DOCUMENTS, LETTERS AND CANONS IN EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA'S *ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY*

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1. An approach to the subject: history and discourses

The modern reader[1] who reads ancient historians is often surprised by the security with which the personages featured in these histories give discourses which, in principle, could not have been literally reproducible in Antiquity.[2] Thucydides explains the purpose of the discourses included in the *History of the Peloponnesian War* in a programmatic passage (1.22):[3]

> Καὶ ὅσα μὲν λόγῳ εἶπον ἕκαστοι ἢ μέλλοντες πολεμήσειν ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη ὄντες, χαλεπὸν τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὴν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεῦσαι ἦν ἐμοί τε ὧν αὐτὸς ἤκουσα καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοθέν ποθεν ἐμοὶ ἀπαγγέλλουσιν· ὡς δ' ἂν ἐδόκουν ἐμοὶ ἕκαστοι περὶ τῶν αἰεὶ παρόντων τὰ δέοντα μάλιστ' εἰπεῖν, ἐχομένῳ ὅτι ἐγγύτατα τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων, οὕτως εἴρηται.

[1] This study forms part of the project "*Alteritas*: Alteridad lingüística y alteridad cultural en el imperio romano (SS. III-V): historiografía y géneros afines" [Linguistic and Cultural Alterity in the Roman Empire (3rd-5th centuries): Historiography and Related Genres] (FFI2010-15402 / FILO). I am grateful to D. DeVore (Ball State), A. Quiroga (Granada) and Á. Sánchez-Ostiz (Navarra) for their observations; I would also like to thank Prof. Caltabiano (Milan) for the comments she made after having heard an oral presentation of a prior version of this article.

[2] Nevertheless, the *Ecclesiastical History* (7.29) refers to people who gathered literal oral testimony in order to employ it with a documentary value: οὗτός γέ τοι ἐπισημειουμένων ταχυγράφων ζήτησιν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐνστησάμενος, ἣν καὶ εἰς δεῦρο φερομένην ἴσμεν…, "This man, having conducted a discussion with him, which was taken down by stenographers and which we know is still extant..." (translations of passages from the *HE* are taken, with slight adaptations, from A. C. McGiffert, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series. Vol. 1. Eusebius. Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, Buffalo 1890; http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2501.htm). In authors prior to Eusebius the term ταχυγράφος is documented in Aelius Herodianus (S. II AD). Concerning the *notae tironianae* and their use in the transcription of Cicero's discourses, Plu. *Cat.Min.* 23.3. See also n. 60.

[3] J. C. Iglesias Zoido, "Acercamiento a la polémica sobre Tucídides I, 22, 2", *AEF* 12, 1989, 125-32 proposes a succinct and accurate analysis of the passage. The translation is taken from R. Crawley, *Thucydides. The History of the Peloponnesian War*, Auckland 1874.

> With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said.

The Attic historian was able to carry out his proposal with notable skill thanks to his rhetorical abilities. We do not know to what degree this ability is related to his public actions in the Athens of his day; what we do know is that the historian composed a work whose historiographical validity depends to a large degree on its discourses.[4] For his part, Eusebius does not employ discourses in the *Ecclesiastical History* [*HE*], in contrast to the practice of Thucydides, the *Acts of the Apostles* (the first example of a Christian work of history) and Flavius Josephus, who was his primary referent in many aspects.[5] We know that the rhetorical skills of the bishop of Caesarea must

[4] In contrast, his work is of great importance for the study of the rhetoric of his time; J. C. Iglesias Zoido, *La argumentación en los discursos deliberativos de Tucídides y su relación con la normativa retórica del siglo IV*, Cáceres 1995. Concerning the relationship between historiography and rhetoric in Late Antiquity, M. S. Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400-1500*, Manchester 2011; P. van Nuffelen, *Orosius and the Rhetoric of History*, Oxford 2012. It should be remembered that ancient historiography, because it emphasizes the capacity for public speaking, follows the pattern of the oratory of the period in which it was written, where the weight of the argument rests on the verisimilitude of its reasoning, while the testimony of the witnesses has only a subsidiary importance.

[5] Concerning Eusebius's use of Josephus as a reference, D. Timpe, "Che cos'è la storia della Chiesa? La *Historia Ecclesiastica* di Eusebio. Caratteristiche di un genere", in G. Cambiano, L. Canfora, D. Lanza (eds.), *Lo Spazio Letterario della Grecia antica. II. La ricezione e l'attualizzazione del testo*, Roma 1995, 429-30; E. Prinzivalli, "Le genre historiographique de l'Histoire ecclésiastique", in S. Morlet, L. Perrone (eds.), *Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique : Commentaire. I. Études d'introduction. Anagôgê*, Paris 2012, 95. The exceptions to the norm of including discourses in historical works are scarce; there are no discourses in Book VIII of Thucydides (however, cf. 8.53.3), which is considered to be an indicator that the author himself did not manage to give the text a final revision; aside from brief interjections in direct style, there are also no discourses in the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*. Concerning the absence of discourses in Eusebius and their substitution by documents, see the general evaluation proposed by A. Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century A.D.", in A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, Oxford 1963, 89-90: "Eusebius, like any other educated man, knew what proper history was. He knew that it was a rhetorical work with a maximum of invented speeches and a minimum of authentic documents. Since he chose to give plenty of documents and refrained from inventing speeches, he must have intended to produce something different from ordinary history. Did he then intend to produce a preparatory work to history, hypomnema? This is hardly credible. First of all, historical hypomnemata were normally confined to contemporary events. Secondly, Eusebius speaks as if he were writing history, and not collecting materials for a future history." See also Timpe, "Che cos'è la storia della Chiesa?", 420-1.

be different from, and very likely inferior to, those of Thucydides.[6] But the fact that Eusebius was not perhaps the best orator of his time is not sufficient to explain the absence of discourses in the *HE*. In fact, other historians less skilled in rhetorics did not hesitate to invent discourses for their own works, thinking that these were an obligatory feature of the genre. This article seeks to offer a new explanation for this peculiarity of the *HE,* a peculiarity which (it must be noted) represents an original contribution, and gives an indication of Eusebius's ideas about historiography; for this reason I will examine, first of all, the theoretical considerations that the author sets out at the beginning of the work (1.1).[7]

Eusebius presents the objective of his work as being a narration of the apostolic succession[8] of the different ecclesial communities (1.1.1) as well as the oppression suffered by the Church at the hands of the pagans (1.1.2). After defining his topic, the author develops a key idea in the central paragraphs of this chapter (1.1.3-5): the task he takes on is pioneering, since a work of this type had never been composed before, and as a result he requests the indulgence of the reader:[9]

> πρῶτοι νῦν τῆς ὑποθέσεως ἐπιβάντες οἷά τινα ἐρήμην καὶ ἀτριβῆ ἰέναι ὁδὸν ἐγχειροῦμεν (1.1.3).
>
> Since I am the first to enter upon the subject, I am attempting to traverse as it were a lonely and untrodden path (1.1.3).

> ἀνθρώπων γε μὴν οὐδαμῶς εὑρεῖν οἷοί τε ὄντες ἴχνη γυμνὰ τὴν αὐτὴν ἡμῖν προωδευκότων (1.1.3).
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> (...) since I am unable to find even the bare footsteps of those who have traveled the way before me (1.1.3).

