

THE EPISTLE OF EUSEBIUS TO CARPIANUS

TEXTUAL TRADITION AND TRANSLATION

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The early Christian desire to create a harmony of the diverse elements presented in the four canonical gospels reached a degree of success in the labors of Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea in Palestine (b. A.D. 260-d. A.D. 340). The Eusebian system which had the feature of maintaining the gospels intact was composed of several complementary elements: first, an epistle written to a certain Carpianus with the express purpose of explaining the complete arrangement; secondly, a marginal system of pairs of numbers indicating the paragraph number in that particular gospel and another indicating the canon table to be consulted for determining parallel paragraphs from other gospels; and thirdly, a prefixed system of canon tables<sup>1</sup>. This harmony system became standard *paraphenalia* in Byzantine New Testament manuscripts and has appeared in many editions of the Greek New Testament beginning with the second edition of Erasmus in 1519. The popular edition of the Nestles has aided the student by including the Eusebian harmony system in its entirety<sup>2</sup>. While it is an inadequate critical tool when compared with modern synopses of the gospels, the Eusebian arrangement is no historical curio to be known only by the antiquarian; it has practical value for the user who will have his Greek New Testament in hand far more often than his Gospel Parallels. While NESTLE provides an explanation of the use of the system, the student may wish to know what Eusebius says about it himself. Since no full translation of this epistle into English has

<sup>1</sup> CARL NORDENFALK, *Die spätantiken Kanontafeln; Kunstgeschichte Studien über die Eusebianische Evangelien-Konkordanz in den vier ersten Jahrhunderten ihrer Geschichte*; I, Textband, II, Tafelband (Göteborg, 1937).  
<sup>2</sup> EBERHARD NESTLE, *Novum Testamentum Graece cum apparatus critico* (Stuttgart, 1957), pp. 32\*-37\* et passim.

appeared in print to the knowledge of the writer, and since many readers may lack the tools for doing this privately, a translation into English seems appropriate and will follow the brief survey of its textual tradition.

A. TEXTUAL TRADITION

1) Greek Texts and Editions

That the *Epistle to Carpianus* was a document preserved by continual copying means that it must be made the object of textual criticism if the original form is to be established from extant MSS. The present writer knows no complete list of Greek MSS containing the epistle; drawing up such a list would involve a study of the general lists of Gospel codices which describe their *paraphenalia*. In his N.T. (editio septima) TISCHENDORF was content to give the text as determined from MSS M (Paris, Bibl. Natl. 48, ix saec.) and 564 (Leipzig Univ. Tisch. IV, x saec.)<sup>1</sup>. W. H. P. HATCH seems to favor the text of Codex Σ of the sixth century<sup>2</sup>. Most of the older editions of the Greek New Testament give this treatise, though in a majority of the cases it is an uncritical edition<sup>3</sup>. Among editions of this century, VON SODEN gives a text which hardly an improvement over older ones; it is further limited in that no witnesses are cited for the variants<sup>4</sup>. By some strange course of events unusual in scholarship the most accessible form of the epistle is also the most adequate, namely, that of NESTLE. The text itself is from TISCHENDORF, but the apparatus makes accessible to the reader "the variants of the earlier editions of Erasmus"<sup>2-5</sup>, Stephanus (ς), Mill, Ma(thaei), L(loyd) 1828 and 1836, Scr(ivener), Ln (Lachmann), C(ischendorf) and W(ordsworth)

<sup>1</sup> C. R. GREGORY, *Textkritik des Neuen Testaments*, IIte Bd. (Leipzig, 1902), p. 863. Cf. the reproduction of this text given by GREGORY (with the *variae lectiones* of MSS 77, 108 and 177) with that offered by him in his *Pologomena* to A. F. C. TISCHENDORF'S *Novum Testamentum Graece* (ed. in critica maior), III (Lipsiae, 1894), p. 154 f.  
<sup>2</sup> W. H. P. HATCH, *Facsimiles and Descriptions of Minuscule Manuscripts of the New Testament* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), p. 99.  
<sup>3</sup> The dominant edition was that of John MILL (based on Stephanus) and his H KAINH ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ, *Novum Testamentum Graecum* (Oxonii, 1707), vol. cxxvii (unnumbered in edition). Cf. also MIGNÉ, *Patrologia graeca*, XII, coll. 1175-78.  
<sup>4</sup> Hermann Freiherr von SODEN, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt*, I. Teil, 1 Abt. (Berlin, 1902), p. 388 f.

White" <sup>1</sup>). Perhaps the discovery of new material <sup>2</sup>) will aid in the construction of a definitive text of this small, but important epistle.

