CHAPTER 5

The Eusebian Apparatus in the Lindisfarne Gospels: Ailerán’s Kanon euangeliorum as a Lens for Its Appreciation

Thomas O’Loughlin

1 Eusebius and Jerome in the Lindisfarne Gospels

The opening folios of the Lindisfarne Gospels devoted to the Canon Tables (10r–17v: ills. iii, 6.8–12) are visually arresting.1 These tables, which can all too often appear as a forbidding mass of numbers arranged in an arcane code, form one element in a work of exegetical scholarship known today as ‘the Eusebian Apparatus’. Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–c. 340) produced it as a system for showing how the four gospels can be brought into concord. The system’s core is the division of the texts of the gospels (with the exception of the long ending of Mark) into numbered units which can then be related to the ‘gospel tradition’, the euangelium qui Christum predicat, through a series of ten relationships indicated in the margins of the page which are then tabulated as the ten ‘canons’ in the opening pages of codices.2 My purpose in this paper is to draw explicit attention to this element of the Lindisfarne Gospels, to examine what the manner of its presentation in this codex tells us about the exegetical milieu of its makers, and to explore what we can know about their appreciation of the Apparatus through asking how a knowledge of a seventh-century poem on the Apparatus by Ailerán the Wise could have contributed to an exegetic’s work with the gospels when using such a codex.

The Apparatus is a paratextual feature of Lindisfarne and many other four-gospel codices3 which enables the reader to know at every point in the text whether the detail, statement, or story being read is an item found in just that gospel, in only one or two other gospels, or whether it can be found in all four of them. Consequently, its acceptance as a valuable part of a codex fosters both a sense that these four early Christian texts are an harmonious expression of the ‘one gospel of Jesus Christ’,4 and that the ideal way to interpret the gospels is to read each text with constant reference to the other three.5 The Apparatus works by means of being a running index to the gospels. First, each gospel is broken down into ‘sections’ whose rationale is simply whether or not that piece of information is found only there or whether it found somewhere else in the gospels. Using this criterion, one can divide the gospels into 1162 items, and these are numbered sequentially in the margin of the text.6 Hence an item in one of the gospels, with its own specific number, can be related to the corresponding numbers in the other three gospels (if it is an item found in all four), in combinations of two other gospels (if found in three gospels), in just one other gospel (if found in only two gospels), or identified as an item found only there and nowhere else in the canonical

1 For study of this aspect of the codex, see Brown, LG1, pp. 179–82, and Heather Pulliam, Ch. 6 in the present volume; other aspects of this question have been examined by P. McGurk, ‘The Canon Tables in the Book of Lindisfarne and in the Codex Fuldensis of St. Victor of Capua’, Journal of Theological Studies n.s. 6 (1955), 192–8.

2 Many scholars, following a long trend in palaeography and art history where the ‘canons’ as an item in the fore-matter of a gospel codex is the object of attention, use the phrase ‘Eusebian Canons’ indiscriminately: sometimes referring to the lists at the beginning of a codex, sometimes referring to the marginal numbers, and sometimes for the entire system. In this paper a sharper distinction will be drawn: the system will be referred to as the ‘Eusebian Apparatus’, and the phrase ‘Eusebian Canons’ reserved for the actual tables/lists that are found in the introductory matter to gospel codices/editions. See T. O’Loughlin, ‘Harmonizing the Truth: Eusebius and the Problem of the Four Gospels’, Traditio 65 (2010), 1–29; and M.R. Crawford, ‘Ammonius of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea and the Origins of Gospels Scholarship’, New Testament Studies 61 (2015), 1–2.
gospels. These various relationships between items in the gospels can be expressed in thirteen lists (canones) as follows.

First, a list presenting, in parallel columns, those items found in all four gospels. For example, John the Baptist’s statement about baptising Jesus can be found in a single verse in Matthew (3.11) and this verse is the eleventh item in that gospel using the criterion just outlined. A similar statement can be found in Mark 1.7–8 and is the fourth item in his gospel. Likewise, Luke has a statement by John the Baptist but this is only part of a single verse in his gospel (3.16), and this detail, within the verse, is the tenth item using this criterion. Lastly, there are a group of four statements in John’s Gospel (1.15; 1.26–7; 1.30–31; and 3.28) that were seen as that evangelist’s version of this piece of testimony; and these four statements are numbered items 6, 12, 14, and 28 in his gospel. This can be expressed in a grid thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mt 11 = Mk 4</th>
<th>Lk 10 = Jn 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mt 11 = Mk 4</td>
<td>Lk 10 = Jn 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt 11 = Mk 4</td>
<td>Lk 10 = Jn 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt 11 = Mk 4</td>
<td>Lk 10 = Jn 28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part of what is labelled Canon primus in quo quattuor in codices, these numbers, presented in Roman numerals, can be found on fol. 10r of the Lindisfarne Gospels.

We then need lists that compare three gospels, such as Mt, Mk, and Lk, which gives us Canon ii (fols. 11v to 13r in Lindisfarne: ill. 6.9); Mt, Lk, and Jn, which gives us Canon iii (13v in Lindisfarne: ill. 6.10); and Mt, Mk, and Jn giving us Canon iv (14r in Lindisfarne: ill. 6.10).