[6] Concerning Eusebius's knowledge and practice of rhetoric, G. A. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*, Princeton 1983, 186-97; Id., *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, Chapel Hill 1999^2, 161-3; A. J. Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea*, Leiden 2003, 137-8. Concerning the *Life of Constantine* as an example of an encomium, T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, Cambridge 1981, 265-71; A. Cameron, S. G. Hall, *Eusebius. Life of Constantine*, Oxford 1999, 27-48; a close reading of this work – J. B. Torres, "Image and Word in Eusebius (*VC* 3,4-24): Constantine in Nicaea", in A. J. Quiroga Puertas (ed.), *Rhetorical and Literary Strategies in Imperial and Late Antique Literature*, (forthcoming) – may indicate that Eusebius's rhetorical skills were not so clumsy as so oft supposed (see Cameron, Hall, *Eusebius. Life of Constantine*, 27).

[7] Prinzivalli, "Le genre historiographique", 85-8.

[8] The syntagma with which the text opens is, in fact, Τὰς τῶν ἱερῶν ἀποστόλων διαδοχάς, "the Apostolic successions". D. DeVore, "Genre and Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History: Toward a Focused Debate", in A. Johnson, J. Schott (eds.), *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations*, Washington 2013, 38-9.

[9] In regards to Eusebius's consciousness of his own originality, Prinzivalli, "Le genre historiographique", 87-8.

μηδένα πω εἰς δεῦρο τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν συγγραφέων διέγνων περὶ τοῦτο τῆς γραφῆς σπουδὴν πεποιημένον τὸ μέρος (1.1.5).

I know of no ecclesiastical writer who has devoted himself to this subject (1.1.5).

Eusebius's claim is only partly faithful to reality,[10] since he himself recognizes, in the same middle section of the first chapter, that his work is based on that of those precursors he employs. These predecessors preserved the memory of events that Eusebius himself wishes to present in the form of a historical exposition:[11]

σμικρὰς (…) προφάσεις, δι' ὧν ἄλλος ἄλλως ὧν διηνύκασι χρόνων μερικὰς ἡμῖν καταλελοίπασι διηγήσεις (1.1.3).

brief fragments (...) have transmitted to us particular accounts of the times in which they lived (1.1.3).

ἀναλεξάμενοι καὶ ὡς ἂν ἐκ λογικῶν λειμώνων τὰς ἐπιτηδείους αὐτῶν τῶν πάλαι συγγραφέων ἀπανθισάμενοι φωνάς, δι' ὑφηγήσεως ἱστορικῆς πειρασόμεθα σωματοποιῆσαι (1.1.4).

(...) having plucked like flowers from a meadow the appropriate passages from ancient writers, we shall endeavor to embody the whole in an historical narrative (1.1.4).

Eusebius recognizes expressly that the original, overall work that he presents is based on "the matters mentioned here and there by [my predecessors],"[12] i.e. on the imperfect testimonies of those who partially recorded the happenings of the past. Of course, in employing the testimony of previous sources Eusebius merely applied the procedure used, ever since Herodotus, by all historians in order to narrate the events that they themselves had not witnessed. The most important and novel issue is that Eusebius believes that the written testimony of all those he depends upon

[10] Eusebius's statement may not do justice, above all, to Julius Africanus; M. Wallraff, *Julius Africanus und die christliche Weltchronistik*, Berlin 2006; U. Roberto, *Le Chronographiae di Sesto Giulio Africano: storiografia, politica e cristianesimo nell´età dei Severi,* Soveria Mannelli 2011.

[11] Concerning the key place in history that Eusebius occupies as the originator of ecclesiastical historiography, Prinzivalli, "Le genre historiographique", 96-100; concerning this same issue, see also A. Louth, "Eusebios as Apologist and Church Historian", in this volume; concerning the place of the *HE* within the genre of historiography, DeVore, "Genre". As Timpe, "Che cos´è la storia della Chiesa?", 390, n. 2 mentions in passing, it is of key importance that Eusebius sees his predecessors as being nothing more than sources. His use of his precursors was also fundamental for Eusebius in the case of the *Chronicle*. Concerning the local historians he must have relied on, Carriker, *Library*, 139-54, 313.

[12] τῶν αὐτοῖς ἐκείνοις σποράδην μνημονευθέντων (*HE* 1.1.4).

is trustworthy and sufficient. In this way, the employment of discourses composed for a specific occasion by preceding historians is now seen to be unnecessary and dispensable.[13] Instead, Eusebius will use, as his documentary sources, quotations from other writers, edicts, rescripta and letters.[14]

2. The letters as *sermones*: an issue of style?

Nevertheless, the *HE* also includes a type of discourse or – employing the Latin term – a special form of the *sermo*. This is the so-called *sermo absentis ad absentem*, i.e. letters, which abound in a striking manner among the documents adduced in the *HE*.[15] In the work there are a total of fifty five documents that can be classified as letters.[16] In Book II he does not cite any epistles. In contrast, they represent a notably ample part of the text in Books V and VII. In Books VIII-X,[17] with only one exception (8.10.1-10),

[13] Notwithstanding this, and as DeVore reminds me, Eusebius quotes directly a brief deliberative speech in *HE* 7.32.9 (Anatolius speaks to the Alexandrian Senate); the panegyric about the building of churches cited in 10.4, addressed to Paulinus of Tyre and probably pronounced by Eusebius himself, must be also taken into account.

[14] All of the materials cited by Eusebius have been gathered (as being constituents of the author's library) in Carriker, *Library*. Concerning the abundant citations included in the work, see what Eusebius himself states in *PE* 10.9.28: διὸ καὶ μάλιστα ταῖς αὐτῶν ἠγησάμην δεῖν παραχωρῆσαι φωναῖς τὸν παρόντα λόγον, ὅπως ὁμοῦ τῶν οἰκείων μὴ ἀποστεροῖντο καρπῶν οἱ τῶν λόγων πατέρες καὶ διὰ πλειόνων μαρτύρων, ἀλλὰ μὴ δι' ἑνὸς ἐμοῦ, ἡ σύστασις τῆς ἀληθείας ἀναμφίλεκτον λάβοι τὴν ἐπικύρωσιν, "And for this reason especially I thought it right to give place in the present discussion to their own words, in order that the authors of the arguments might not be deprived of their due rewards, and at the same time the maintenance of the truth might receive indisputable confirmation not by one witness but by many". The translation is taken from E. H. Gifford, *Eusebii Pamphili Evangelicae praeparationis libri XV*, Oxford 1903; http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/eusebius_pe_10_book10.htm.

[15] The definition of letters as *sermones absentis ad absentem,* following Cicero's definition (Cic. *Phil.* 2.7: *litteras … amicorum colloquia absentium*), recurs in the rhetoric manuals of Humanism; J. R. Henderson, "Defining the Genre of the Letter: Juan Luis Vives' *De Conscribendis Epistolis*", *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 19, 1983, 89-105; Id., "Humanism and the Humanities: Erasmus's Opus *de conscribendis epistolis* in Sixteenth-Century Schools", in C. Poster, L. C. Mitchell (eds.), *Letter-Writing Manuals from Antiquity to the Present: Historical and Bibliographic Studies*, Columbia 2007, 141-77. The letters used in the *HE* are listed in a table at the end of this article.