## 2) Ancient Versions

It was inevitable that anything so integral to the Eusebian system as the epistle would be prefixed to manuscripts which contained the complementary material. As the New Testament became translated into the languages of peoples adjacent to the Mediterranean, many of these texts adopted likewise the Eusebian material with two notable changes: 1) the *Epistula ad Carpianum* was also translated into the language; and 2) often the Greek numbers were replaced with others more intelligible to the readers (as in Latin, Syriac, Armenian, etc.; Coptic would use them in the original form).

*Latin*: The Eusebian system was a popular one in the Christian West and the amount of extant evidence makes the study of its 'Latin history' a rich one. The definitive edition of the material was that edited by the masters, WORDSWORTH and WHITE <sup>3</sup>). One could wish that the Greek material had received as complete and excellent a treatment.

The transmission of the Latin material was further guaranteed longevity when included by Jerome into his Vulgate New Testament. It is doubtful if the Prologue, or Carpiian epistle, was always added—at least not in Latin translation. For preceding it, or possibly superceding it, was the *Epistula ad Damasum* <sup>4</sup>), written by Jerome in A.D. 383 as an *apology* for his work. At the conclusion of this letter Jerome gives his own version of the use of the Eusebian canon tables and marginalia. As this section of the epistle to Carpiian is the one essential to its understanding, it is easy to see how the inclusion of the Greek text, or even of a Latin translation *per se*, would not be as necessary as before. The standard English trans-

<sup>1</sup>) NESTLE, *op. cit.*, p. 30\*. All references to the epistle by line number are based on NESTLE'S edition.

<sup>2</sup>) Note, e.g., the discovery of a Greek fragment in 1926, published in W. E. CRUM and H. G. EVELYN WHITE, *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes*, II (New York, 1926), p. 302.

<sup>3</sup>) Iohannes WORDSWORTH et Henrico Iuliano WHITE, edd., *Novum Testamentum Domini Iesu Christi Latine secundum editionem sancti Hieronymi* (Oxonii, 1889-1908), 779 pp. + xxxviii.

<sup>4</sup>) There being other *Epistulae ad Damasum*, this one is usually referred to as the 'Preface to the Four Gospels'.

lation of the preface by Jerome does not include a rendering of this "Eusebian material" <sup>1</sup>); the only attempted translation of it into a modern language is a rather free German translation of the major portion of the relevant section <sup>2</sup>). In addition to this preface, there was the *Argumentum Evangeliorum [inc. Sciendum etiam, exp. quod solum est]*—the so-called *Monitum Anonymum* <sup>3</sup>)—which also commented on the Eusebian canons. The existence of these native Latin writings, however, did not totally prevent the translation of the epistle itself, as is evident from WORDSWORTH and WHITE'S *magnum opus* <sup>4</sup>). This rich material centering in the famous epistle is indicative of the wide-spread use of the system in the West.

*Syriac*: In the time of G. H. GWILLIAM the Epistle to Carpiian was known to exist in five Syriac codices <sup>5</sup>). Though the Syriac system does not correspond exactly to the Greek, the epistle was translated with a minimum of alteration. The Syriac text is given by GWILLIAM, as well as its Latin translation and pertinent notes <sup>6</sup>). The descriptive statement of the editor should be sufficient to characterize the accuracy of the Syriac translation: "The earlier part of this Syriac version of Eusebius' epistle is a fair rendering of the original, but the latter part has become a paraphrase in the attempt to make the somewhat obscure Greek intelligible" <sup>7</sup>). The particular character of the Syriac system and of this translation should be evaluated in the light of Eusebius' general popularity in the Syrian Christian Church. This interest is obvious from the early existence in Syriac of some of his other writings, such as the *Ecclesiastical History* and *History of the Palestinian Martyrs* <sup>8</sup>). In general, the Syriac version

<sup>1</sup>) "St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works", *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edd. Philip SCHAFF and Henry WACE, Second Series, VI (New York, 1893), p. 487 f.

<sup>2</sup>) Stephan BEISSEL, *Geschichte der Evangelienbücher in der ersten Hälfte des Mittelalters*, Ergänzungshefte zu den 'Stimmen aus Maria-Laach', XXIII (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1906), 92-3, 28: inc. *Magnum squidem; expl. propria sunt inueniantur*.

<sup>3</sup>) WORDSWORTH and WHITE, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>) *Ibid.*, p. 6 f. Also cf. MIGNÉ, *Patrologia latina*, XXIX, coll. 562 f.

<sup>5</sup>) GWILLIAM, G. H., "The Ammonian Sections, Eusebian Canons and Harmonizing Tables in the Syriac Tetraevangelium", *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica* . . . by Members of the University of Oxford, vol. II, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1890, p. 254.

