EUSEBIUS AND THE LITTLE LABYRINTH

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Eusebius makes use of a vast number of sources in writing both his *Preparation for the Gospel* (*Praeparatio evangelica*) and his *Ecclesiastical History* (*Historia ecclesiastica*), frequently quoting extensively from numerous works that are no longer extant.¹ The *Preparation for the Gospel* is particularly valuable as a source for ancient philosophy, though it also contains important excerpts from poetic and historical works, both pagan and Jewish.² The *Ecclesiastical History* has a similar value for early Christian works.³ In the beginning of this work, Eusebius refers to Christian authors who “have left to us partial accounts of the times through which they have passed” (*Hist. eccl.* 1.1.3) and indicates that “we have . . . collected from their scattered memoirs all that we think will be useful for the present subject, and have brought together the utterances of the ancient writers themselves that are appropriate to it, culling, as it were, the flowers of intellectual fields” (1.1.4).⁴ Modern historians are often more grateful for these quotations than for the

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historical narrative in which Eusebius has embedded them, for they are not only chronologically prior to Eusebius but also constitute primary evidence for a reconstruction of ecclesiastical and imperial history that sometimes differs from that provided by Eusebius. Furthermore, the number of these quotations is not small. According to Lawlor and Oulton, the *Ecclesiastical History* contains "nearly 250 passages transcribed from early sources. Almost half of them—including the greater number of the more lengthy—are otherwise unknown to us." Three of these quotations are derived from an anonymous document that Eusebius uses in writing book 5, chapter 28, of the *Ecclesiastical History*. This document is typically referred to as *The Little Labyrinth* and is significant for a variety of reasons, including its value as a witness to the "new explosion of interest in Aristotle" that began in the first century BC with Andronicus of Rhodes's edition of the works of Aristotle and Theophrastus and reached a pinnacle with the appointment of Alexander of Aphrodisias to a chair in Aristotelian philosophy between 198 and 209. Among those affected by this Aristotelian

5 That Eusebius occasionally rewrote both imperial and ecclesiastical history in order to serve his own theological and personal interests is well known; see, for example, the discussion of R. M. Grant, "The Case against Eusebius, or, Did the Father of Church History Write History?" *StPat* 12 (1975) 413–21.

6 For a discussion of the quotations in the *Ecclesiastical History*, see Lawlor and Oulton, *Eusebius*, 2.19–27. The quotation is from 2.19.


9 For the neglect of Aristotle's works prior to Andronicus's edition, see Cicero *Topica* 3 (written in 44 BC). For the ancient tradition of the events that led to Andronicus's edition, see Plutarch *Sulla* 26.1–2, and Strabo, 13.1.54.