[16] At times the epistolary character of what Eusebius cites can be debated, as occurs in the case of doctrinal letters, due to the difficulty of distinguishing them from treatises (e.g. 4.8.3-5, 7; 5.20.4-8). This is an old problem that scholars have already confronted in the past; J. Sykutris, "Epistolographie", *RE Suppl.* 5, 1931, coll. 185-220. The official documents that took an epistolary form (imperial dispositions and *rescripta*; 4.8.8-9.1-3; 7.13; 9.1.3-6; 9.9a.1-9; 10.5.15-17) may also have a special status. In relation to that, it may be added that it has been argued (T. D. Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty, Religion and Power in the Later Roman Empire*, Chichester 2011, 93-7) that the text of the so-called 'Edict of Milan' (10.5.2-14) should be actually regarded as a rescript (an official letter) whose author would be not Constantine but Licinius.

[17] This datum must be related to the different editions of the *HE* published by Eusebius; T. D. Barnes, "The Editions of Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History", *GRBS* 21, 1980, 191-201; A.

all of the texts that can be considered letters are official documents written by emperors (Galerius, Maximinus Daia, Constantine) or some high functionary close to the Augustus.[18]

The letters share their character of being *sermones* with discourses, absent in the *HE*. Therefore it seems that, if one reviews his case, it might be possible to advance in the clarification of why there are no discourses in Eusebius's work.[19] I will begin by discussing and refuting an initial explanation: that the inclusion of the epistles is due to the desire to introduce a stylistic *variatio*.

Letters are a discursive modality that previous Greek historians had employed, including Herodotus, Thucydides, Josephus and Luke himself in the *Acts of the Apostles*.[20] The possibility that epistles would appear in a historiographical work with the purpose of varying the narrative has also been discussed in relation to the letters inserted by some of these authors into their own texts.[21] It is true that the letters of Eusebius impart a certain dynamism to his account, especially in the case of missives where there is an interaction between sender and recipient, embodied in the alternation between the first and second grammatical person. A noteworthy example of this is found in the correspondence supposedly exchanged between King Abgar of Edessa and Jesus of Nazareth.[22] In the first book of the *HE*, Eusebius

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Louth, "The Date of Eusebius's 'Historia Ecclesiastica'", *JThS* 41, 1990, 111-23; R. W. Burgess, "The Dates and Editions of Eusebius's 'Chronici Canones' and 'Historia Ecclesiastica'", *JThS* 48, 1997, 471-504; V. Neri, "Les éditions de l'Histoire ecclésiastique (livres VIII-IX): bilan critique et perspectives de la recherche", in S. Morlet, L. Perrone (eds.), *Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique : Commentaire. I. Études d'introduction. Anagôgê*, Paris 2012, 151-83; M.-Y. Perrin, M. Cassin, M. Debie, "La question des éditions de l'Histoire ecclésiastique et le livre X", in S. Morlet, L. Perrone (eds.), *Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique : Commentaire. I. Études d'introduction. Anagôgê*, Paris 2012, 185-207.

[18] The highly-ranked functionary is Sabinus: παρ' αὐτοῖς τῷ τῶν ἐξοχωτάτων ἐπάρχων ἀξιώματι τετιμημένος, "honored with the highest official rank among them" (*HE* 9.1.2); he was the person who sent the letter included in 9.1.3-6 to the governors of the provinces.

[19] In relation to Eusebius's letters there is another question which cannot be discussed here in detail: if there is any difference in the way Eusebius uses letters and other documents; as will be seen later (in relation to the terms ἐπίδειξις, μαρτύριον, or κατὰ λέξιν), a very similar terminology is used in the *HE* to introduce both kinds of quotations. A complete study of the letters in the *HE* should also discuss if all these documents play the same role or if there are any differences in the way Eusebius employs them.

[20] R. S. Coleman, *Embedded Letters in Acts and in Jewish and Hellenistic Literature*, Doct. Thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary 1994; P. A. Rosenmeyer, *Ancient Epistolary Fictions: The Letter in Greek Literature*, Cambridge 2001; R. S. Olson, *Tragedy, Authority, and Trickery: The Poetics of Embedded Letters in Josephus*, Washington 2010.

[21] According to some scholars, the motive for Herodotus and Thucydides including letters in their works would be not only their strict documentary value, but also would respond to an interest in introducing *uariatio* into their works. Olson, *Tragedy, Authority, and Trickery*, 29-30.

[22] Concerning the legend of Abgar, J. W. Drijvers, "Abgarsage", in W. Schneemelcher (ed.), *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen. II. Apostolisches Apokalypsen und Verwandtes*, Tübingen 1987[5], 389-95; S. Brock, "Eusebius and Syriac Christianity", in H. W. Attridge,

introduces a copy of a letter from the king (1.13.6-8); he then includes the response that Jesus gave to this missive (1.13.10):

"Ἄβγαρος Οὐχαμα τοπάρχης Ἰησοῦ σωτῆρι ἀγαθῷ ἀναφανέντι ἐν τόπῳ Ἱεροσολύμων χαίρειν. ἤκουσταί μοι τὰ περὶ σοῦ καὶ τῶν σῶν ἰαμάτων, ὡς ἄνευ φαρμάκων καὶ βοτανῶν ὑπὸ σοῦ γινομένων. ὡς γὰρ λόγος, τυφλοὺς ἀναβλέπειν ποιεῖς, χωλοὺς περιπατεῖν, καὶ λεπροὺς καθαρίζεις, καὶ ἀκάθαρτα πνεύματα καὶ δαίμονας ἐκβάλλεις, καὶ τοὺς ἐν μακρονοσίᾳ βασανιζομένους θεραπεύεις, καὶ νεκροὺς ἐγείρεις. καὶ ταῦτα πάντα ἀκούσας περὶ σοῦ, κατὰ νοῦν ἐθέμην τὸ ἕτερον τῶν δύο, ἢ ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ θεὸς καὶ καταβὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ποιεῖς ταῦτα, ἢ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ ποιῶν ταῦτα. διὰ τοῦτο τοίνυν γράψας ἐδεήθην σου σκυλῆναι πρός με καὶ τὸ πάθος, ὃ ἔχω, θεραπεῦσαι. καὶ γὰρ ἤκουσα ὅτι καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι καταγογγύζουσί σου καὶ βούλονται κακῶσαί σε. πόλις δὲ μικροτάτη μοί ἐστι καὶ σεμνή, ἥτις ἐξαρκεῖ ἀμφοτέροις".

"Abgar, ruler of Edessa, to Jesus the excellent Savior who has appeared in the country of Jerusalem, greetings. I have heard the reports of you and of your cures as performed by you without medicines or herbs. For it is said that you make the blind to see and the lame to walk, that you clean lepers and cast out impure spirits and demons, and that you heal those afflicted with lingering disease, and raise the dead. And having heard all these things concerning you, I have concluded that one of two things must be true: either you are God, and having come down from heaven you do these things, or else you, who do these things, are the Son of God. I have therefore written to you to ask you that you would take the trouble to come to me and heal the disease which I have. For I have heard that the Jews are murmuring against you and are plotting to injure you. But I have a very small yet noble city which is great enough for us both."