<sup>6</sup>) *Ibid.*, pp. 255-58. The Syriac text is largely that of a single manuscript, Tetraev. Florentium I, dated A.D. 586.

<sup>7</sup>) *Loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup>) *Ibid.*, p. 201.

of this material, due to its modifications, is but a secondary witness to the text of the Greek original. Through GREGORY and VON SODEN, attention was drawn to an "addition" in the Peshitta text given in Syriac with a French translation by J. P. P. MARTIN<sup>1</sup>).

*Coptic:* There are two important Coptic (bohairic) manuscripts containing translations of this epistle and both are texts copied about the twelfth century<sup>2</sup>. The first, dated A.D. 1208, was edited by G. HORNER and is known as Evv., Copt.-Arab., London, Brit. Mus. Oriental 1315 (Greg. II)<sup>3</sup>. The section of the epistle which he gives in Coptic and English concerns only the origin of the system (i.e., NESTLE, II. I-13) and contains much elaboration of the attitude expressed by Eusebius in *πῶλλῶν . . . φιλοτινῶν καὶ σπουδῶν ἐπιστολῆς*. The second of these is known as Evv., Copt.-Arab., Rome, Vat. 9 (Greg. 30) and is dated A.D. 1205. The edition of the epistle by HEBBELYNCK is accompanied by a French translation with notes comparing the text of Vat. 9 with Brit. Mus. Oriental 1315<sup>4</sup>. HEBBELYNCK states that the former differs from the latter<sup>5</sup> and a comparison of texts and translations of both are evidence for the superiority (i.e., more literal quality) of the Vatican text as an ancient witness to the Greek 'Vorlage'. There are also numerous supra-textual editorial notes in the Coptic texts, such as this: "The ten canons end which Eusebius wrote for Carpians, shewing him the passages which agree together in the four Gospels"<sup>6</sup>.

*Others:* That the canon tables are found in Armenian, Georgian, Gothic, Arabic and Ethiopic codices<sup>7</sup> is circumstantial evidence for

<sup>1</sup>) J. P. P. MARTIN, *Introduction à la Critique textuelle du Nouveau Testament*, Partie théorique (Paris, 1883), x-xi.

<sup>2</sup>) GREGORY, *Prolegomena*, pp. 871-75. Two other MSS are listed by GREGORY as containing the epistle (14a and 38); both, however, are from the eighteenth century.

<sup>3</sup>) G. GEORGE HORNER, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect*, I (Oxford, 1898), lxxii f. HORNER also gives the passage dealing with the use of the canon tables from Paris Natl. Copte 13 (Greg. 18) of A.D. 1179, not cited by GREGORY as containing this epistle.

<sup>4</sup>) Ad. HEBBELYNCK, "Les *κεφάλαια* et les *τίτλοι* des évangiles", *Le Muséon* XLI (1928), 81-120. HORNER (*op. cit.*, pp. lix-lx) does not imply that this MS (i.e., Vat. 9) has the whole text of the epistle, publishing only material from a section of the epistle (cf. NESTLE, lines 14-23 for comparative amount).

<sup>5</sup>) *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>6</sup>) HORNER, *op. cit.*, p. xli.

<sup>7</sup>) NORDENFALK, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

the existence of a translated form of the epistle to explain their use. The epistle in only one of these versions has received critical treatment, namely the Armenian<sup>1</sup>).

## B. TRANSLATIONS

### I) Modern Translations

Though there is much to commend the use of this epistle in its original Greek, the failure of scholars to give it a clear translation has caused the rise of a number of subtle differences in their understanding and use of it. Of the Greek text itself, there seem to be translations into only two modern languages, German and English. And yet a full translation of the epistle occurs in neither. These partial translations will be described in detail so as to indicate what resources were available in making the full English rendering which will follow.

For the German translation(s) we are indebted to Theodor ZAHN, who first edited it in 1881<sup>2</sup>. The portion translated was comparable to lines I-13 of NESTLE's text. Approximately forty years later, ZAHN again gave a rendering of the same portion<sup>3</sup>. The choice of words in the later is such as to indicate a different understanding of certain phrases by the translator<sup>4</sup>. As the latter represents the more mature judgment of the author it should receive the higher consideration by those seeking to make modern translations.

Approximately one half of the epistle has been rendered into English. JOHN BURGON, the first to make such a translation, confined himself to the latter section (cf. NESTLE, lines 31-43) due to the case which he sought to prove<sup>5</sup>. The present English translation differs from this one largely by the rejection of its

<sup>1</sup>) P. A. VARDANIAN, in *Handes amsoyya, Monatschrift für armenische Philologie*, XLII (1928), 291-302; Greek and Armenian texts paralleled.

