eusebius does not explicitly say that the speech which he delivered in Constantinople was the same as he had spoken in Jerusalem, and the juxtaposition of the two references need not imply identity. If the speeches of September and November 335 were in fact different, then all the evidence falls neatly into place.

The speech which Constantine heard standing is clearly the speech of November 335, since the panegyric of 25 July 336 was only the second occasion on which Eusebius glorified God in the imperial palace (VC 4.46). But the speech of September differed in content from the one which he delivered before the emperor: it did not describe the site, the building or the emperor's dedications in gold, silver and precious stones, but dealt with the philosophical assumptions from which Constantine's actions proceeded and their theological explanation. Now the content of the extant speech corresponds, not to the speech which Eusebius delivered before the emperor and which he promises to append to the *Life*, but to the one which he affirms that he delivered in Jerusalem. Moreover, the extant speech was in fact delivered in Jerusalem (11.2), and its invocations of Constantine in the second person need not imply that it was ever spoken in his presence.¹⁶

On the available evidence, it should thus be concluded that the

¹³ So, recently, F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 B.C.–A.D. 337)* (London 1977) 607.

¹⁴ Drake, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 44f. The phrase *φέρει δὴ* at the very beginning of 11 does not (as Drake urges) suffice to prove that something has been omitted: for apparently resumptive beginnings to speeches, cf. Euseb. *C.Hier.* 1; Themist. *Or.* 24.1 (*ἀλλὰ καί*); 25.1 (*ἀλλ' εἶ*); Julian. *Or.* 8 (*ἀλλά*); Liban. *Or.* 25.1 (*τῷ δὲ ὀνόματι τοῦτῳ*).

¹⁵ I. A. Heikel, *Kritische Beiträge zu den Constantin-Schriften des Eusebius (Eusebius Werke I) (Texte u. Untersuchungen 36.4, 1911)* 81ff.

¹⁶ For similar invocations of an absent emperor, note *Pan.Lat.* 4 (10) 3.1; Themist. *Or.* 13, cf. *HSCP* 79 (1975) 329; Liban. *Or.* 19; 20, cf. A. F. Norman, *Libanius' Autobiography (Oration I)* (London 1965) 222.

speech which survives is the speech which Eusebius delivered in September 335. Why this has been preserved, and not the speech promised in the *Life*, can readily be explained. Eusebius died with his *Life of Constantine* unfinished.¹⁷ The man who added the chapter-headings and published it knew Eusebius' intentions and attempted to put them into effect. But Eusebius had left two speeches on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and his literary executor unfortunately appended the wrong one.

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October, 1977

¹⁷ G. Pasquali, *Hermes* 45 (1910) 386; Winkelmann, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.12) lvii.