"Μακάριος εἶ πιστεύσας ἐν ἐμοί, μὴ ἑορακώς με. γέγραπται γὰρ περὶ ἐμοῦ τοὺς ἑορακότας με μὴ πιστεύσειν ἐν ἐμοί, καὶ ἵνα οἱ μὴ ἑορακότες με αὐτοὶ πιστεύσωσι καὶ ζήσονται. περὶ δὲ οὗ ἔγραψάς μοι ἐλθεῖν πρὸς σέ, δέον ἐστὶ πάντα δι' ἃ ἀπεστάλην ἐνταῦθα, πληρῶσαι καὶ μετὰ τὸ πληρῶσαι οὕτως ἀναληφθῆναι πρὸς τὸν ἀποστείλαντά με. καὶ ἐπειδὰν ἀναληφθῶ, ἀποστελῶ σοί τινα τῶν μαθητῶν μου, ἵνα ἰάσηταί σου τὸ πάθος καὶ ζωήν σοι καὶ τοῖς σὺν σοὶ παράσχηται".

"Blessed are you who have believed in me without having seen me. For it is written concerning me, that they who have seen me will not

H. Hata (eds.), *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, Leiden 1992, 212-34; A. Mirkovic, *Prelude to Constantine: the Abgar Tradition in Early Christianity*, Frankfurt 2004.

> believe in me, and that they who have not seen me will believe and be saved. But in regard to what you have written me, that I should come to you, it is necessary for me to fulfill all things here for which I have been sent, and after I have fulfilled them thus to be taken up again to him that sent me. But after I have been taken up I will send to you one of my disciples, that he may heal your disease and give life to you and yours."

These texts make the narration of the first book of the *HE* more dynamic. From our perspective, the greatest novelty of the passage consists in the introduction of direct style and, with it, the inclusion of the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, words which are not in fact found in the Gospels or the New Testament as a whole. From the point of view of a fourth-century reader and of Eusebius himself, this fact could be relevant. But for him and for his readers the most important thing is perhaps not the discourse in direct style but rather the fact that this exchange of letters showed that a first-century monarch, such as the king of Edessa, had a favorable attitude towards Christianity, similar to that of Constantine, during whose reign the final version of the *HE*[23] can be situated. Therefore it does not seem likely that Eusebius would have included these two letters simply for reasons of style. In addition, the letters exchanged by Abgar and Jesus are unique in the entire *HE*. Furthermore, it does not seem very likely that anyone would consider the bishop of Caesarea to be a refined prose stylist; at least, this has never been the scholarly consensus.[24]

3. Putting the letters in context: demonstration, testimonies, literality

The reasons why Eusebius does not include discourses but does cite letters may be connected to the narrative contexts of the letters, in which certain recurring terms appear that need to be examined. In this regard, a significant passage of Book III can be seen as an initial example (3.36.6);[25] here the writer

[23] Concerning the chronology of the *HE,* Burgess, "Dates and Editions"; O. Andrei, "Canons chronologiques et Histoire ecclésiastique", in S. Morlet, L. Perrone (eds.), *Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique : Commentaire. I. Études d'introduction. Anagôgê*, Paris 2012, 33-82. Concerning the Abgar-Constantine analogy and its limits, Mirkovic, *Prelude to Constantine*.

[24] Concerning the lack of literary or rhetorical pretensions in the *HE,* Timpe, "Che cos´è la storia della Chiesa?", 401, 409. Concerning the analogous case of the *Vita Constantini,* Cameron, Hall, *Eusebius. Life of Constantine*, 27, 33.

[25] Previously the *HE* had cited letters in 1.7.2-16, 13.5-10; 3.31.3. Even though in these passages Eusebius has employed certain of the words that I will comment on later (αὐτοῖς … ῥήμασιν in 1.7.1, 13,5; ἐπιδείκνυται in 3.31.2 [ἀπόδειξις in 1.13.9]), the interest of 3.36.6 derives from the fact that here the two words appear together. Other nouns derived from the root of μαρτύριον (see infra) also appear in 1.13.5 (μαρτυρίαν), 3.31.3 (μάρτυς).

presents, as testimony that supports his previous affirmations, a fragment of a letter that Ignatius of Antioch sent to the church in Rome (3.36.7-9):[26]

> πρὸς ταύταις καὶ τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἐκκλησίᾳ γράφει, ἣ καὶ παράκλησιν προτείνει ὡς μὴ παραιτησάμενοι τοῦ μαρτυρίου τῆς ποθουμένης αὐτὸν ἀποστερήσαιεν ἐλπίδος· ἐξ ὧν καὶ βραχύτατα εἰς ἐπίδειξιν τῶν εἰρημένων παραθέσθαι ἄξιον. γράφει δὴ οὖν κατὰ λέξιν.
>
> In addition to these he wrote also to the Church of Rome, entreating them not to secure his release from martyrdom, and thus rob him of his earnest hope. In confirmation of what has been said it is proper to quote briefly from this epistle.

In this paragraph there are two terms that require analysis: εἰς ἐπίδειξιν, "as a demonstration," and κατὰ λέξιν, "literally." The cited paragraph also includes the word μαρτύριον, with the current meaning of martyrdom, "death or torments suffered for the cause of the Christian religion";[27] as I will show later, this word, employed under another of its possible meanings, has a key importance for my investigation.

The noun ἐπίδειξις and the verb ἐπιδείκνυμι are used in 3.36.6 and other places in the *HE*[28] in order to affirm that the texts that Eusebius adduces, or the writers of the epistles themselves, play an epideictic or demonstrative function; this same function is recognized in oratory as applicable to discourses of the same genre.[29] The bishop thus uses the verb ἐπιδείκνυμι in the eighth book (8.10.1), when he says that the demonstration of what he has just stated about Phileas of Thmuis is found in a letter of the martyr himself that Eusebius cites next:[30]

> Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ τῶν ἔξωθεν μαθημάτων ἕνεκα πολλοῦ λόγου ἄξιον γενέσθαι τὸν Φιλέαν ἔφαμεν, αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ παρίτω μάρτυς, ἅμα μὲν ἑαυτὸν ὅστις ποτ' ἦν, ἐπιδείξων ἅμα δὲ καὶ τὰ κατ' αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ συμβεβηκότα μαρτύρια ἀκριβέστερον μᾶλλον ἢ ἡμεῖς ἱστορήσων διὰ τούτων τῶν λέξεων.
>
> Since we have mentioned Phileas as having a high reputation for secular learning, let him be his own witness in the following extract, in which he shows us who he was, and at the same time describes more accurately than we can the martyrdoms which occurred in his time at Alexandria.

[26] Ign. *Rom.* 4.5.

[27] This is the first sense of the word contained in the *Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy* (*Diccionario de la Real Academia Española,* s.v. "martirio.")

[28] 3.31.2; 8.10.1.

[29] Arist. *Rh.* 1358a36-b8.

[30] The letter of Phileas is cited in 8.10.2-10.