<sup>2</sup>) THEODOR ZAHN, *Tatians Diatessaron, Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur*, I (Erlangen, 1881), pp. 32-33.

<sup>3</sup>) THEODOR ZAHN, "Der Exeget Ammonius und andere Ammonii", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XXXVIII (1920), 4.

<sup>4</sup>) A close examination of both reveals that only about two-thirds of the former remains unchanged in the latter. The changes, however, occur largely in passages most difficult to translate.

<sup>5</sup>) JOHN BURGON, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark, vindicated against recent critical objectors and established* (Oxford: James Parker and Co., 1871), p. 312.

archaized English idiom. The second scholar to translate any portion into English was W. E. CRUM, whose choice of sections was limited to the Greek fragment(s) he was editing<sup>1</sup>). The extent of the original which is extant in this text corresponds to lines 1-6 and 16-19 of the NESTLE edition. On the whole, the translation appears to be an accurate one and significant differences between that of CRUM and of this paper will be noted in the notes. Thus with capable, but fragmentary antecedents the following translation is attempted.

2) English Translation

EUSEBIUS TO CARPIANUS BELOVED BROTHER IN THE LORD GREETING

A  
i

Ammonius the Alexandrine, with the expense of much industry and zeal—as was proper—left us the Diatessaron Gospel, in which he had placed the similar pericopes of the rest of the Evangelists alongside Matthew, with the inevitable result that the coherent sequence of the three was destroyed inasmuch as regards the network of the readings.

ii

But in order that, while preserving completely both the content and sequence of the other three, you may know the specific passages in each Evangelist in which they were compelled by love of truth to say the same things, (and) having taken occasion from the work of the aforementioned individual, I formed for you according to a different method the sum of ten canons which have been subjoined:

B  
i

Of which the first contains numbers in which the Four have said things very similar, namely Matthew, Mark, Luke, (and) John; the second in which the three, Matthew, Mark, (and) Luke; the third in which the three, Matthew, Luke, (and) John; the fourth in which the three, Matthew, Mark, (and) John; the fifth in which the two, Matthew, (and) Luke; the sixth in which the two, Matthew,

<sup>1</sup>) CRUM and WHITE, *op. cit.*, p. 302. The apparent reason for giving the English rather than the Greek text is the hyper-fragmentary state of the MS.

(and) Mark; the seventh in which the two, Matthew, (and) John; the eighth in which the two, Luke, (and) Mark; the ninth in which the two, Luke, (and) John; the tenth in which each of them recorded things independently. This then is the list of the subjoined canons;

ii

But their clear meaning is this. In each of the Four Evangelists a certain number is prefixed part by part, beginning from the first, then second and third, and proceeding continually throughout unto the end of the books. And for each number a rubricate note is given, indicating in which of the ten canons the present number occurs. If, for instance, a 1, it is clear that it is in the first; but if 2, in the second; and so on to ten.

C

If then, having opened any one of the Four Gospels, you may wish to study a certain desired chapter, and to know which (of the other three) have said things very similar and to find the specific passages in which they felt compelled [to say] the same; when you have taken the present number of the pericope you hold, seek it in the canon which the rubricate note has suggested. You shall immediately discover from those [words] prefixed at the head of the canon, both how many and which ones (of the Evangelists) spoke concerning what you are seeking. For both by having sought the numbers of the remaining Evangelists which lie parallel in the canon to the number you are holding, and by having sought them in the specific passages of each Gospel, you will find them saying things very similar.

Notes

- A i *Diatessaron Gospel*] CRUM, 'Four-fold Gospel'/ZAHN, das Diatessaron,  
A i *alongside Matthew*] CRUM, the Gospel according to Matthew/ZAHN.  
dem Evangelium nach Matthäus.  
A i *similar pericopes*] CRUM, those passages which correspond to it/ZAHN,  
aus den gleichen Stoff bezüglichen Abschnitte. Literally: ὁμο =  
same + φωνος = sound  
A i *network of the readings*] CRUM, connected reading/ZAHN, das Gewebe  
der Lektion.  
A ii *compelled by love of truth*] ZAHN, mit Wahrheitsliebe... gedungen  
fühlten.  
A ii *the sum of ten canons ... subjoined*] ZAHN, Verzeichnisse (κατάλογος),  
zehn an der Zahl ... entworfen....  
C *things very similar*] BURGON, things of the same kind. Literally, παρα-  
πλήσια = things almost or nearly alike.  
*rubricate note*] BURGON, subscribed in vermilion.