Obviously, ἐπίδειξις and ἐπιδείκνυμι do not refer only to the type of demonstration that the letters provide. Eusebius employs these words in order to allude to the testimony of another kind of writings. In 5.7.3 he introduces a quotation from the *Aduersus haereses* (2.31.2) of Irenaeus of Lyon, who cites the testimony of the prophetic books of the Old Testament in support of the thesis he wishes to demonstrate:[31]

> εἰ δὲ καὶ τὸν κύριον φαντασιωδῶς τὰ τοιαῦτα πεποιηκέναι φήσουσιν, ἐπὶ τὰ προφητικὰ ἀνάγοντες αὐτούς, ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐπιδείξομεν πάντα οὕτως περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ προειρῆσθαι καὶ γεγονέναι βεβαίως καὶ αὐτὸν μόνον εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ.
>
> If they will say that even the Lord did these things in mere appearance, we will refer them to the prophetic writings, and show from them that all things were beforehand spoken of him in this manner, and were strictly fulfilled; and that he alone is the Son of God.

It is even more habitual that Eusebius uses the verb ἐπιδείκνυμι in order to refer to a demonstration by works, as happens, for example, when he speaks of the martyrs of Gaul in 5.2.4,[32] the supposed Christianity of Philip the Arab in 6.34[33] or the proof value that the works of pagan citizens would have in 9.7.14,[34] in comparison with those of Christians in 9.8.14.[35]

The text of 3.36.6 also stands out due to its pretension to literality: γράφει δὴ οὖν κατὰ λέξιν, "So then, he writes literally". The key point is, doubtless, that Eusebius knows that an epistolary document adduced with an epideictic intention needs to be a faithful citation in order to fulfil its function. The aspiration to literality is, in fact, something that occurs in many other passages of the work, as well as in a great deal of the Christian literature of Antiquity.[36] Specifically, the group κατὰ λέξιν is attested in 24

[31] In Book V (5.26.1), Eusebius recalls that Irenaeus dedicated to his brother Marcian a work entitled *In Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching,* εἰς ἐπίδειξιν τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ κηρύγματος.

[32] καὶ τὴν μὲν δύναμιν τῆς μαρτυρίας ἔργῳ ἐπεδείκνυντο, "They showed in their deeds the power of testimony."

[33] τὸ γνήσιον καὶ εὐλαβὲς τῆς περὶ τὸν θεῖον φόβον διαθέσεως ἔργοις ἐπιδεδειγμένον, "proving with his deeds the nobility and piety of his God-fearing disposition."

[34] τοῦ δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀξίων ἐπάθλων τετυχηκέναι παρὰ τῆς ἡμετέρας φιλαγαθίας ταύτης ὑμῶν ἕνεκεν τῆς τοῦ βίου προαιρέσεως υἱοῖς τε καὶ ἐκγόνοις ὑμετέροις ἐπιδειχθήσεται, "This (...) shall furnish for all time an evidence of reverent piety toward the immortal gods, and of the fact that you have obtained from our benevolence merited prizes for this choice of yours; and it shall be shown to your children and children's children."

[35] μόνοι γοῦν ἐν τηλικαύτῃ κακῶν περιστάσει τὸ συμπαθὲς καὶ φιλάνθρωπον ἔργοις αὐτοῖς ἐπιδεικνύμενοι, "For they alone in the midst of such ills showed their sympathy and humanity by their deeds."

[36] In contrast, in their handling of the Scriptures the Fathers considered those activities to be inadequate which they characterized with the terms λεπτολογία, "subtle expression," and

places in the *HE,* always in regards to the literality of the documents cited by Eusebius, whether they are letters or not.[37] The same concept is expressed in another 19 places via the group αὐτοῖς ῥήμασι or ῥήμασιν αὐτοῖς.[38] The same thing occurs in the passage at the beginning of the work (1.7.1), where he introduces a quotation from a letter of Julius Africanus regarding the genealogy of Jesus:[39]

> (…) ἣν δι' ἐπιστολῆς Ἀριστείδῃ γράφων περὶ συμφωνίας τῆς ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις γενεαλογίας ὁ μικρῷ πρόσθεν ἡμῖν δηλωθεὶς Ἀφρικανὸς ἐμνημόνευσεν, τὰς μὲν δὴ τῶν λοιπῶν δόξας ὡς ἂν βιαίους καὶ διεψευσμένας ἀπελέγξας, ἣν δ' αὐτὸς παρείληφεν ἱστορίαν, τούτοις αὐτοῖς ἐκτιθέμενος τοῖς ῥήμασιν.
>
> [Africanus] (…) in his epistle to Aristides, where he discusses the harmony of the gospel genealogies. After refuting the opinions of others as forced and deceptive, he gives the account which he had received from tradition in these words.

In addition to εἰς ἐπίδειξιν and κατὰ λέξιν, in 3.36.6 there appears, as I stated earlier, the noun μαρτύριον, a word of interest for this study, albeit not due to the meaning it carries in this *locus* ("martyrdom"). In general, μαρτύριον refers to any kind of testimony, not necessarily that of the Christian martyrs or "witnesses." The text of 8.10.1 already cited employs the word μάρτυς with this generic sense when it proposes that Phileas himself appear as a witness to what Eusebius had said about the martyrdoms (μαρτύρια) that occurred in Alexandria. The fundamental issue is that, when the μαρτύριον is a written text, the noun refers to the "documents" employed as a basis for the new kind of history that Eusebius wants to write. For example, the word μαρτύριον or μαρτυρία is used in this sense in the paragraph that Eusebius uses in order to introduce the citation of the letter that Abgar wrote to Jesus (1.13.5): ἔχεις καὶ τούτων ἀνάγραπτον

λεξιθηρέω, "searching carefully for an expression." For λεξιθηρέω, Epiph.Const. *Haer*. 1.366; 2.201, 308; 3.196, 209, 224, 445. See also A. J. Quiroga Puertas, "The Limits of Philology: Aulus Gellius, *NA* 2.9", *Ágora* 15, 2013, 95-112.

[37] *HE* 1.5.4, 8.5; 2.2.4, 5.2, 6.1, 11.1, 20.1, 26.1, 2; 3.1.3, 19, 23.3, 29.1, 31.5, 32.3, 36.6; 4.15.15; 5.8.10, 18.1, 28.2; 6.2.6, 11.3, 19.4, 25.1 (in 2.26.1 and 3.1.3 no literal citation is introduced, but rather a reference to a text). It is noteworthy that the group κατὰ λέξιν is not attested in Books VII through X, although in them Eusebius continues to quote from letters and documents.

[38] *HE* 1.2.7, 13, 4.12, 7.1, 13.5; 2.17.22, 20.1; 3.5.5, 9.5, 10.8, 36.13; 4.2.5; 5.2.1, 18.1, 24.11, 25.1, 28.7; 6.46.4; 9.9.10 (in 2.17.22, 3.5.5 and 4.2.5 he does not introduce a literal quotation). The syntagma αὐτοῖς ῥήμασιν (ῥήμασιν αὐτοῖς) appears on one occasion only (9.9.10) between Books VII and X.

[39] The letter in question, whose addressee (Aristides) is unknown, is mentioned again in 6.31. See H. Merkel, *La pluralité des Evangiles comme problème théologique et exégétique dans l'Eglise ancienne*, Bern 1978, 50-7.

τὴν μαρτυρίαν, ἐκ τῶν κατὰ Ἔδεσσαν τὸ τηνικάδε βασιλευομένην πόλιν γραμματοφυλακείων ληφθεῖσαν, "You have written evidence of these things taken from the archives of Edessa, which was at that time a royal city."[40]

4. Original and copy

It is, at this point, important to refer to a fourth idea that Eusebius repeatedly relates to the letters and documents. I have indicated that he associates the literality of the citations of the testimonies with the fulfilling of their epideictic function. But the idea of literality implies the existence of a "copy" and presupposes that this copy must be authentic, trustworthy and, ultimately, able to be compared with an original version. This explains the fact that another recurring term in the *HE,* in the narrative portions that precede letters and documents, is the noun ἀντίγραφον, "copy."

This word also appears in the epistolary exchange between Abgar and Jesus. Eusebius introduces his citation of the letter of the king (1.13.5) by emphasizing that it comes from the royal archives (γραμματοφυλακείων, ἀρχείων) and that it is a trustworthy translation from Syriac (ἐπιστολῶν… αὐτοῖς ῥήμασιν ἐκ τῆς Σύρων φωνῆς μεταβληθεισῶν, "epistles... literally translated from the Syriac language").[41] The text of the letter is presented following this epigraph: ἀντίγραφον ἐπιστολῆς γραφείσης ὑπὸ Ἀβγάρου τοπάρχου τῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ πεμφθείσης αὐτῷ δι' Ἀνανίου ταχυδρόμου εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, "copy of an epistle written by Abgar the ruler to Jesus, and sent to him at Jerusalem by Ananias the swift courier."[42]

Eusebius's historical work presents a series of relevant passages that exemplify the use of the word ἀντίγραφον.[43] For example, in 4.8.7 he cites Justin, who in a text of his *Apology* says that he is going to include a copy of a letter from Hadrian in order that it confirm what the author is saying:[44] ὑπετάξαμεν δὲ καὶ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς Ἁδριανοῦ τὸ ἀντίγραφον, ἵνα καὶ τοῦτο ἀληθεύειν ἡμᾶς γνωρίζητε, "And we have quoted the copy of Hadrian's epistle that you may know that we are speaking the truth in this matter also." In the fifth book (5.20.2), a citation of the letter that Irenaeus sent to Florinus (*About monarchy, or that God is not the author of evils*) stands out in particular for its insistence on the necessity that an ἀντίγραφον be trustworthy:

[40] In the Greek text τούτων refers to the story narrated earlier by Eusebius, that of the petition that Abgar made to Jesus on discovering he was ill; Christ promises that, after his Ascension, one of his disciples would come to him (Thaddeus, according to tradition, who was sent to Edessa by the apostle Thomas). See n. 22.

[41] J. B. Torres, "Traducción e interpretación en Eusebio de Cesarea, *Historia de la Iglesia*", in Á. Martínez, B. Ortega, H. Velasco, H. Zamora (eds.), *Ágalma. Ofrenda desde la Filología Clásica a Manuel García Teijeiro*, Valladolid 2014, 647-8.

[42] In the epigraph of Jesus's response there appears the passive participle of ἀντιγράφω, ἀντιγραφέντα, which here has the sense of "respond in writing."

[43] *HE* 1.7.14; 4.8.7; 5.8.5, 20.2, 25, 28.16, 18; 7.6, 30.3; 9.7.2, 9a, 10.6; 10.5.1, 15, 18, 21, 6.1, 7.1.

[44] These are measures that have to do with trials of Christians.

"ὁρκίζω σε τὸν μεταγραφόμενον τὸ βιβλίον τοῦτο κατὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ κατὰ τῆς ἐνδόξου παρουσίας αὐτοῦ, ἧς ἔρχεται κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, ἵνα ἀντιβάλῃς ὃ μετεγράψω, καὶ κατορθώσῃς αὐτὸ πρὸς τὸ ἀντίγραφον τοῦτο ὅθεν μετεγράψω, ἐπιμελῶς· καὶ τὸν ὅρκον τοῦτον ὁμοίως μεταγράψεις καὶ θήσεις ἐν τῷ ἀντιγράφῳ."

"I adjure you who may copy this book, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by his glorious advent when he comes to judge the living and the dead, to compare what you shall write, and correct it carefully by this manuscript, and also to write this adjuration, and place it in the copy."

It is noteworthy that Irenaeus would adjure the receiver of this text in such strong terms. That said, Irenaeus insists that the scribe who copies a work do his work scrupulously because, in the first centuries of the Church, modified copies of Christian texts circulated.[45] The authors themselves are conscious of this, as one can see in another letter transmitted by Eusebius (*HE* 4.23.12). The author, Dionysius of Corinth, speaks of manipulations that his own texts had suffered:

"ἐπιστολὰς γὰρ ἀδελφῶν ἀξιωσάντων με γράψαι ἔγραψα. καὶ ταύτας οἱ τοῦ διαβόλου ἀπόστολοι ζιζανίων γεγέμικαν, ἃ μὲν ἐξαιροῦντες, ἃ δὲ προστιθέντες· οἷς τὸ οὐαὶ κεῖται. οὐ θαυμαστὸν ἄρα εἰ καὶ τῶν κυριακῶν ῥᾳδιουργῆσαί τινες ἐπιβέβληνται γραφῶν, ὁπότε καὶ ταῖς οὐ τοιαύταις ἐπιβεβουλεύκασιν."

"As the brethren desired me to write epistles, I wrote. And these epistles the apostles of the devil have filled with tares, cutting out some things and adding others. For them a woe is reserved. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at if some have attempted to adulterate the Lord's writings also, since they have formed designs even against writings which are of less account."

As this passage of Dionysius also indicates, the texts that were modified without respect for the literality of the original did not just include contemporary letters but also texts from Holy Scripture. This is also shown by a passage from a work which Eusebius (5.28.1) believes to be by an anonymous author;[46] the passage is included at the end of the fifth book of the *HE* (5-

[45] Among Latin authors, Augustine shows a similar concern. See e.g. Aug. *Ep.* 59 (Augustine signs the letter with his seal in order to assure its authenticity), 72 and 73 (concerning a supposed exchange of letters between Augustine and Jerome, and the problem of the authenticity of the missives), 4* [274] (an individual named Justus travels to Hippo in order to compare a text of Augustine). I would like to thank Prof. Caltabiano for the references to the work of Augustine.

[46] Today we know that the work from which the citations of Eusebius derive is the *Little Labyrinth,* written against Artemon; it is possible that its author was Hippolytus of Rome (ca.

28.15): "ταῖς θείαις γραφαῖς ἀφόβως ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας, λέγοντες αὐτὰς διωρθωκέναι", "Therefore they have laid their hands boldly upon the Divine Scriptures, alleging that they have corrected them." It is interesting that the anonymous writer not only raises the problem of untrustworthy copies but also, in the next line (5.28.16-17), offers certain philological indications about how to detect them via the comparison of manuscripts:

> "καὶ ὅτι τοῦτο μὴ καταψευδόμενος αὐτῶν λέγω, ὁ βουλόμενος δύναται μαθεῖν. εἰ γάρ τις θελήσει συγκομίσας αὐτῶν ἑκάστου τὰ ἀντίγραφα ἐξετάζειν πρὸς ἄλληλα, κατὰ πολὺ ἂν εὕροι διαφωνοῦντα. ἀσύμφωνα γοῦν ἔσται τὰ Ἀσκληπιάδου τοῖς Θεοδότου, πολλῶν δὲ ἔστιν εὐπορῆσαι διὰ τὸ φιλοτίμως ἐκγεγράφθαι τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτῶν τὰ ὑφ' ἑκάστου αὐτῶν, ὡς αὐτοὶ καλοῦσιν, κατωρθωμένα, τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ἠφανισμένα· πάλιν δὲ τούτοις τὰ Ἑρμοφίλου οὐ συνᾴδει. τὰ γὰρ Ἀπολλωνιάδου οὐδὲ αὐτὰ ἑαυτοῖς ἐστιν σύμφωνα· ἔνεστιν γὰρ συγκρῖναι τὰ πρότερον ὑπ' αὐτῶν κατασκευασθέντα τοῖς ὕστερον πάλιν ἐπιδιαστραφεῖσιν καὶ εὑρεῖν κατὰ πολὺ ἀπᾴδοντα".
>
> "That I am not speaking falsely of them in this matter, whoever wishes may learn. For if any one will collect their respective copies, and compare them one with another, he will find that they differ greatly. Those of Asclepiades, for example, do not agree with those of Theodotus. And many of these can be obtained, because their disciples have assiduously written the corrections, as they call them, that is the corruptions, of each of them. Again, those of Hermophilus do not agree with these, and those of Apollonides are not consistent with themselves. For you can compare those prepared by them at an earlier date with those which they corrupted later, and you will find them widely different."

The author cited by Eusebius in 5.28.18 all but states explicitly that those who manipulate the Scriptures in this way have committed what Jesus called the sin against the Holy Spirit.[47] In more philological terms, their error consists in having corrupted the received originals and having created, by their own hand (τῇ αὐτῶν χειρί), copies that are not in accordance with an original (δεῖξαι ἀντίγραφα ὅθεν αὐτὰ μετεγράψαντο, μὴ ἔχωσιν):

> "ὅσης δὲ τόλμης ἐστὶ τοῦτο τὸ ἁμάρτημα, εἰκὸς μηδὲ ἐκείνους ἀγνοεῖν. ἢ γὰρ οὐ πιστεύουσιν ἁγίῳ πνεύματι λελέχθαι τὰς θείας γραφάς, καί εἰσιν ἄπιστοι· ἢ ἑαυτοὺς ἡγοῦνται σοφωτέρους τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ὑπάρχειν, καὶ τί ἕτερον ἢ δαιμονῶσιν; οὐδὲ

170 -235). R. H. Connolly, "Eusebius H. E. V. 28", *JThS* 49, 1948, 73-9.

[47] Mc 3.29 and Mt 12.32; Lc 12.10.

γὰρ ἀρνήσασθαι δύνανται ἑαυτῶν εἶναι τὸ τόλμημα, ὁπόταν καὶ τῇ αὐτῶν χειρὶ ᾖ γεγραμμένα, καὶ παρ' ὧν κατηχήθησαν, μὴ τοιαύτας παρέλαβον τὰς γραφάς, καὶ δεῖξαι ἀντίγραφα ὅθεν αὐτὰ μετεγράψαντο, μὴ ἔχωσιν".

"But how daring this offense is, it is not likely that they themselves are ignorant. For either they do not believe that the Divine Scriptures were spoken by the Holy Spirit, and thus are unbelievers, or else they think themselves wiser than the Holy Spirit, and in that case what else are they than demoniacs? For they cannot deny the commission of the crime, since the copies have been written by their own hands. For they did not receive such Scriptures from their instructors, nor can they produce any copies from which they were transcribed."

A detailed reading of the *HE* permits one to appreciate that Eusebius is particularly sensitive to the need for the copies of the texts he cites (letters and other types of documents) to be trustworthy, that is, for them to hold closely to the originals that were transmitted. Another issue is that he himself might have distorted in one way or another the sources he relies upon.[48] Or that he claims that texts that are surely falsifications are in fact authentic, as occurs in the case of the letters exchanged between Jesus and Abgar.[49] The most important point is that Eusebius considers it to be vitally important to have trustworthy and contrastable copies of the texts cited as documents in support of his historical argumentation.

5. The reliability of the canon

It is possible that the new historiographical concept that enters into play here is that proper to a man of the fourth-century Church who is aware that neither all the texts in circulation, nor all of their copies, have the same importance. Or what amounts to the same thing: in dealing with written texts one has to distinguish between those which are canonical, sanctioned by the tradition, and those that do not fulfill this requirement. The term "canon" comes from the Greek noun κανών, a word which originally designated an "upright object," but came to mean "rule or measure that

[48] In the past, Gibbon (1737-1794) and Burckhardt (1818-1897) harshly criticized the trustworthiness of Eusebius as a historian, calling him (in the case of Burckhardt) "dishonest." Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 128 also criticized Eusebius, whose *HE* he presents as "a literary or philosophical history." In a positive sense (defending the position that Eusebius did not limit himself to passive citing, and that he is no mere compiler), see S. Morlet, "Eusèbe de Césarée: biographie, chronologie, profil intellectual", in S. Morlet, L. Perrone (eds.), *Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique : Commentaire. I. Études d'introduction. Anagôgê*, Paris 2012, 26.

[49] See n. 22.

acquires the status of a model."[50] In its application to literature, κανών was used, beginning in Hellenistic times, in order to refer to those authors that were considered exemplary, those that should be read and imitated.[51] Those who wrote about the Bible also used the term κανόνες in order to designate the books of Scripture that were considered to be divinely inspired. They did so after certain selective lists had already been compiled, such as the canon of Muratori.[52] The oldest example of this use of the word κανών is from the 4th century and, significantly, the person who first documents it is none other than Eusebius of Caesarea. It should be noted that the appearance of gnostic writings that became confused with those that were properly Christian led church authorities to fix, sometime in the second half of the 2nd century, the canon of the writings that should be considered revealed.[53]

Κανών[54] appears in 26 passages of the *HE,* five of them referring to the norm according to which the date of Easter is to be calculated.[55] In its most habitual use, the term alludes in ten places to the norms and rules of life observed in the Church.[56] But in the *HE* κανών is also attested, as I mentioned earlier, with a new sense, that which the word "canon" continues to have in ecclesiastical contexts: "Catalog of the books held by the Catholic Church or another religious confession to be authentically sacred."[57] This is what happens in 6.25.3, where it is mentioned that Origen did not recognize any other Gospels besides the four of the canon: ἐν δὲ τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν εἰς τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον, τὸν ἐκκλησιαστικὸν φυλάττων κανόνα, μόνα τέσσαρα εἰδέναι εὐαγγέλια μαρτύρεται, "In his first book on Matthew's Gospel, maintaining the Canon of the Church, he testifies that he knows only four Gospels." It may also be relevant that the noun κανών appears in Book V (5.28.13) with the sense of "norm," a little before a passage I have already cited in regards to those who made fraudulent copies of Scripture: "γραφὰς μὲν θείας ἀφόβως ῥεᾳδιουργήκασιν, πίστεώς τε ἀρχαίας κανόνα ἠθετήκασιν", "They have treated the Divine Scriptures recklessly and without fear. They have set aside the rule of ancient faith."

[50] *LSJ*, 875, P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque : Histoire des mots*, Paris 1983-1984[2], 493, J. B. Torres, "Literatura griega: las bases del canon", *Minerva* 25, 2012, 21-48.

[51] Ibid., 24.

[52] B. M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*, Oxford 1987.

[53] Torres, "Literatura griega: las bases del canon", 26.

[54] The corresponding adjective, κανονικός, is not attested to in the *HE*. In earlier literature, κανονικός is attested, for example, in Gal. 7.417.

[55] 5.24.6; 6.22.1; 7.Pin., 20.1, 32.13.

[56] 2.17.1; 3.32.7; 4.23.5; 5.28.13; 6.2.14, 13.3, 33.1, 43.15; 7.7.4, 30.6.

[57] According to the 23rd edition of the *Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy,* s.v. "canon."

In this article I seek, in essence, to propose a hypothesis for discussion: perhaps the new advance of the historiographical genre introduced by the *HE* came about because its author applied to his work as a historian, in an implicit manner, a scripture-related category that he was the first to attest, i.e. "canon." Eusebius holds that only those documents and letters can be held to be trustworthy, i.e. as being "canonical," which are able to be compared with other copies.[58] It is only in this case that they can be assumed to transmit τὰ ὄντα, what really happened. In contrast, the discourses employed as testimony by earlier historians are not trustworthy, and can be put into the category of texts that are "non-canonical" because they are not literal, and, as a result of the limitations of human memory, cannot be compared.[59] Even more, the written testimony of documents makes the value as testimony of those discourses dubious (even supposing that they are literal)[60] and therefore an ecclesiastical historian like Eusebius prefers not to employ them.

Ultimately, the issue is that, from the point of view of the bishop of Palestine, the discourses used as testimony by Thucydides and Josephus do not transmit truth, τὰ ὄντα, the *ipsissima verba* of their protagonists. One can only presume these works to transmit, as the Athenian author stated, τὰ δέοντα, that which is opportune, what can be understood in a logical manner as that which might possibly have been stated (or not) in determined circumstances. One cannot assure, for obvious reasons, that their embedded discourses faithfully report what Pericles or Herod actually said.

[58] The point to be stressed is that Eusebius seems to regard the documents he cites as canonical, meaning just 'authentic': this does not mean that the bishop of Caesarea takes actually the documents quoted by him for a canon.

[59] This does not mean that, on occasion, they might be of some interest, just as Christian writings at times recognized non-canonical texts as being of interest, as is the case with the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Ath. Al. *Decr*. 18.3.1: ἐν δὲ τῷ Ποιμένι γέγραπται, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τοῦτο καίτοι μὴ ὂν ἐκ τοῦ κανόνος προφέρουσι, "It is written in the *Shepherd [of Hermas],* since they also adduce this work, even though it does not form part of the canon."

[60] They would be literal if they had been recorded by a professional stenographer. What is clear is that, despite the development of techniques for rapid writing in Antiquity (see n. 2), there is no evidence that these techniques had acquired a level of development such that they could guarantee the absolute literality of all the oral statements collected in writing in the Empire.

Letters included in the *HE*

Reference	Author	Addressee	Subject
1.7.2-16	Julius Africanus	Aristides	Genealogy of Jesus
1.13.5-8	Abgar	Jesus	Abgar invites Jesus
1.13.10	Jesus	Abgar	Jesus's reply
3.31.3	Polycrates	Victor I	Tombs of the apostles John and Philip
3.36.7-9	Ignatius of Antioch	Church of Rome	His own martyrdom
3.36.11	Ignatius of Antioch	Church of Smyrna	Resurrection of Christ
3.36.13-15	Polycarp	Church of Philippians	The example of Ignatius and other martyrs
4.8.3-7	Justin	Antoninus Pius	Apology of Justin
4.9.1-3	Hadrian	Minucius Fundanus	Rescript about persecutions
4.13	Antoninus Pius	Assembly of cities and countries of Asia	Edict concerning Christians
4.15.2-46	Church of Smyrna	Church of Philomelium	Martyrdom of Polycarp
4.23.10-11	Dionysius of Corinth	Church of Rome	Uses of the Church of Rome
4.23.12	Dionysius of Corinth	---	Characteristics of his letters
5.1.3-2.7	Churches of Lyon and Vienna	Churches of Asia and Phrygia	Martyrs of Gaul
5.4.1-2	Gaulish Martyrs	Eleutherius of Rome	Irenaeus
5.19	Serapion	Caricus and Pontius	Heresy of Montanus
5.20.4-8	Irenaeus	Florinus	Polycarp
5.24.1-8	Polycrates	Victor I	On Easter
5.24.12-17	Irenaeus	Victor I	On Easter
5.25	Bishops of Palestine	---	On Easter
6.11.3	Alexander of Jerusalem	Church of Antinoë	Narcissus
6.11.5-6	Alexander of Jerusalem	Church of Antioch	Asclepiades
6.14.8-9	Alexander of Jerusalem	Origen	Pantaenus and Clement
6.19.11-14	Origen	---	Pagan education of Origen

6.19.17-18	Alexander of Jerusalem and Theoctistus	Demetrius	Origen
6.40	Dionysius of Alexandria	Germanus	Dionysius, persecuted
6.41-42	Dionysius of Alexandria	Fabius of Antioch	Martyrs of Alexandria
6.43.5-20	Cornelius	Fabius of Antioch	Novatian
6.44	Dionysius of Alexandria	Fabius of Antioch	Serapion
6.45	Dionysius of Alexandria	Novatian	Exhortation to unity
6.46,4	Dionysius of Alexandria	---	Alexander of Jerusalem
7.1	Dionysius of Alexandria	Hermammon	Gallus
7.5	Dionysius of Alexandria	Stephen I	Unity of the Churches of the East
7.5	Dionysius of Alexandria	Sixtus	On Baptism
7.6	Dionysius of Alexandria	Sixtus	Sabellius
7.7	Dionysius of Alexandria	Philemon	On Baptism
7.8	Dionysius of Alexandria	Dionysius of Rome	Novatian
7.9	Dionysius of Alexandria	Sixtus	On Baptism
7.10	Dionysius of Alexandria	Hermammon	Valerian
7.11.2-19	Dionysius of Alexandria	---	Defense against Germanus
7.11.20-25	Dionysius of Alexandria	Dometius and Didymus	Deportation of Dionysius
7.13	Gallienus	Christians	Rescript on tolerance of Christians
7.21	Dionysius of Alexandria	Hierax	Rebellion in Alexandria
7.22	Dionysius of Alexandria	Church of Egypt	The plague of Alexandria
7.23.1-4	Dionysius of Alexandria	Hermammon and the Church of Egypt	Gallienus
7.30.1-17	Council Fathers	Dionysius of Rome and Maximus of Alexandria	Paul of Samosata

8.10.1-10	Phileas	Thmuits	Martyrs of Alexandria
8.17.2-11	Galerius	Provinces of the Empire	End of the persecutions: edict of clemency
9.1.3-6	Sabinus	Governors	Freedom of worship for Christians
9.9a.1-9	Maximinus Daia	Sabinus	Freedom of worship for Christians
10.5.15-17	Constantine	Anilinus	Clarifications to the Edict of Milan
10.5.18-20	Constantine	Miltiades and Marcus	Solution to the Donatist schism
10.5.21-24	Constantine	Crestus	About the Donatist schism
10.6	Constantine	Caecilianus	The property of the Church
10.7.1	Constantine	Anilinus	The clergy and the fulfilling of the duties of public office